

Election denialism and candidate favorability: Insights from survey experiments

By Jacob Ausubel

Abstract

Recent studies suggest that election-denying candidates (i.e., those who challenged the legitimacy of Joe Biden's victory) underperformed in the 2022 U.S. midterms. However, there are key gaps in the existing literature. First, it is difficult to determine from observational data whether election denialism itself caused the underperformances or if these candidates were simply less popular than other politicians in other ways. Second, it is unclear how the public perceives candidates who challenge the legitimacy of local elections unrelated to Biden's victory. I address these gaps with original survey experiments. My results suggest that there are only a few circumstances in which fact-checking election deniers lowers the candidates' favorability among co-partisans. At least at the moment, politicians have little incentive to stop engaging in election denialism.