

Research note: Examining false beliefs about voter fraud in the wake of the 2020 Presidential Election | HKS Misinformation Review

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The 2020 U.S. Presidential Election saw an unprecedented number of false claims alleging election fraud and arguing that Donald Trump was the actual winner of the election. Here we report a survey exploring belief in these false claims that was conducted three days after Biden was declared the winner. We find that a majority of Trump voters in our sample – particularly those who were more politically knowledgeable and more closely following election news – falsely believed that election fraud was widespread, and that Trump won the election. Thus, false beliefs about the election are not merely a fringe phenomenon. We also find that Trump conceding or losing his legal challenges would likely lead a majority of Trump voters to accept Biden’s victory as legitimate, although 40% said they would continue to view Biden as illegitimate regardless. Finally, we found that levels of partisan spite and endorsement of violence were equivalent between Trump and Biden voters.

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