



Analysis of Election Fraud in the 2020 US Election

Insights from **pressrelations GmbH** | Analysis period: **08/01/2016 –11/14/2020**

REPORTING OVER TIME

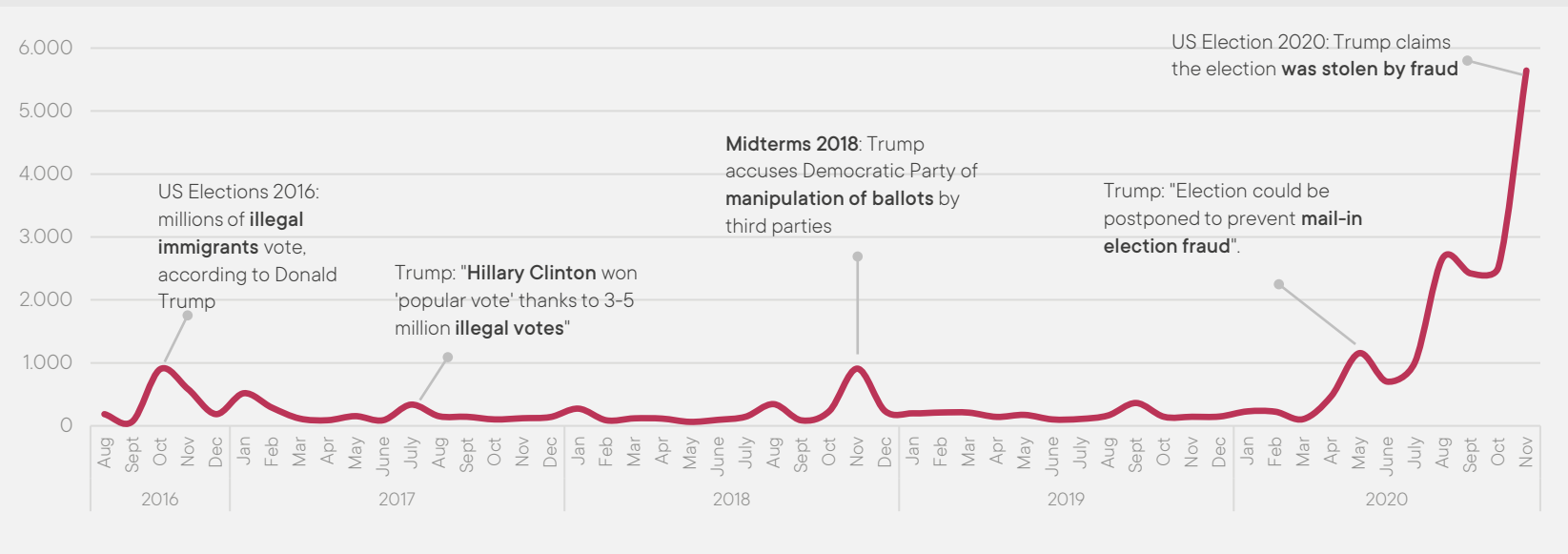
The Subject of *Election Fraud* in US Media

In **2016**, Trump prepares the ground for his current accusations of election fraud by speaking of **"illegal" votes for the first time**. This narrative will be carried over one-to-one to the mail-in ballots in 2020. The **narrative** that Democrats wanted to "steal" the election comes as a consequence of their call for absentee voting due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The various **allegations** related to the technology for **voting and counting votes used by Dominion Voting Systems** make up a large part of the discussion about election

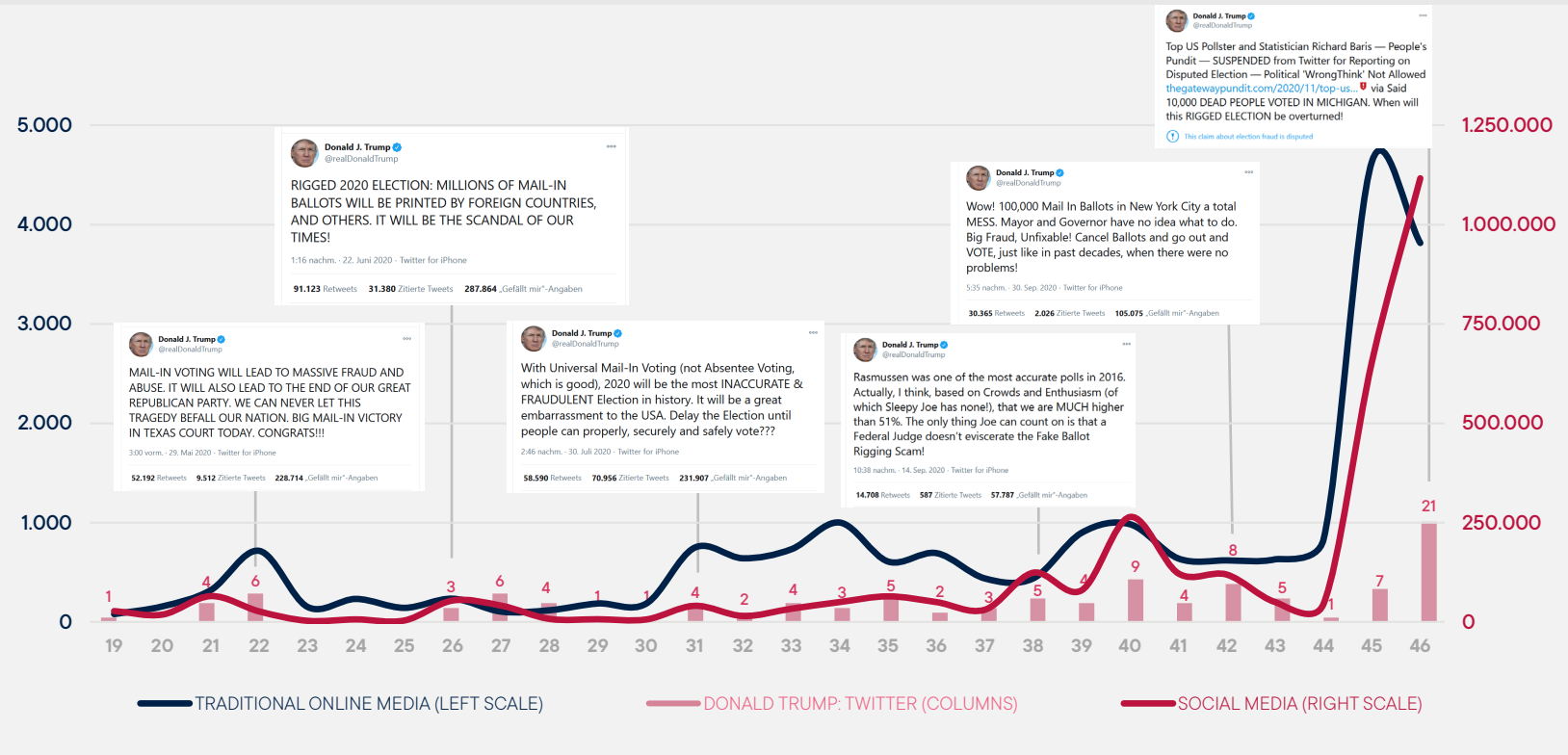
fraud - especially in the last few days. Starting on Election Day, **reporting on the topic** was initially quite hesitant. **The topic was mainly picked up by untrustworthy media outlets**. Reliable outlets picked up the topic after **November 12th**, right after Trump's tweet about the "deleted votes".

Coverage on the topic of **election fraud** by number of contributions: **August 2016 - November 2020**



REPORTING OVER TIME

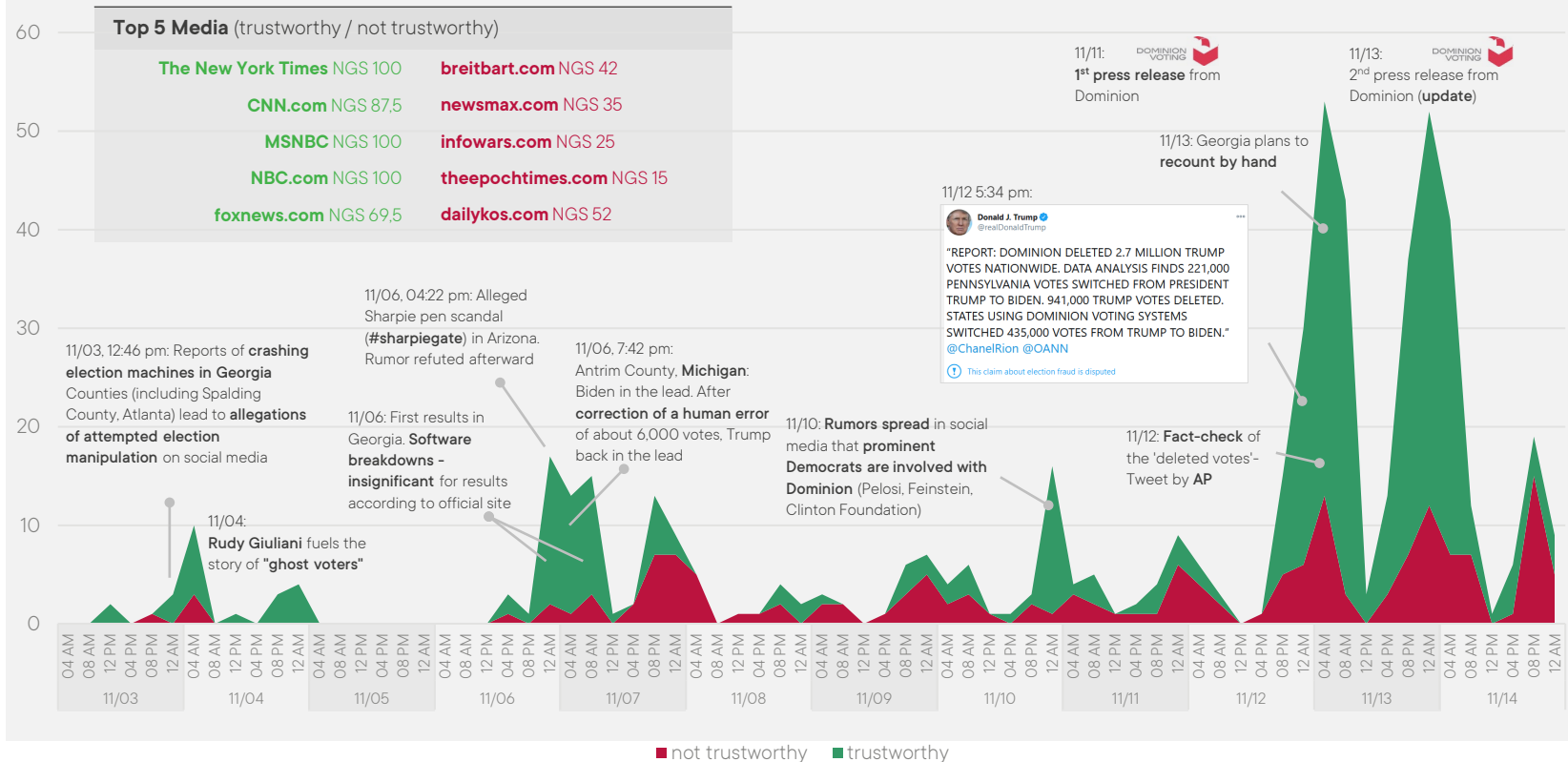
 The Subject of *Election Fraud* in Online and Social Media (USA)

 Contributions covering the topic of **election fraud** by number: **May - November 2020** (calendar weeks)


REPORTING OVER TIME

The Subject of *Dominion Voting Systems* in the US Media

Coverage on the topic of **Dominion Voting Systems** by number of contributions: **November 03 - 14, 2020**



Trump and the Myth of the *Election Fraud*

Trump's accusation of **electoral fraud**, which is currently blocking an orderly transition to a Biden government, has its origins long before the 2020 election. In 2016, the Republican challenger is well behind Democrat **Hillary Clinton** in most polls. Therefore, in the fall before the previous presidential election (see Figure 1), he warns that **millions of migrants** would cast their votes **illegally**. In addition, his attacks are directed against the media and the polling institutions, which he accuses of **unfair influence based on lies**. *Illegal* votes and *fake* media become the cornerstones of Trump's attack strategy, which in subsequent years will serve him time and again to challenge the **integrity of the U.S. electoral system** (see Figure 1). Although Trump wins the 2016 election, he **trails Clinton** in the *popular vote* by almost **three million votes**. As one of his first official acts, the new US president appoints an election commission led by Vice President **Mike Pence** to investigate the alleged million-dollar electoral fraud. In January 2018, the commission was dissolved as no evidence of systematic electoral fraud was found. But the **myth of rigged elections** is already out there in the world, widespread among Trump supporters and thus, also on social media. The incumbent president uses his **Twitter account** to keep the narrative of election manipulation alive. **Figure 2** clearly shows the almost always similar pattern of the chain from **owned to earned media** on social media and to **traditional media**.

The second chart shows how Trump has been pushing the issue of **election fraud in the context of the coronavirus pandemic** on Twitter since May when the first polls put him once again behind the democratic challenger. Background: When it becomes clear that the pandemic is not a temporary phenomenon, the **Democrats** encourage their voters to **vote by mail** for safety reasons. **Trump's thesis**: He can only lose the election if the Democrats steal it from him through the allegedly massively **susceptible to fraud mail-in voting**. Interestingly enough, Trump's confidant **Roger Stone** had already launched the *Stop the Steal* initiative during the 2016 election, which aimed to have Republican election observers gather evidence of the Democratic Party's alleged manipulation of the election. Trump popularized the narrative in tweets and TV interviews as a **hashtag** before the 2020 election - after the election, it became a **fighting term for his supporters**. Even after four years, the media outrage still helps Trump to maintain a constant presence - even if it is partly by showing that statements of the incumbent president are **disinformation**. In recent days, Trump's attacks are focused specifically on the alleged **systematic manipulation** of the results by **Dominion Systems'** software used in some states. Therefore, **Figure 3** analyzes in detail how and when the accusations are reflected in trustworthy and untrustworthy media. The **NewsGuard score** for US online media was used as an index of trustworthiness (see page 7).

Trump and the Myth of the *Election Fraud*

The subject of Dominion Software

- 11/03 - Reports of **crashing election machines in Georgia Counties** (including Spalding County, Atlanta) lead to allegations of attempted election manipulation on social media.
- 11/04 - Trump's lawyer **Rudy Giuliani** fuels the story of "**dead people voting**" ("ghost voters").
- 11/04 - First results in Georgia; **software problems - Dominion** was used - had no influence on the number of votes according to official statements. On 11/11, the state announces that a recount will be done by hand.
- 11/06 - Alleged Sharpie pen scandal (**#sharpiegate**) in Arizona. Rumor refuted afterward.
- 11/06 - Antrim County, **Michigan**: an employee inadvertently fails to perform a software update, so in unofficial results, Biden is reported to be temporarily in the lead. The **error (about 6,000 votes)** is corrected - the votes go to Trump, who wins in the County. The Republican Party, nevertheless, accuses the County of electoral fraud in favor of Biden.
- 11/10 - The narrative that **prominent Democrats are associated with Dominion Software** (Pelosi, Feinstein, Clinton Foundation) spreads like wildfire on social media. This assertion is later **refuted** by AP, among others, but is further spread by numerous untrustworthy media sources.
- 11/11 - Release of **Dominion Systems' first press release** regarding **allegations of systematic election fraud**.
- 11/12 - **Donald Trump** adds a new twist to the accusations against Dominion on **Twitter**. @realDonaldTrump: "**REPORT: DOMINION DELETED 2.7 MILLION TRUMP VOTES NATIONWIDE.**" He provides **no evidence** but tags Channel Rion and One American News Network (OAN), who had previously reported on these unfounded rumors. The allegation is further disseminated by The Gateway Pundit, Infowars, and Newsmax, among others.
- 11/12 - **AP FACT CHECK**: 'Trump tweets a made-up story of deleted votes'.
- 11/13 - **Update** of Dominion's **press release**.
- 11/14 - Newsmax claims Trump wants to obtain **constitutionally legitimized win** / Trump supporters demand "**Stop the Steal**" at MAGA demonstration in Washington.
- 11/14 - **Trump tweets** @realDonaldTrump: „*People are not going to stand for having this Election stolen from them by a **privately owned Radical Left company, Dominion, and many other reasons!***"

APPENDIX

Comments and remarks

Media set

Traditional Media:

- US Online Media

Social Media:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
- VKontakte
- Dailymotion

NewsGuard Score

In its analyses of the US election, pressrelations cooperates with NewsGuard that creates a rating system for news sites online. The news sites are analyzed by trained journalists according to nine credibility and transparency criteria and evaluated using a point system. The highest number of points is 100.

Not trustworthy

If a media outlet scores less than 60 points, it does not meet the journalistic requirements and is marked red.

Trustworthy

The news sites rated as credible are marked green.

Real-time InfoBoard:

Additional information about the US election is available **for free** in our [real-time InfoBoard](#).



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