Election Scams on the Rise: Over Half of Americans Targeted with Election Scams

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New Norton Survey Finds Younger Voters Under 35 Targeted Most with Fake Polls, Donation Scams and Disinformation

TEMPE, Ariz., and PRAGUE, Oct. 17, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- With less than three weeks left before Election Day in the U.S., new data reveals that over half of Americans (56%) have already been targeted by election-related scams. Younger voters, especially those under 35, are being targeted more, facing higher exposure to schemes like fake polls, impersonation attempts and disinformation campaigns. A survey conducted by Norton, a consumer Cyber Safety brand of Gen™ (NASDAQ: GEN), showcases the growing need for public awareness and caution during this election season.

"Election scams are a significant issue. From fake donations to disinformation intended to deceive, these scams can lead to serious financial and personal data losses, or even increase divisiveness by spreading confusion and mistrust," said Leena Elias, Chief Product Officer at Gen. "Protecting voters means staying ahead of new threats and providing people with the Cyber Safety knowledge and tools they need to safeguard their personal information and confidently vote."

Who's at Risk?

Younger adults are most at risk of being bombarded by election scams, with two-thirds (66%) of those aged 25 to 34 reporting encounters. According to the National Cybersecurity Alliance's latest Cybersecurity Attitudes and Behaviors Report, overconfidence may be a contributing factor to this, as younger generations may believe they are less susceptible to threats and engage in riskier online behavior due to a false sense of security.

Financial Losses

Alarmingly, nearly one in five (19%) individuals targeted by election scams fell victim, with 88% of victims reporting financial losses. On average, victims report losing over $7,200.

Voter Concerns: Rising Anxiety Over Election Scams

As Election Day approaches, voters are apprehensive about scams designed to mislead them. The survey reveals that fake news and disinformation top the list of concerns, with 43% of respondents identifying it as one of their primary fears. Other significant worries include fake polls and surveys (31%), voter registration scams (31%), fake endorsement scams (23%), impersonation scams and deepfakes (22%), donation scams (21%) and robocalls (21%).

These fears are not unfounded. Several common scams have emerged during this election cycle:

- Robocalls: Topping the list of reported scam attempts, over one-third (37%) of participants reported being targeted by election-related robocalls, which disproportionately target Americans over the age of 55 (45%).
- Fake News/Disinformation: One-fifth (20%) of respondents reported encountering misleading information, with voters aged 25 to 34 particularly at risk—with 28% being targeted by such tactics.
- Political Donation Scams: One in five (19%) expressed worry about the legitimacy of texts and emails asking for money. With the average person receiving 11 fundraising messages a week, it can be challenging to sort through what is real and what is not, which is why nearly half (48%) of voters choose to delete and two-thirds ignore political messages all together.
- Impersonation Scams/Deepfakes: About one in ten (10%) participants say they encountered impersonation scams and deepfakes, which were notably more prevalent among individuals aged 25 to 34 (20%).
- Fake Polls and Surveys: 17% of those surveyed were targeted by attempts to capture and steal personal information in fake polls, with the highest instances among the 18 to 24 age group (25%).

Additionally, while 82% of respondents confirmed their intention to vote, 40% of those voters expressed concerns about the legitimacy of polling stations. Voters 55 and older had the most confidence in polling stations (71% had no concerns vs 49% of people 25 to 34). Some of the concerns about polling stems from misinformation, raising concerns of what sources the public trusts to get their political information. Traditional news outlets are the most trusted (75%), followed by friends and family (25%). Interestingly, only about one in five (19%) said they trust official candidate platform information, only slightly higher than those who trust social media (16%).

Your Guide to Staying Safe This Election Season

To help protect yourself from election-related scams, Norton recommends the following:

- Verify Sources: Always check the credibility of the information you receive. Stick to official election websites and trusted news sources for accurate updates.
- Be Cautious when Donating: If you're considering donating, research the organization first. Legitimate organizations will provide clear information on how donations are used.
- Look for Red Flags: Be wary of unsolicited messages or phone calls asking for personal information or money. If something feels off, trust your instincts and investigate further. When in doubt, you can check in with Norton Genie, a free AI-powered scam detector, and in seconds, find out if a message you received is likely a scam and what to do next.
- Report Suspicious Activity: If you encounter a potential scam, report it to the appropriate authorities. Education is Key: Share this information with friends and family, especially younger voters who may be more susceptible to these scams.

Norton urges voters to stay informed and alert in the lead-up to Election Day. Scams have the potential to mislead voters, skew public opinion and compromise personal information. It is important for people to verify the credibility of political communications and report any suspicious activity.

For more information on how to safeguard against election-related scams, visit https://www.gendigital.com/blog/news/innovation/ai-elections-2024.

Methodology

The study was conducted online within the United States by Dynata on behalf of Gen from September 13 to September 20, 2024, among 1,000 adults ages 18 and older. Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, and region, to be nationally representative.

About Norton

Norton is a leader in Cyber Safety, and part of Gen™ (NASDAQ: GEN), a global company dedicated to powering Digital Freedom with a family of trusted consumer brands. Norton empowers millions of individuals and families with award-winning protection for their devices, online privacy, and identity. Norton products and services are certified by independent testing organizations including AV-TEST, AV Comparatives, and SE Labs. Norton is a founding member of the Coalition Against Stalkerware. Learn more at www.norton.com.

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