



# EIP Weekly Report

October 24-30, 2022

This report was created by analysts from the [Election Integrity Partnership](#), a non-partisan coalition to empower the research community, election officials, government agencies, civil society organizations, social media platforms, and others to defend our elections against those who seek to undermine them by exploiting weaknesses in the online information environment.

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## Recently Published Research

The [EIP](#) regularly publishes blog posts on our website that take a deeper dive into election-related rumors. In this report we highlight our most recent publication: a deep dive into social media platform's 2022 election misinformation policies. The analysis assesses the extent to which platforms have implemented or changed their election policies, both in terms of their

scope and their enforcement. We also include newer platforms that have entered this space and become prominent since the 2020 election. Click the title below to read more. If you're a journalist looking to speak with EIP researchers, please contact Michael Grass ([megrass@uw.edu](mailto:megrass@uw.edu)) at the University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public or send a message to [info@eipartnership.net](mailto:info@eipartnership.net)

## [Platform Policy Analysis 2022](#)

- **In 2020, the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) [assessed](#) platform policies** as part of our analysis into election misinformation on social media platforms. Our assessment highlighted the critical need for platforms to develop comprehensive and transparent election-related policies and to enforce them evenly.
- **In 2022, as the U.S. midterms approach, the EIP once again assessed to what extent platforms have implemented or changed their election policies**, both in terms of their scope and their enforcement. We found that most platforms do not have policies that specifically protect election workers despite the rise in threats against them. Each of the five platforms we assessed has at least three categories that are vague or non-existent.
- **We additionally assess newer platforms that have entered this space** and become prominent in the intervening years. This document provides an evaluation of platforms' policies concerning election integrity.
- [Read more here.](#)

## [NiemanLab: What makes an election rumor go viral? Look at these 10 factors](#)

- **This article for Nieman Lab was adapted from a Sept. 21, 2022 blog post, "[10 Factors That Shape a Rumor's Capacity for Online Virality](#)"**
- **Online rumors about election processes and procedures can undermine trust in the democratic process.** Rumors are a growing concern among researchers, journalists, and election officials, but rumors are not a new phenomenon. Decades of research provide insight into how and why rumors spread, and this knowledge can help us anticipate what kinds of rumors might emerge and which rumors have the potential for virality.
- **We have identified 10 factors that help determine a rumor's potential to gain traction:** uncertainty/ambiguity; diminished trust in media and authoritative sources of information; significance/impact; familiarity/repetition; compellingness of evidence; emotional appeal; novelty; participatory potential, origins and amplification in the social network; and inauthentic amplification or manipulation.
- [Read more here.](#)

## [Election Vulnerability Disclosure Becomes Fodder for Dueling Conspiratorial Narratives on Telegram](#)

- University of Michigan computer science professor **J. Alex Halderman recently published an analysis where he identified a flaw in Dominion Voting Systems** ballot scanners, a vulnerability that didn't allow ballots or vote tallies to be modified but could, in some situations, compromise voter privacy.

- Online narratives around this vulnerability show how **different communities — even those that seemingly share partisan goals — can take the same phenomenon and create opposing narratives around it**, fitting the story to the anxieties and concerns of each respective subgroup.
- **In this Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) analysis, we analyze the spread of associated narratives across multiple platforms**, including Twitter and Telegram. We explore one *counter-narrative* that doubts the flaw’s seriousness, instead claiming that Halderman’s disclosure is part of a larger plan to prevent citizen oversight of the election process.
- [Read more here.](#)

## Noteworthy Incidents & Rumors

The EIP team identifies and analyzes the spread of rumors that suppress voting, reduce participation, confuse voters about election processes, delegitimize election results, or threaten election workers. In the weeks leading up to and following Election Day in November, we’re highlighting several viral incidents that our team believes are noteworthy.

### 1. Multiple videos of voter intimidation and confrontation In Mesa, Arizona

Multiple videos posted on Twitter show armed citizens guarding a drop box in Mesa, AZ with masks, tactical gear, and with their car license plates covered. In one video, the person recording comes close to one of the armed citizens, leading to a confrontation. [Maricopa County Elections Department tweeted](#) a statement on Saturday Oct 22 stating they are aware of two individuals dressed in tactical gear watching a drop box. It appears that these individuals showed up again on Saturday night, according to photos/videos from another user taken that night. The discourse surrounding this incident includes claims of criminal activity and voter intimidation. This incident has spread to various Telegram channels as well, where conversations have been focused on the legality of watching drop boxes.

This incident has [since hit mainstream media](#) and is being primarily reported on in a factual manner as the incident is largely corroborated, though there has since emerged a left-leaning discourse criticizing this tactic as blatant intimidation, with some users believing a crime has taken place because the men were armed. Further analysis highlights some spread of the videos on TikTok, alongside concerns of voter intimidation.

With growing conversation around ballot boxes and ballot watchers, we expect to see similar stories emerge in the coming weeks.

### 2. Texas voting machines "glitching," changing votes

Multiple Twitter users posted warnings that the “calibration is off” on voting machines in Texas as they were “switching” votes from Beto O’Rourke to Greg Abbott. Reports claimed either first hand experience or “friend of friend” stories of seeing their ballot switching from one candidate to another. Some users also framed it as the fault of the Texas GOP. The claims did not spread

outside of Twitter, and Twitter flagged several of the tweets as “misleading”—directing users to more information about election security and stopping users from being able to engage with the original tweets. Higher level engagement with the incident was driven by tweets using speculative framing, for example “if Texas voting machines really are switching votes,” and were not flagged by the platform. [The Texas Secretary of State communications director confirmed](#) that no machines are switching votes and highlighted that the perception of vote switching was most likely due to user error when voting.

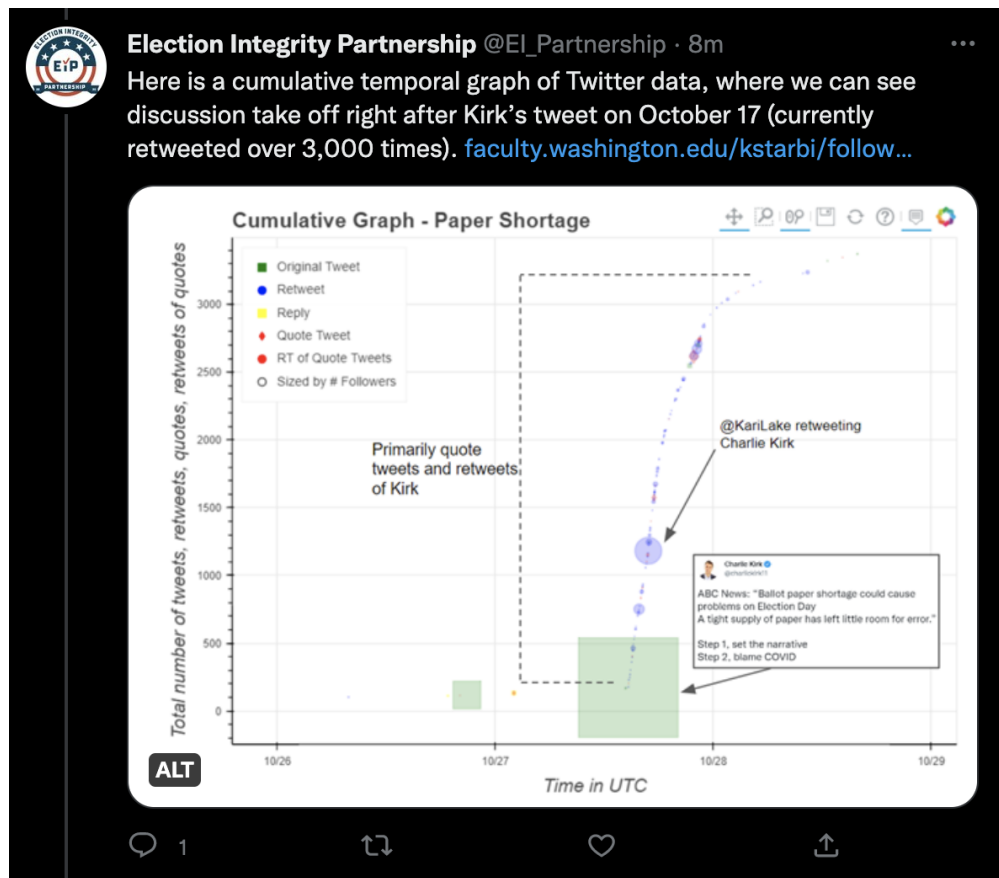
### Several reports coming out of Texas right now about voting machines changing votes from Democrats to republicans. Being investigated

7:17 AM · Oct 26, 2022 · Twitter Web App

6,759 Retweets 413 Quote Tweets 17K Likes

### 3. Possible ballot paper shortages on election day framed as masking election fraud

- On October 28, the EIP team examined misleading framing around (real) challenges emerging from ballot paper shortages. The incident involved the contextualization of a news article from ABC News that covers potential impacts from paper shortages during the midterm elections.

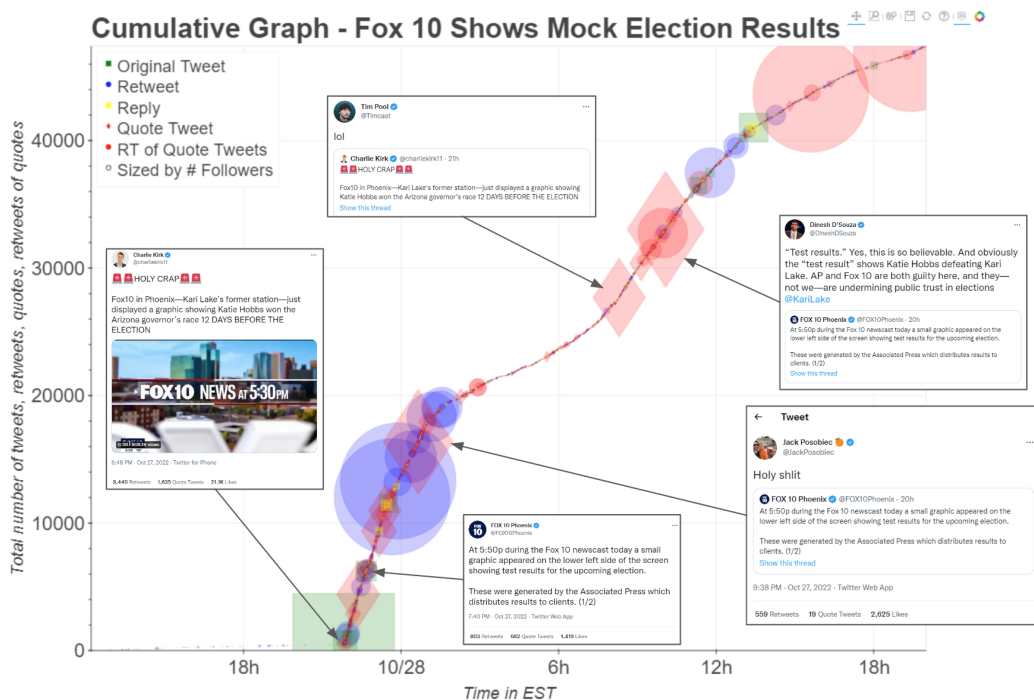


- On Twitter, Charlie Kirk, the founder and president of Turning Point USA, tweeted a quote from the ABC News article, implying that coverage of the potential issue was designed to set a “narrative” that could then be blamed on COVID.
- Further conversations appear to be leading online audiences to interpret future consequences of the ballot paper shortage as evidence of fraud rather than legitimate, nuanced, and difficult problems resulting from ongoing economic impacts due to COVID.
- [The EIP published a tweet thread on the incident here.](#)

#### 4. Implication that FOX 10 Phoenix mistakenly leaked predetermined results in AZ Governor's race

Users across multiple platforms (Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, Gettr) sowed doubt over the fairness of the upcoming Arizona gubernatorial election because of an error from a local TV station. The error concerns the mistaken publication of **mock results** used to test systems before an election, and not meant to be viewed by the public. The mock results in question showed the Democratic candidate for Governor in the lead, which prompted speculation that the election results were predetermined.

[Politifact has already rated the claims “half-true,”](#) noting the event did happen, but was due to an error during a standard process. Two things of note about the incident: first, this incident represents a form of predictable rumor. We saw a [similar event in the Michigan primary](#), for instance, this past July. In 2020, we saw a similar event — again, around test election results — when a cached web page of a [local station showed Kayne West obtaining 20% of the early vote](#). This is part of a class of election rumors where predictable events or errors in the display of results are framed as “evidence” of a “massive mainstream media cover-up”.



Second, we've seen [many errors framed in misleading ways](#) this election season. But on Twitter this incident was shared by many popular “repeat spreaders” of election misinformation we identified in 2020 (see the cumulative graph above), and had much further reach than other narratives we've seen so far. As we get closer to election day, we can expect more attention from influencers and the public on these election narratives.

## How to Connect With the EIP

Thank you for subscribing to the Election Integrity Partnership newsletter! Every week we compile narratives and articles from the previous week. To speak with EIP researchers about this work or other researchers, email [info@eipartnership.net](mailto:info@eipartnership.net).

