Biden, Harris and Trump Campaigns Responsible for More Than 6 Billion Ad Impressions Combined on Meta in '24 Campaign

The report from Syracuse University also identifies more than $6 million in negative ads from groups backed by Elon Musk.

SYRACUSE, NY, UNITED STATES, December 11, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Biden, Harris and Trump campaigns are responsible for more than 6 billion ad impressions combined on Meta Platforms during the 2024 presidential election, according to a new ElectionGraph analysis. Another 5 billion impressions came from 4,377 Facebook pages that ran ads mentioning any presidential candidate.

The report finds President Joe Biden's and Vice President Kamala Harris' campaigns together outspent now President-elect Donald Trump on Facebook and Instagram by about 6-to-1 ($140 million to $24 million) between Sept. 1, 2023, and the Nov. 5, 2024, election. Meta owns the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram.

The fourth quarterly ElectionGraph report from [Syracuse University's Institute for Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship](#) (IDJC) also identifies more than $6 million in negative ads from groups backed by Elon Musk that accept unlimited sums from anonymous donors, a source of financing known as "dark money." The ads, which undercut Harris, aired during the closing weeks of the campaign.

The world's richest man, Musk is CEO of Tesla and owns social media platform X. He has emerged as a close advisor to Trump.

The report looks at spending on Meta Platforms related to Musk-backed Progress 2028, Building America's Future PAC, Future Coalition and FC PACs, Duty to America, Fair Election Fund, RBG PAC and America PAC.

In addition to messaging about the economy and illegal immigration, the ads aim to erode support for Democrats among Black Americans who smoke menthol cigarettes;, and send conflicting, targeted messages about the Israel-Hamas war. For instance, in Michigan, ads played up Harris' support for Israel to erode Arab and Muslim voters' support for the vice president;

while in Pennsylvania, ads emphasized Harris' sympathy for Palestinians to turn off Jewish voters.

The ElectionGraph report provides a powerful—though only partial—measure of the volume of election-related messaging on social media, whether ads originated from the candidates' own campaigns or the vast web of outside groups that range from truthful and transparent, to murky and conspiracy-minded, and everything in between.

This is the final installment in a yearlong research project that seeks to identify misinformation trends in the U.S. presidential election. The project is supported by a grant and the use of analytics software from Neo4j, the world's leading graph database and analytics company.

The ElectionGraph team's efforts include pinpointing origins of messages and tracing misinformation by collecting and algorithmically classifying ads run on Facebook and Instagram. ElectionGraph also has developed a publicly accessible dashboard to explore its findings.

"In the closing days of the election, shady groups with unclear motives ran duplicitous ads meant to manipulate the public's understanding of candidate Harris' policies," said says Jennifer Stromer-Galley, a professor in the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University and ElectionGraph's lead researcher. "The fragmented information environment combined with weak regulation around campaign finance and disclosures on digital ads leaves the public vulnerable to actors who will say anything to try and win elections."

While Meta allows approved organizations to access ad data, such data is not required to be made available—and is not similarly trackable—on TikTok, Google, YouTube or Snapchat. The findings nevertheless provide a framework to visualize the fire hose of information and misinformation targeting voters from groups with a jumble of motives, ties and trustworthiness ahead of the 2024 election.

Graph databases have emerged as a formidable ally in unmasking coordinated misinformation campaigns this election cycle, said Jim Webber, chief scientist at Neo4j.

"Using Neo4j, IDJC ElectionGraph researchers have illuminated vast networks of accounts acting in unison to amplify false narratives, even when those accounts tried to maintain a veneer of independence," Webber saidsays. "They were able to quickly see the forest through the trees and map out an intricate structure of this problematic content, which had the potential to deceive voters."

The Institute for Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship is a joint University initiative of the Newhouse School of Public Communications and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

"Election ads on social media in the closing weeks of the campaign can be particularly influential,

but also difficult in terms of voters' ability to see whose money and influence is behind them, given lag times in reporting requirements," said IDJC Kramer Director Margaret Talev, a journalist and professor of practice at the Newhouse School.

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