

Bot-like accounts on X fuel US political conspiracies, watchdog says

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Bot-like accounts remain entrenched on X, previously known as Twitter, researchers say.

Bot-like accounts on social media platform X that spread misinformation and hate ahead of Britain's election are now amplifying conspiracy

theories around US politics, a watchdog investigation revealed Tuesday, as the race to the White House kicks into high gear.

Forty-five accounts analyzed by Global Witness, which collectively generated more than four billion impressions since late May, were active in the run-up to the British polls earlier this month.

Some of them subsequently pivoted to other high-profile events ahead of the US [presidential election](#) in November, including the recent assassination attempt on Donald Trump and President Joe Biden pulling out from the race, the watchdog said in a report.

The findings demonstrate how apparent bot activity continues to plague X, previously called Twitter, despite pledges by Elon Musk to crack down on the digital manipulation when he purchased the influential social media platform in 2022 for \$44 billion.

The bot-like accounts, which collectively produced around 610,000 posts and amplified racist and sexualized abuse, also focused on climate disinformation and other global events, including anti-migrant protests in Ireland.

"In a moment when everyone is worried about democracy, it is shocking how easy it has been to find accounts that appear to be bots spreading division around the UK vote, and then to watch them jump straight into [political discussions](#) in the US and Ireland, frequently responding with hate and conspiracy," said Ava Lee, campaign leader at Global Witness.

"Access to timely, accurate and reliable information is crucial for all democracies, and it's needed now more than ever in the run up to the US presidential election."

The platform did not reply to AFP's request for comment.

An automated response from the platform's press team said, "Busy now, please check back later."

'Flood' of manipulation

It was unclear who was behind the bot-like activity uncovered by the watchdog.

Global Witness said it did not find evidence that any British political parties were paying for, using or promoting the bot-like accounts as part of their campaigns.

After the assassination attempt on Trump at a Pennsylvania rally earlier this month, some accounts—which previously supported the right-wing party Reform UK—were found sharing unfounded theories holding Biden responsible, the watchdog said.

Other accounts supporting Britain's Labour party questioned whether the incident was staged by Trump, it added.

After Biden announced he was pulling out from the race, a number of accounts increased their discussions of US Vice President Kamala Harris—the presumptive Democratic nominee—including sharing "gendered disinformation tropes" and racist comments, the report said.

Ahead of his purchase of the platform, Musk pledged to "defeat the spam bots or die trying."

But bot activity remains entrenched on the platform, a report from Australia's Queensland University of Technology (QUT) said last year after an analysis of about one million posts.

"X is flooded with platform manipulation of various kinds, is not doing

enough to moderate content, and has no clear strategy for dealing with political disinformation," the QUT report said.

Lee, in light of Global Witness's findings, called on X to "increase its moderation efforts and get better at enforcing its own policies against inauthentic activity."

"We're relying on them to protect our democracies from interference," Lee said.

The platform has gutted trust and safety teams and scaled back content moderation efforts once used to tame misinformation, making it what researchers call a haven for disinformation.

Last week, Musk—who recently endorsed Trump—himself faced a firehose of criticism for sharing a deepfake video featuring Harris on X, which tech campaigners said violated the [platform](#)'s own policies.

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