



Written by [Larry Elder](#) on May 5, 2022

The Conservative Surge in Twitter Followers — The Elon Musk Effect?

In January, I wrote about a *USA Today* article centered around a New York University study that supposedly disproved the claim that social media platforms, like Twitter, discriminate against conservatives.

USA Today said, “Despite repeated charges of anti-conservative bias from former President Donald Trump and other GOP critics, Facebook, Twitter and Google’s YouTube are not slanted against right-leaning users.”

As to the study, Paul Barrett, deputy director of the NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, said: “Republicans, or more broadly conservatives, have been spreading a form of disinformation on how they’re treated on social media. They complain they’re censored and suppressed but, not only is there not evidence to support that, what evidence exists actually cuts in the other direction.”

I wrote:

Tell this to singer-songwriter John Ondrasik, to cite just one example, who on Jan. 2 posted his new music video critical of President Joe Biden’s disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. YouTube first attached a warning that the video’s images violated the platform’s “graphic content policy,” making it unsuitable for younger audiences. But five days and 250,000 views later, YouTube removed it altogether. Nine hours later, when conservatives and, one hopes, others complained, YouTube restored it, although it added another warning labeling the video “inappropriate or offensive to some audiences.”

About its abrupt takedown and restoration, YouTube explained: “This was our mistake and we’ve reinstated your video. So sorry this happened and thanks for being patient while we worked this out.” What was there to “work out”? As Ondrasik pointed out, a number of videos on YouTube displaying “similar Taliban atrocities” not only remain on the platform but are monetized, actually making money for whoever posted it.

My campaign for governor of California, which attracted international attention, ended Sept. 14, 2021. For whatever reason over the next several weeks, I *lost* over 25,000 followers and started losing hundreds of Twitter followers per day. This drip-by-drip erosion continued for months. By contrast, I experienced no such erosion on Instagram and Facebook where I also regularly post content.



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Other conservatives have similar stories about a sudden loss of Twitter followers or about suppressed content on that platform. Yet, the NYU study essentially dismissed these suspicions as baseless.

But something odd happened shortly before and shortly after mega-billionaire Elon Musk announced his purchase of Twitter. In a 24-to-48-hour span, I gained nearly 9,000 followers. Other conservatives also saw their follower numbers suddenly spike. The *Daily Mail* reported: “Fox News host Tucker Carlson, Donald Trump Jr. and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis — three of America’s most forthright conservative mouthpieces — have experienced an influx of 175,960, 301,570 and 286,559 followers respectively since the news of Musk’s takeover broke earlier this week.”

By contrast, big-name liberals, with the exception of former President Barack Obama and President Joe Biden, experienced steep drops in their Twitter follower count. The *Daily Mail* wrote: “Alexandra [sic] Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), Hillary Clinton and Ellen DeGeneres have witnessed an exodus of 26,072, 21,424 and 27,141 Twitter followers respectively in the past four days. Vice President of the United States Kamala Harris lost over 28,000 of her supporters and Michelle Obama dropped a dramatic 32,073.”

Twitter says it blocked anyone within the company from changing its algorithms to avoid internal sabotage from workers who might be unhappy with Musk’s purchase. If true, this undercuts the suspicion that Twitter employees might be covering their anticonservative biases in order to keep their jobs under the new and different management.

Who knows? It certainly seems awfully peculiar that after Musk, a nonliberal, bought Twitter, the platform suddenly and dramatically appears more welcoming to conservatives. But expect another New York University study to provide a perfectly innocent and rational explanation.

Maybe Musk might next purchase *The New York Times* — and turn it into a newspaper. Or, perhaps, buy *The Washington Post* — and hire actual journalists. One can hope.

Larry Elder is a bestselling author and nationally syndicated radio talk show host. His latest book, The New Trump Standard, is available in paperback from Amazon.com and for Nook, Kindle, iBooks and Google Play. To find out more about Larry Elder, or become an “Elderado,” visit www.LarryElder.com. Follow Larry on Twitter @LarryElder. To read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate website at www.creators.com.

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