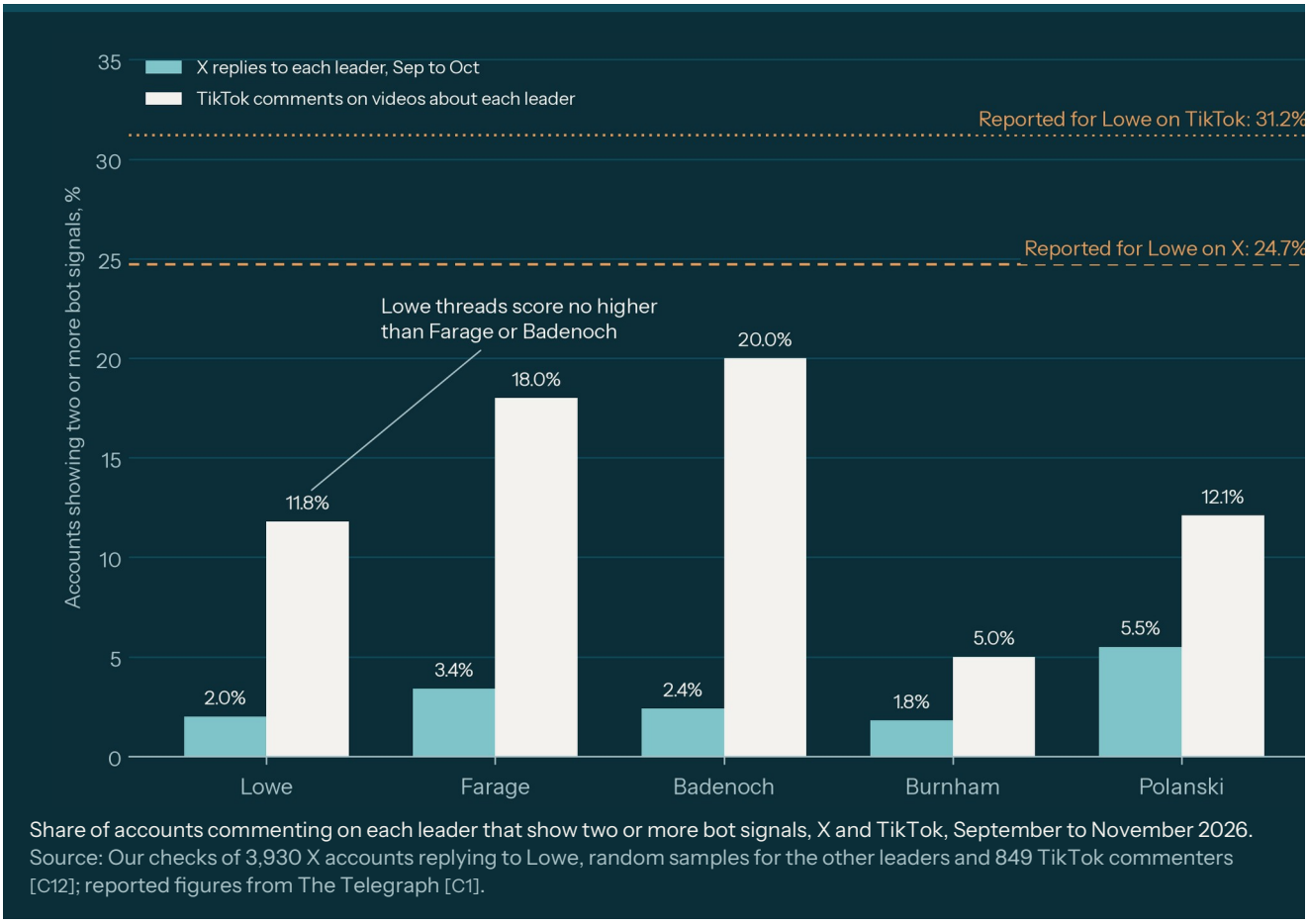
Disinformation Commission rapid assessment

The Rupert Lowe "bot army" claim, tested

23 Nov 2026



Share of accounts commenting on each leader that show two or more bot signals, X and TikTok, September to November 2026. Source: Our checks of 3,930 X accounts replying to Lowe, random samples for the other leaders and 849 TikTok commenters [C12]; reported figures from The Telegraph [C1].

We found no sign of a bot army behind Rupert Lowe: his commenters look no more fake than Farage's

A commercial analysis reported by The Telegraph said about a quarter of comments on Lowe came from inauthentic accounts [C1]. In our sample of the same platforms and months, 2.0% of accounts replying to Lowe on X showed two or more bot signals, against 3.4% for Farage [C12]. We found no sign of accounts created minutes apart posting in step.

Are Lowe's X repliers mostly fake?

2.0%

of 3,930 accounts replying to Lowe showed two or more bot signals; 3.4% of Farage's did. See Section 4, p.7

[C12]

Was there a timed network?

0

pairs of accounts created within 10 minutes of each other that also replied to the same post within a minute. See Section 5, p.9

[C12]

Do suspect accounts attack Reform?

3.9%

of suspect accounts in Lowe's X threads attacked Farage or Reform; the reported figure was 45%. See Section 6, p.10

[C12, C1]

What's inside Results at a glance, p.3 · Section 4 How many accounts look fake, p.7 · Section 5 Coordination, p.9 · Section 6 Who attacks Reform, p.10

© 2026 DisCom.ai · DisinformationCommission.com

01

Results at a glance

Our assessment

The Telegraph's commercial analytics firm reported a bot army around Lowe, and that claim does not hold up on the public evidence in our sample. Accounts with bot-like traits exist around every party leader on X and TikTok, but Lowe's comment sections have no more of them than Farage's or Kemi Badenoch's, and the suspect accounts we found were no more likely to attack Reform than anyone else [C12]. We found no copy chains of concern, no accounts posting identical text in step and no cluster of accounts created minutes apart replying together [C12]. Real Restore Britain supporters, many of them former Reform voters, do flood Farage's replies; their accounts are years old [C12]. We could not reproduce the reported 24.7% and 31.2%. The commercial analysis has not published its method or account list, and may use signals that are not public [C1].

Strong indicator	Of 3,930 X accounts replying to Lowe, 2.0% showed two or more bot signals, against 3.4% for Farage and 2.4% for Kemi Badenoch; on TikTok, 11.8% against Farage's 18.0% [C12]. Our assessment: it is highly likely (about 80% to 90%) that Lowe's comment sections carry no more suspect accounts than his rivals'. We have moderate confidence: we see only public profile signals, and the TikTok comparison samples are small.	Section 4
Strong indicator	No pair of accounts created within 10 minutes of each other replied to the same post within a minute, and no X accounts posted identical replies within 60 seconds [C12]. Our assessment: it is highly unlikely (about 10% to 20%) that a network of accounts created minutes apart drove the conversation in our sample. We have moderate confidence: accounts removed before 23 November are missing.	Section 5
Strong indicator	In Lowe's threads, 3.9% of suspect X accounts and 3.8% on TikTok attacked Farage or Reform, against a reported 45%; none of 13 suspect accounts' recent posts did [C12, C1]. Our assessment: it is unlikely (about 20% to 35%) that fake accounts are a main source of attacks on Reform. We have moderate confidence: our coding over-counts attacks, so the true shares are lower.	Section 6
Strong indicator	238 accounts urged Restore under Farage's posts; 1.7% showed two or more bot signals, against 2.0% of his other repliers, and their median account age is over four years [C12]. Our assessment: it is likely (about 55% to 75%) that this pressure comes mainly from real Restore supporters. We have moderate confidence: real people can also run several accounts.	Section 6
Strong indicator	Newest, unranked X replies show more suspect accounts, 8.1% for Lowe and 13.4% for Farage, but still about a third of the reported 24.7% [C12, C1]. Our assessment: it is likely (about 55% to 75%) that low-grade spam accounts sit in every leader's replies rather than a Lowe-specific operation. We have moderate confidence: the unranked samples are 446 and 247 accounts.	Section 4

© 2026 DisCom.ai · DisinformationCommission.com

Why it matters

Farage asked to meet the Government about the findings, and said the "pro-Restore, anti-Reform playbook could happen to any party" [C1]. Claims of foreign or automated interference shape how voters and officials judge an insurgent party's support, as the Lowestoft by-election result shows [C4]. Public checks of such claims matter before any policy response is built on them.

How to read the findings

Each finding opens with its evidence label. Confirmed means a reproducible primary source or measurement. Strong indicator means a pattern across several measures. Insufficient evidence means we could not see enough to judge. The likelihood term follows the UK Professional Head of Intelligence Assessment yardstick, and the confidence sentence says how much the evidence supports it. We take no view on any party's politics.

02

What was claimed

On 22 November The Telegraph reported that a cyber-security firm had analysed more than 72,000 X and TikTok comments posted from 1 September to 31 October 2026 about Lowe, Farage, Burnham, Badenoch and Polanski [C1, C2]. It reported that 24.7% of X posts and 31.2% of TikTok comments about Lowe came from inauthentic accounts, that 45% of those accounts posted content negative about Farage or Reform, and that some accounts were created minutes apart and posted at identical times [C1]. About 25% of TikTok posts about Farage and Polanski, and 22% about Burnham and Badenoch, were also flagged [C1].

Farage said: "This report is deeply alarming and shows our democracy is open to subversion. The pro-Restore, anti-Reform playbook could happen to any party. I am keen to meet the Government to discuss dealing with this." [C1] Lowe called the article "another Telegraph hit-job" on X; the post drew 125,570 impressions and 503 replies by 23 November [C3, C12]. The next morning he asked whether the 48% of Lowestoft voters who backed Restore Britain were "all bots too" [C4]. We found no post by Farage on X about the report up to 08:50 UK on 23 November; his latest post was about Burnham [C13].

The article does not give the firm's definition of an inauthentic account, the comments it sampled or the account list, so the figures cannot be checked directly [C1].

03

What we collected

We rebuilt the test as closely as public data allows: replies on X to every post the five leaders made from 1 September to 31 October, TikTok comments on videos by or about them, and a check of the accounts behind them [C12].

Figure 1. We matched the claim's platforms, leaders and months

What we collected, 1 September to 23 November 2026

X	21,546 replies under 175 posts by the five leaders, plus 884 posts found by keyword Profiles of 7,214 accounts; recent posts of 373 sampled accounts
TikTok	19,980 comments on 161 videos by or about the five leaders Profiles of 849 sampled commenters
Telegram	1,709 posts from 14 public UK nationalist and alternative news channels, from three keyword searches Lowe and Restore channels checked; 16 posts mention Lowe, Restore, Farage or Reform
Reports and news	Takedown and threat reports from Meta, OpenAI, Google, Microsoft, TikTok, the EEAS and DFRLab News coverage of the claim and earlier research on Restore-linked groups

Our collection, 23 November 2026 [C12].

On X we took up to three pages of replies to each of 175 posts, 57 of them Lowe's, and checked every account replying to Lowe plus a random sample of 2,000 accounts drawn from those replying to the other four; 1,541 of them replied to Farage and had a public profile, and they are the Farage comparison [C12]. On TikTok we took comments from 161 videos and checked 450 accounts commenting on Lowe and about 100 for each other leader [C12]. Of the TikTok comments, 9,653 of 19,980 were posted before 1 November; the rest came in November [C12].

Telegram played little part. The public Telegram channel using Restore Britain's name had 35 subscribers, and the 14 UK nationalist channels we read mentioned Lowe, Restore, Farage or Reform in 16 of 1,709 posts, with no repeated text across channels [C12].

04

How many accounts look fake

We scored each account on five public signals: created within 90 days of its first comment, fewer than 10 followers, a default-style handle of a name plus a string of digits, no bio, and copied text. Two or more signals is our loose measure; three or more is strict.

Table 1. Accounts with bot signals, by leader

Leader and platform	Accounts checked	Two or more signals	Three or more	Created in last 90 days	Median age
Lowe, X	3,930	2.0%	0.1%	2.0%	5.0 years
Farage, X	703	3.4%	0.0%	2.1%	6.2 years
Badenoch, X	625	2.4%	0.2%	1.3%	7.6 years
Burnham, X	392	1.8%	0.0%	1.0%	7.3 years
Polanski, X	489	5.5%	0.6%	3.7%	6.4 years
Lowe, TikTok	450	11.8%	0.9%	2.9%	3.4 years
Farage, TikTok	100	18.0%	3.0%	7.0%	3.1 years
Badenoch, TikTok	100	20.0%	3.0%	2.0%	4.5 years
Burnham, TikTok	100	5.0%	2.0%	1.0%	4.2 years
Polanski, TikTok	99	12.1%	2.0%	4.0%	3.8 years

Our account checks [C12]. Other leaders' X figures are random samples of their repliers. Ages are at 23 November 2026.

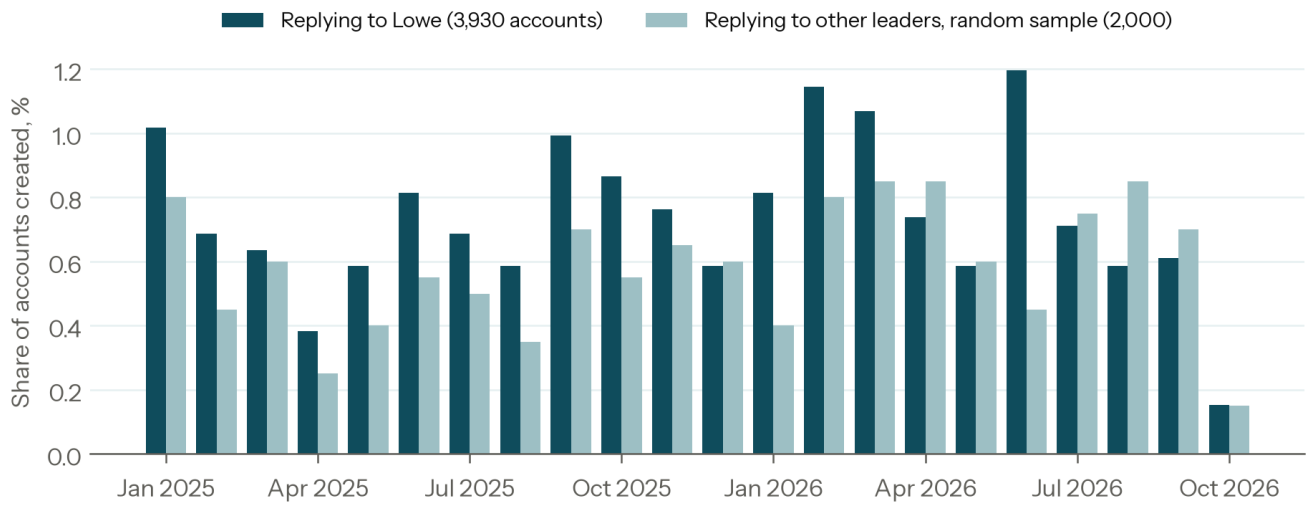
The Lowe figures sit in the middle of the range on both platforms. With these sample sizes, the Lowe TikTok rate of 11.8% has a likely range of 9.1% to 15.1%, and Farage's 18.0% a range of 11.7% to 26.7%, so the two may not differ; neither comes near 31.2% [C12, C1]. Posts that mentioned Lowe without replying to him came from 594 accounts, of which 2.9% showed two or more signals [C12].

X shows the most relevant replies first. When we instead took the newest replies to 20 Lowe and 10 Farage posts, suspect accounts rose to 8.1% of 446 Lowe repliers and 13.4% of 247 Farage repliers [C12]. Spam that X pushes down is therefore real, but it is heavier under Farage than Lowe, and still a third of the reported figure.

Accounts replying to Lowe are slightly younger than the baseline. 16.2% were created between January 2025 and October 2026, against 12.8% of the random sample for other leaders, but there was no burst of new accounts in September and October 2026: 0.8% against 0.9% [C12].

© 2026 DisCom.ai · DisinformationCommission.com

Figure 2. Lowe's repliers show no burst of new accounts before the analysis window



Our account checks; creation dates from X account identifiers and profiles [C12].

05

Coordination

The Telegraph reported accounts created minutes apart and posting at identical times [C1]. We tested for that directly.

Table 2. Coordination tests on X and TikTok

Test	Lowe	Comparison
Identical replies from different X accounts within 60 seconds	0	0 for all four other leaders
X copy clusters of three or more accounts	1, four accounts writing "boring boring boring"	Not applicable
X accounts created within 10 minutes of each other, per 400 accounts	0.55 pairs	Farage 0.90, Badenoch 0.66
Pairs created within 10 minutes that also replied to the same post within a minute	0	0
TikTok copy clusters of three or more accounts	18, all short slogans	Not applicable
TikTok identical comments from different accounts within 60 seconds	1 pair	Not applicable

Our analysis of 21,546 X replies and 19,980 TikTok comments [C12]. Creation pairs use only accounts with an exact creation time.

The TikTok clusters are slogans typed by many people, such as "general election now", from nine accounts, and "rupert lowe for prime minister", from six [C12]. That is how supporters talk, not evidence of a script. Of 373 X accounts whose recent posts we read on 23 November, 371 were still active with posts, so mass suspensions do not explain the gap [C12].

We tested four explanations.

Table 3. Competing explanations

Explanation	Evidence for	Evidence against
Real Restore supporters posting in Lowe and Farage threads	Old accounts; bot-signal rates at or below rivals'; almost all sampled accounts still active [C12]	Lowe's repliers slightly younger [C12]
A coordinated fake network promoting Restore and attacking Reform	The commercial analysis [C1]; repeated slogans on TikTok [C12]	No coordination test fires; suspect accounts no more anti-Reform than others [C12]
Low-grade spam across all UK political threads	Suspect rates of 5% to 20% on TikTok for every leader; more under Farage than Lowe in newest X replies [C12]	None found
A network our sample misses	Newest replies show more suspect accounts than ranked ones [C12]	Even newest replies show a third of the reported share, and less for Lowe than Farage [C12]

Our analysis.

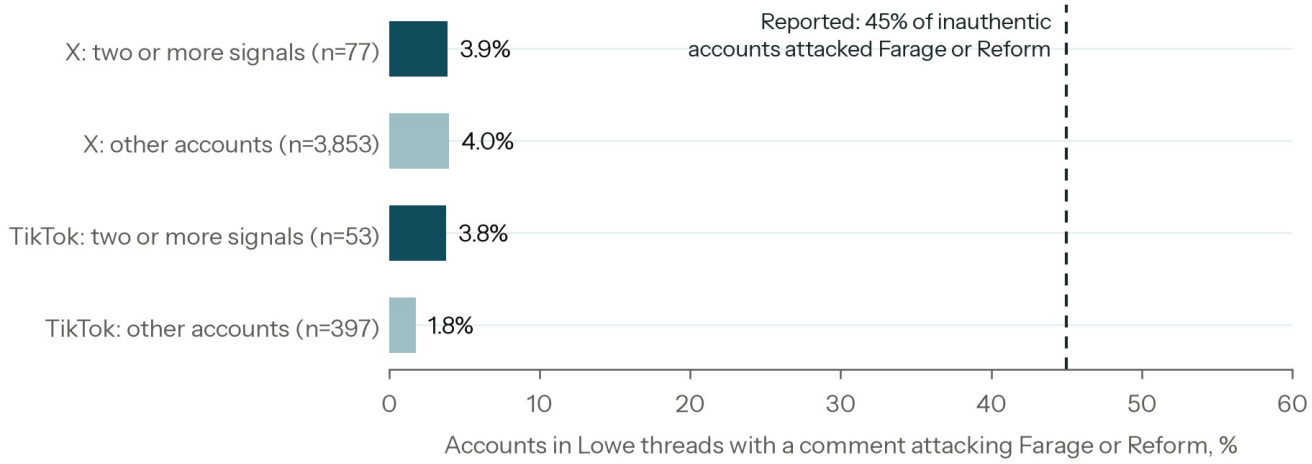
The first and third explanations fit best together. Key assumptions: that public profile signals catch most cheap fake accounts, and that reply threads and video comments stand for "comments about Lowe". If the commercial analysis used private signals, or a different set of comments, our rates would be lower than its rates without either being wrong.

06

Who attacks Reform

A language model coded every comment for whether it promoted Lowe or Restore, criticised them, attacked Farage or Reform, backed Farage or Reform, or urged a switch to Restore. In Lowe's X threads, 443 of 6,047 comments promoted Lowe or Restore and 174 attacked Farage or Reform, while 1,029 criticised Lowe or Restore [C12]. On TikTok, 1,718 of 9,305 comments on Lowe videos promoted him or Restore and 141 attacked Farage or Reform [C12].

Figure 3. Suspect accounts in Lowe threads were no more anti-Reform than others



Our coding of comments [C12]; reported figure from The Telegraph [C1].

We then read the most recent posts of three groups of X accounts. Of 199 randomly chosen Lowe repliers, 10.1% had a recent post attacking Farage or Reform; of 13 suspect accounts, none did [C12]. The strongest anti-Reform voices are the 238 accounts urging Restore under Farage's own posts, and in a sample of 100 of them, 19% attacked Farage or Reform in their recent posts [C12]. Their accounts look like everyone else's: of the 238, six were under 90 days old, and their median age is about 1,597 days, against 2,013 for other Farage repliers [C12].

The anti-Reform pressure is real, but it comes from what look like real accounts. A hand check of 15 comments the model coded as attacking Farage or Reform found 9 clear attacks, 3 unclear and 3 wrong, so the counts above are upper limits [C12].

© 2026 DisCom.ai · DisinformationCommission.com

07

Links to known networks

We checked for any published takedown or research naming networks around Restore or Reform.

Table 4. Matches against takedown and threat reports

Source	Match	Note
Meta, adversarial threat report, second half of 2026	No	A for-hire network targeted UK anti-immigrant audiences; no Restore or Reform link stated [C6]
Google, influence operations bulletin, third quarter of 2026	No	No UK party campaign listed [C7]
OpenAI, 8 October 2026	No	Operations from Russia and Iran, not UK party politics [C8]
TikTok, covert influence reports	No	No 2026 network tied to a UK party found [C9]
Microsoft, the EEAS and DFRLab	No	Nothing found on Restore or Reform in 2026
ISD research, via PoliticsHome, July 2026	Related	Pro-Restore Facebook groups run from Pakistan and Bangladesh, apparently to make money [C10]

Our checks of the named reports, 23 Nov 2026.

The Facebook groups show that Restore's popularity attracts opportunists, as Reform's did in 2024, when the BBC found fake pro-Reform accounts on social media [C10, C11]. That is a different thing from a campaign run for or against a party. No websites featured in the activity we found, so no site ownership check was needed.

08

What to do and what to watch

Table 5. Countermeasures

Actor	Practical steps
Government and the Electoral Commission	Before acting on the claim, ask for the method and account list behind it, and test it against other leaders on the same terms.
The firm and The Telegraph	Publish the definition of an inauthentic account, the comment sample and the baseline for each leader, so others can reproduce it [C1].
X and TikTok	Report what share of replies to UK party leaders came from accounts later actioned for spam or platform manipulation.
Newsrooms	Report the share for every leader alongside any one party's figure, and say whether it is a share of accounts or comments.
Parties	Avoid treating opponents' online support as fake without public evidence; it invites the same claim in return.

Our recommendations, based on the evidence cited.

Table 6. Watch specification

Element	Specification
Sources	Replies to Lowe, Farage, Restore Britain and Reform UK on X; comments on their TikTok videos; UK nationalist Telegram channels; platform takedown reports.
Tripwires	Ten or more accounts created within the same hour replying to the same post; identical replies within 60 seconds; a platform takedown naming UK party content; publication of the commercial analysis's method.
Cadence	Weekly until the May 2027 local elections, daily during by-election weeks.
Output	A short note with the item, link, time, our assessment and what to watch next.

Our design.

© 2026 DisCom.ai · DisinformationCommission.com

09

Forecasts

Table 7. Forecasts, made 23 Nov 2026

Id	Outcome	Probability	Resolves by	Key signals; what would change our view
LB1	A government minister publicly meets or agrees to meet Farage or Reform about bot interference	15%	31 Dec 2026	Farage's request [C1]; a written answer or ministerial statement would raise it
LB2	The firm or The Telegraph publishes the method or account list behind the 24.7% and 31.2% figures	25%	31 Dec 2026	Criticism of the figures would raise it; silence lowers it
LB3	X, TikTok or Meta publicly reports removing a network that promoted Restore Britain or attacked Reform	10%	31 Mar 2027	No such takedown so far [C6, C7, C9]
LB4	The Electoral Commission or Ofcom comments publicly on the bot claim	20%	31 Dec 2026	A question in Parliament would raise it

Our assessment. Logged as F-20261123-LB1 to LB4.

10

Limitations

Our data is a sample, not a census. We took up to three pages of replies per post, ranked by X, and a sample of newest replies as a check; TikTok comments came from 161 videos, and about half were posted in November, after the reported window. We see public profile signals only, not device, network or login data, and accounts removed before 23 November are missing. Other leaders' TikTok samples are about 100 accounts each. A language model coded the comments, and a hand check showed it over-counts attacks on Reform. Telegram came from public channels only. Times are UK time, which is UTC.

02

Methodology

Reviewed 23 November 2026, UK time (UTC). Scope. Replies to posts by Lowe, Farage, Badenoch, Burnham and Polanski made from 1 September to 31 October 2026, TikTok comments on videos by or about them, and posts mentioning Lowe; with Lowe's and The Telegraph's posts of 22 November. Coverage. X: 21,546 replies under 175 posts, 884 keyword posts, 7,214 account profiles and recent posts of 373 sampled accounts. TikTok: 19,980 comments on 161 videos and 849 commenter profiles. Telegram: three keyword searches and 1,709 posts from 14 public channels, with public channel and group search and channel monitoring with edit and deletion capture where available. Commercial social-data tools were used; costs are recorded internally. Signals. Account created within 90 days of its first comment; under 10 followers; default-style handle; no bio; copied text. Creation times from X and TikTok account identifiers where exact. Coding. A language model coded each comment for support for or attacks on Lowe, Restore, Farage and Reform. We hand-checked 40. Coordination. Identical text from three or more accounts; identical text from different accounts within 60 seconds; accounts created within 10 minutes of each other, averaged over random sets of 400; and such pairs replying to the same post within a minute. Fact check. A second model, run separately from the writer, re-checked every figure and date against the sources without seeing our conclusions. Naming. Public figures and outlets are named. Private accounts are not named; the dataset uses anonymised identifiers.

03

Evidence register

Each code in square brackets in the text links to its row here. Each row gives the full source and its address.

C1 The Telegraph, Rupert Lowe's popularity boosted by army of online bots, 22 Nov 2026. telegraph.co.uk/politics/2026/11/22/rupert-lowes-popularity-boosted-by-army-o...

C2 AOL, syndicated copy of The Telegraph's article, 22 Nov 2026. aol.com/articles/rupert-lowe-popularity-boosted-army-152328000.html

C3 Rupert Lowe on X, "Another Telegraph hit-job", 22 Nov 2026, 17:38. x.com/RupertLowe10/status/2124558231338881114

C4 Rupert Lowe on X, Lowestoft voters "all bots too?", 23 Nov 2026, 08:50. x.com/RupertLowe10/status/2124787586308919671

C6 Meta threat research, Israel-based coordinated inauthentic behaviour network, second half of 2026. threatresearch-team.github.io/indicators/meta-h2-2026-israel-cib-based-network

C7 Google, influence operations bulletin, third quarter of 2026. blog.google/security/influence-operations-bulletin-q3-2026

C8 OpenAI, disrupting AI-enabled false-front operations, 8 Oct 2026. openai.com/index/disrupting-ai-enabled-false-front-operations

C9 TikTok, covert influence operations reports. tiktok.com/transparency/en/covert-influence-operations

C10 PoliticsHome, thousands join pro-Restore Britain Facebook groups run from Pakistan and Bangladesh, Jul 2026. politicshome.com/news/article/thousands-join-pro-restore-britain-facebook-gro...

C11 BBC News, fake pro-Reform accounts on social media, 2024. bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1335nj316lo

C12 DisCom.ai, evidence dataset for this report (account checks, comment coding, coordination tests), 23 Nov 2026. disinformationcommission.com/investigation/uk-lowe-reform-bots

C13 Nigel Farage on X, latest post at time of checking, 22 Nov 2026, 11:53. x.com/Nigel_Farage/status/2124471449557799350