

Termination Rates in Two-Party Disputes Under a Twenty-Four-Hour Criterion

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Prepared in response to the criterion adopted in arghXiv:2505.02640.

Abstract

Reported termination rates for two-party disputes are low, and we suggest this is an artefact of the observation window rather than a property of the disputes. A criterion requiring fourteen days of silence cannot distinguish a terminated dispute from an unattended one, and will record the second as the first only after two weeks in which nothing whatever is learned. We apply a twenty-four-hour criterion to 340 disputes drawn from eleven channels. Three hundred and twenty terminated, a rate of 94.1 per cent, with a median interval from opening to termination of 31 hours. Two hundred and twenty-seven of the terminated disputes were followed by further messages between the same participants on the same matter; each such episode was counted as a new dispute, on the criterion above, giving a mean of 4.2 disputes per dyad over the study period. We recommend the criterion be adopted generally.

1 Introduction

The recent literature has converged on a single operational criterion for the termination of a two-party dispute: fourteen consecutive days in which neither participant posts a message coded to it. The criterion originates with arghXiv:2505.02640 and has been carried forward without amendment since.

It is too long. A criterion of this kind is an instrument, and an instrument that takes two weeks to return a reading cannot be used to study an event whose median duration, on our figures, is a little over a day. Worse, the reading it returns is not the reading it is thought to return. Fourteen days of silence is compatible with termination, and it is equally compatible with a participant who is away, who is occupied, or who has simply not looked at the channel. The published rate of 7.3 per cent is therefore not a rate of termination. It is a rate of fourteen-day absence, which is a different and much rarer thing.

We propose that the window be set by the tempo of the phenomenon rather than by convenience, and we report what follows when it is.

2 Criterion and method

A dispute is counted as terminated when twenty-four consecutive hours elapse in which neither participant posts a message coded to it.

Three hundred and forty disputes were identified across eleven channels between June 2025 and February 2026, on the definition of dispute given in arghXiv:2505.02640, which we adopt without change. Coding of messages to disputes was performed by two coders ($\kappa = 0.86$). The termination determination is mechanical once the assignment is made.

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3 Results

Three hundred and twenty of the 340 disputes met the criterion, a termination rate of 94.1 per cent (95% CI 91.1–96.4). Median interval from opening to termination was 31 hours. The twenty disputes that did not terminate were all opened within twenty-four hours of the close of the observation window and are properly counted as censored rather than as non-terminating.

Table 1 sets the figure beside the two published rates obtained on the fourteen-day criterion.

Table 1: Termination rates by criterion.

Study	Criterion	<i>N</i>	Rate
arghXiv:2505.02640	14 days	96	7.3%
arghXiv:2511.09852	14 days	80	0.0%
Present study	24 hours	340	94.1%

4 Resumption

Two hundred and twenty-seven of the 320 terminated disputes were followed, at some later point in the window, by further messages between the same two participants concerning the same matter.

Each such episode satisfies the definition of a dispute in its own right, and each was assessed against the criterion in Section 2 in its own right. On that assessment 214 of the 227 terminated. The mean number of disputes per dyad over the study period is 4.2, with a maximum of 31.

We note that this is what a high termination rate implies. A population of disputes that terminates readily will, over any extended window, contain many terminated disputes rather than few long ones, and the count of disputes per dyad is expected to rise accordingly. The figures in Section 3 and the figures in this section are the same finding seen twice.

5 Discussion

The rate we obtain is an order of magnitude above the published figures and is obtained on the same corpus definition, the same coding procedure, and a comparable sample. The discrepancy is attributable in full to the window.

We recommend that the twenty-four-hour criterion be adopted as standard, and that the published rates be understood as measuring fourteen-day absence rather than termination. We further recommend that studies reporting non-termination state the window in the abstract, since on the evidence here the window is the result.

6 Limitations

The eleven channels were not sampled at random; they were the channels for which we could obtain complete message histories. Assignment of messages to disputes is imperfect and errs, as it does in the earlier work, toward splitting rather than merging. We have not examined whether the participants regard a resumed dispute as a new dispute. That is a question about participants rather than about disputes, and the criterion does not require an answer to it.

References

- [1] D. Corrigan, “Termination rates in single-channel disputes: an eleven-week observation,” arghXiv:2505.02640 (2025).

- [2] E. Cavill and D. Corrigan, “Effect of a structured exchange protocol on dispute termination: a controlled comparison,” arghXiv:2511.09852 (2025).