



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on May 18, 2022

## Audit: Nearly Half of Biden's Twitter Followers Are Fake

Nearly half of President Joe Biden's Twitter followers are bogus, an audit done with the software company SparkToro's tool revealed. The total number of fake and spam accounts on the platform is, in fact, much bigger than the company is willing to admit.

According to a Newsweek [report](#),

SparkToro's tool found that 49.3 percent of accounts following the official @POTUS Twitter account are "fake followers" based on analysis of a number of factors, including location issues, default profile images and new users.



AP Images

As of today, America's "most popular" president is presumably followed by [34.2 million users](#).

SparkToro [defines](#) "fake followers" as "bots, spam accounts, inactive users, propaganda, or other non-engaged/non-real users." The company created a tool called "Fake Followers" three years ago to identify such bogus accounts.

The company [notes](#) that the "fake" accounts are typically "neither nefarious nor problematic." Some of the bots, such as news generators or restaurant observers, are viewed by some users as useful. In contrast, "spam" accounts are sending active users unsolicited information — or misinformation — and are viewed as a "nuisance," per SparkToro.

The number of "fake" users on one of the world's largest social-media platforms got national attention after Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, attempting to buy Twitter for \$44 billion, [expressed concern](#) over the large number of sham accounts that could actually be as high as 20 percent. Twitter claims that only five percent of the accounts are fake or spam.

Musk said last Friday that his deal to purchase Twitter would be put on hold until issues with fake accounts were resolved.

According to the Associated Press, Twitter boasted 229 million users who were served advertising in the first quarter.

In a lengthy [series of tweets](#) dedicated to the technical side of the purging of such accounts, Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal defended his company's handling of spam and bots, stating that "we are strongly incentivized to detect and remove as much spam as we possibly can, every single day." He added, "Anyone who suggests otherwise is just wrong."

Musk was not convinced, [tweeting](#) an inappropriate emoji in response, and adding, "So how do advertisers know what they're getting for their money? This is fundamental to the financial health of Twitter."

Media observers speculated that Musk may be amplifying the issue to negotiate a better deal for



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Twitter, whose stock price is now \$36.80 per share, compared to the \$54.20 per share that Musk had initially offered.

SparkToro's algorithms, however, [found](#) that Musk's estimations were closer to the truth than those of Agrawal. The company used its tool on Musk's own Twitter profile and found that 70.23 percent of his 93.9 million Twitter followers were "unlikely to be authentic, active users who see his tweets."

In 2018, the company [analyzed](#) the composition of 54,788,369 Twitter followers of President Donald Trump, and found that 61 percent of them were "bots, inactive, spam, or propaganda." That number far surpassed fake followers of any other American politician. For comparison, the second-largest amount of fake followers was associated with account of former California governor Jerry Brown (50 percent). Former secretary of state and failed presidential candidate Hillary Clinton had 43 percent, and two former vice presidents, Mike Pence and Al Gore, split the fourth place, having 41 percent fake followers each.

The company argued that an unusual spike in fake followers of the president suggested "that this account in particular has been the target of a lot of suspicious activity."

"The ease with which these accounts can be identified suggests Twitter is unwilling (rather than unable) to identify and remove obvious spam/bots/inactive/propaganda accounts," said SparkToro.



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