

GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN TIKTOK

KEY FINDINGS:

GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK ARE JUST AS PROBLEMATIC, IF NOT MORE THAN TIKTOK ON A RANGE OF CRITICAL ISSUES, FROM DISINFORMATION TO NATIONAL SECURITY TO PRIVACY TO MENTAL HEALTH AND MODERATION STANDARDS

TIKTOK, GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK HAVE ALL ALLOWED DISINFORMATION TO SPREAD LARGELY UNCHECKED ON THEIR PLATFORMS

FACEBOOK

- Facebook has long failed to adequately combat the spread of disinformation on its platforms. A [Washington Post/ProPublica](#) investigation found that Facebook played a “critical role” in the spread of disinformation ahead of the January 6th insurrection. The investigation found Facebook groups had at least 650,000 posts attacking the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election between Election Day and January 6th.
 - [Washington Post/ProPublica](#) reported its investigation “provides the clearest evidence yet that Facebook played a critical role in the spread of false narratives that fomented the violence of Jan. 6.” It also found Facebook’s efforts to police 2020 election disinformation were ineffective and started too late. Facebook has reportedly created a task force before the election to police violent and hateful election disinformation, but it was disbanded, and enforcement rolled back after the November election.
 - Critics said Facebook “recognizes the need for enforcement only after a problem has caused serious damage, often in the form of real-world mayhem and violence.”
- During the 2022 U.S. midterm elections, Facebook allowed election deniers to spread misinformation on their profiles and did “virtually nothing” to refute their claims. [Washington Post](#) found at least 26 candidates posted inaccurate election claims for months without being challenged, and posts by 17 candidates that the election would be rigged went unchallenged.
- In the lead-up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Facebook failed to label 91 percent of pro-Russian propaganda posts as having come from Kremlin-run sources. Facebook failed to label posts containing articles that claimed Ukraine planned a false flag incident prepared by British-trained saboteurs, that claimed U.S. mercenaries prepared provocation using chemical weapons, and that claimed UK intelligence reports about a Ukraine invasion were “false stories.”
 - March 2022: Facebook allowed Redfish, a Russian state-controlled media page to post pro-Russian propaganda. It also allowed Chinese state broadcaster CGTN to target global users with pro-Russian talking points and buy ads pushing pro-Russian propaganda.
 - Facebook also failed to curb the spread of Spanish-language disinformation about the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It refused to take down posts, like one from a Mexican politician who claimed Russia’s impending invasion of Ukraine was Russophobic hysteria in the Western media.
 - Facebook also allowed individuals with close ties to the Kremlin who had been sanctioned by the United States to maintain a social media presence, which allowed them to spread disinformation and pro-Russian propaganda. It also allowed them to recruit fighters and solicit funds to support pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine.
- Facebook has previously failed to discover and crackdown on other nation-state disinformation campaigns, like Russia’s effort to spread hyperpartisan content and disinformation during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and the Myanmar military’s use of the platform to foment rapes, murder and forced migrations of the Rohingya people.
- Climate misinformation also runs rampant on Facebook platforms. One study found climate misinformation had grown by 76.7 percent on Facebook between 2020 and 2021. A whistleblower alleged that Facebook allowed Breitbart to be exempt from misinformation rules, thereby allowing it to spread climate misinformation. Facebook also reportedly allowed staff to make climate misinformation ineligible for fact-checking by deeming it to be an “opinion” of the poster or publisher.

- The Guardian: “The scale of climate misinformation on Facebook is ‘staggering’ and ‘increasing quite substantially’, a new analysis of thousands of posts has found.”

GOOGLE

- Google-owned YouTube has been slow to combat misinformation on its platform. In 2018, YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki said the platform would add information from Wikipedia to videos about popular conspiracy theories, but one year later some videos still lacked the added context. YouTube was also slow to remove channels that spread misinformation and conspiracy theories about COVID-19.
- In 2019, YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki refused to remove a Trump campaign ad that had been proven false because “politicians are always accusing their opponents of lying.” In 2022, a New York University reported YouTube for amplifying Trump’s 2020 election lies.
- YouTube allowed the Kremlin to push misleading Russian-language propaganda about Ukraine for weeks after the invasion. Two days after a news investigation into pro-Russian propaganda circulating on the platform, YouTube removed the content.
- YouTube was also slow to address the fact that its algorithms spread and favored climate disinformation. Google’s algorithm reportedly put climate misinformation on equal footing with videos educating about climate science, making it harder for climate science videos to go viral. A 2020 study found that YouTube had 21 million views on videos promoting false and misleading climate information, many that YouTube’s software had recommended to its audience. It wasn’t until October 2021, that YouTube said it would demonetize climate misinformation on its platform.

TIKTOK

- Researchers found that nearly 20 percent of videos provided on TikTok search results on major news topics contained false or misleading claims, and it was described as a “very permissible space” for bad actors to spread viral disinformation content. TikTok’s refusal to share data about the origin of its videos or insight into its algorithms has created a major roadblock to combatting disinformation on the platform.
 - New York Times: “The spread of misinformation has left TikTok struggling with many of the same knotty free speech and moderation issues that Facebook and Twitter have faced, and have addressed with mixed results, for several years.”
- TikTok has failed to combat misinformation on its platform about consequential elections in the United States and abroad. Ahead of the 2022 U.S. midterm elections, baseless conspiracy theories about voter fraud and debunked rumors about the January 6th congressional inquiry were viewed widely on the platform. TikTok was “instrumental in the spread of misinformation” in the 2022 Philippines presidential election. TikTok also helped fueled disinformation and political tension ahead of the presidential election in Kenya.
- Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, disinformation and Kremlin propaganda ran wild on the platform. New York Times reported that the invasion “supersized the issues facing TikTok” with respect to misinformation.

IN ADDITION TO ALLOWING THE SPREAD OF DISINFORMATION, GOOGLE, FACEBOOK AND TIKTOK PRESENT OTHER NATIONAL SECURITY RISKS TO THE UNITED STATES

FACEBOOK, GOOGLE AND TIKTOK’S ALGORITHMS AND POLICIES HAVE ALL CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE OF FAR-RIGHT NATIONALISM AND EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES AND AROUND THE WORLD

- Facebook manipulated its News Feed algorithm in 2018 in an attempt to combat declining user engagement and ended up making the platform and angrier place. It weighted “angry” emoji reactions five-times more heavily than “like” which led to the spread of misinformation, toxicity and low-quality news. Facebook knew its algorithm had this effect, but was reluctant to change it because it didn’t want to reduce user engagement.
 - Facebook Data Scientist: “Our approach has had unhealthy side effects on important slices of public content, such as politics and news... this is an increasing liability.”
 - Facebook Internal Research: “Misinformation, toxicity, and violent content are inordinately prevalent among reshares.”

- Facebook has also exempted high-profile accounts from normal content moderation process, which allowed them to post harassment and incitements to violence. For example, soccer star Neymar was allowed to post non-consensual “revenge porn” image for more than day due to his cross-checked account. A Wall Street Journal investigation found Facebook knew of these problems, but often misled the public and its own oversight board about how much it knew.
- YouTube’s redesigned algorithm has also contributed to the rise of far-right nationalism. In 2012, YouTube rewrote its algorithm to maximize views, and in 2015 it put in place a new one that a computer scientist called an “addiction engine” in order to drive more views and increase profits.
- YouTube reportedly ignored warnings about the rise of hate speech and conspiracy theories on its platform even though in 2017 several large corporations pulled advertising from the platform after their ads appeared next to offensive content.
- Following the 2020 election, YouTube continued to allow content that sought to undermine the legitimacy of the presidential election to proliferate on its platform, which later led lawmakers leading the inquiry in the January 6th insurrection to subpoena records from Google’s parent company and grill the Google CEO about the connection between online disinformation and the insurrection. YouTube’s algorithm and autoplay features also reportedly contributed to the rise of support for far-right politicians in Brazil.
- TikTok’s algorithm similarly made it difficult to combat far-right extremism on its platform. A Media Matters investigation found even though videos promoting far-right extremist groups were banned on TikTok its algorithm continued to push accounts that promoted those groups and movements anyway. A researcher said TikTok’s immediacy and reach have made the app “unusually effective” at spreading misinformation and viral lies.
- A U.S. Homeland Security briefing said domestic extremists used TikTok to spread information about bringing guns to the January 6th insurrection and accessing the White House through tunnels.

JUST A HANDFUL OF BIG TECH COMPANIES, INCLUDING FACEBOOK AND GOOGLE, HAVE AMASSED NEARLY ALL POWER OVER UTILIZATION AND ADVANCED OF THE GLOBAL TECH INFRASTRUCTURE

- Most internet access and content was driven through Google, which was considered the “most important AI company in the world.” 75 percent of social media usage in 2020 occurred through Facebook or one of its subsidiaries. Facebook even possessed the personal data of more than 25 percent of the world’s population and half of all digital ad spending happened on Facebook platforms.
- This high consolidation and big tech’s commercial development of AI was at the center of the risk they posed to U.S. national security. Top U.S. national security officials expected AI and machine learning to be at the heart of the future of warfare, espionage and national defense. Despite this, U.S. defense agencies were largely shut out of Big Tech’s AI developments, potentially in part because big corporations were first and foremost focused on making a profit.
- U.S. foreign adversaries, like China, understood the strategic advantages of developing an AI program. Between 2010 and 2017, China had invested an estimated \$1.3 billion in U.S. AI companies and by 2018, China had filed 2.5 times more patents in AI technologies than the United States.

WHILE MUCH ATTENTION HAS BEEN FOCUSED ON TIKTOK’S CHINESE OWNERSHIP, BOTH FACEBOOK AND GOOGLE HAVE CLOSE TIES TO CHINA, THEY’VE EVEN SOUGHT THEM OUT DESPITE NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS

- Despite having been blocked in China since 2009, Facebook derives \$5 billion per year from advertisers in China and in 2020 it even set up an engineering team in Singapore to develop ad-buying tools for Chinese customers. Facebook also had data-sharing partnership with at least four Chinese electronics companies with close ties to the Chinese government and were flagged by U.S. intelligence officials as a national security risk. It even Chinese telecom giant Huawei access to user data and then defended the move.
- Since 2019, Chinese state-run media has run ads on Facebook to U.S. audiences and said it would continue to accept them without independent oversight of the content.
- In 2016, Facebook even developed a content censorship tool in an attempt to enter the Chinese market. CEO Mark Zuckerberg defended the project as several employees working on it left the company. CEO Zuckerberg has even

tried to cultivate a relationship with Chinese president Xi Jinping, even reportedly one asking him to offer a Chinese name for his soon-to-be-born son.

- Google is also banned in China but has worked to build a presence in the country nonetheless, specifically around AI. IN 2017, Google opened an AI center in Shanghai. It also partnered with a leading AI research institution in China that also conducted AI research for the Chinese military. In June 2018, Google entered a two-year partnership with a university in Shanghai to research emerging technology in AI.
- In 2018, Google even attempted to create a censored search engine for use inside China but abandoned the project after backlash from human rights groups. Google also helped found a non-profit that helped the Chinese government conduct mass surveillance on 200 million of its citizens.
- Former TikTok employees confirmed that the boundaries between TikTok and its Chinese parent company ByteDance were “almost non-existent.” A Forbes review found that 300 TikTok and ByteDance employees had a history of for Chinese state media. Former ByteDance employees also alleged ByteDance instructed staff to push Pro-China content on English-language news app TopBuzz. In September 2022, a TikTok executive would not say if ByteDance would keep U.S. user data from the Chinese government or if ByteDance was influence by the Chinese government.

FACEBOOK, GOOGLE AND TIKTOK HAVE ALL FLAGRANTLY FAILED TO PROTECT USER PRIVACY AND CONSUMER DATA

FACEBOOK

- Facebook has long been a data privacy and collection nightmare for consumer advocates. Since 2007, it has faced numerous privacy scandals. In 2011, it settled with the Federal Trade Commission over allegations that it allowed private user information to be made public without warning. In the settlement Facebook agreed to undergo and independent privacy evaluation every other year for 20 years.
- In 2013, a Facebook bug exposed the email addresses and phone numbers of six million users to anyone who had some connection to the user or knew at least one piece of their contact information. In 2014, Facebook faced criticism for conducting a social science experiment on 500,000 randomly-selected users, raising ethical questions.
- Potentially most famous was Trump consultant Cambridge Analytica harvesting private information from more than 50 million Facebook users without their permission with the aim of exploiting huge parts of the American electorate in favor of Donald Trump’s presidential candidacy.
- In, Facebook software bugs allowed the exposure of personal information of nearly 50 million users and a Belgian court ordered the company to stop collecting private information about Belgian users across third-party sites by using cookies.
- In 2019, the Federal Trade Commission fined Facebook \$5 billion for violating its 2012 consent decree by being deceptive in how it protects consumer privacy and handles consumer data. The FTC alleged Facebook did not limit its sharing of third-party information with appl developers based on the settings it enabled for limiting the sharing of user personal information with their friends, did not require app users to request permission from a user’s friends to gather the friend data, and failed to implement a maintain a reasonable privacy program as mandated in 2012.
- It came to light in 2021 that Facebook refused to notify more than 530 million users whose personal data was stolen in a data breach sometime before August 2019. It was also reported that Facebook collected data through third-party apps and websites by providing business partners with tracking software to embed in their products.

GOOGLE

- Google has faced lawsuits and had to pay record fines for violating privacy laws. In 2019, Google and YouTube had to pay a record \$170 million to settle allegations that it violated a 1996 privacy law meant to protect children under the age of 13 online. In 2020, it faced a similar lawsuit in the United Kingdom.
- In 2018, it came to light that Google exposed the private data of almost 500,000 Google+ users between 2015 and 2018, but did not disclose the glitch in order to avoid regulatory scrutiny.

- Google has been sued multiple times over its location tracking policies. In 2020, a class action lawsuit in California alleged that Google continued to track users' location even after they switched off the location history features and while they were in "incognito mode." In 2021, Arizona's attorney general sued Google over its location tracking policies. In 2022, several state attorneys general sued Google for allegedly tracking users' locations after they believed the feature had been disabled.

TIKTOK

- A Cybersecurity firm found that TikTok's data collection practices were "overly intrusive" and suggested "the only reason this information has been gathered is for data harvesting." Another report found that TikTok's in-app browser included code that could monitor keystrokes and user clicks on websites, which made it possible to capture sensitive information.
- TikTok has also refused to commit to cutting off the flow of U.S. data to China. Internal TikTok audio revealed that Chinese parent company ByteDance employees repeatedly accessed non-public data on U.S. TikTok users despite the company's assurances about U.S.-based data storage. The Senate Intelligence Committee called for a Federal Trade Commission investigation after this revelation.

FACEBOOK, GOOGLE AND TIKTOK HAVE ALL BEEN FOUND TO BE DETRIMENTAL TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

FACEBOOK

- Facebook knew that Instagram was detrimental to young people's mental health, particularly teen girls, but said the opposite in public. Reports have found that Facebook and Instagram are intentionally designed to be addictive and lawmakers have called on Facebook to be more transparent about its mental health effects on teenagers.
- Internal Facebook research found "thirty-two percent of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse." It also found that Facebook made body image issues worse for one in three girls and knew that teens blamed Instagram for increases in anxiety and depression without being prompted.
- Wall Street Journal: "The features that Instagram identifies as most harmful to teens appear to be at the platform's core." Facebook researchers concluded some of the problems Instagram created with teen mental health were specific to Instagram and not found in social media more broadly.
- Despite acknowledging these problems, Facebook wanted to emulate TikTok in order to expand its base of young users and it did so by rolling out Instagram Reels and a "discovery engine" on Facebook.

GOOGLE

- Google's YouTube has failed to protect young children from disturbing or inappropriate content and in 2019 was fined a record \$170 million for violating a 1996 law meant to protect young children's privacy online. Like, Facebook, YouTube redesigned its algorithm in a way that made it an "addition engine."
- In 2015, two months after YouTube Kids launched, consumer advocates complained to the FTC about disturbing content geared towards children on the platform.
- In 2018, Parents and medical experts reported that people were manipulating content from well-known children's franchises and inserted inappropriate or disturbing content on YouTube, which has adverse effects on developing brains.
 - CNBC: "Mental health experts warn that YouTube is a growing source of anxiety and inappropriate sexual behavior among kids under the age of 13." Child psychotherapist said she has seen a rise in cases of children suffering from anxiety triggered by videos they've watched on YouTube and the children exhibited loss of appetite, sleeplessness, crying fits and fear.
- In 2021, the House Oversight and Reform subcommittee sent a letter to YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki seeking information on YouTube Kids and accusing it of not doing enough to protect children from potentially harmful content. The committee said a high volume of children's videos on YouTube smuggled hidden marketing and advertising with product placements by "children's influencers" and YouTube did not appear to be trying to prevent "such problematic marketing."

- Associated Press Headline: "Lawmakers Call YouTube Kids A 'Wasteland Of Vapid' Content"

TIKTOK

- Researcher found that TikTok was intentionally designed to be addictive and children and teenagers were particularly vulnerable to TikTok's short content format as a result of underdeveloped prefrontal cortexes, which directed decision-making and impulse control. As a result, experts have become concerned that it could add to the mental health crisis among young people.
 - A non-profit study found TikTok may surface potentially harmful content related to suicide and eating disorders within minutes of them creating an account.
- In January 2023, Seattle Public Schools sued TikTok, Facebook and YouTube, alleging the platforms exploited children and contributed to the youth mental health crisis. That lawsuit followed a December 2022 class action lawsuit of 1,200 American families who sued those three companies, alleging the companies knew they were negatively affecting children's mental health.

FACEBOOK, GOOGLE AND TIKTOK HAVE ALL FACED ALLEGATIONS THAT THEIR ALGORITHMS AND CONTENT MODERATION POLICIES SUPPRESS USERS FROM HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

FACEBOOK

- Facebook has long been accused of using AI that protects hate speech and suppresses content created by users from historically marginalized groups. Its content rules reportedly only detected broad groups of people, like "white men," but would not flag hate speech if a protected group contained a characteristic that isn't protected, like "female drivers" or "black children." For example, it allowed a Republican congressman's post about hunting down and killing "radicalized" Muslims to remain up but took down a Boston poet's post that said white people were racist.
 - ProPublica: Facebook's "hate-speech rules tend to favor elites and governments over grassroots activists and racial minorities...in so doing, they serve the business interests of the global company, which relies on national governments not to block its service to their citizens."
- Facebook also reportedly ignored internal research it conducts on racial bias in its content moderation program. Internal Facebook research found a new set of proposed rules meant to crack down on bullying made it 50 percent more likely that Black users' accounts were automatically disabled by the moderation system than white users. Researchers were reportedly told not to share their findings or conduct further research.
 - September 2021: Facebook had to apologize after a flaw in its AI software led to a video of black men being labeled as "primates."
- In 2021, Facebook parent company Meta said it would finally look into whether its platforms treated users differently based on their race. A Facebook civil rights audit found that it put free speech ahead of other values, which undermined its efforts to curb hate speech and voter suppression. It also found Facebook refused to take down posts by then-President Donald Trump that "clearly violated" the company's policies on hate and violent speech and voter suppression. It also found Facebook exempted politicians from third-party fact checking and was "far too reluctant to adopt strong rules to limit [voting] misinformation and voter suppression."

GOOGLE

- YouTube has been accused of unfairly targeting users from historically marginalized groups while allowing top creators to violate content moderation rules. 11 current and former YouTube content moderators reportedly said YouTube gave more lenient punishments to top video creators for violating rules that banned demeaning speech, bullying and other graphic content.
- In August 2019, a group of LGBTQ+ creators sued YouTube, alleging that it suppressed their content, restricted their ability to sell advertising and culled their subscribers. The creators alleged YouTube's software algorithms and human reviewers single out and remove content that features words common in the LGBTQ+ community, like "gay," "lesbian" or "bisexual."
- In June 2020, a group of Black creators sued YouTube alleging that the platform had systematically removed their content without explanation. Washington Post: "The suit is the latest allegation that YouTube's software, which can

automatically remove videos suspected of violating the company's policies, discriminates against certain groups, such as LGBT People."

- In December 2020, YouTube announced it would review its content moderation system after years of denying that its algorithms unfairly target users from historically marginalized groups.

TIKTOK

- TikTok admitted that at one point it had intentionally suppressed content from historically marginalized people under the guise of attempting to prevent cyberbullying. Internal documents reportedly showed TikTok instructing moderators to suppress posts created by "users deemed too ugly, poor or disabled for the platform."
- A Black TikTok creator reportedly tried to post in support of Black Lives Matter, but content containing the word "Black" was immediately flagged as "inappropriate content." The creator then reportedly tested the algorithm with white supremacist and neo-Nazi language and the app did not give him the same inappropriate content message.
- Several Jewish TikTok creators have also reportedly said that their content has been regularly removed from the platform for allegedly violating community guidelines.

TIKTOK, GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK ALL ALLOW DISINFORMATION TO SPREAD LARGELY UNCHECKED ON THEIR PLATFORMS

FACEBOOK HAS FAILED TO ADEQUATELY COMBAT THE SPREAD OF DISINFORMATION ON ITS PLATFORMS

WASHINGTON POST/PROPUBLICA INVESTIGATION FOUND FACEBOOK PLAYED A "CRITICAL ROLE" IN SPREAD OF DISINFORMATION AHEAD OF JANUARY 6TH

Washington Post And ProPublica Found Facebook Groups Had At Least 650,000 Posts Attacking The Legitimacy Of Joe Biden's Election As President Between Election Day And The January 6th Insurrection. "Facebook groups swelled with at least 650,000 posts attacking the legitimacy of Joe Biden's victory between Election Day and the Jan. 6 siege of the U.S. Capitol, with many calling for executions or other political violence, an investigation by ProPublica and The Washington Post has found. The barrage — averaging at least 10,000 posts a day, a scale not reported previously — turned the groups into incubators for the baseless claims supporters of President Donald Trump voiced as they stormed the Capitol, demanding he get a second term. Many posts portrayed Biden's election as the result of widespread fraud that required extraordinary action — including the use of force — to prevent the nation from falling into the hands of traitors." [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]

- **Washington Post/ProPublica: Facebook Groups "Averaging At Least 10,000 Posts A Day, A Scale Not Reported Previously — Turned The Groups Into Incubators For The Baseless Claims Supporters Of President Donald Trump Voiced As They Stormed The Capitol."** "Facebook groups swelled with at least 650,000 posts attacking the legitimacy of Joe Biden's victory between Election Day and the Jan. 6 siege of the U.S. Capitol, with many calling for executions or other political violence, an investigation by ProPublica and The Washington Post has found. The barrage — averaging at least 10,000 posts a day, a scale not reported previously — turned the groups into incubators for the baseless claims supporters of President Donald Trump voiced as they stormed the Capitol, demanding he get a second term. Many posts portrayed Biden's election as the result of widespread fraud that required extraordinary action — including the use of force — to prevent the nation from falling into the hands of traitors." [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]

Washington Post/ProPublica Reported Its Investigation "Provides The Clearest Evidence Yet That Facebook Played A Critical Role In The Spread Of False Narratives That Fomented The Violence Of Jan. 6." "Facebook executives have played down the company's role in the Jan. 6 attack and have resisted calls, including from its own Oversight Board, for a comprehensive internal investigation. The company also has yet to turn over all the information requested by the congressional committee studying the Jan. 6 attack, though it says it is negotiating with the committee. But the ProPublica-Post investigation, which analyzed millions of posts between Election Day and Jan. 6 and drew on internal company documents and interviews with former employees, provides the clearest evidence yet that Facebook played a critical role in the spread of false narratives that fomented the violence of Jan. 6." [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]

- **Facebook Efforts To Police 2020 Election Misinformation Were Ineffective And Started Too Late.** "But the ProPublica-Post investigation, which analyzed millions of posts between Election Day and Jan. 6 and drew on internal company documents and interviews with former employees, provides the clearest evidence yet that Facebook played a critical role in the spread of false narratives that fomented the violence of Jan. 6. Its efforts to police such content, the investigation also found, were ineffective and started too late to quell the surge of angry, hateful misinformation coursing through Facebook groups — some of it explicitly calling for violent confrontation with government officials, a theme that foreshadowed the storming of the Capitol that day amid clashes that left five people dead." [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]
- **Facebook Had Reportedly Established Task Force To Police Violent And Hateful Election Disinformation Ahead Of The 2020 Election, But Disbanded The Task Force And Rolled Back Enforcement Actions After The Election.** "Facebook has heavily promoted groups since CEO Mark Zuckerberg made them a strategic priority in 2017. But the ones focused on U.S. politics have become so toxic, say former Facebook employees, that the company established a task force, whose existence has not been previously reported, specifically to police them ahead of Election Day 2020. The task force removed hundreds of groups with violent or hateful content in the months before Nov. 3, 2020, according to the ProPublica-Post investigation. Yet shortly after the vote, Facebook dissolved the task force and rolled back other intensive enforcement measures. The results of that decision were clear in the data ProPublica and The Post examined: During the nine increasingly tense weeks that led up to Jan. 6, the groups were inundated with posts attacking the legitimacy of Biden's election, while the pace of removals noticeably slowed." [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]

Critics Said Facebook “Recognizes The Need For Enforcement Only After A Problem Has Caused Serious Damage, Often In The Form Of Real-World Mayhem And Violence.” "Critics and former employees say this also underscores a recurring issue with the platform since its founding in Zuckerberg's Harvard University dorm room in 2004: The company recognizes the need for enforcement only after a problem has caused serious damage, often in the form of real-world mayhem and violence." [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]

FACEBOOK ALLOWED PRESIDENT TRUMP TO USE ITS PLATFORM TO SPREAD LIES ABOUT THE 2020 ELECTION UP UNTIL IT BANNED HIM ON JANUARY 6TH

Former President Trump Used Facebook As A “Key Platform” For His Lies About The 2020 Election Right Up Until He Was Banned On January 6th. "Facebook officials have noted that more-extreme content flowed through smaller social media platforms in the buildup to the Capitol attack, including detailed planning on bringing guns or building gallows that day. But Trump also used Facebook as a key platform for his lies about the election right up until he was banned on Jan. 6. And Facebook's reliance on groups to drive engagement gave those lies unequalled reach. This combined with the sag in post-election enforcement to make Facebook a key vector for pushing the ideas that fueled violence on Jan. 6." [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]

September 2022: A New York University Report Faulted Facebook, TikTok And YouTube For Amplifying Trump's 2020 Election Lies. "A report released last month from New York University faulted Meta, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube for amplifying Trump's false statements about the 2020 election. The study cited inconsistent rules regarding misinformation as well as poor enforcement." [Fortune Magazine, [10/21/22](#)]

FACEBOOK ALLOWED ELECTION DENIERS TO SPREAD MISINFORMATION ON THEIR PROFILES AND DID “VIRTUALLY NOTHING” TO REFUTE THEIR CLAIMS

HEADLINE: “You Would Think That They Would Have Learned By Now.’ Facebook And Other Social Media Still Serve Up Election Lies Weeks Before Midterms” [Fortune Magazine, [10/21/22](#)]

Washington Post Found During The 2022 Midterm Election Cycle At Least 26 Candidates Posted Inaccurate Election Claims For Months And The Platform Had Done “Virtually Nothing” To Refute Them. "For years, Facebook and Twitter have pledged to fight falsehoods that could confuse users about America's electoral system by tagging questionable posts with accurate information about voting and removing rule-breaking misinformation. But this electoral cycle, at least 26 candidates have posted inaccurate election claims since April, but the platforms have done virtually nothing to refute them, according to a Washington Post review of the companies' misinformation labeling practices." [Washington Post, [11/6/22](#)]

- **Washington Post Found Posts By 17 Candidates Claiming The 2022 Election Would Be Rigged Or The Voting Systems Were Rigged In Some Way Went Unchallenged By Facebook.** "The Post reviewed thousands of social media posts on Twitter, Facebook and other, smaller platforms from nearly 300 GOP elected officials and candidates to evaluate how they have been portraying the upcoming vote over the past six months

and the platforms' reaction to that. The Post's review relied on a previous Post analysis from October that examined every Republican running for House, Senate or key statewide offices to see whether they had challenged or refused to accept the results of the 2020 election. That review found 17 candidates claiming that the 2022 election will be rigged or that aspects of the voting system are rigged, fraudulent or corrupt. Those claims were made in 40 posts on Facebook and Twitter. Those posts were left unchallenged by the social media companies, with no labeling from Facebook and Twitter, the review found." [Washington Post, [11/6/22](#)]

- **2022: Washington Post Found 18 Election Denier Republican Candidates Claimed The 2020 Election Was Rigged Or President Biden Was Illegitimate And Facebook Did Not Challenge The Posts.** "The Post's analysis also found that 18 election-denying GOP candidates recently claimed the 2020 election was rigged or that President Biden is illegitimate at least 52 times on these platforms. Those posts too went unchallenged by the social media companies, the review found." [Washington Post, [11/6/22](#)]

October 2022: A Facebook Search For "Election Fraud" Delivered An Article That Claimed Pennsylvania Children's Museum Workers Were Brainwashing Children To Accept Stolen Elections. "A Facebook search for the words 'election fraud' first delivers an article claiming that workers at a Pennsylvania children's museum are brainwashing children so they'll accept stolen elections. Facebook's second suggestion? A link to an article from a site called MAGA Underground that says Democrats are plotting to rig next month's midterms. 'You should still be mad as hell about the fraud that happened in 2020,' the article insists." [Fortune Magazine, [10/21/22](#)]

October 2022: A Facebook Search For "Election Fraud" Delivered An Article From "MAGA Underground" That Claimed Democrats Were Plotting To Rig The 2022 Midterm Elections. "A Facebook search for the words 'election fraud' first delivers an article claiming that workers at a Pennsylvania children's museum are brainwashing children so they'll accept stolen elections. Facebook's second suggestion? A link to an article from a site called MAGA Underground that says Democrats are plotting to rig next month's midterms. 'You should still be mad as hell about the fraud that happened in 2020,' the article insists." [Fortune Magazine, [10/21/22](#)]

IN THE LEAD-UP AND AFTER THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE, FACEBOOK ALLOWED RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AND MISINFORMATION TO SPREAD ON ITS PLATFORMS

IN THE LEAD-UP TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE, FACEBOOK FAILED TO LABEL 91 PERCENT OF PRO-RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA POSTS AS COMING FROM KREMLIN-RUN SOURCES

February 2022: Center For Countering Digital Hate Study Found That 91% Of Facebook Posts Containing Propaganda From Kremlin-Funded Media Did Not Carry Any Warning Labels About The Content Being From State-Run Media. "In a new study, CCDH researchers analysed a sample of 3,593 articles posted by RT.com (formerly Russia Today), Sputnik News, TASS and Ruptly—a social media content producer owned by RT.com. All of these outlets have been identified by the US State Department as 'Kremlin-funded media' and part of 'Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem' Researchers then used Facebook's own CrowdTangle tool to identify posts featuring the 100 most popular articles from this sample, to examine whether the platform applied warning labels stating that the content was from 'Russia state-controlled media'. This revealed that 91% of 1,304 posts containing articles from Kremlin-funded media did not carry any warning labels." [Center For Countering Digital Hate, [2/26/22](#)]

- **Facebook Announced In October 2019 That It Would Label State-Controlled Media On Their Pages And In Facebook's Ad Library, But The Vast Majority Of Posts Containing Content From Russia-State Media Are Not Covered By This Policy And Do Not Carry Labels.** "Facebook announced in October 2019 that it would start 'labelling state-controlled media on their Page and in our Ad Library,' as part of its measures to counter disinformation targeting US elections. But the vast majority of posts containing content from Russian state media, which are from a wider range of Pages and Groups, are not covered by this policy and do not carry labels." [Center For Countering Digital Hate, [2/26/22](#)]

Facebook Failed To Label Posts Containing An Article That Claimed Ukraine Planned A False Flag Incident Prepared By British-Trained Saboteurs. According to a Center for Countering Digital Hate study about Facebook failing to label 91 percent of posts containing pro-Russian propaganda as coming from a state-run source in the lead-up to the War in Ukraine: "Examples of articles that Facebook is failing to label in posts include claims that: Ukraine planned a 'false flag' incident 'prepared by British-trained saboteurs.'" [Center For Countering Digital Hate, [2/26/22](#)]

Facebook Failed To Label Posts Containing An Article That Claimed American Mercenaries Prepared A Provocation Using Chemical Weapons. According to a Center for Countering Digital Hate study about Facebook failing to label 91 percent of posts containing pro-Russian propaganda as coming from a state-run source in the lead-up to the

War in Ukraine: “Examples of articles that Facebook is failing to label in posts include claims that: ‘American mercenaries’ are ‘preparing a provocation using chemical weapons.’” [Center For Countering Digital Hate, [2/26/22](#)]

Facebook Failed To Label Posts Containing An Article That Claimed UK Intelligence Reports About A Ukraine Invasion Were “False Stories.” According to a Center for Countering Digital Hate study about Facebook failing to label 91 percent of posts containing pro-Russian propaganda as coming from a state-run source in the lead-up to the War in Ukraine: “Examples of articles that Facebook is failing to label in posts include claims that...UK intelligence reports about an invasion are ‘false stories.’” [Center For Countering Digital Hate, [2/26/22](#)]

Facebook Failed To Label Posts Containing An Article That Claimed Media Reports About Russian Troop Movements Were Hysteria. According to a Center for Countering Digital Hate study about Facebook failing to label 91 percent of posts containing pro-Russian propaganda as coming from a state-run source in the lead-up to the War in Ukraine: “Examples of articles that Facebook is failing to label in posts include claims that...Media reports about troop movements are ‘hysteria’” [Center For Countering Digital Hate, [2/26/22](#)]

Facebook Failed To Label Posts Containing An Article That Claimed War-Hungry Americans In Combat Clothing Were Operating In Ukraine. According to a Center for Countering Digital Hate study about Facebook failing to label 91 percent of posts containing pro-Russian propaganda as coming from a state-run source in the lead-up to the War in Ukraine: “Examples of articles that Facebook is failing to label in posts include claims that: ‘War-hungry armed Americans in combat clothing’ are operating in Ukraine.” [Center For Countering Digital Hate, [2/26/22](#)]

MARCH 2022: FACEBOOK ALLOWED A RUSSIAN-STATE CONTROLLED MEDIA FACEBOOK PAGE TO POST PRO-RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA

March 2022: CBS News Reported That Redfish, A Facebook Page Labeled As Russian-State Controlled Media, Built Up A U.S. And Liberal-Leaning Audience Of More Than 800K. “Redfish, a Facebook page that is labeled as Russian-state controlled media, has built up a mostly U.S. and liberal-leaning audience of more than 800,000 followers over the years. The page has in recent days posted anti-U.S. sentiment and sought to down play Russian’s invasion of Ukraine, calling it a “military operation” and dedicating multiple posts to highlighting anti-war protests across Russia. One Facebook post also used a picture of a map to highlight airstrikes in other parts of the world.” [CBS News, [3/1/22](#)]

- **Redfish Is Just Another Front For Kremlin’s Propaganda Division And Is Staffed By Former Employees Of The State- Run Outlet Russia Today.** “But, as the Daily Beast first exposed in 2018, the company is actually just another front for the Kremlin’s propaganda division. It’s staffed by former employees of the state-run outlet Russia Today (RT), which also broadcasts most of the company’s longer-form video output.” [Vice, [3/4/22](#)]

3/4/22: Vice Reported That Redfish Has Spent The “Last Week Racking Up Likes And Shares On Its Viral Content Designed To Undermine U.S. Support For Ukraine.” “A Kremlin-backed media outlet masquerading as a left-wing news source has spent the last week racking up likes and shares on its viral content designed to undermine U.S. support for Ukraine. If you’ve spent much time on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram over the last week consuming content about the war in Ukraine, you’ve probably come across a map showing locations of airstrikes around the world.” [Vice, [3/4/22](#)]

- **HEADLINE: “Millions Of Leftists Are Reposting Kremlin Misinformation By Mistake.”** [Vice, [3/4/22](#)]

Vice Reported That Facebook Labeled Redfish As Russian-Controlled Media, But “Redfish Continues To Thrive.” “The three platforms have all labeled Redfish as a “Russia state-controlled media” organization and users who click on a link from their Facebook page or try and share one of their posts, are greeted with the following message: “This link is from a publisher Facebook believes may be partially or wholly under the editorial control of the Russian government.” If you try to Like the page, Facebook tells you: “This Page has shared posts that violate our Community Standards.” But Redfish continues to thrive.” [Vice, [3/4/22](#)]

- **If Facebook Kicked Redfish Off Its Platforms, It Would Be Left To Rebuild On Platforms Like Telegram, Where It Has 2,500 Followers, Or TikTok, Where It Has A Few Hundred Followers.** “If the company is kicked off mainstream platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, where it has a cumulative total of 1.45 million followers, it will be left to rebuild its audience on platforms like Telegram, where it currently has only 2,500 followers. Redfish also just launched a new TikTok page, which has only a few hundred followers.” [Vice, [3/4/22](#)]

MARCH 2022: FACEBOOK ALLOWED CHINESE STATE MEDIA TO BUY ADS PUSHING PRO-RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AS RUSSIA INVADED UKRAINE

March 2022: Facebook Allowed Chinese State Broadcaster CGTN To Run On Its Platform, Target Global Users With Pro-Russian Talking Points. “Ads from Chinese state broadcaster CGTN are running on Meta-owned Facebook, targeting global users with pro-Russian talking points about Russia's invasion of Ukraine.” [Axios, [3/9/22](#)]

- **Despite Banning Ads From Russian State Media, Not Recommending Content From Such Outlets, Facebook Hasn't Stopped Pro-Russia Countries From Using Their State Channels To Buy Ads Pushing Pro-Russian Propaganda.** “Meta said last week it would ban ads from Russian state media and stop recommending content from such outlets. But that hasn't stopped countries close to Moscow, like China, from using their state channels to buy ads pushing a pro-Russian line.” [Axios, [3/9/22](#)]

March 2022: The Chinese State Broadcaster CGTN Placed At Least 21 Advertisements On Facebook, Most Featuring Newscasts About The War In Ukraine Or Media Briefings From Chinese Officials. “China Global TV Network, a China state-controlled outlet with nearly 118 million followers on Facebook and 2.4 million on Instagram, placed at least 21 advertisements on Facebook this month, most featuring newscasts about the war or media briefings from Chinese officials.” [Axios, [3/9/22](#)]

Facebook Declined To Specify How Much Chinese State Broadcaster Spent On Ads Or How Which Countries It Targeted. “Meta's advertising library, which is intended to provide a transparent record of all ads running on Meta's services, does not specify how much CGTN spent on the ads or which countries it targeted, and the company declined to provide that information.” [Axios, [3/9/22](#)]

- **Axios Reported Some Of The CGTN Ads Were Targeted At Users In Hong Kong, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan And Tajikistan.** “Meta's advertising library, which is intended to provide a transparent record of all ads running on Meta's services, does not specify how much CGTN spent on the ads or which countries it targeted, and the company declined to provide that information. Per a search, some of the ads are targeted at users in Hong Kong, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.” [Axios, [3/9/22](#)]

FACEBOOK ALLOWED SPANISH-LANGUAGE POSTS WITH PRO-RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AND MISINFORMATION TO SPREAD

February 2022: Facebook Took Steps To Demonetize Russian State-Run Social Media Accounts, Restrict Access To Russia-Funded RT And Sputnik In Europe. “Following Russia's invasion and pressure from politicians like Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), platforms have started to clamp down – with Facebook and YouTube demonetizing Russian state-run social media accounts and both platforms restricting access to Russia-funded RT and Sputnik in Europe.” [Politico, [3/1/22](#)]

March 2022: Politico Reported That There Were Still Numerous Spanish-Language Posts On Facebook Spreading Russian State Propaganda And Misinformation. “It's just one example of the numerous Spanish-language posts on Facebook and YouTube spreading Kremlin-based propaganda and misinformation, according to Jacobo Licona, a disinformation research lead at Equis Labs, a Latinx-focused polling and research firm.” [Politico, [3/1/22](#)]

March 2022: Politico Reported That Facebook Was Not Conducting Efforts To Stop Russian Propaganda And Misinformation In Majority Spanish-Speaking Countries, And Thus It “Continue[d] To Spread.” “Following Russia's invasion and pressure from politicians like Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), platforms have started to clamp down – with Facebook and YouTube demonetizing Russian state-run social media accounts and both platforms restricting access to Russia-funded RT and Sputnik in Europe. But similarly sweeping efforts aren't happening in majority Spanish-speaking countries – and Spanish-language Russian propaganda and misinformation continues to spread.” [Politico, [3/1/22](#)]

- **In The Week Before March 1, 2022, Spanish-Language RT Saw Double The Engagement With The Second-Most Shared Post Being Russia's Defense Minister Falsely Claiming Russia Did Not Carry Out Offensives In Ukraine.** “In the past week, the Facebook page for RT en Español, Russia's Spanish-language state-run news site, saw nearly double the engagement than its daily average in the past month. The second-most shared post is a Feb. 24 video (with over 125,000 views) from Russia's defense minister falsely claiming Russia did not carry out offensives against Ukraine, according to Licona's data collected from CrowdTangle, the Meta-owned social-media analytics firm.” [Politico, [3/1/22](#)]

FACEBOOK REFUSED TO TAKE DOWN POSTS, LIKE THOSE FROM A MEXICAN POLITICIAN, WHO DOWNPLAYED CONCERNS ABOUT RUSSIA'S IMPENDING INVASION OF UKRAINE

Two Weeks Before Russia Invaded Ukraine, Mexican Politician Claimed Russia's Impending Invasion Of Ukraine Was Russophobic Hysteria In The Western Media. “Two weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine, Aquiles Córdova

Morán, a Mexican politician with nearly 150,000 Facebook followers, took to Facebook to declare: “The entire Russophobic hysteria in the Western media is based on one blatant lie: Russia’s impending invasion of Ukraine.” [Politico, [3/1/22](#)]

- **Mexican Politician’s Post Claiming Spreading Disinformation About Impending Russian Invasion Of Ukraine Garnered More Than 41K Shares.** “The post garnered more than 41,000 shares, reports POLITICO tech policy reporter Rebecca Kern. It’s just one example of the numerous Spanish-language posts on Facebook and YouTube spreading Kremlin-based propaganda and misinformation, according to Jacobo Licona, a disinformation research lead at Equis Labs, a Latinx-focused polling and research firm.” [Politico, [3/1/22](#)]
- **Facebook Spokesperson Said Misleading Posts In Spanish Like The One From The Mexican Politician Would Stay Up, Just Have Reduced Distribution.** “Facebook spokesperson Kevin McAlister said the platform is removing Spanish-language content that could put people in imminent danger. But misleading posts – like Morán’s – stay up, but with reduced distribution.” [Politico, [3/1/22](#)]

FACEBOOK ALLOWED SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS AND ENTITIES TO MAINTAIN A SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE, THROUGH WHICH PRO-RUSSIAN FORCES TRIED TO RECRUIT FIGHTERS AND SOLICIT FUNDS

HEADLINE: "Pro-Russia Rebels Are Still Using Facebook To Recruit Fighters, Spread Propaganda." [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]

Following The Russian Invasion Of Ukraine, Whistleblower Complaints To The Justice And Treasury Departments Argued Facebook Violated Sanctions Law By Permitting Sanctioned Entities And Individuals To Maintain A Robust Facebook And Instagram Presence. “The multitude of sanctioned entities and individuals who, like Zaldostanov, maintain a robust Facebook and Instagram presence is the subject of a pair of new whistleblower complaints, filed in December and February, arguing that Facebook parent company Meta engaged in “reckless or willful” violations of U.S. sanctions law by permitting the accounts, according to redacted copies reviewed exclusively by The Washington Post.” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]

Facebook Allowing Sanctioned Entities And Individuals To Maintain A Presence On The Platform Allowed The Users To Cultivate Global Legitimacy And Spread Russian Propaganda. “The multitude of sanctioned entities and individuals who, like Zaldostanov, maintain a robust Facebook and Instagram presence is the subject of a pair of new whistleblower complaints, filed in December and February, arguing that Facebook parent company Meta engaged in ‘reckless or willful’ violations of U.S. sanctions law by permitting the accounts, according to redacted copies reviewed exclusively by The Washington Post. The existence of these accounts, the filings allege, allowed the users to cultivate global legitimacy and spread Russian propaganda.” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]

- **Posts From Sanctioned Individuals Were Being Used To Recruit Fighters And Solicit Funds To Back Pro-Russian Separatists, Which Could Violate US Sanctions Law.** “The complaints identify other posts appearing to recruit fighters and solicit funds to back pro-Russian separatists, which some legal experts suggest could violate U.S. sanctions laws, as well as Facebook’s rules.” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]
- **One Facebook Post From A Pro-Russian Rebel Called For Volunteers With Experience In “Combat And Armed Conflicts.”** “The existence of these accounts, the filings allege, allowed the users to cultivate global legitimacy and spread Russian propaganda. The complaints identify other posts appearing to recruit fighters and solicit funds to back pro-Russian separatists, which some legal experts suggest could violate U.S. sanctions laws, as well as Facebook’s rules. One post from a pro-Russian rebel called for volunteers with experience ‘in combat and armed conflicts.’ Another video sought donations for separatist forces to pay for ‘equipment for soldiers on the front.’ (The Post independently viewed this content on Facebook on Tuesday.)” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]
- **A Facebook Video Sought Donations For Separatist Forces To Pay For “Equipment For Soldiers On The Front.”** “The existence of these accounts, the filings allege, allowed the users to cultivate global legitimacy and spread Russian propaganda. The complaints identify other posts appearing to recruit fighters and solicit funds to back pro-Russian separatists, which some legal experts suggest could violate U.S. sanctions laws, as well as Facebook’s rules. One post from a pro-Russian rebel called for volunteers with experience ‘in combat and armed conflicts.’ Another video sought donations for separatist forces to pay for ‘equipment for soldiers on the front.’ (The Post independently viewed this content on Facebook on Tuesday.)” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]

FACEBOOK ALLOWED PRO-PUTIN BIKER GANG LEADER TO SPREAD PRO-RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AND MISINFORMATION ABOUT THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Aleksandr Zaldostanov, Leader Of A Pro-Putin Biker Gang, Used Facebook To Disparage The Ukrainian President And Push Falsehoods About The War. “In the days after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Aleksandr Zaldostanov, the leader of a pro-Putin biker gang, the Night Wolves, turned to Facebook to disparage the Ukrainian president and push falsehoods about the war. ‘Ukraine is a torn off piece of Russia, which is shrinking in pain and bleeding still,’ he posted on March 1 to more than 18,000 followers. ‘Russia did not start a war now!!!! Those who divided us started it!’” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]

- **Pro-Putin Biker Gang Leader Aleksandr Zaldostanov Has Been On The US Government Sanctions List Since 2014, Amid Allegations He Helped Russian Troops Confiscate Weapons During The Invasion Of Crimea.** “A former physician known by his nickname, “the Surgeon,” Zaldostanov has been on the U.S. government sanctions list since 2014, amid allegations that he helped Russian troops confiscate weapons during the country’s invasion of Crimea.” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]
- **U.S. Sanctions Blocked Pro-Putin Biker Gang Leader Aleksandr Zaldostanov From Dealing With U.S. Citizens, But On Facebook He “Maintains A Very Active Account, Posting Frequent Support Of Russia Since The Invasion.”** “The sanctions block Zaldostanov’s assets and generally prohibit U.S. citizens from ‘dealing’ with him, but on Facebook he maintains a very active account, posting frequent support of Russia since the invasion.” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]

FACEBOOK ALLOWED RUSSIAN-BACKED SEPARATIST LEADERS TO USE ITS PLATFORMS

Whistleblower Complaints Identified Instagram And Facebook Pages Linked To Dennis Pushilin And Leonid Pasechnik, Russian-Backed Leaders Of Separatist Enclaves In Eastern Ukraine Who Were Both On U.S. Sanctions Lists For Years. “The complaints were made to the Justice Department and the Treasury Department by Whistleblower Aid, a nonprofit organization representing Joohn Choe, a Facebook contractor hired to study extremism on the platforms after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. A parallel complaint filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission argues that the company misled investors. Choe is seeking whistleblower protections from the SEC. [...] Choe’s complaints identify Instagram and Facebook pages linked to Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik, Russian-backed leaders of separatist enclaves in eastern Ukraine, both on the U.S. sanctions lists for years.” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]

- **The Treasury Department Accused Russian-Backed Separatist Leader Dennis Pushilin Of Overseeing Uprisings Across The Eastern Region Of Ukraine And Accused Separatist Leader Leonid Pasechnik Of Smuggling Arms And Other Contraband To Russia.** “The Treasury Department accused Pushilin of overseeing uprisings across the eastern region of Ukraine and accused Pasechnik of smuggling arms and other contraband to Russia.” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]
- **Washington Post: “Both Men Played A Central Role In Putin’s Justification For His Invasion Of Ukraine.”** “Choe’s complaints identify Instagram and Facebook pages linked to Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik, Russian-backed leaders of separatist enclaves in eastern Ukraine, both on the U.S. sanctions lists for years. [...] Both men played a central role in Putin’s justification for his invasion of Ukraine. The Russian president claimed he was deploying ‘peacekeeping’ forces as he recognized the independence of these separatist regions, known as the Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics.” [Washington Post, [3/10/22](#)]

FACEBOOK HAS FAILED TO DISCOVER AND CRACKDOWN ON OTHER NATION-STATE DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

FACEBOOK PREVIOUSLY FAILED TO DISCOVER A RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN TO SPREAD HYPERPARTISAN CONTENT AND DISINFORMATION DURING THE 2016 ELECTION

Facebook Failed To Discover The Russia-Based Internet Research Agency Campaign To Spread Hyperpartisan Content And Disinformation During The 2016 Election. “Facebook didn’t discover a campaign by the Russia-based Internet Research Agency to spread hyperpartisan content and disinformation during the 2016 presidential election until months after Americans had voted. The company’s actions were late as well when Myanmar’s military leaders used Facebook to foment rapes, murders and forced migrations of minority Rohingya people. Facebook has apologized for failings in both cases.” [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]

FACEBOOK PREVIOUSLY FAILED TO CRACK DOWN ON MYANMAR MILITARY LEADERS WHO USED TO PLATFORM TO COMMIT VIOLENCE AGAIN THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE

Facebook Failed To Crack Down On Myanmar Military Leaders Who Used The Platform To Foment Rapes, Murders And Forced Migrations Of The Rohingya People. "Facebook didn't discover a campaign by the Russia-based Internet Research Agency to spread hyperpartisan content and disinformation during the 2016 presidential election until months after Americans had voted. The company's actions were late as well when Myanmar's military leaders used Facebook to foment rapes, murders and forced migrations of minority Rohingya people. Facebook has apologized for failings in both cases." [Washington Post, [1/4/22](#)]

FACEBOOK HAS ALLOWED CLIMATE DISINFORMATION TO SPREAD UNCHECKED ON ITS PLATFORMS

HEADLINE: "Climate Misinformation On Facebook 'Increasing Substantially', Study Says" [Guardian, [11/4/21](#)]

The Guardian: "The Scale Of Climate Misinformation On Facebook Is 'Staggering' And 'Increasing Quite Substantially', A New Analysis Of Thousands Of Posts Has Found." "The scale of climate misinformation on Facebook is 'staggering' and 'increasing quite substantially', a new analysis of thousands of posts has found. A report released on Thursday by the Real Facebook Oversight Board, an independent watchdog group, and the environmental non-profit Stop Funding Heat, analyzed a dataset of more than 195 Facebook pages and groups. Researchers found an estimated 45,000 posts downplaying Throughout 2021, Facebook Has Been A Major Purveyor Of Climate Disinformation – With 10 Far-Right Publishers Accounting For Nearly 70 Percent Of Climate Denial Content or denying the climate crisis, which have received a combined total of between 818,000 and 1.36m views." [Guardian, [11/4/21](#)]

- **Study Found That From 2020-2021, Climate Misinformation On Facebook Had Grown By 76.7 Percent.** "This 'rampant' spread of climate misinformation is getting substantially worse, said Sean Buchan, the research and partnerships manager for Stop Funding Heat. Interactions per post in its dataset have increased 76.7% in the past year, the report found. 'If it continues to increase at this rate, this can cause significant harm in the real world,' he said." [Guardian, [11/4/21](#)]

HEADLINE: "Breitbart Has Outsize Influence Over Climate Change Denial On Facebook, Report Says." [Washington Post, [11/2/21](#)]

- **Facebook Whistleblower Alleged Facebook Executive Joel Kaplan Proposed Exempting Breitbart From Misinformation Rules.** "A Facebook whistleblower in October told The Post on the condition of anonymity that Facebook executive Joel Kaplan, a former George W. Bush administration official, once defended a 'white list' that exempted Breitbart and other select publishers from Facebook's ordinary rules against falsehoods. Kaplan told The Post there has 'never been' a white list that exempts publishers, including Breitbart, from the company's misinformation rules." [Washington Post, 11/2/21]

HEADLINE: "Climate Denial Newspaper Flourishes On Facebook" [E&E News, [8/27/21](#)]

A Study Found 99 Percent Of False Climate Information On Stories About The February 2021 Texas Power Outages Went Unchecked By Facebook. "One recent study conducted by Friends of the Earth, an environmental organization, found about 99 percent of climate misinformation about the February 2021 power outages in Texas went unchecked. The study found misleading reports that wind turbines were at fault in the outage had run rampant on the social media platform. It also showed how such theories make their way from the fringes of Facebook to the mainstream, finding that though the windmill claim was debunked on local and major news outlets, the falsehoods became talking points for prominent politicians within four days. Facebook has rejected the study's findings, calling its characterization 'misleading.' A spokesman said Facebook had flagged dozens of inaccurate posts at that time and limited their distribution in newsfeeds. 'Many of the examples in the report cited as not having labels are simply positions that the organization disagrees with,' the spokesman said." [Mother Jones, [9/20/21](#)]

FACEBOOK REFUSED TO REMOVE CLIMATE MISINFORMATION EVEN THOUGH ITS ALGORITHM WAS PROMOTING IT

As Of January 2021, Facebook Displayed Climate Disinformation When Users Searched For Climate Change Information. "More than a year later, in January 2021, a Facebook employee noted a similar concern when searching for 'climate change' on the social network's video-on-demand service, Facebook Watch. The second result, according to the employee, was a video titled 'Climate Change Panic is not based on facts.' The video had been posted nine days earlier and already had 6.6 million views, according to another internal post. These examples were flagged by Facebook (FB) employees on the company's internal site, according to documents reviewed by CNN Business." [CNN, [11/7/21](#)]

Facebook Refused To Remove Climate Misinformation Even As It Pledged To Remove Misinformation About Covid, Vaccines, And Elections. “Facebook says it does ‘downrank,’ or reduce the spread, of climate change content that third-party fact checkers have labeled as false, and says ‘we take action’ against pages, groups or accounts that regularly share false claims about climate science. ‘We work with a global network of over 80 independent fact-checking organizations who review and rate content, including climate content, in more than 60 languages,’ the company said in blog post Monday. ‘When they rate content as false, we add a warning label and move it lower in News Feed so fewer people see it. We don’t allow ads that have been rated by one of our fact-checking partners.’ But it doesn’t outright remove climate change misinformation — something it does do for misinformation about Covid- 19, vaccines and elections.” [CNN, [11/7/21](#)]

- **Screenshots Provided By Whistleblower Frances Haugen Showed That An Employee On Facebook’s Message Board Argued That Climate Denial Content Should Not Be Suppressed.** “But as the October 2019 thread reveals, some within the company are also inclined to teach to the controversy. A response to the initial post reads: ‘It seems problematic to treat scientific consensus as the definitive truth for the purpose of suppressing content that disagrees with it. Scientific consensus is occasionally overturned.’ [...] ‘My immediate reaction is that this is the ‘skeptics as Galileo’ claim that climate deniers have sometimes appealed to in an effort to position themselves as the victim of authoritarian suppression of ideas,’ Geoffrey Supran, a Harvard research associate and director of Climate Accountability Communication at the Climate Social Science Network, said in an email.” [Gizmodo, [10/26/21](#)]

Facebook Reportedly Allowed Staff To Make Climate Misinformation Ineligible For Fact- Checking By Deeming The Misinformation To Be The “Opinion” Of The Poster Or Publisher. “But now Facebook has reportedly decided to allow its staffers to overrule the climate scientists and make any climate disinformation ineligible for fact-checking by deeming it ‘opinion.’ The organization that requested the change, the CO2 Coalition, is celebrating, E&E news reported on Monday. The group, which has close ties to the fossil fuel industry, says its views on climate change are increasingly ignored by the mainstream media. Now it plans to use Facebook to aggressively push climate misinformation on the public—without having to worry about fact checks from climate scientists. [...] The Wall Street Journal reported that, after receiving the complaint from the CO2 coalition, Facebook planned to create a new rule exempting ‘opinion pieces’ from fact-checking. But Facebook did not ‘respond to requests for comment’ on the new rule. No such rule has been publicly acknowledged by Facebook in the months that followed.” [Heated, [6/24/20](#)]

Facebook Reportedly Suppressed Information From A Climate Scientist Aiming To Correct Misinformation. “Evan Greer, deputy director at the digital rights organization Fight for the Future, said that Facebook Facebook’s Algorithm Promoted Climate Disinformation, And The Company Refused To Remove Misinformation faced other critiques when it comes to combating climate misinformation, noting that the platform had been accused of suppressing posts and information from reliable organizations in the field. In 2020 July, a prominent climate scientist said the platform was restricting her ability to research and factcheck posts containing climate misinformation. The company reportedly flagged the posts the scientist’s posts as ‘political.’ Facebook declined to comment further.” [Mother Jones, [9/20/21](#)]

GOOGLE’S YOUTUBE HAS ALLOWED MISINFORMATION TO SPREAD ON ITS PLATFORM

GOOGLE-OWNED YOUTUBE HAS BEEN SLOW TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST MISINFORMATION

ONE YEAR AFTER YOUTUBE CEO SAID INFORMATION FROM WIKIPEDIA WOULD APPEAR ON VIDEO SPREADING POPULAR CONSPIRACY THEORIES, SOME VIDEOS STILL LACKED THE ADDED CONTEXT

2018: YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki Announced That YouTube Would Add Information From Wikipedia To Videos About Popular Conspiracy Theories In An Attempt To Conquer Misinformation. “YouTube will add information from Wikipedia to videos about popular conspiracy theories to provide alternative viewpoints on controversial subjects, its CEO said today. YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki said that these text boxes, which the company is calling ‘information cues,’ would begin appearing on conspiracy-related videos within the next couple of weeks. Wojcicki, who spoke Tuesday evening at a panel at the South by Southwest Interactive festival in Austin, showed examples of information cues for videos about the moon landing and chemtrails. ‘When there are videos that are focused around something that’s a conspiracy — and we’re using a list of well-known internet conspiracies from Wikipedia — then we will show a companion unit of information from Wikipedia showing that here is information about the event,’ Wojcicki said.” [The Verge, [3/13/18](#)]

2019: YouTube Failed To Apply The Wikipedia Information To All Conspiracy Videos, Such As A Video Claiming Cancer Could Be Cured In Weeks. “The company has been applying the fix Wojcicki proposed a year ago. YouTube said the information panels from Wikipedia and other sources, which Wojcicki debuted in YouTube Has Been Slow To Act Against Misinformation – Even When Other Platforms Announced They Would Take Action A Year After YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki Announced That Information From Wikipedia Would Appear On Videos Spreading Popular Conspiracy Theories, Some Conspiracy Videos Were Missing The Added Context Austin, are now shown ‘tens of millions of times a week.’ A 2015 clip about vaccination from iHealthTube.com, a ‘natural health’ YouTube channel, is one of the videos that now sports a small gray box. The text links to a Wikipedia entry for the MMR vaccine. Moonshot CVE, the London-based anti-extremism firm, identified the channel as one of the most consistent generators of anti-vaccination theories on YouTube. But YouTube appears to be applying the fix only sporadically. One of iHealthTube.com’s most popular videos isn’t about vaccines. It’s a seven-minute clip titled: ‘Every cancer can be cured in weeks.’ While YouTube said it is no longer recommends the video to viewers, there is no Wikipedia entry on the page. It has been viewed over 7 million times.” [Bloomberg, [4/2/19](#)]

2020: YOUTUBE SAID IT WOULD COMBAT COVID-19 MISINFORMATION, BUT WAS SLOW TO REMOVE CHANNELS THAT SPREAD CONSPIRACY THEORIES

April 2020: YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki Said YouTube Removed Covid Misinformation While Serving 10 Billion Impressions Of Information From Public Health Organizations. “Of this latter point, Wojcicki told CNN that ‘we’ve had to update our policy numerous times associated with COVID-19.’ In addition to an evolving stance on monetization, this also includes more recently removing videos promoting miracle cures or other medically unsubstantiated claims, as well as any videos that contradict the World Health Organization (WHO)’s recommendations about social distancing. All told, YouTube has removed thousands of videos since the start of the crisis, while serving over 10 billion impressions of information from public health organizations. Wojcicki also told CNN’s Reliable Sources podcast that the company’s bid to clamp down on inappropriate content in recent years, precipitated by 2016’s ‘Adpocalypse’, enabled it to move more quickly in the face of the coronavirus crisis. ‘We’re not saying we’re done,’ she said. ‘We need to continue to work on our responsibility efforts and we will continue to do that over the next couple of years.’” [TubeFilter, [4/24/20](#)]

May 2021: YouTube Removed A Popular Anti-Covid Vaccine Channel That Had Been Spreading Misinformation Since October 2020 And Had More Than 1.5 Million Views. “A major online seller of disinformation about COVID-19 and its vaccines has had one of its channels removed from YouTube, days after an Associated Press investigation detailed how they work with other spreaders of false information to make money. The Truth About Vaccines YouTube channel was taken down this week, Ty and Charlene Bollinger said in a post Tuesday on the messaging app Telegram. The Bollingers’ channel had about 75,000 subscribers but some of its videos had a much broader reach, including one that had over 1.5 million views and featured Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., a prominent voice in the anti-vaccine movement. A message that greets visitors to the channel says the account was ‘terminated for violating YouTube’s Community Guidelines.’ YouTube said it terminated the account because it violated its policies barring ‘COVID-19 medical misinformation,’ and had three strikes in a 90-day period. YouTube started banning anti-vaccine misinformation in October.” [Associated Press, [5/19/21](#)]

2019: YOUTUBE CEO REFUSED TO REMOVE TRUMP CAMPAIGN AD PROVEN FALSE BECAUSE “POLITICIANS ARE ALWAYS ACCUSING THEIR OPPONENTS OF LYING”

2019: Wojcicki Said That A False Ad From Trump Would Not Be In Violation Of YouTube’s Policies Because “Politicians Are Always Accusing Their Opponents Of Lying.” Lesley Stahl: “Facebook is facing a lot of controversy because it refuses to take down a President Trump ad about Biden which is not true. Would you run that ad? Susan Wojcicki: So that is an ad that, um, right now would not be a violation of our policies. Lesley Stahl: Is it on YouTube right now?” Susan Wojcicki: “It has been on YouTube. Lesley Stahl: Can a politician lie on YouTube? Susan Wojcicki: For every single video I think it’s really important to look at it. Politicians are always accusing their opponents of lying. That said, it’s not okay to have technically manipulated content that would be misleading. For example, there was a video uploaded of Nancy Pelosi. It was slowed down just enough that it was unclear whether or not she was in her full capacity because she was speaking in a slower voice. The title of the video actually said drunk, had that in the title. And we removed that video. Lesley Stahl: How fast did you remove it? Susan Wojcicki: Very fast.” [CBS, 60 Minutes, [12/1/19](#) (video)]

A SEPTEMBER 2022 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY REPORT FAULTED YOUTUBE FOR AMPLIFYING TRUMP’S 2020 ELECTION LIES

September 2022: A New York University Report Faulted Facebook, TikTok And YouTube For Amplifying Trump’s 2020 Election Lies. “A report released last month from New York University faulted Meta, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube

for amplifying Trump's false statements about the 2020 election. The study cited inconsistent rules regarding misinformation as well as poor enforcement." [Fortune Magazine, [10/21/22](#)]

GOOGLE'S YOUTUBE ALLOWED THE KREMLIN TO PUSH MISLEADING RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE PROPAGANDA ABOUT UKRAINE FOR WEEKS AFTER THE INVASION

HEADLINE: "YouTube Promised To Label State-Sponsored Videos But Doesn't Always Do So" [ProPublica, [11/22/19](#)]

Grid News Investigation Found YouTube Was One Of The Most Effective Online Platforms From The Kremlin To Spread Toxic Misinformation To Justify Putin's Invasion Of Ukraine. "YouTube has become one of the most effective online platforms for the Kremlin to spread toxic misinformation to Russian speakers to justify President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, a Grid news investigation has found." [Grid, [3/9/22](#)]

3/9/22: Investigation Found YouTube Was Still Allowing The Kremlin To Use Its Platform To Push Misleading Russian-Language Propaganda About Ukraine, Even Though Invasion Occurred Feb. 24. "Since the start of the Russian invasion on Feb. 24, YouTube and other platforms have moved aggressively to block Russian state propaganda in English and other languages from reaching Western audiences. But the video streaming giant, which enjoys a massive audience inside Russia, continues to allow the Kremlin to use its platform to push misleading Russian-language propaganda about Ukraine, including claims of Nazism against the Ukrainian government that experts call 'morally repugnant.'" [Grid, [3/9/22](#)]

- **Grid News Reported That When YouTube Hosts Videos About Conspiracy-Rife Topics Like Covid Or 9/11, It Has Added Information Panels Linking To Credible Information Sources.** "YouTube appears to have handled Russian state propaganda differently from other misinformation-rich content. For example, when YouTube hosts videos about conspiracy-rife topics like covid-19 or the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the platform has added prominent information panels linking to credible information sources. But the Russian state "denazification" videos on YouTube don't contain a label adding information or context other than a link to the Wikipedia page for the broadcast outlets." [Grid, [3/9/22](#)]
- **YouTube Did Not Add Information Or Context Other Than A Link To The Wikipedia Page For The Kremlin-Run Broadcast Outlets Pushing Propaganda Videos On YouTube.** "YouTube appears to have handled Russian state propaganda differently from other misinformation-rich content. For example, when YouTube hosts videos about conspiracy-rife topics like covid-19 or the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the platform has added prominent information panels linking to credible information sources. But the Russian state 'denazification' videos on YouTube don't contain a label adding information or context other than a link to the Wikipedia page for the broadcast outlets." [Grid, [3/9/22](#)]

YOUTUBE REMOVED RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA TWO DAYS AFTER GRID NEWS REPORTED THAT IT ALLOWED THE MISINFORMATION TO SPREAD WEEKS AFTER RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

3/11/22: YouTube Removed Videos Discussed In Grid Article, Blocked Access To YouTube Channels Associated With Russian State-Funded Media Globally. "This story originally ran on Wednesday. YouTube on Friday removed the videos discussed in this article from its platform as it announced that it was 'blocking access to YouTube channels associated with Russian state-funded media globally.' 'Our Community Guidelines prohibit content denying, minimizing or trivializing well-documented violent events,' YouTube said in a statement. 'We are now removing content about Russia's invasion in Ukraine that violates this policy.'" [Grid, [3/9/22](#)]

YOUTUBE WAS SLOW TO ADDRESS THE FACT THAT ITS ALGORITHMS SPREAD AND FAVORED CLIMATE DISINFORMATION

HEADLINE: "YouTube's Algorithm Is Pushing Climate Misinformation Videos, And Their Creators Are Profiting From It" [Nieman Lab, [1/16/20](#)]

Google's Algorithm Put Climate Misinformation On Equal Footing With Videos Educating About Climate Science, Making It Harder For Climate Science Videos To Go Viral. "YouTube wasn't built to reward truth and clearly documented reliable sources. Google's video service has long put broadcasters like Brown and Moffit, who echo the scientific consensus, on equal footing with conspiracy theorists and global warming deniers. Both the skeptics and the

science-aligned creators could appear in a YouTube search result or get recommended to viewers or go viral. That approach let a swarm of footage that misrepresented or contradicted established science.” [Bloomberg, [1/8/21](#)]

2020 Study: YouTube Had 21 Million Views On Videos Promoting False And Misleading Climate Information, Many That YouTube’s Software Recommended To Its Audience. “Google’s video site lacked many of the news standards of broadcast and had a super-charged recommendation system designed, for many years, to show viewers like-minded videos. Avaaz, a nonprofit that promotes climate activism, released a report earlier last year detailing the abundance of climate inaccuracies on YouTube. The report identified over 21 million views on videos with false and misleading information, many that YouTube’s software recommended to its audience.” [Bloomberg, [1/8/21](#)]

- **YouTube Claimed Public Discourse That Involved Climate Change Denial Was Not The Same As Promoting Climate Denial.** “Another clip from Fox News—using the ever-present title ‘The truth about global warming’—features a guest from a think tank, which received oil industry funding, disputing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. ‘It’s not your run-of-the-mill type of disinformation,’ says Fadi Quran, campaigns director for Avaaz. ‘It’s so politicized.’ YouTube disputed Avaaz’s characterization of the Fox News clip. YouTube sees the video as an example of ‘public discourse on a political and scientific topic rather than misinformation,’ Shadloo, the spokesman, wrote in an email. For YouTube, there’s a difference between stating false claims and discussing false claims. The video giant relies on a mixture of machine systems and reviewers to separate the two, but doesn’t share much about its sorting process.” [Bloomberg, [1/8/21](#)]

YouTube’s Algorithm Kept Serving Climate Misinformation Content To Those Who Viewed Climate Misinformation Content. “Avaaz cites YouTube’s much-debated algorithms as the main culprit, given that its video recommendations account for 70 percent of what people watch on the platform. ‘For every climate misinformation video someone watches or likes, similar content is likely to show up in that person’s recommendations, thereby trapping the viewer in an online bubble of misinformation,’ the report says. It was a year ago that YouTube said it would change its algorithms to YouTube’s Algorithms Spread Climate Disinformation – Though The Company Took Steps In October 2021 To Partially Address The Issue recommend fewer conspiracy theory or misinformation videos, and anecdotal evidence has suggested at least some improvement. But these results, gathered in August 2019, suggest there’s still a ways to go.” [Nieman Lab, [1/16/20](#)]

OCTOBER 2021: GOOGLE FINALLY ANNOUNCED IT WOULD BAN ADS ON CONTENT, INCLUDING VIDEOS, THAT SPREAD CLIMATE DISINFORMATION

HEADLINE: "Google Bans Ads On Content, Including YouTube Videos, With False Claims About Climate Change." [New York Times, [10/7/21](#)]

October 2021: Google Announced That It Would Demonetize Climate Misinformation On YouTube. “Google said it will no longer display advertisements on YouTube videos and other content that promote inaccurate claims about climate change. The decision, by the company’s ads team, means that it will no longer permit websites or YouTube creators to earn advertising money via Google for content that ‘contradicts well-established scientific consensus around the existence and causes of climate change.’ And it will not allow ads that promote such views from appearing.” [New York Times, [10/7/21](#)]

TIKTOK ALLOWS DISINFORMATION TO SPREAD ON ITS PLATFORM AROUND THE WORLD

HEADLINE: "TikTok’s Search Engine Repeatedly Delivers Misinformation To Its Majority-Young User Base, Report Says." [CNN, [9/18/22](#)]

NewsGuard Research Found Nearly 20% Of Videos Provided In TikTok Search Results On Major News Topics Contained False Or Misleading Claims. “Researchers at NewsGuard, a journalism and technology tool that tracks online information, searched TikTok and Google this month for information on major news topics such as the 2020 presidential election, the Russia-Ukraine war and abortion to compare the misinformation delivered by their search engines. ... The researchers searched terms such as ‘mRNA vaccine’ and ‘2022 election,’ as well as controversial news topics like ‘Uvalde tx conspiracy.’ They analyzed 540 TikTok results and found that 105 videos, or 19.4%, contained false or misleading claims, the report says.” [CNN, [9/18/22](#)]

- **Disinformation Expert Observed That TikTok Offered “Very Permissible Space” For Bad Actors To Spread Viral Disinformation Content.** “TikTok’s filters, effects, and sounds have made creating viral and compelling content easier. While those tools can be used to make videos that are completely innocuous, they could also be weaponized by bad actors. ‘For creating misleading or false information and content, TikTok offers a very permissible space,’ Ciaran O’Connor, an analyst at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue who monitors

disinformation online, told Insider. 'Often [these tools] are used on videos of dance trends or cooking videos, but also they're used by disinformation practitioners to create content that is eye-catching.' [Business Insider, [5/8/22](#)]

NEW YORK TIMES: "THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION HAS LEFT TIKTOK STRUGGLING WITH MANY OF THE SAME KNOTTY FREE SPEECH AND MODERATION ISSUES THAT FACEBOOK AND TWITTER HAVE FACED, AND HAVE ADDRESSED WITH MIXED RESULTS"

New York Times: "The Spread Of Misinformation Has Left TikTok Struggling With Many Of The Same Knotty Free Speech And Moderation Issues That Facebook And Twitter Have Faced, And Have Addressed With Mixed Results, For Several Years." "Baseless conspiracy theories about certain voter fraud in November are widely viewed on TikTok, which globally has more than a billion active users each month. Users cannot search the #StopTheSteal hashtag, but #StopTheStealIII had accumulated nearly a million views until TikTok disabled the hashtag after being contacted by The New York Times. Some videos urged viewers to vote in November while citing debunked rumors raised during the congressional hearings into the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. TikTok posts have garnered thousands of views by claiming, without evidence, that predictions of a surge in Covid-19 infections this fall are an attempt to discourage in-person voting. The spread of misinformation has left TikTok struggling with many of the same knotty free speech and moderation issues that Facebook and Twitter have faced, and have addressed with mixed results, for several years." [New York Times, [8/14/22](#)]

TIKTOK'S REFUSAL TO SHARE DATA ABOUT VIDEO ORIGIN OR INSIGHT INTO ITS ALGORITHMS PRESENTED A MAJOR ROADBLOCK TO COMBATTING DISINFORMATION

New York Times: "Researchers Said That Misinformation Would Continue To Thrive On TikTok As Long As The Platform Refused To Release Data About The Origins Of Its Videos Or Share Insight Into Its Algorithms." "Researchers said that misinformation would continue to thrive on TikTok as long as the platform refused to release data about the origins of its videos or share insight into its algorithms. Last month, TikTok said it would offer some access to a version of its application programming interface, or A.P.I., this year, but it would not say whether it would do so before the midterms." [New York Times, [8/14/22](#)]

Wired: TikTok Has "Not Provided Tools To Enable Researchers To Study How Content Circulates On Its Platform, As Facebook And Twitter Have Done." "To date, TikTok has been less transparent and less thoroughly studied than Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. That's partly because it is a much younger service, and fewer researchers and journalists have scrutinized its workings. But TikTok has also not provided tools to enable researchers to study how content circulates on its platform, as Facebook and Twitter have done." [Wired, [5/4/22](#)]

Director Of NYU Center For Social Media And Politics On TikTok's Lack Of Transparency: "The Consensus Is That It's A Five-Alarm Fire [...] We Don't Have A Good Understanding Of What's Going On There." "Disinformation watchdogs have criticized the company for a lack of transparency over the origins of its videos and the effectiveness of its moderation practices. Experts have called for more tools to analyze the platform and its content — the kind of access that other companies provide. 'The consensus is that it's a five-alarm fire,' said Zeve Sanderson, the founding executive director at New York University's Center for Social Media and Politics. 'We don't have a good understanding of what's going on there,' he added." [New York Times, [8/23/22](#)]

Social Media Researcher Described TikTok As "Completely Opaque, And We Cannot Independently Assess Anything." "Filippo Menczer, an informatics and computer science professor and the director of the Observatory on Social Media at Indiana University, said he had proposed research collaborations to TikTok and had been told, 'Absolutely not.' 'At least with Facebook and Twitter, there is some level of transparency, but, in the case of TikTok, we have no clue,' he said. 'Without resources, without being able to access data, we don't know who gets suspended, what content gets taken down, whether they act on reports or what the criteria are. It's completely opaque, and we cannot independently assess anything.'" [New York Times, [8/14/22](#)]

TIKTOK HAS FAILED TO COMBAT MISINFORMATION ON ITS PLATFORM AHEAD OF CONSEQUENTIAL ELECTIONS IN THE U.S. AND AROUND THE WORLD

TIKTOK ALLOWED ELECTION MISINFORMATION TO SPREAD ON ITS PLATFORM AHEAD OF THE 2022 U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

HEADLINE: "On TikTok, Election Misinformation Thrives Ahead Of Midterms." [New York Times, [8/14/22](#)]

Researchers Said TikTok Was “Shaping Up To Be A Primary Incubator Of Baseless And Misleading Information, In Many Ways As Problematic As Facebook And Twitter” Ahead Of The U.S. 2022 Midterm Elections. "Ahead of the midterm elections this fall, TikTok is shaping up to be a primary incubator of baseless and misleading information, in many ways as problematic as Facebook and Twitter, say researchers who track online falsehoods. The same qualities that allow TikTok to fuel viral dance fads — the platform’s enormous reach, the short length of its videos, its powerful but poorly understood recommendation algorithm — can also make inaccurate claims difficult to contain." [New York Times, [8/14/22](#)]

New York Times Reported That Baseless Conspiracy Theories About Voter Fraud And Debunked Rumors About The January 6th Congressional Investigation Were Widely Viewed On TikTok. "Baseless conspiracy theories about certain voter fraud in November are widely viewed on TikTok, which globally has more than a billion active users each month. Users cannot search the #StopTheSteal hashtag, but #StopTheStealIII had accumulated nearly a million views until TikTok disabled the hashtag after being contacted by The New York Times. Some videos urged viewers to vote in November while citing debunked rumors raised during the congressional hearings into the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. TikTok posts have garnered thousands of views by claiming, without evidence, that predictions of a surge in Covid-19 infections this fall are an attempt to discourage in-person voting. The spread of misinformation has left TikTok struggling with many of the same knotty free speech and moderation issues that Facebook and Twitter have faced, and have addressed with mixed results, for several years." [New York Times, [8/14/22](#)]

September 2022: A New York University Report Faulted Facebook, TikTok And YouTube For Amplifying Trump’s 2020 Election Lies. "A report released last month from New York University faulted Meta, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube for amplifying Trump’s false statements about the 2020 election. The study cited inconsistent rules regarding misinformation as well as poor enforcement." [Fortune Magazine, [10/21/22](#)]

MISINFORMATION ON TIKTOK AFFECTED THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

HEADLINE: "The Spread Of Misinformation On TikTok May Have Impacted The Philippines' Presidential Election — And Researchers Are Keen To Learn What That Might Mean For Democracies Around The World." [Business Insider, [5/8/22](#)]

Buzzfeed News Reported That TikTok Was “Instrumental In The Spread Of Misinformation” In 2022 Philippine Presidential Election In Rewriting History On The Marcos Name. “The platform was recently named as being instrumental in the spread of misinformation in the run-up to last month’s presidential election in the Philippines, with Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., the son of dictator Ferdinand Marcos, securing a landslide victory after a successful campaign that essentially rewrote history and glamourized the Marcos name on TikTok.” [Buzzfeed News, [6/7/22](#)]

HEADLINE: "Dictator’s Son Uses TikTok To Lead In Philippine Election And Rewrite His Family’s Past." [Los Angeles Times, [5/5/22](#)]

POLITICAL MISINFORMATION RAN RAMPANT ON TIKTOK AHEAD OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN KENYA

HEADLINE: "Political Disinformation Is All Over Kenyan Tiktok." [Gizmodo, [6/8/22](#)]

Mozilla Foundation Researcher Said TikTok Is “Failing Its First Real Test” In Africa By Failing To Rein In Disinformation Ahead Of Kenyan Presidential Election. "TikTok has been ‘failing its first real test’ in Africa in recent weeks, Odanga Madung, a researcher for the nonprofit Mozilla Foundation, wrote in a report. The app struggled to tamp down on disinformation ahead of last week’s presidential election in Kenya. Mr. Madung cited a post on TikTok that included an altered image of one candidate holding a knife to his neck and wearing a blood-streaked shirt, with a caption that described him as a murderer. The post garnered more than half a million views before it was removed. ‘Rather than learn from the mistakes of more established platforms like Facebook and Twitter,’ Mr. Madung wrote, ‘TikTok is following in their footsteps.’" [New York Times, [8/14/22](#)]

HEADLINE: "TikTok Found To Fuel Disinformation, Political Tension In Kenya Ahead Of Elections." [TechCrunch, [6/7/22](#)]

MISINFORMATION ABOUT THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE RAN WILD ON TIKTOK

HEADLINE: "TikTok Sees A Surge Of Misleading Videos That Claim To Show The Invasion Of Ukraine." [NPR, [2/28/22](#)]

New York Times Reported The Russian Invasion Of Ukraine “Supersized The Issues Facing TikTok” With Misinformation Running Rampant Across The Platform. "But the war in Ukraine has supersized the issues facing TikTok, which has over one billion users globally....The very features that TikTok designed to help people share and record their own content have also made it easy to spread unverified videos across its platform. That includes TikTok's algorithm for its 'For You' page, which suggests videos based on what people have previously seen, liked or shared. Viewing one video with misinformation likely leads to more videos with misinformation being shown, Ms. Richards said. Another popular TikTok feature lets people easily reuse audio, which has enabled people to create lip-syncing scenes of popular movies or songs. But audio can be misused and taken out of context, Ms. Richards said. Over the last week, audio from a 2020 explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, was uploaded to several TikTok videos that claimed to show present-day Ukraine, according to The Times's review. In another instance, a soundtrack of gunfire that was uploaded to TikTok on Feb. 1 — before Russia's invasion — was later used in over 1,700 videos, many of which purported to be from the fighting in Ukraine, Ms. Richards said." [New York Times, [3/5/22](#)]

HEADLINE: "TikTok Is Gripped By The Violence And Misinformation Of Ukraine War." [New York Times, [3/5/22](#)]

HEADLINE: "Russian TikTok Influencers Are Being Paid To Spread Kremlin Propaganda." [VICE, [3/11/22](#)]

IN ADDITION TO SPREADING DISINFORMATION, GOOGLE, FACEBOOK AND TIKTOK PRESENT OTHER NATIONAL SECURITY RISKS TO THE UNITED STATES

GOOGLE, TIKTOK AND FACEBOOK'S ALGORITHMS AND POLICIES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE OF FAR-RIGHT NATIONALISM AND EXTREMISM IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD

FACEBOOK MANIPULATED ITS ALGORITHMS WHICH MADE THE PLATFORM ANGRIER, MOST SENSATIONALIST AND PRONE TO THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION

HEADLINE: "Facebook Tried To Make Its Platform A Healthier Place. It Got Angrier Instead." [Wall Street Journal, [9/15/21](#)]

2018: Facebook Changed Its News Feed Algorithm. "In the fall of 2018, Jonah Peretti, chief executive of online publisher BuzzFeed, emailed a top official at Facebook Inc. The most divisive content that publishers produced was going viral on the platform, he said, creating an incentive to produce more of it. He pointed to the success of a BuzzFeed post titled '21 Things That Almost All White People are Guilty of Saying,' which received 13,000 shares and 16,000 comments on Facebook, many from people criticizing BuzzFeed for writing it, and arguing with each other about race. Other content the company produced, from news videos to articles on self-care and animals, had trouble breaking through, he said. Mr. Peretti blamed a major overhaul Facebook had given to its News Feed algorithm earlier that year to boost 'meaningful social interactions,' or MSI, between friends and family, according to internal Facebook documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal that quote the email. BuzzFeed built its business on making content that would go viral on Facebook and other social media, so it had a vested interest in any algorithm changes that hurt its distribution. Still, Mr. Peretti's email touched a nerve." [Wall Street Journal, [9/15/21](#)]

- **Facebook Made The Change To Its News Feed Algorithm Partly Because User Engagement Was Declining.** "Within the company, though, staffers warned the change was having the opposite effect, the documents show. It was making Facebook's platform an angrier place. Company researchers discovered that publishers and political parties were reorienting their posts toward outrage and sensationalism. That tactic produced high levels of comments and reactions that translated into success on Facebook. [...] Facebook employees also discussed the company's other, less publicized motive for making the change: Users had begun to interact less with the platform, a worrisome trend, the documents show." [Wall Street Journal, [9/15/21](#)]

Facebook Data Scientist: "Our Approach Has Had Unhealthy Side Effects On Important Slices Of Public Content, Such As Politics And News... This Is An Increasing Liability." "Facebook's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, said the aim of the algorithm change was to strengthen bonds between users and to improve their well-being. Facebook would encourage people to interact more with friends and family and spend less time passively consuming professionally produced content, which research suggested was harmful to their mental health. Within the company, though, staffers warned the change was having the opposite effect, the documents show. It was making Facebook's platform an angrier place. Company researchers discovered that publishers and political parties were reorienting their posts toward outrage and sensationalism. That tactic produced high levels of comments and reactions that translated into success on Facebook. 'Our approach has had unhealthy side effects on important slices of public content, such as politics and news,'

wrote a team of data scientists, flagging Mr. Peretti's complaints, in a memo reviewed by the Journal. 'This is an increasing liability,' one of them wrote in a later memo." [Wall Street Journal, [9/15/21](#)]

HEADLINE: "Five Points For Anger, One For A 'Like': How Facebook's Formula Fostered Rage And Misinformation." [Washington Post, [10/26/21](#)]

Facebook Weighted "Angry" Emoji Reactions Five-Times More Heavily Than "Likes," Leading To A Spread Of Misinformation, Toxicity, And Low-Quality News. "Five years ago, Facebook gave its users five new ways to react to a post in their news feed beyond the iconic 'like' thumbs-up: 'love,' 'haha,' 'wow,' 'sad' and 'angry.' Behind the scenes, Facebook programmed the algorithm that decides what people see in their news feeds to use the reaction emoji as signals to push more emotional and provocative content — including content likely to make them angry. Starting in 2017, Facebook's ranking algorithm treated emoji reactions as five times more valuable than 'likes,' internal documents reveal. The theory was simple: Posts that prompted lots of reaction emoji tended to keep users more engaged, and keeping users engaged was the key to Facebook's business. [...] The warning proved prescient. The company's data scientists confirmed in 2019 that posts that sparked angry reaction emoji were disproportionately likely to include misinformation, toxicity and low-quality news. [...] Anger was the least used of the six emoji reactions, at 429 million clicks per week, compared with 63 billion likes and 11 billion 'love' reactions, according to a 2020 document. Facebook's data scientists found that angry reactions were 'much more frequent' on problematic posts: 'civic low quality news, civic misinfo, civic toxicity, health misinfo, and health antivax content,' according to a document from 2019. Its research that year showed the angry reaction was 'being weaponized' by political figures." [Washington Post, [10/26/21](#)]

- **Facebook Whistleblower Frances Haugen: "Anger And Hate Is The Easiest Way To Grow On Facebook."** "Anger and hate is the easiest way to grow on Facebook,' Haugen told the British Parliament on Monday. In several cases, the documents show Facebook employees on its 'integrity' teams raising flags about the human costs of specific elements of the ranking system — warnings that executives sometimes heeded and other times seemingly brushed aside. Employees evaluated and debated the importance of anger in society: Anger is a 'core human emotion,' one staffer wrote, while another pointed out that anger-generating posts might be essential to protest movements against corrupt regimes." [Washington Post, [10/26/21](#)]

FACEBOOK KNEW ITS NEW ALGORITHM MADE THE PLATFORM AN ANGRIER PLACE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION, BUT RESISTED CHANGING IT BECAUSE IT DIDN'T WANT TO REDUCE USER ENGAGEMENT

Facebook's Internal Research Found Changes To The News Feed Algorithm Made Facebook An Angrier Place, With Publishers Incentivized To Post Sensationalist Content That Produced Outrage. "Facebook's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, said the aim of the algorithm change was to strengthen bonds between users and to improve their well-being. Facebook would encourage people to interact more with friends and family and spend less time passively consuming professionally produced content, which research suggested was harmful to their mental health. Within the company, though, staffers warned the change was having the opposite effect, the documents show. It was making Facebook's platform an angrier place. Company researchers discovered that publishers and political parties were reorienting their posts toward outrage and sensationalism. That tactic produced high levels of comments and reactions that translated into success on Facebook. 'Our approach has had unhealthy side effects on important slices of public content, such as politics and news,' wrote a team of data scientists, flagging Mr. Peretti's complaints, in a memo reviewed by the Journal. 'This is an increasing liability,' one of them wrote in a later memo. They concluded that the new algorithm's heavy weighting of reshared material in its News Feed made the angry voices louder. 'Misinformation, toxicity, and violent content are inordinately prevalent among reshares,' researchers noted in internal memos." [Wall Street Journal, [9/15/21](#)]

- **Facebook Internal Research: "Misinformation, Toxicity, And Violent Content Are Inordinately Prevalent Among Reshares."** "Facebook's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, said the aim of the algorithm change was to strengthen bonds between users and to improve their well-being. Facebook would encourage people to interact more with friends and family and spend less time passively consuming professionally produced content, which research suggested was harmful to their mental health. Within the company, though, staffers warned the change was having the opposite effect, the documents show. It was making Facebook's platform an angrier place. Company researchers discovered that publishers and political parties were reorienting their posts toward outrage and sensationalism. That tactic produced high levels of comments and reactions that translated into success on Facebook. 'Our approach has had unhealthy side effects on important slices of public content, such as politics and news,' wrote a team of data scientists, flagging Mr. Peretti's complaints, in a memo reviewed by the Journal. 'This is an increasing liability,' one of them wrote in a later memo. They concluded that the new algorithm's heavy weighting of reshared material in its News Feed made the angry voices louder. 'Misinformation, toxicity, and violent content are inordinately prevalent among reshares,' researchers noted in internal memos." [Wall Street Journal, [9/15/21](#)]

Facebook Resisted Changing Harmful Attributes To Its News Feed Algorithm, Concerned The Changes Risked Reducing User Engagement. “In an interview, Lars Backstrom, a Facebook vice president of engineering, said that any algorithm risks promoting content that is objectionable or harmful to some users. ‘Like any optimization, there’s going to be some ways that it gets exploited or taken advantage of,’ he said. ‘That’s why we have an integrity team that is trying to track those down and figure out how to mitigate them as efficiently as possible.’ Data scientists on that integrity team—whose job is to improve the quality and trustworthiness of content on the platform—worked on a number of potential changes to curb the tendency of the overhauled algorithm to reward outrage and lies. Mr. Zuckerberg resisted some of the proposed fixes, the documents show, because he was worried they might hurt the company’s other objective—making users engage more with Facebook. Anna Stepanov, who led a team addressing those issues, presented Mr. Zuckerberg with several proposed changes meant to address the proliferation of false and divisive content on the platform, according to an April 2020 internal memo she wrote about the briefing. One such change would have taken away a boost the algorithm gave to content most likely to be reshared by long chains of users. ‘Mark doesn’t think we could go broad’ with the change, she wrote to colleagues after the meeting. Mr. Zuckerberg said he was open to testing the approach, she said, but ‘We wouldn’t launch if there was a material tradeoff with MSI impact.’ Last month, nearly a year and a half after Ms. Stepanov said Mr. Zuckerberg nixed the idea of broadly incorporating a similar fix, Facebook announced it was ‘gradually expanding some tests to put less emphasis on signals such as how likely someone is to comment or share political content.’” [Wall Street Journal, [9/15/21](#)]

FACEBOOK EXEMPTED HIGH-PROFILE ACCOUNTS FROM NORMAL CONTENT MODERATION PROCESSES ALLOWING THEM TO POST HARASSMENT AND INCITEMENTS TO VIOLENCE

HEADLINE “Facebook Says Its Rules Apply To All. Company Documents Reveal A Secret Elite That’s Exempt.”
[Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]

Facebook’s Cross Check Program Protected High-Profile Accounts From The Company’s Normal Enforcement Process, Effectively Allowing Them To Post Content Containing Harassment Or Incitements To Violence. “The program, known as ‘cross check’ or ‘XCheck,’ was initially intended as a quality-control measure for actions taken against high-profile accounts, including celebrities, politicians and journalists. Today, it shields millions of VIP users from the company’s normal enforcement process, the documents show. Some users are ‘whitelisted’—rendered immune from enforcement actions—while others are allowed to post rule-violating material pending Facebook employee reviews that often never come. At times, the documents show, XCheck has protected public figures whose posts contain harassment or incitement to violence, violations that would typically lead to sanctions for regular users. In 2019, it allowed international soccer star Neymar to show nude photos of a woman, who had accused him of rape, to tens of millions of his fans before the content was removed by Facebook. Whitelisted accounts shared inflammatory claims that Facebook’s fact checkers deemed false, including that vaccines are deadly, that Hillary Clinton had covered up ‘pedophile rings,’ and that then-President Donald Trump had called all refugees seeking asylum ‘animals,’ according to the documents.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]

- **Soccer Star Neymar Was Allowed To Post Non-Consensual “Revenge Porn” Image For More Than Day Due To His Cross Checked Account.** “After a woman accused Neymar of rape in 2019, he posted Facebook and Instagram videos defending himself—and showing viewers his WhatsApp correspondence with his accuser, which included her name and nude photos of her. He accused the woman of extorting him. Facebook’s standard procedure for handling the posting of ‘nonconsensual intimate imagery’ is simple: Delete it. But Neymar was protected by XCheck. For more than a day, the system blocked Facebook’s moderators from removing the video. An internal review of the incident found that 56 million Facebook and Instagram users saw what Facebook described in a separate document as ‘revenge porn,’ exposing the woman to what an employee referred to in the review as abuse from other users. ‘This included the video being reposted more than 6,000 times, bullying and harassment about her character,’ the review found. Facebook’s operational guidelines stipulate that not only should unauthorized nude photos be deleted, but that people who post them should have their accounts deleted. ‘After escalating the case to leadership,’ the review said, ‘we decided to leave Neymar’s accounts active, a departure from our usual ‘one strike’ profile disable policy.’ Neymar denied the rape allegation, and no charges were filed against him. The woman was charged by Brazilian authorities with slander, extortion and fraud. The first two charges were dropped, and she was acquitted of the third. A spokesperson for Neymar said the athlete adheres to Facebook’s rules and declined to comment further.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]
- **Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg Advocated For Neutrality In Content Moderation Decisions: “We Do Not Want To Become The Arbiters Of Truth.”** “Mr. Zuckerberg has consistently framed his position on how to moderate controversial content as one of principled neutrality. ‘We do not want to become the arbiters of truth,’ he told Congress in a hearing last year. Facebook’s special enforcement system for VIP users arose from the fact that its human and automated content- enforcement systems regularly flub calls.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]

A 2019 Internal Review Found Facebook’s Favoritism Of Cross Checked Accounts “Not Publicly Defensible,” Adding “We Are Not Actually Doing What We Say Publicly.” “In private, the company has built a system that has exempted high-profile users from some or all of its rules, according to company documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. The program, known as ‘cross check’ or ‘XCheck,’ was initially intended as a quality-control measure for actions taken against high-profile accounts, including celebrities, politicians and journalists. [...] A 2019 internal review of Facebook’s whitelisting practices, marked attorney-client privileged, found favoritism to those users to be both widespread and ‘not publicly defensible.’ ‘We are not actually doing what we say we do publicly,’ said the confidential review. It called the company’s actions ‘a breach of trust’ and added: ‘Unlike the rest of our community, these people can violate our standards without any consequences.’” [Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]

- **A 2019 Internal Facebook Review Found Facebook’s Cross Checked Accounts “Can Violate Our Standards Without Any Consequences.”** “In private, the company has built a system that has exempted high-profile users from some or all of its rules, according to company documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. The program, known as ‘cross check’ or ‘XCheck,’ was initially intended as a quality-control measure for actions taken against high-profile accounts, including celebrities, politicians and journalists. [...] A 2019 internal review of Facebook’s whitelisting practices, marked attorney-client privileged, found favoritism to those users to be both widespread and ‘not publicly defensible.’ ‘We are not actually doing what we say we do publicly,’ said the confidential review. It called the company’s actions ‘a breach of trust’ and added: ‘Unlike the rest of our community, these people can violate our standards without any consequences.’” [Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]
- **Wall Street Journal: “In Practice, Most Of The Content Flagged By The XCheck System Faced No Subsequent Review.”** “The program covers pretty much anyone regularly in the media or who has a substantial online following, including film stars, cable talk-show hosts, academics and online personalities with large followings. On Instagram, XCheck covers accounts for popular animal influencers including ‘Doug the Pug.’ In practice, most of the content flagged by the XCheck system faced no subsequent review, the documents show. Even when the company does review the material, enforcement delays like the one on Neymar’s posts mean content that should have been prohibited can spread to large audiences. Last year, XCheck allowed posts that violated its rules to be viewed at least 16.4 billion times, before later being removed, according to a summary of the program in late December.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]

Wall Street Journal: Facebook Knew Of Its Cross Check Problems, But Often Misled The Public And Its Own Oversight Board About How Much It Knew. “The documents that describe XCheck are part of an extensive array of internal Facebook communications reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. They show that Facebook knows, in acute detail, that its platforms are riddled with flaws that cause harm, often in ways only the company fully understands. Moreover, the documents show, Facebook often lacks the will or the ability to address them. [...] They offer perhaps the clearest picture thus far of how broadly Facebook’s problems are known inside the company, up to the CEO himself. And when Facebook speaks publicly about many of these issues, to lawmakers, regulators and, in the case of Xcheck, its own Oversight Board, it often provides misleading or partial answers, masking how much it knows.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]

Facebook Had No Plans To Hold High-Profile Users To The Same Content Moderation Standards As Everyone Else. “‘VIP lists continue to grow,’ a product manager on Facebook’s Mistakes Prevention Team wrote. She announced a plan to ‘stop the bleeding’ by blocking Facebook employees’ ability to enroll new users in XCheck. One potential solution remains off the table: holding high-profile users to the same standards as everyone else. ‘We do not have systems built out to do that extra diligence for all integrity actions that can occur for a VIP,’ her memo said. To avoid making mistakes that might anger influential users, she noted, Facebook would instruct reviewers to take a gentle approach. ‘We will index to assuming good intent in our review flows and lean into ‘innocent until proven guilty,’ ‘ she wrote.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/13/21](#)]

YOUTUBE’S ALGORITHM HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE OF FAR-RIGHT NATIONALISM IN THE UNITED STATES AND ABROAD

YOUTUBE REDESIGNED ITS ALGORITHM TO MAXIMIZE VIEWS

2012: YouTube Re-Wrote Its Algorithm To Maximize Views, Which YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki Cheered When She Took Over In 2014. “In 2012, YouTube concluded that the more people watched, the more ads it could run—and that recommending videos, alongside a clip or after one was finished, was the best way to keep eyes on the site. So YouTube, then run by Google veteran Salar Kamangar, set a company-wide objective to reach one billion hours of viewing a day, and rewrote its recommendation engine to maximize for that goal. When Wojcicki took over, in 2014, YouTube was a third of the way to the goal, she recalled in investor John Doerr’s 2018 book Measure What Matters. ‘They thought it would break the internet! But it seemed to me that such a clear and measurable objective would energize

people, and I cheered them on,' Wojcicki told Doerr. 'The billion hours of daily watch time gave our tech people a North Star.' By October, 2016, YouTube hit its goal." [Bloomberg, [4/2/19](#)]

2015: YouTube Put In Place A New Algorithm, Criticized By A Computer Scientist As An "Addiction Engine" In Order To Drive More Views To Its Content And Make Profits. "That same fall, three Google coders published a paper on the ways YouTube's recommendation system worked with its mountain of freshly uploaded footage. They outlined how YouTube's neural network, an AI system that mimics the human brain, could better predict what a viewer would watch next. The research notes how the AI can try to suppress 'clickbait,' videos that lied about their subject and lost viewer's attention. [...] Rather than revamp its recommendation engine, YouTube doubled down. The neural network described in the 2016 research went into effect in YouTube recommendations starting in 2015. By the measures available, it has achieved its goal of keeping people on YouTube. 'It's an addiction engine,' said Francis Irving, a computer scientist who has written critically about YouTube's AI system. Irving said he has raised these concerns with YouTube staff. They responded with incredulity, or an indication that they had no incentives to change how its software worked, he said. 'It's not a disastrous failed algorithm,' Irving added. 'It works well for a lot of people, and it makes a lot of money.'" [Bloomberg, [4/2/19](#)]

YOUTUBE REPORTEDLY IGNORED WARNINGS ABOUT THE RISE OF HATE SPEECH AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES ON THE PLATFORM

HEADLINE: "YouTube Executives Ignored Warnings, Letting Toxic Videos Run Rampant" [Bloomberg, [4/2/19](#)]

2019: Employees Said That YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki Ignored Warnings About Hate Speech And Conspiracies On YouTube And That She Viewed It As Not Her Job To Fix The Issues. "In recent years, scores of people inside YouTube and Google, its owner, raised concerns about the mass of false, incendiary and toxic content that the world's largest video site surfaced and spread. One employee wanted to flag troubling videos, which fell just short of the hate speech rules, and stop recommending them to viewers. Another wanted to track these videos in a spreadsheet to chart their popularity. A third, fretful of the spread of 'alt-right' video bloggers, created an internal vertical that showed just how popular they were. Each time they got the same basic response: Don't rock the boat. The company spent years chasing one business goal above others: "Engagement," a measure of the views, time spent and interactions with online videos. Conversations with over twenty people who work at, or recently left, YouTube reveal a corporate leadership unable or unwilling to act on these internal alarms for fear of throttling engagement. Wojcicki would 'never put her fingers on the scale,' said one person who worked for her. 'Her view was, 'My job is to run the company, not deal with this.' This person, like others who spoke to Bloomberg News, asked not to be identified because of a worry of retaliation." [Bloomberg, [4/2/19](#)]

BIG CORPORATIONS HAVE EVEN PULLED ADVERTISING FROM YOUTUBE HAVE THEIR ADS APPEARED NEXT TO OFFENSIVE CONTENT

2017: Blue Chip Companies Pulled Advertising From YouTube After Their Ads Appeared Next To Offensive Content. "But the technology underpinning YouTube's advertising business has come under intense scrutiny in recent days, with AT&T, Johnson & Johnson and other deep-pocketed marketers announcing that they would pull their ads from the service. Their reason: The automated system in which ads are bought and placed online has too often resulted in brands appearing next to offensive material on YouTube such as hate speech. On Thursday, the ride-sharing service Lyft became the latest example, removing their ads after they appeared next to videos from a racist skinhead group. 'This is beyond offensive,' a Lyft spokesman, Scott Coriell, said. 'As soon as we learned of it, we pulled our advertising on YouTube.'" [New York Times, [3/23/17](#)]

YOUTUBE ALLOWED VIDEOS PERPETRATING THE BIG LIE TO PROLIFERATE ON ITS PLATFORM FOLLOWING THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

HEADLINE: "YouTube Election Loophole Lets Some False Trump-Win Videos Spread." [Bloomberg, [11/10/20](#)]

Following The November 2020 Election, YouTube Allowed Content Seeking To Undermine The Legitimacy Of The Election To Proliferate On Its Platform. "A few months ago, YouTube released a detailed policy prohibiting manipulated media and voter suppression, but left one gap: Expressing views on the election is OK. The result has been an onslaught of videos aiming to undermine the legitimacy of the election, according to online media and political researchers. Some of this material has spread on other social networks. And several clips, like the two OANN videos on Monday, ran advertisements, profiting from a Google policy that lets content framed as news reporting or talk shows cash in. 'YouTube saw the inevitable writing on the wall that its platform would be used to spread false claims of election victory and it shrugged,' said Evelyn Douek, a lecturer at Harvard Law School who studies content moderation and the regulation of online speech." [Bloomberg, [11/10/20](#)]

HEADLINE: "Election Misinformation Continues Staying Up On YouTube." [New York Times, [11/10/20](#)]

HEADLINE: "YouTube Says It Wants 'Discussion' Of Election Results, Even When It's Been Debunked" [NBC News, [11/13/20](#)]

NBC News: "YouTube Is Facing Growing Criticism For Allowing Election Misinformation After It Decided Not To Remove Or Individually Fact-Check Videos That Spread Unfounded Conspiracy Theories Alleging Voter Fraud."
"YouTube is facing growing criticism for allowing election misinformation after it decided not to remove or individually fact-check videos that spread unfounded conspiracy theories alleging voter fraud. While all internet platforms are struggling to contain the volume of misinformation since voting ended last week — and all have been criticized to some degree by researchers for their handling of the situation — YouTube has staked out a position that is less aggressive than its social media competitors, most notably Facebook and Twitter. YouTube said before the election that it wouldn't allow videos that encourage 'interference in the democratic process,' but now, as state officials are working to certify vote tallies, the company said it wants to give users room for 'discussion of election results,' even when that discussion is based on debunked information." [NBC News, [11/13/20](#)]

LAWMAKERS GRILLED GOOGLE ABOUT THE ROLE IT MAY HAVE PLAYED IN THE LEAD-UP TO THE JANUARY 6TH INSURRECTION

The House Select Committee Investigating January 6th Subpoenaed Alphabet For Records Related To The Insurrection. "The House select committee investigating the Capitol attack subpoenaed Twitter, Meta, Alphabet and Reddit on Thursday for records related to the 6 January insurrection, as it seeks to review data that could potentially incriminate the Trump White House. Facebook is part of Meta and Google is part of Alphabet. The move by the select committee suggests the panel is ramping up its examination of social media posts and messages that could provide evidentiary evidence as to who might have been in contact with the Trump White House around 6 January, one source said." [The Guardian, [1/13/22](#)]

Lawmakers Grilled Google's CEO Over The Connection Between Online Disinformation And The Insurrection At The Capitol. "Lawmakers grilled the leaders of Facebook, Google and Twitter on Thursday about the connection between online disinformation and the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol, causing Twitter's chief executive to publicly admit for the first time that his product had played a role in the events that left five people dead. When a Democratic lawmaker asked the executives to answer with a 'yes' or a 'no' whether the platforms bore some responsibility for the misinformation that had contributed to the riot, Jack Dorsey of Twitter said yes.' Neither Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook nor Sundar Pichai of Google would answer the question directly." [New York Times, [3/25/21](#)]

YOUTUBE'S ALGORITHM CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE IN SUPPORT FOR FAR-RIGHT POLITICIANS IN BRAZIL

HEADLINE: "How YouTube Radicalized Brazil" [New York Times, [8/11/19](#)]

Amid Reporting That YouTube's Algorithm And Autoplay Features Were Causing A Rise In Support for Far Right Politicians In Brazil, Advocates Pointed Out That YouTube Was Negatively Impacting Democracies. "Danah Boyd, founder of the think tank Data & Society, attributed the disruption in Brazil to YouTube's unrelenting push for viewer engagement, and the revenues it generates. Though corruption scandals and a deep recession had already devastated Brazil's political establishment and left many Brazilians ready for a break with the status quo, Ms. Boyd called YouTube's impact a worrying indication of the platform's growing impact on democracies worldwide. 'This is happening everywhere,' she said. Maurício Martins, the local vice president of Mr. Bolsonaro's party in Niterói, credited 'most' of the party's recruitment to YouTube — including his own. He was killing time on the site one day, he recalled, when the platform showed him a video by a right-wing blogger. He watched out of curiosity. It showed him another, and then another. 'Before that, I didn't have an ideological political background,' Mr. Martins said. YouTube's auto-playing recommendations, he declared, were 'my political education.' 'It was like that with everyone,' he said." [New York Times, [8/11/19](#)]

TIKTOK'S ALGORITHM MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO COMBAT FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM ONLINE

HEADLINE: "TikTok's Algorithm Is Sending Users Down A Far-Right Extremist Rabbit Hole" [Mashable, [3/28/21](#)]

A Media Matters Investigation Found Even Though Videos Promoting Far-Right Extremist Groups Were Banned On TikTok Its Algorithm Continued To Push Accounts That Promoted Those Groups And Movements Anyway.
"TikTok's recommendations algorithm is sending users down a far right wing rabbit hole QAnon. Patriot Party, Oath

Keepers. Three Percenters. Videos promoting these far right wing movements are all banned on TikTok. Yet the viral app's recommendations algorithm keeps pushing accounts that promote these groups and movements anyway. According to a new report by the media monitoring group Media Matters for America, TikTok's user recommendation algorithm is pushing its users toward accounts with the kinds of far-right views that are supposedly prohibited on the platform. The report found that TikTok is still promoting content from QAnon, Patriot Party, Oath Keepers, and Three Percenters accounts on the platform's 'For You' page. The For You page is where TikTok's algorithm sends content it believes each specific user would like." [Mashable, [3/28/21](#)]

- **Researcher Said TikTok's Immediacy And Reach Have Made The App "Unusually Effective" At Spreading Misinformation And Viral Lies.** "But its immediacy and reach have also made the app unusually effective at spreading misinformation and viral lies, said Abbie Richards, a researcher at the Accelerationism Research Consortium, which studies extremism and the internet. 'Misinformation will go viral more easily ... and the algorithm assists in the building of that hive mind,' Richards said. 'There's money to be made through building a following.' Unlike on YouTube or Facebook, where bogus claims and conspiracy theories are displayed as long videos or text reports, TikTok can deliver them via personalized videos that don't require people manually resharing them to build an audience, Richards said. The app's vertical-video monologues, she said, often feel 'like you're FaceTiming with someone.'" [Washington Post, [10/21/22](#)]

Researcher Said Lies On TikTok Could Spread To Millions Before They Are Taken Down Or Corrected And People Attempting To Question Them Often End Up Belittled Or Ignored. "Lies on TikTok can spread to millions before they're taken down or corrected, Richards said, and people attempting to question the dominant narrative often end up belittled or ignored. TikTok's mob mentality ends up reinforcing narratives as they gain more views, as some creators saw during the high-profile defamation trial between actors Johnny Depp and Amber Heard, when their attempts to defend Heard or fact-check claims in the case were met with relentless harassment and attack." [Washington Post, [10/21/22](#)]

HEADLINE: "TikTok Played A Key Role In MAGA Radicalization" [Wired, [3/3/21](#)]

HEADLINE: "From Transphobia To Ted Kaczynski: How TikTok's Algorithm Enables Far-Right Self-Radicalization" [Business Insider, [12/12/21](#)]

A U.S. Homeland Security Briefing Said Domestic Extremists Used TikTok To Spread Information About Bringing Guns To The January 6th Insurrection And Accessing The White House Through Tunnels. "DOMESTIC EXTREMISTS USED TikTok, an app best known for short videos and viral dances, to spread information about bringing guns to the January 6th Capitol attack and accessing the White House through tunnels, according to a Homeland Security briefing. The briefing document reveals domestic extremists have been using the social media platform since October of 2019 to 'recruit adherents, promote violence, and disseminate tactical guidance for use in various terrorist or criminal activities.' Although TikTok has moderation, the briefing says, both foreign and domestic extremists 'are exploiting standard features of the platform to evade the platform's detection and removal efforts.'" [Rolling Stone, [9/16/21](#)]

JUST A HANDFUL OF BIG TECH COMPANIES, INCLUDING FACEBOOK AND GOOGLE, HAD AMASSED NEARLY ALL POWER OVER UTILIZATION AND ADVANCEMENT OF THE GLOBAL TECH INFRASTRUCTURE

MOST INTERNET ACCESS AND CONTENT WAS DRIVEN THROUGH GOOGLE, WHICH WAS ALSO CONSIDERED THE "MOST IMPORTANT AI COMPANY IN THE WORLD"

A MAJORITY OF INTERNET USERS HAD USED A GOOGLE PRODUCT IN SOME FORM, WHETHER IT WAS THE 1.8 BILLION GMAIL USERS OR 84 PERCENT OF PHONES USING ANDROID

Google Processed Over 40,000 Search Queries Every Second. "Google processes over 40,000 search queries every second. (Source: Ardor SEO) With the massive number of active users on Google's search engine every day, it really isn't a surprise this number is so high. Essentially, this amounts to over 3.5 billion searches per day and a whopping 1.2 trillion searches per year. Additionally, the search engine handles a mammoth amount of desktop searches. In April of 2019, Google managed 88.47% of desktop searches. This data is according to the Google search statistics from Internet Live Stats and the most recent SEO statistics." [Website Builder, [3/20/21](#)]

Google's Mobile Software, Android, Was Used In 84.8% Of All Mobile Phones Across The Globe. "Android was the world's leading smartphone platform in 2020, with an 84.8% market share. (Source: IDC) Android smartphones have

spread really fast, and most companies now use the operating system when making phones. According to the recent stats about Google from IDC, Google's Android had the largest market share in 2020." [Website Builder, 3/20/21]

In 2020, There Were Over 1.8 Billion Active Gmail Users. "How many active Gmail users are there? There are over 1.8 billion active Gmail users in 2020. That's one Gmail user for every five people around the globe. This makes Gmail one of the most popular email platforms in the world." [FinancesOnline.com, Accessed [11/8/21](#)]

- **In 2015, Google Hosted Nearly 100 Huawei Engineers At The Company's Mountain View Campus And Gave The Team Their Own Dedicated Lab.** "During the development of one its Nexus phones back in 2015, Google hosted nearly 100 Huawei engineers at its Mountain View, California headquarters and gave the team from China its own dedicated lab, according to a report by The Information[1] on Monday. While sales for the Nexus 6b smartphone failed to meet internal goals, Huawei sources said that what they learned from working with Google helped the Chinese firm produce better phones in the future. As a part of the same report, The Information also said that Google was working with the Chinese manufacturing giant to license its Google Assistant technology for a Huawei-branded smart speaker." [Business Insider, 7/29/19]
- **Huawei Said Working With Google Would Help Them Produce Better Phones In The Future.** "During the development of one its Nexus phones back in 2015, Google hosted nearly 100 Huawei engineers at its Mountain View, California headquarters and gave the team from China its own dedicated lab, according to a report by The Information[1] on Monday. While sales for the Nexus 6b smartphone failed to meet internal goals, Huawei sources said that what they learned from working with Google helped the Chinese firm produce better phones in the future. As a part of the same report, The Information also said that Google was working with the Chinese manufacturing giant to license its Google Assistant technology for a Huawei-branded smart speaker." [Business Insider, 7/29/19]

GOOGLE WAS A WORLD LEADER IN AI RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TO THE POINT THEY WERE CALLED "THE MOST IMPORTANT AI COMPANY IN THE WORLD"

Google / Alphabet's AI Labs Did Twice As Much Research Than Any Other Company Or University On AI. "No company is more dominant in AI than Alphabet, parent company of Google and its AI-focused sister lab DeepMind. Combined, the companies' labs accounted for twice as much of the research published at AI conferences like NeurIPS as any other company or university. Their wide-ranging study has led them to defeat every existing chess player, translate over 100 languages, and probe the most minute mysteries of our biology. And in the first week of December, the conglomerate illustrated how the river of corporate money flowing into AI in all those fields can come at the cost of lower standards for transparency and accountability." [Quartz, [12/12/20](#)]

- **Google CEO Sundar Pichai Said AI Was "One Of The Most Important Things Humanity [Was] Working On."** "Google CEO Sundar Pichai says artificial intelligence is going to have a bigger impact on the world than some of the most ubiquitous innovations in history. 'AI is one of the most important things humanity is working on. It is more profound than, I dunno, electricity or fire,' says Pichai, speaking at a town hall event in San Francisco in January. A number of very notable tech leaders have made bold statements about the potential of artificial intelligence." [CNBC, [2/1/18](#)]
- **Google CEO Sundar Pichai Said AI Was "More Profound Than [...] Electricity Or Fire."** "Google CEO Sundar Pichai says artificial intelligence is going to have a bigger impact on the world than some of the most ubiquitous innovations in history. 'AI is one of the most important things humanity is working on. It is more profound than, I dunno, electricity or fire,' says Pichai, speaking at a town hall event in San Francisco in January. A number of very notable tech leaders have made bold statements about the potential of artificial intelligence." [CNBC, [2/1/18](#)]

Tech Crunch: Google Was "The Most Important AI Company In The World." "In its 2017 unclassified budget, the Pentagon spent about \$7.4 billion on AI, big data and cloud-computing, a tiny fraction of America's overall expenditure on AI. Clearly, winning the future will not be a government activity alone, but there is a big role government can and must play. Even though Google remains the most important AI company in the world, the U.S. still crucially lacks a coordinated national strategy on AI and emerging digital technologies." [Tech Crunch, [4/15/18](#)]

SINCE 2007, GOOGLE HAS BOUGHT AT LEAST 30 AI COMPANIES

Since 2007, Google Bought At Least 30 AI Companies. "You may laugh Pichai's comparison off as the usual Silicon Valley hype, but the company's dealmakers aren't laughing. Since 2007, Google has bought at least 30 AI companies working on everything from image recognition to more human-sounding computer voices—more than any of its Big Tech peers. One of these acquisitions, DeepMind, which Google bought in 2014, just announced that it can predict the structure

of every protein in the human body from the DNA of cells—an achievement that could fire up numerous breakthroughs in biological and medical research.” [Foreign Policy, [8/11/21](#)]

75 PERCENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE OCCURRED THROUGH FACEBOOK OR ONE OF ITS SUBSIDIARIES

AS OF JUNE 2020, ROUGHLY TWO BILLION PEOPLE INTERACTED WITH FACEBOOK EVERY DAY

As Of June 2020, Facebook And Its Subsidiaries Like Instagram Accounted For 75% Of All Time Spent On Social Media. “Facebook and its subsidiaries, including Instagram, account for 75% of all time spent on social media. In a new paper, Yale SOM economist Fiona Scott Morton writes that the company took control of the industry by misleading consumers and buying up rivals. Scott Morton is the founder and director of the Thurman Arnold Project at Yale, which performs and disseminates research on antitrust policy and enforcement.” [Yale Insights, [6/18/20](#)]

As Of June 2020, Roughly Two Billion People Interacted With Facebook Every Day. “Roughly 2 billion humans interact with Facebook every day. People across the globe use it to share pictures, catch up with friends and family, post news stories, and debate politics and art. Non-profits build Facebook pages through which to deploy messaging and organize advocacy; schools post official calendars and sports schedules. People with interests as varied as ‘dry-aged beef,’ ‘rock-gardening,’ and ‘bow hunting,’ gather in Facebook sponsored virtual groups.” [Roadmap For An Antitrust Case Against Facebook, [June 2020](#)]

FACEBOOK POSSESS THE PERSONAL DATA OF MORE THAN 25 PERCENT OF THE WORLD’S POPULATION: 2.8 BILLION PEOPLE

Facebook Possessed The Personal Data Of More Than A Quarter Of The World’s Population, Nearly 2.8 Billion Out Of 7.9 Billion People. “Since 2016, Facebook has become interested in election integrity here and elsewhere; the company has thirty-five thousand security specialists in total, many of whom function almost like a U.N. team of elections observers. But its early mantra, “Company over country,” still resonates. The company is, in important respects, larger than any country. Facebook possesses the personal data of more than a quarter of the world’s people, 2.8 billion out of 7.9 billion, and governs the flow of information among them. The number of Facebook users is about the size of the populations of China and India combined.” [New Yorker, [7/26/21](#)]

HALF OF ALL DIGITAL AD SPENDING WENT TO FACEBOOK AND ITS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Facebook Captured 50% Of All Revenue In The Digital Ad Market. “Another way to think of Facebook’s market share is to examine the percentage of digital ad dollars that are spent to buy advertising on Facebook. The CMA finds that Facebook captures up to 50% of revenue in the digital display market. Excluding money earned on ads shown in search engine results, Facebook (including Instagram) generated almost half of all digital advertising revenues, an amount larger than the entirety of what is called the “open display” market, meaning ads placed on websites such as ESPN.com or Time.com, and more than four times larger than the amount earned by YouTube, its next largest competitor.” [Roadmap For An Antitrust Case Against Facebook, [June 2020](#)]

BIG TECH’S COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF AI IS AT THE CENTER OF THE RISK THEY POSE TO U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

AI WAS EXPECTED TO BE AT THE HEART OF THE FUTURE OF WARFARE, ESPIONAGE AND NATIONAL DEFENSE

Top U.S. National Security Officials Believe That AI And Machine Learning Would Have Transformative Implications For Cybersecurity And Cyberwar. “Cybersecurity & Cyberwar Top U.S. national security officials believe that AI and machine learning will have transformative implications for cybersecurity and cyberwar. In response to a question from the authors of this report, Admiral Mike Rogers, the Director of the National Security Agency and Commander of U.S. Cyber command, said ‘Artificial Intelligence and machine learning—I would argue—is foundational to the future of cybersecurity [...] We have got to work our way through how we’re going to deal with this. It is not the if, it’s only the when to me.’ We agree.” [Harvard Belfer Center, Artificial Intelligence And National Security, [July 2017](#)]

Congressional Research Service: “AI Is Likely To Be A Key Technology In Advancing Military Cyber Operations.”

“AI is likely to be a key technology in advancing military cyber operations. In his 2016 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Commander of U.S. Cyber Command Admiral Michael Rogers stated that relying on human intelligence alone in cyberspace is “a losing strategy.” He later clarified this point, stating, ‘If you can’t get some level of AI or machine learning with the volume of activity you’re trying to understand when you’re defending networks ... you are always behind the power curve.’” [Congressional Research Service, [11/10/20](#)]

Harvard’s Belfer Center Said AI Would Represent “A Key Aspect Of Future Military Power.” “Comparing the technology profile of AI with the prior technology cases, we find that it has the potential to be a worst-case scenario. Proper precautions might alter this profile in the future, but current trends suggest a uniquely difficult challenge. At a minimum, AI will dramatically augment autonomous weapons and espionage capabilities and will represent a key aspect of future military power. • Speculative but plausible hypotheses suggest that General AI and especially superintelligence systems pose a potentially existential threat to humanity.” [Harvard Belfer Center, Artificial Intelligence And National Security, [July 2017](#)]

- **Harvard’s Belfer Center: “AI Will Dramatically Augment Autonomous Weapons And Espionage Capabilities.”** “Comparing the technology profile of AI with the prior technology cases, we find that it has the potential to be a worst-case scenario. Proper precautions might alter this profile in the future, but current trends suggest a uniquely difficult challenge. At a minimum, AI will dramatically augment autonomous weapons and espionage capabilities and will represent a key aspect of future military power. • Speculative but plausible hypotheses suggest that General AI and especially superintelligence systems pose a potentially existential threat to humanity.” [Harvard Belfer Center, Artificial Intelligence And National Security, [July 2017](#)]

Center For Security And Emerging Technology: “Artificial Intelligence Stands To Play An Important Role In America’s Defense Posture In The Coming Decades.” “Artificial intelligence stands to play an important role in America’s defense posture in the coming decades. The Pentagon has identified AI as a critical technology for national security and is working to acquire and deploy AI tools across its operations. Unlike with many prior defense technologies, the private sector currently drives the development of AI.” [Georgetown University, Center For Security And Emerging Technology, Antitrust And AI, [May 2020](#)]

Center For Security And Emerging Technology: Big Tech Had “Relatively Little Incentive To Work With The Pentagon” Because They Had “Financial Independence From U.S. Government Contracts.” “Are smaller vendors more likely to produce innovative products that meet the Pentagon’s needs? Tech industry leaders have relatively little incentive to work with the Pentagon. Their companies already enjoy broad customer bases and financial independence from U.S. government contracts—including those at the Pentagon.⁸⁹ DOD contracts involve applying AI technology in varied, complex, and operationally demanding environments with low tolerance for error.” [Georgetown University, Center For Security And Emerging Technology, Antitrust And AI, [May 2020](#)]

DESPITE THIS EXPECTED VITAL ROLE IN AMERICA’S DEFENSE POSTURE, U.S. DEFENSE AGENCIES WERE SHUT OUT FROM BIG TECH’S AI DEVELOPMENTS...

With Commercial Companies Leading AI Development, The DoD Was Forced To Adapt Big Tech’s AI Innovations For Military Applications After The Fact. “Indeed, DARPA’s Strategic Computing Initiative invested over \$1 billion between 1983 and 1993 to develop the field of artificial intelligence for military applications, but the initiative was ultimately cancelled due to slower-than-anticipated progress.¹⁰³ Today, commercial companies— sometimes building on past government-funded research—are leading AI development, with DOD later adapting their tools for military applications.” [Congressional Research Service, [11/10/20](#)]

- **The DoD Said Their AI Strategy Required “Close Collaboration With Academia And Non-Traditional Centers Of Innovation In The Commercial Sector.”** “We cannot succeed alone; this undertaking requires the skill and commitment of those in government, close collaboration with academia and non-traditional centers of innovation in the commercial sector, and strong cohesion among international allies and partners. We must learn from others to help us achieve the fullest understanding of the potential of AI, and we must lead in responsibly developing and using these powerful technologies, in accordance with the law and our values.” [Defense.Gov, Summary Of The 2018 DoD AI Strategy, [2018](#)]

The DoD Warned That China And Russia’s Investments In AI For Military Purposes “Threaten[d] To Erode Our Technological And Operational Advantages.” “Other nations, particularly China and Russia, are making significant investments in AI for military purposes, including in applications that raise questions regarding international norms and human rights. These investments threaten to erode our technological and operational advantages and destabilize the free and open international order. The United States, together with its allies and partners, must adopt AI to maintain its

strategic position, prevail on future battlefields, and safeguard this order.” [Defense.Gov, Summary Of The 2018 DoD AI Strategy, [2018](#)]

...AND AMERICAN INTERESTS MAY NOT BE PART OF BIG TECH’S CALCULUS BECAUSE THEIR FIRST PRIORITY WAS TO MAKE A PROFIT

Columbia University Asserted That With Privately Companies Largely Focused On Profit, “American Interests [Were] Not Part Of The Calculus” Of How They Did Business. “Second, the willingness of these companies to adhere to Chinese preferences calls into question whether global firms can be trusted when they seek to lobby or influence the U.S. government. In the mid-twentieth century, the maxim ‘what’s good for General Motors is good for America’ suggested a link between corporate success and national success. That is unlikely to be the case anymore (if it ever was). Under the dominant ideology of contemporary corporate lawyers—who see shareholder profits as the sole aim of corporate managers—corporate managers are required to pursue profitable operations; American national interests are not part of the calculus.” [Columbia University, Knight First Amendment Institute, [1/30/20](#)]

Columbia University: “A Global Corporation That Gain[ed] Most Of Its Profits From Abroad [...] Might Therefore Have Profit-Based Interests That Do Not Align With American National Interests.” “Second, the willingness of these companies to adhere to Chinese preferences calls into question whether global firms can be trusted when they seek to lobby or influence the U.S. government. In the mid-twentieth century, the maxim ‘what’s good for General Motors is good for America’ suggested a link between corporate success and national success. That is unlikely to be the case anymore (if it ever was). Under the dominant ideology of contemporary corporate lawyers—who see shareholder profits as the sole aim of corporate managers—corporate managers are required to pursue profitable operations; American national interests are not part of the calculus.” [Columbia University, Knight First Amendment Institute, [1/30/20](#)]

U.S. FOREIGN ADVERSARIES, LIKE CHINA, UNDERSTOOD THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES OF DEVELOPING AN AI PROGRAM

Between 2010-2017, China Invested An Estimated \$1.3 Billion In U.S. AI Companies. “China’s centrally directed effort is fueling speculation in the U.S. AI market, where China is investing in companies working on militarily relevant AI applications—potentially granting it lawful access to U.S. technology and intellectual property. Figure 2 depicts Chinese venture capital investment in U.S. AI companies between 2010 and 2017, totaling an estimated \$1.3 billion. The CFIUS reforms introduced in FIRRMA are intended to provide increased oversight of such investments to ensure that they do not threaten national security or grant U.S. competitors undue access to critical technologies.” [Congressional Research Service, [11/10/20](#)]

- **By 2018, China Filed 2.5x More Patents In AI Technologies Than The United States.** “Recognizing that this would have to be led by entrepreneurial companies rather than agencies of government, he designated five companies to become China’s national champions: Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, iFlytek and SenseTime.¹³ Twelve months after Xi’s directive, investments in Chinese AI startups had topped investments in American AI startups.¹⁴ By 2018, China filed 2.5 times more patents in AI technologies than the United States.¹⁵ And this year China is graduating three times as many computer scientists as the United States.” [Harvard Belfer Center, [August 2020](#)]
- **In 2017 Alone, China Won Around 900 Patents Related To Facial Recognition, Compared With Fewer Than 150 In The United States.** “However, the anxiety over China’s plans for AI may be overblown, says Jeffrey Ding, an economics and technology researcher at the University of Oxford’s Future of Humanity Institute. Yes, there are many signs that China is making huge investments in AI, and it leads the world in AI-related patent filings and publications — in 2017 alone, it won some 900 patents related to facial recognition, compared with fewer than 150 in the United States. However, Ding says, China’s overall position is more complicated and requires a nuanced view.” [MIT Sloan Review, [4/30/20](#)]

China Called AI A “Strategic Technology” That Would “Enhance[d] National Competitiveness And Protect[ed] National Security.” “At least two Chinese regional governments have each committed to investing 100 billion yuan (~\$14.7 billion USD). The opening paragraphs of the AIDP exemplify mainstream Chinese views regarding AI: AI has become a new focus of international competition. AI is a strategic technology that will lead in the future; the world’s major developed countries are taking the development of AI as a major strategy to enhance national competitiveness and protect national security. The above quote also reflects how China’s AI policy community is paying close attention to the AI industries and policies of other countries, particularly the United States.” [Center For A New American Security, [2/6/19](#)]

China Released The ‘New Generation Artificial Intelligence Plan’ Which Said China Would “Promote All Kinds Of AI Technology To Become Quickly Embedded In The Field Of National Defense Innovation.” Use of the term ‘intelligitized’ is meant to signify a new stage of military technology beyond the current stage based on information

technology. China's AIDP strategy document states that China will 'Promote all kinds of AI technology to become quickly embedded in the field of national defense innovation.' The next day at the Xiangshan Forum, Zeng Yi, a senior executive at China's third largest defense company, gave a speech in which he described his company's (and China's) expectations for the future implementation of AI weapons: "In future battlegrounds, there will be no people fighting." [Center For A New American Security, [2/6/19](#)]

China Said AI Would "Bring About A Leapfrog Development" In Military Technology. "Chinese Defense executive Zeng Yi echoed that claim, saying that AI will 'bring about a leapfrog development' in military technology and presents a critical opportunity for China. If China is correct that AI presents a leapfrog opportunity, it would mean that China is better positioned to adopt military AI than the United States. In this theory, the United States' current advantages in stealth aircraft, aircraft carriers, and precision munitions actually would be long-term disadvantages because the entrenched business and political interests that support military dominance today will hamper the United States in transitioning to an AI-enabled military technology paradigm in the future." [Center For A New American Security, [2/6/19](#)]

GOOGLE, FACEBOOK AND TIKTOK ALL HAVE CLOSE TIES TO CHINA; GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK EVEN SOUGHT THEM OUT DESPITE NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS

FACEBOOK'S BUSINESS VENTURES IN CHINA PRESENT A SIGNIFICANT U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY RISK

FACEBOOK DERIVES \$5 BILLION PER YEAR FROM ADVERTISERS IN CHINA DESPITE ITS PLATFORM BEING BANNED IN THE COUNTRY

Despite Having Been Blocked In China Since 2009, Facebook Derives \$5 Billion A Year From Advertisers In China, Second Only To The U.S. "Although Facebook has been blocked in China since 2009, its revenue from advertisers in the country may exceed \$5 billion a year, according to some research-firm analysts who study digital advertising. That would make it the company's largest revenue source after the U.S. Facebook doesn't break out revenue by country. Taking action against state-controlled media outlets on Facebook presents a quandary for the company, some of those analysts say. The ads may contain content that Facebook staff are uncomfortable with, but introducing policies to tackle them would amount to deciding what governments are allowed to broadcast on the platform." [Wall Street Journal, [4/2/21](#)]

2020: Facebook Set Up An Engineering Team In Singapore To Develop Ad-Buying Tools For Chinese Customers.

"Facebook is setting up a new engineering team in Singapore to focus on its lucrative China advertising business, according to three people familiar with the effort, even as chief executive Mark Zuckerberg ramps up criticism of a country that blocks the social network. The team at Facebook's Asia-Pacific headquarters is tasked with developing better ad-buying tools for Chinese customers who have to work around internet restrictions in China known as the 'great firewall,' the sources said. One of the people described it as Facebook's first significant attempt at developing regionally localized ads tools outside of its Silicon Valley headquarters, where China-related engineering work previously took place." [Reuters, [1/7/20](#)]

- **2019: Facebook Took At Least A Dozen Big Chinese Clients On Trips To India And The Middle East.** "In the last year Facebook has taken at least a dozen big Chinese clients on trips to India and the Middle East, and showed them data on local consumers to encourage them to market more in those regions rather than just in the United States, one of the people said." [Reuters, [1/7/20](#)]

FACEBOOK LIBERALLY HANDED OUT ITS USER DATA TO CHINESE COMPANIES THAT HAD BEEN LABELED U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

HEADLINE: "Facebook Gave User Data to A Chinese Company Considered A National Security Threat." [Vox, [6/6/18](#)]

Facebook Had Data-Sharing Partnerships With At Least Four Chinese Electronics Companies That Had Close Ties To The Chinese Government And Were Flagged By Intelligence Officials As A National Security Risk. "It wasn't just Apple, Amazon, and BlackBerry that Facebook gave access to its user data. The social media company also has data-sharing partnerships with at least four Chinese electronics companies, including Huawei, which has close ties to the Chinese government and has been flagged by intelligence officials as a national security risk. The New York Times's Michael LaForgia and Gabriel J.X. Dance reported on Tuesday that Facebook said it has agreements dating back to at least 2010 with Huawei, Lenovo, Oppo, and TCL." [Vox, [6/6/18](#)]

Facebook Gave Huawei Private Access To User Data. “Facebook has data-sharing partnerships with at least four Chinese electronics companies, including a manufacturing giant that has a close relationship with China’s government, the social media company said on Tuesday. The agreements, which date to at least 2010, gave private access to some user data to Huawei, a telecommunications equipment company that has been flagged by American intelligence officials as a national security threat, as well as to Lenovo, Oppo and TCL.” [New York Times, [6/5/18](#)]

- **User Data Included Their Friends List, Religious And Political Leanings, Work And Education History And Relationship Status.** “Facebook officials said the agreements with the Chinese companies allowed them access similar to what was offered to BlackBerry, which could retrieve detailed information on both device users and all of their friends — including religious and political leanings, work and education history and relationship status. Huawei used its private access to feed a ‘social phone’ app that let users view messages and social media accounts in one place, according to the officials.” [New York Times, [6/5/18](#)]

FACEBOOK EVEN DEFENDED ITS DECISION TO SHARE USER DATA WITH CHINESE TELECOM GIANT HUAWEI

When Responding To Reports That Facebook Shared Data With Huawei, A Facebook Executive Defended The Move Because Huawei Was “The Third Largest Mobile Manufacturer Globally.” “The worry is that data accessed by Huawei on American users could find its way into the hands of the Chinese government. The Pentagon this year banned sales of Huawei phones on US military bases. ‘Huawei is the third largest mobile manufacturer globally and its devices are used by people all around the world, including in the United States. Facebook along with many other US tech companies have worked with them and other Chinese manufacturers to integrate their services onto these phones,’ Francisco Varela, vice president of mobile partnerships at Facebook, said in an emailed statement to Vox.” [Vox, [6/6/18](#)]

FACEBOOK OVERRODE USERS WHO DENIED THEM PERMISSION TO SHARE THEIR DATA WITH THIRD PARTIES DESPITE BEING BANNED FROM DOING SO BY A FEDERAL CONSENT DECREE

Facebook Overrode Users Who Denied Facebook Permission To Share Information With Third Parties And Still Provided Their Data To Device Makers. “Facebook’s view that the device makers are not outsiders lets the partners go even further, The Times found: They can obtain data about a user’s Facebook friends, even those who have denied Facebook permission to share information with any third parties. In interviews, several former Facebook software engineers and security experts said they were surprised at the ability to override sharing restrictions.” [New York Times, [6/3/18](#)]

A 2011 Consent Decree With F.T.C. Barred Facebook From Overriding Users’ Privacy Settings Without First Getting Explicit Consent. “The broad access Facebook provided to device makers raises questions about its compliance with a 2011 consent decree with the F.T.C. The decree barred Facebook from overriding users’ privacy settings without first getting explicit consent. That agreement stemmed from an investigation that found Facebook had allowed app developers and other third parties to collect personal details about users’ friends, even when those friends had asked that their information remain private.” [New York Times, [6/3/18](#)]

SINCE 2019, CHINESE STATE MEDIA HAS RUN PROMOTED ADS ON FACEBOOK JUSTIFYING ITS TREATMENT OF UIGHURS AND FACEBOOK DECLINED TO BAN THE ADS

2019: Chinese State Media Ran Ads On Facebook To U.S. Audiences Claiming That Detention Centers Were Beneficial For Uighurs. “Extending the reach of its propaganda beyond its borders, Chinese state-owned media is running ads on Facebook seemingly designed to cast doubt on human rights violations occurring under the government’s mass incarceration of Muslim minorities in the country’s northwest Xinjiang region. BuzzFeed News found three ads — two active and one inactive — within Facebook’s ad library extolling the alleged success stories of detainees at the camps and claiming that the detention centers were not meant to interfere with religious beliefs and practices. The two active ads had been placed in the last four days and were targeted to an audience in the United States and other countries. The Global Times placed one of the active Facebook ads on Monday, in which it claimed that ‘if the centers were set up earlier, fewer violent attacks would happen.’ The state-controlled tabloid, which has both Chinese- and English-language editions, is best known for its nationalistic opinion and editorial page.” [Buzzfeed News, [8/20/19](#)]

- **Unlike Twitter, Facebook Said It Would Continue To Accept Ads From State-Run Media Without Independent Oversight Of The Content.** “BuzzFeed News discovered the ads after reviewing promoted Twitter and Facebook posts by Chinese state media that pushed an anti-protester narrative about the ongoing anti-extradition demonstrations in Hong Kong. On Monday, Twitter said it would no longer accept advertisements from state-owned media companies without independent editorial oversight. Facebook said it would continue to accept advertisements from such organizations, but would review individual ads about the Hong Kong protests to see if they violated the company’s content policies.” [Buzzfeed News, [8/20/19](#)]

2021: Facebook Employees Expressed Concern About The Ads But The Company Claimed It Did Not Violate Any Of Their Policies. “Now, some Facebook staff are raising concerns on internal message boards and in other employee discussions that the company is being used as a conduit for state propaganda, highlighting sponsored posts from Chinese organizations that purport to show Muslim ethnic minority Uyghurs thriving in China’s Xinjiang region, according to people familiar with the matter. [...] Facebook hasn’t determined whether to act on the concerns, say people familiar with the matter. The company is watching how international organizations such as the United Nations respond to the situation in Xinjiang, one of the people said. The U.N. this week called on firms conducting Xinjiang-linked business to undertake ‘meaningful human rights due diligence’ on their operations. A Facebook spokesman said that the ads taken out by Beijing pertaining to Xinjiang don’t violate current policies so long as the advertisers follow Facebook’s rules when purchasing them. He said the company is monitoring reports of the situation in Xinjiang ‘to help inform our approach and due diligence on this issue.’” [Wall Street Journal, [4/2/21](#)]

2016: FACEBOOK DEVELOPED A CONTENT CENSORSHIP TOOL IN AN ATTEMPT TO ALLOW THE PLATFORM TO BE USED IN CHINA

2016: Facebook Developed Software That Would Allow It To Enter The Chinese Market By Preventing Content From Entering Users’ Feeds In China. “The social network has quietly developed software to suppress posts from appearing in people’s news feeds in specific geographic areas, according to three current and former Facebook employees, who asked for anonymity because the tool is confidential. The feature was created to help Facebook get into China, a market where the social network has been blocked, these people said. Mr. Zuckerberg has supported and defended the effort, the people added. But the new feature takes that a step further by preventing content from appearing in feeds in China in the first place. Facebook does not intend to suppress the posts itself. Instead, it would offer the software to enable a third party — in this case, most likely a partner Chinese company — to monitor popular stories and topics that bubble up as users share them across the social network, the people said. Facebook’s partner would then have full control to decide whether those posts should show up in users’ feeds.” [New York Times, [11/22/16](#)]

Several Employees Working On The Suppression Tool Left The Company, As CEO Mark Zuckerberg Defended The Program To Employees. “Over the summer, several Facebook employees who were working on the suppression tool left the company, the current and former employees said. Internally, so many employees asked about the project and its ambitions on an internal forum that, in July, it became a topic at one of Facebook’s weekly Friday afternoon question-and-answer sessions. Mr. Zuckerberg was at the event and answered a question from the audience about the tool. He told the gathering that Facebook’s China plans were nascent. But he also struck a pragmatic tone about the future, according to employees Facebook Attempted To Develop A Tool To Censor Content On Its Site In Order To Re-enter China who attended the session. ‘It’s better for Facebook to be a part of enabling conversation, even if it’s not yet the full conversation,’ Mr. Zuckerberg said, according to employees.” [New York Times, [11/22/16](#)]

FACEBOOK CEO MARK ZUCKERBERG EVEN TRIED TO CULTIVATE A RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg Had Tried To Cultivate A Relationship With China’s President, Xi Jinping, Because The Company Had Been Banned In The Country Since 2009. “Banned in China since 2009, Facebook in recent years has quietly sought to re-establish itself there. The company’s chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, has tried to cultivate a relationship with China’s president, Xi Jinping, and put in an appearance at one of the country’s top universities.” [New York Times, [6/5/18](#)]

- **Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg Reportedly Once Asked Xi Jinping To Offer A Chinese Name For His Soon-To-Be-Born Son.** “At a White House dinner in 2015, Mr. Zuckerberg had even asked the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, whether Mr. Xi might offer a Chinese name for his soon-to-be-born first child — usually a privilege reserved for older relatives, or sometimes a fortune teller. Mr. Xi declined, according to a person briefed on the matter.” [New York Times, [9/17/17](#)]

In 2016, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg Met With China’s Propaganda Chief Amid A Crackdown By Beijing Authorities On The Use Of The Internet. “Facebook founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg has held a rare meeting with China’s propaganda chief amid a crackdown by the Beijing authorities on the use of the internet. Liu Yunshan told Zuckerberg that he hopes Facebook can share its experience with Chinese companies to help ‘internet development better benefit the people of all countries’, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Zuckerberg was in Beijing to attend an economic forum.” [The Guardian, [3/20/16](#)]

GOOGLE IS BANNED IN CHINA BUT HAS WORKED TO BUILD A PRESENCE IN THE COUNTRY DESPITE THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY RISKS

GOOGLE HAS EXTENSIVE AI RESEARCH TIES IN CHINA

2017: GOOGLE OPENED AN AI CENTER IN SHANGHAI

HEADLINE: "Google Is Blocked In China, But That's Not Stopping It From Opening An A.I. Center There" [CNBC, [12/13/17](#)]

2017: Google Opened An AI Center In Shanghai. "Google's parent Alphabet said in a statement that it had launched the Google AI China Center on Wednesday in Shanghai, the company's first facility of its kind in Asia. The center is focused on 'basic AI research' and will be made up of a team of researchers based in Beijing. The center will be headed by Fei-Fei Li, a Stanford University professor who is chief scientist of AI and machine learning at Google Cloud, and Jia Li, head of research and development at Google Cloud AI." [CNBC, [12/13/17](#)]

- **December 2017: Google CEO Sundar Pichai Attended A State-Run Internet Conference And Google Held An AI Demonstration In China.** "Google CEO Sundar Pichai attended a state-run internet conference in Wuzhen earlier in December, where he outlined how small and medium-sized enterprises on the mainland have benefited from the use of Google services, the South China Morning Post reported. Earlier in the year, the company put on a show on the mainland when it put its AI technology up to the test by making it compete with top human Go players. The game, which eventually resulted in Go world champion Ke Jie losing to Google's AlphaGo, was censored in China." [CNBC, [12/13/17](#)]

GOOGLE PARTNERED WITH A LEADING AI RESEARCH INSTITUTION IN CHINA THAT ALSO CONDUCTED AI RESEARCH FOR THE CHINESE MILITARY

Google Partnered With A Leading AI Research Institution, Tsinghua University, That Also Conducted AI Research For The Chinese Military. "Google has been cooperating with a leading artificial intelligence (AI) research body at Tsinghua University, a prestigious Chinese academic institution that also conducts AI research for the Chinese military. The U.S. internet giant has collaborated with Beijing's Tsinghua University since June 2018, when it launched a new AI research body, the Tsinghua University Institute for Artificial Intelligence (TUFAI)." [The Epoch Times, 8/1/19]

- **Tsinghua University Had Established Two Military AI Labs Between 2017 And 2018, One Of Which Was Described As A "High-End Military Intelligence Lab."** "Zhang Bo, the head of TUFAI, was named to lead that project. The report added that Zhang has been a leading figure involved in military AI research at Tsinghua University. The report added that the work of the university's military AI lab, called "Military Intelligent High-End Lab" and established in 2018, would be "guided by military needs" and would help build China into an advanced AI country. The university also established another military AI lab in spring 2017 called 'High-end Military Intelligence lab.' The Chinese regime has set the development of AI as one of its top priorities." [The Epoch Times, 8/1/19]
- **Tsinghua University Received Significant Funding From The Chinese Military To Work On A Project Aimed To Advance The Military's AI Capabilities.** "Google has been cooperating with a leading artificial intelligence (AI) research body at Tsinghua University, a prestigious Chinese academic institution that also conducts AI research for the Chinese military. The U.S. internet giant has collaborated with Beijing's Tsinghua University since June 2018, when it launched a new AI research body, the Tsinghua University Institute for Artificial Intelligence (TUFAI). Earlier that month, it was revealed that the university received significant funding from the Chinese military to work on a project aimed to advance the military's AI capabilities." [The Epoch Times, 8/1/19]
- **Tsinghua University Received \$14.53 Million From The Science And Technology Committee Of China's Central Military Commission.** "Google didn't respond to a request for comment by The Epoch Times. Tsinghua and the Chinese Military China Education Daily, a state owned newspaper run by the regime's Ministry for Education, reported on June 8, 2018, that Tsinghua University received more than 100 million yuan (\$14.53 million) from the Science and Technology Committee of China's Central Military Commission—a Party organ that oversees the military-to work on an AI project for the military." [The Epoch Times, 8/1/19]

JUNE 2018: GOOGLE ENTERED A TWO-YEAR PARTNERSHIP WITH A UNIVERSITY IN SHANGHAI TO RESEARCH EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, LIKE AI

In June 2018, Google Entered Into A Two-Year Partnership With Fudan University, Located In Shanghai, To Research Emerging Technologies Such As AI. "A subsidiary of Google has entered a two-year partnership with Fudan University, the leading university in China's eastern Shanghai municipality, with a focus on emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. Google China's Education Cooperation Division support Fudan's curriculum related to emerging

science and technology, online news outlet The Paper reported, adding that the pair will jointly build a laboratory as well as an exchange center to boost interaction between students in China and the US." [Yicai.com, [6/1/18](#)]

2018: GOOGLE ATTEMPTED TO CREATE A CENSORED SEARCH ENGINE FOR USE INSIDE CHINA, BUT ABANDONED THE PROJECT AFTER BACKLASH FROM HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS

2018: Google Was Developing A Censored Search Engine For China, Codenamed Dragonfly, But Ended The Project After Pushback From Staff And Human Rights Organizations. "Google is facing a new campaign of global protests over its plan to launch a censored version of its search engine in China. On Friday, a coalition of Chinese, Tibetan, Uighur, and human rights groups organized demonstrations outside Google's offices in the U.S., U.K., Canada, India, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Sweden, Switzerland, and Denmark. Google designed the Chinese search engine, code-named Dragonfly, to blacklist information about human rights, democracy, religion, and peaceful protest, in accordance with strict rules on censorship in China that are enforced by the country's authoritarian Communist Party government. In December, The Intercept revealed that an internal dispute had forced Google to shut down a data analysis system that it was using to develop the search engine. This had 'effectively ended' the project, sources said, because the company's engineers no longer had the tools they needed to build it." [The Intercept, [1/18/19](#)]

- **Dragonfly Would Have Blacklisted Terms Such As "Student Protest" And "Nobel Prize" And May Have Tied Searches To People's Phone Numbers.** "Still, few tech companies are as obviously eager to be part of the market as Google, said O'Donnell. Dragonfly, the censored search product, would reportedly blacklist search terms disapproved of by the Chinese government, such as 'student protest' and 'Nobel Prize.' It also may have tied searches to people's phone numbers." [CNET, [5/22/19](#)]

August 2018: A Coalition Of Human Rights Groups Wrote To Google Executives, Outlining Concerns That The Rumored Search Engine Project Would Enable Human Rights Abuses. "Like many of Google's own employees, we are extremely concerned by reports that Google is developing a new censored search engine app for the Chinese market. The project, codenamed 'Dragonfly', would represent an alarming capitulation by Google on human rights. The Chinese government extensively violates the rights to freedom of expression and privacy; by accommodating the Chinese authorities' repression of dissent, Google would be actively participating in those violations for millions of internet users in China. We support the brave efforts of Google employees who have alerted the public to the existence of Dragonfly, and voiced their concerns about the project and Google's transparency and oversight processes. In contrast, company leadership has failed to respond publicly to concerns over Project Dragonfly, stating that it does not comment on 'speculation about future plans'. Executives have also refused to answer basic questions about how the company will safeguard the rights of users in China as it seeks to expand its business in the country." [Letter to Google from Amnesty International et al, [8/28/18](#)]

- **October 2018: Google's General Counsel Said That He Could Not Answer Any Specific Questions Because The Search Engine For China Was Still In Internal Development Stages.** "I am writing in regards to your recent letter. We appreciate the opportunity to have met with many of you and your teams and welcome the opportunity to further engage on these important issues. [...] Google has been open about our desire to increase our ability to serve users in China and other countries. We are considering a variety of options for how to offer services in China in a way that is consistent with our mission. In the course of that exploration, we built an internal product to understand better what Google search in China might look like. But at this stage we are still not close to launching such a product, and whether we would or could do so remains unclear. Accordingly, we are not yet in a position to answer detailed questions about our approach. We believe continuing to explore opportunities in markets across the world, including in countries like China, is consistent with Google's mission to organize the world's information and with our commitment to create opportunity for everyone." [Letter from Kent Walker to Amnesty International et al, [10/26/18](#)]

December 2018: A Coalition Of Human Rights Groups Asked Google To Drop Project Dragonfly And Noted That Google's Letter "Only Heightens Our Fear That The Company May Knowingly Compromise Its Commitments To Human Rights And Freedom Of Expression." "We are writing to ask you to ensure that Google drops Project Dragonfly and any plans to launch a censored search app in China, and to re-affirm the company's 2010 commitment that it won't provide censored search services in the country. We are disappointed that Google in its letter of 26 October failed to address the serious concerns of human rights groups over Project Dragonfly. Instead of addressing the substantive issues set out in the August letter, Google's response – along with further details that have since emerged about Project Dragonfly – only heightens our fear that the company may knowingly compromise its commitments to human rights and freedom of expression, in exchange for access to the Chinese search market." [Human Rights Watch, [12/10/18](#)]

GOOGLE HELPED FOUND A NONPROFIT THAT THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT USED TO CONDUCT MASS SURVEILLANCE ON ITS CITIZENS

A Non-Profit Founded By Google And IBM Worked With Chinese Company Semptian That Helped The Chinese Government Conduct Mass Surveillance On 200 Million Of Its Citizens. “An American organization founded by tech giants Google and IBM is working with a company that is helping China’s authoritarian government conduct mass surveillance against its citizens, The Intercept can reveal. The OpenPower Foundation — a nonprofit led by Google and IBM executives with the aim of trying to ‘drive innovation’ — has set up a collaboration between IBM, Chinese company Semptian, and U.S. chip manufacturer Xilinx. Together, they have worked to advance a breed of microprocessors that enable computers to analyze vast amounts of data more efficiently. Shenzhen-based Semptian is using the devices to enhance the capabilities of internet surveillance and censorship technology it provides to human rights-abusing security agencies in China, according to sources and documents. A company employee said that its technology is being used to covertly monitor the internet activity of 200 million people.” [The Intercept, [7/11/19](#)]

- **The Technology Developed By Semptian Allowed The Chinese Government To Search By Particular Users Or Cell Phone Code, Capturing The Full Content Of A Communication.** “The technology can also allow government users to run searches for a particular instant messenger name, email address, social media account, forum user, blog commenter, or other identifier, like a cellphone IMSI code or a computer MAC address, a unique series of numbers associated with each device. In many cases, it appears that the system can collect the full content of a communication, such as recorded audio of a phone call or the written body of a text message, not just the metadata, which shows the sender and the recipient of an email, or the phone numbers someone called and when. Whether the system can access the full content of a message likely depends on whether it has been protected with strong encryption.” [The Intercept, [7/11/19](#)]

FORMER TIKTOK EMPLOYEES CONFIRMED THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN TIKTOK AND CHINESE PARENT COMPANY BYTEDANCE WERE “ALMOST NON-EXISTENT”

HEADLINE: "TikTok Insiders Say Social Media Company Is Tightly Controlled By Chinese Parent ByteDance." [CNBC, [6/25/21](#)]

Former TikTok Employees Confirmed That “Boundaries Between TikTok And ByteDance Were So Blurry As To Be Almost Non-Existent.” “The former employees who spoke to CNBC said the boundaries between TikTok and ByteDance were so blurry as to be almost non-existent. Most notably, one employee said that ByteDance employees are able to access U.S. user data. This was highlighted in a situation where an American employee working on TikTok needed to get a list of global users, including Americans, who searched for or interacted with a specific type of content — that means users who searched for a specific term or hashtag or liked a particular category of videos. This employee had to reach out to a data team in China in order to access that information. The data the employee received included users’ specific IDs, and they could pull up whatever information TikTok had about those users. This type of situation was confirmed as a common occurrence by a second employee.” [CNBC, [6/25/21](#)]

ByteDance Owns Two Of China’s Most Popular Apps, Where Chinese State Media Entities Run Popular Accounts And The Apps Comply With Strict Chinese Censorship Laws. “The profiles also provide critical insight into how ByteDance manages its relationship with Chinese state media entities. In addition to TikTok, ByteDance runs numerous other websites and services, including two of mainland China’s most popular apps: Douyin (a short form video app) and Toutiao (a news aggregator). Chinese state media entities are among the most popular accounts on Douyin, where they have many millions of followers. Many of the Chinese Ownership Of TikTok Poses Unique Difficulties For U.S. Regulators In Stopping Disinformation And Protecting National Security TikTok Is Closely Controlled By China-Based ByteDance Which Maintains Ties To Chinese State LinkedIn profiles detail work on Toutiao and Douyin, which must comply with stringent Chinese censorship laws.” [Forbes, [8/10/22](#)]

300 TIKTOK AND BYDANCE EMPLOYEES USED TO WORK FOR CHINESE STATE MEDIA

HEADLINE: "LinkedIn Profiles Indicate 300 Current TikTok And ByteDance Employees Used To Work For Chinese State Media—And Some Still Do." [Forbes, [8/10/22](#)]

Forbes Review Found 300 TikTok & ByteDance Employees With Employment History At Chinese State Media Outlets, Including 15 That Appeared To Be Employed Concurrently. “Three hundred current employees at TikTok and its parent company ByteDance previously worked for Chinese state media publications, according to public employee LinkedIn profiles reviewed by Forbes. Twenty-three of these profiles appear to have been created by current ByteDance directors, who manage departments overseeing content partnerships, public affairs, corporate social responsibility and ‘media cooperation.’ Fifteen indicate that current ByteDance employees are also concurrently employed by Chinese state

media entities, including Xinhua News Agency, China Radio International and China Central / China Global Television. (These organizations were among those designated by the State Department as ‘foreign government functionaries’ in 2020.)" [Forbes, [8/10/22](#)]

FORMER BYTEDANCE EMPLOYEES ALLEGED THE COMPANY INSTRUCTED STAFF TO PUSH PRO-CHINA CONTENT ON ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWS APP TOPBUZZ

HEADLINE: "TikTok Owner ByteDance Used A News App On Millions Of Phones To Push Pro-China Messages, Ex-Employees Say." [Buzzfeed News, [7/26/22](#)]

Former ByteDance Employees Alleged ByteDance Instructed Staff To Push Pro-China Content On English-Language News App TopBuzz. "According to new claims by four former employees of the company, ByteDance already has used one of its apps to push pro-China messages to Americans: its now-defunct English-language news app, TopBuzz. ByteDance forcefully denies the claims. The four former ByteDance employees, each of whom worked on TopBuzz, claimed that ByteDance instructed members of its staff to place specific pieces of pro- China messaging in the app. According to three of the former employees, TopBuzz staff sometimes promoted content by ‘pinning’ it to the top of the app. One former employee remembered staff posting panda videos in the app, along with videos promoting travel to China. Another remembered a staff member pinning a video in which a white man talked about the benefits of moving his startup to China." [Buzzfeed News, [7/26/22](#)]

- **TopBuzz Launched In 2015 And Had 40 Million Monthly Active Users By 2018.** “Launched in 2015, it amassed 40 million monthly active users by 2018 and was hailed as a major driver of traffic to US news publishers.” [Buzzfeed News, [7/26/22](#)]

ByteDance’s Actions With TopBuzz Raised Regulatory Concerns About Whether TikTok Could Be Used In Similar Fashion To Promote Chinese Propaganda. "But the allegation that ByteDance actively inserted pro-China messages into one of its apps raises another regulatory concern about TikTok: that ByteDance could use TikTok in a similar way to influence public discussion in the United States (or elsewhere) in order to benefit China’s authoritarian government. Adam Segal, director of the Digital and Cyberspace Policy Program at the Council on Foreign Relations, told BuzzFeed News that the allegations ‘certainly speak to the concerns that a Chinese app that is providing information could be misused for Chinese propaganda.’ Still, he said he wasn’t entirely surprised: ‘This is how the company was used to operating in the Chinese market, and so they were just going to do the same thing in foreign markets.'” [Buzzfeed News, [7/26/22](#)]

SEPTEMBER 2022: TIKTOK EXECUTIVE WOULD NOT SAY IF BYTEDANCE WOULD KEEP U.S. USER DATA FROM THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT OR IF IT MAY BE INFLUENCE BY THE STATE

In September 2022 Senate Hearing, TikTok COO “Avoided Saying Whether ByteDance Would Keep US User Data From The Chinese Government Or Whether ByteDance May Be Influenced By China.” "Pappas affirmed in Wednesday’s hearing that the company has said, on record, that its Chinese employees do have access to US user data. She also reiterated that TikTok has said it would ‘under no circumstances ... give that data to China’ and denied that TikTok is in any way influenced by China. However, she avoided saying whether ByteDance would keep US user data from the Chinese government or whether ByteDance may be influenced by China." [CNN, 9/14/22]

FACEBOOK, TIKTOK AND GOOGLE ALL HAVE FLAGRANTLY FAILED TO PROTECT USER PRIVACY AND CONSUMER DATA

FACEBOOK HAS LONG BEEN A DATA PRIVACY AND COLLECTION NIGHTMARE

DECEMBER 2007: FACEBOOK FACED CRITICISM FOR ALLOWING COMPANIES TO TRACK USER PURCHASES AND NOTIFY FRIENDS OF PURCHASES WITH OUT USER CONSENT

December 2007: Facebook Faced Backlash From Its Program Beacon That Allowed Companies To Track Purchases By Facebook Users And Then Notify The User’s Friends Of What They Bought, Often Without The User’s Consent. "When: December 2007 What: Beacon, Facebook’s first big brush with advertising privacy issues Facebook’s response: Zuckerberg apologizes, gives users choice to opt out There was once a time when companies could track purchases by Facebook users and then notify their Facebook friends of what had been bought -- many times without any user consent. In an apology on Dec. 6, 2007, Zuckerberg explained his thought process behind the program, called Beacon, and announced that users would be given the option to opt out of it. ‘We were excited about Beacon

because we believe a lot of information people want to share isn't on Facebook, and if we found the right balance, Beacon would give people an easy and controlled way to share more of that information with their friends,' he said. At the time, Facebook was also talking to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) about online privacy and advertising." [NBC News, [3/24/18](#)]

NOVEMBER 2011: FACEBOOK SETTLED WITH THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION OVER ALLEGATIONS IT ALLOWED PRIVATE USER INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC WITHOUT WARNING

November 2011: Facebook Settled With The Federal Trade Commission Over Allegations That It Allowed Private User Information To Be Made Public Without Warning. "When: November 2011 What: Facebook settles FTC privacy charges Facebook's response: Facebook agrees to undergo an independent privacy evaluation every other year for the next 20 years. Facebook settled with the Federal Trade Commission in 2011 over charges that it didn't keep its privacy promise to users by allowing private information to be made public without warning. Regulators said Facebook falsely claimed that third-party apps were able to access only the data they needed to operate. In fact, the apps could access nearly all of a user's personal data. Facebook users that never authenticated a third-party app could even have private posts collected if their friends used apps. Facebook was also charged with sharing user information with advertisers, despite a promise they wouldn't. [...] As part of the agreement in 2011, Facebook remains liable for a \$16,000-per-day penalty for violating each count of the settlement." [NBC News, [3/24/18](#)]

- **Facebook Settled And Agreed To Undergo An Independent Privacy Evaluation Every Other Year For 20 Years Following Allegations That It Allowed Third-Party Apps To Access Nearly All Of User's Personal Data Despite Claiming Apps Could Only Access Data They Needed To Operate.** "When: November 2011 What: Facebook settles FTC privacy charges Facebook's response: Facebook agrees to undergo an independent privacy evaluation every other year for the next 20 years. Facebook settled with the Federal Trade Commission in 2011 over charges that it didn't keep its privacy promise to users by allowing private information to be made public without warning. Regulators said Facebook falsely claimed that third-party apps were able to access only the data they needed to operate. In fact, the apps could access nearly all of a user's personal data. Facebook users that never authenticated a third-party app could even have private posts collected if their friends used apps. Facebook was also charged with sharing user information with advertisers, despite a promise they wouldn't. [...] As part of the agreement in 2011, Facebook remains liable for a \$16,000-per-day penalty for violating each count of the settlement." [NBC News, [3/24/18](#)]

JUNE 2013: A FACEBOOK BUG EXPOSED THE EMAILS AND PHONE NUMBERS OF SIX MILLION USERS

June 2013: A Facebook Bug Exposed The Email Addresses And Phone Numbers Of Six Million Users To Anyone Who Had Some Connection To The User Or Knew At Least One Piece Of Their Contact Information. "When: June 2013 What: Facebook bug exposes private contact info Facebook's response: Facebook fixes bug, notifies people whose info may have been exposed. A bug exposed the email addresses and phone numbers of 6 million Facebook users to anyone who had some connection to the person or knew at least one piece of their contact information. The bug was discovered by a White Hat hacker — someone who hacks with the intention of helping companies find bugs and build better security practices. When people joined Facebook and uploaded their contact lists, Facebook explained it would match that data to other people on Facebook in order to create friend recommendations." [NBC News, [3/24/18](#)]

JULY 2014: FACEBOOK FACED CRITICISM FOR CONDUCTING A SOCIAL SCIENCE EXPERIMENT ON 500,000 RANDOMLY-SELECTED USERS

July 2014: Facebook Faced Backlash For Conducting A Mood Manipulation Experiment On More Than 500,000 Randomly Selected Users. "When: July 2014 What: Mood-manipulation experiment on thousands of Facebook users Facebook's response: Facebook data scientist apologizes Facebook's mood-manipulation experiment in 2014 included more than half a million randomly selected users. Facebook altered their news feeds to show more positive or negative posts. The purpose of the study was to show how emotions could spread on social media. The results were published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, kicking off a firestorm of backlash over whether the study was ethical. Adam D.I. Kramer, the Facebook data scientist who led the experiment, ultimately posted an apology on Facebook. Four years later, the experiment no longer appears to be online." [NBC News, [3/24/18](#)]

2016: TRUMP CONSULTANT CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICAL HARVESTED PRIVATE INFORMATION FROM 50 MILLION FACEBOOK USERS WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT

2016: Trump Consultant Cambridge Analytica Harvested Private Information From The Facebook Profiles Of More Than 50 Million Users Without Their Permission In Order To Exploit Huge Parts Of The American Electorate. "As the upstart voter-profiling company Cambridge Analytica prepared to wade into the 2014 American midterm elections, it had a problem. The firm had secured a \$15 million investment from Robert Mercer, the wealthy Republican donor, and wooed his political adviser, Stephen K. Bannon, with the promise of tools that could identify the personalities of American voters and influence their behavior. But it did not have the data to make its new products work. So the firm harvested private information from the Facebook profiles of more than 50 million users without their permission, according to former Cambridge employees, associates and documents, making it one of the largest data leaks in the social network's history. The breach allowed the company to exploit the private social media activity of a huge swath of the American electorate, developing techniques that underpinned its work on President Trump's campaign in 2016." [New York Times, [3/17/18](#)]

FEBRUARY 2018: A BELGIAN COURT ORDERED FACEBOOK TO STOP COLLECTING PRIVATE INFORMATION ABOUT BELGIAN USERS ON THIRD-PARTY SITES

February 2018: A Belgian Court Ordered Facebook To Stop Collection Private Information About Belgian Users Across Third-Party Sites Through The Use Of Cookies. "When: February 2018 What: Belgian court tells Facebook to stop tracking people across the entire internet Facebook's response: Appeal the court's ruling In February, Facebook was ordered to stop collecting private information about Belgian users on third-party sites through the use of cookies. Facebook was also ordered to delete all data it collected illegally from Belgians, including those who aren't Facebook users but may have still landed on a Facebook page, or risk being fined up to 100 million euros. Facebook said it has complied with European data protection laws and gives people the choice to opt out of data collection on third-party websites and applications. The company said it would appeal the ruling." [NBC News, [3/24/18](#)]

SEPTEMBER 2018: FACEBOOK SOFTWARE BUGS ALLOWED NEARLY 50 MILLION USER'S PRIVATE INFORMATION TO BE EXPOSED

HEADLINE: "Facebook Security Breach Exposes Accounts Of 50 Million Users" [New York Times, [9/28/18](#)]

September 2018: Facebook Software Bugs Allowed The Exposure Of Personal Information Of Nearly 50 Million Users. "Facebook, already facing scrutiny over how it handles the private information of its users, said on Friday that an attack on its computer network had exposed the personal information of nearly 50 million users. The breach, which was discovered this week, was the largest in the company's 14-year history. The attackers exploited a feature in Facebook's code to gain access to user accounts and potentially take control of them. The news could not have come at a worse time for Facebook. It has been buffeted over the last year by scandal, from revelations that a British analytics firm got access to the private information of up to 87 million users to worries that disinformation on Facebook has affected elections and even led to deaths in several countries. [...] The software bugs were particularly awkward for a company that takes pride in its engineering: The first two were introduced by an online tool meant to improve the privacy of users. The third was introduced in July 2017 by a tool meant to easily upload birthday videos." New York Times, [9/28/18](#)

2019: THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION FINED FACEBOOK \$5 BILLION FOR VIOLATING ITS 2012 ORDER AND FOR BEING DECEPTIVE ABOUT PROTECTING CONSUMER PRIVACY AND HANDLING DATA

HEADLINE: "A Newly Published Complaint Against Facebook Reveals In Excruciating Detail How Deceptive The Company Has Been With Your Data" [Business Insider, [7/24/19](#)]

2019: The Federal Trade Commission Fined Facebook \$5 Billion Dollars Over Allegations That It Violated A 2012 FTC Order By Being Deceptive In How It Protects Consumer Privacy And Handles Consumer Data. "Following the news that Facebook is being hit with a \$5 billion fine over its handling of consumer data, the Federal Trade Commission published its formal complaint against the social media giant, marking the conclusion of its yearlong investigation. The complaint alleges that Facebook violated a 2012 order from the Commission by being deceptive when it comes to the way it protects consumer privacy and handles consumer data. The document breaks down the specific features, settings, and disclaimers found on Facebook's desktop website and mobile app that it's found to have been problematic from a privacy standpoint." [Business Insider, [7/24/19](#)]

- **The Federal Trade Commission Alleged Facebook Did Not Limit Its Sharing Of Third-Party Information With App Developers Based On The Settings It Enabled For Limiting The Sharing Of User Personal Information With Their Friends.** "Among the biggest ways in which Facebook was found to have violated the 2012 order was in the way the social media company represents the control users have over their data and the

extent at which it's available to third parties. Between December 2012 and April 2014, Facebook said users could limit the amount of personal information shared with friends through controls such as the Privacy Settings page, Privacy Shortcuts, and profile settings page. But Facebook did not limit its sharing of third-party information with app developers based on those settings, the filing notes. This, the complaint says, puts Facebook in violation of the Commission Order." [Business Insider, [7/24/19](#)]

- **The Federal Trade Commission Alleged That Facebook Did Not Require App Users To Request Permission From A User's Friends To Gather The Friend Data.** "The filing also points out that Facebook did not require third-party developers to request permission from friends of app users to access their Facebook data. Rather, Facebook only required the app user, not his or her friends, to provide permission. This gave third-party developers access to a trove of data, including friends' birthdays, bio, check-ins, fitness activity, likes, interest, music activity, relationships, photos, and much more, as outlined on the eighth page of the document. [...] After Facebook publicly said in 2014 that it would no longer allow external app developers to access a user's friends' data, it continued to allow millions of third-party app makers to access such data for at least another year. Some of the whitelisted developers that Facebook continued to share such data with had access to friends' information until 2018, says the filing." [Business Insider, [7/24/19](#)]
- **The Federal Trade Commission Alleged Facebook Failed To Implement A Maintain A Reasonable Privacy Program As Mandated In 2012.** "Facebook also failed to implement and maintain a reasonable privacy program as the 2012 order mandated, a step that the complaint says is vitally important given that millions of developers were given access to data about Facebook users and their friends. While Facebook claimed that it had implemented controls and procedures to address such privacy risks, the company did not screen developers or their apps before giving them access to user data. As an example, the complaint notes that although Facebook checks that third party apps have a link to a privacy policy, it doesn't review that privacy policy to make sure that it complies with Facebook's policies." [Business Insider, [7/24/19](#)]
- **The Federal Trade Commission Said Facebook's Use Of Facial Recognition Violated The 2012 Order By Turning The Feature On By Default For Some Users.** "The filing also points to Facebook's use of facial recognition as being another area in which it violates the 2012 order. While Facebook had indicated to users that they would have to opt in to facial recognition to identify people in photos and videos, the feature was turned on by default for some users who still had Facebook's Tag Suggestions Setting." [Business Insider, [7/24/19](#)]
- **The Federal Trade Commission Alleged That Facebook Failed To Clearly Disclose It Would Use Phone Numbers Gathered For Security Purposes In Order To Advertise.** "In addition to being in violation of the 2012 order, the complaint also says the social media giant violated a section of the FTC Act by failing to clearly disclose that Facebook would use phone numbers gathered for security purposes for advertising purposes." [Business Insider, [7/24/19](#)]

2021: IT CAME TO LIGHT THAT FACEBOOK REFUSED TO NOTIFY MORE THAN 530 MILLION USERS THAT THEIR PERSONAL DATA WAS STOLEN TWO YEARS EARLIER

HEADLINE: "Mark Zuckerberg's Metaverse May Be As Privacy Flawed As Facebook" [Fortune Magazine, [10/29/21](#)]

HEADLINE: "After Data Breach Exposes 530 Million, Facebook Says It Will Not Notify Users" [NPR, [4/9/21](#)]

Facebook Refused To Notify More Than 530 Million Users Whose Personal Data Was Stolen In A Data Breach Sometime Before August 2019. "Facebook decided not to notify over 530 million of its users whose personal data was lifted in a breach sometime before August 2019 and was recently made available in a public database. Facebook also has no plans to do so, a spokesperson said. Phone numbers, full names, locations, some email addresses, and other details from user profiles were posted to an amateur hacking forum on Saturday, Business Insider reported last week. The leaked data includes personal information from 533 million Facebook users in 106 countries. In response to the reporting, Facebook said in a blog post on Tuesday that 'malicious actors' had scraped the data by exploiting a vulnerability in a now-defunct feature on the platform that allowed users to find each other by phone number. The social media company said it found and fixed the issue in August 2019 and its confident the same route can no longer be used to scrape that data." [NPR, [4/9/21](#)]

2021: FACEBOOK COLLECTED DATA THROUGH THIRD-PARTY APPS AND WEBSITE BY PROVIDING BUSINESS PARTNERS WITH TRACKING SOFTWARE TO EMBED

Facebook Allows Businesses, Apps And Websites To Snoop On Users On Its Behalf By Providing Business Partners With Tracking Software That They Embed In Apps, Websites And Loyalty Programs. "How does

Facebook's bigness hurt you and me? As Borovicka and I learned, Facebook takes a toll on your privacy — but perhaps not in the way you expect. It isn't just the Facebook app that's gobbling up your information. Facebook is so big, it has persuaded millions of other businesses, apps and websites to also snoop on its behalf. Even when you're not actively using Facebook. Even when you're not online. Even, perhaps, if you've never had a Facebook account. Here's how it works: Facebook provides its business partners tracking software they embed in apps, websites and loyalty programs. Any business or group that needs to do digital advertising has little choice but to feed your activities into Facebook's vacuum: your grocer, politicians and, yes, even the paywall page for this newspaper's website. Behind the scenes, Facebook takes in this data and tries to match it up to your account. It sits under your name in a part of your profile your friends can't see, but Facebook uses to shape your experience online. Among the 100 most popular smartphone apps, you can find Facebook software in 61 of them, app research firm Sensor Tower told me. Facebook also has trackers in about 25 percent of websites, according to privacy software maker Ghostery." [Washington Post, Geoffrey Fowler, [8/29/21](#)]

- **App Research Firm Sensor Tower Said Facebook Software Was Contained In 61 Of The 100 Most Popular Smartphone Apps.** "How does Facebook's bigness hurt you and me? As Borovicka and I learned, Facebook takes a toll on your privacy — but perhaps not in the way you expect. It isn't just the Facebook app that's gobbling up your information. Facebook is so big, it has persuaded millions of other businesses, apps and websites to also snoop on its behalf. Even when you're not actively using Facebook. Even when you're not online. Even, perhaps, if you've never had a Facebook account. Here's how it works: Facebook provides its business partners tracking software they embed in apps, websites and loyalty programs. Any business or group that needs to do digital advertising has little choice but to feed your activities into Facebook's vacuum: your grocer, politicians and, yes, even the paywall page for this newspaper's website. Behind the scenes, Facebook takes in this data and tries to match it up to your account. It sits under your name in a part of your profile your friends can't see, but Facebook uses to shape your experience online. Among the 100 most popular smartphone apps, you can find Facebook software in 61 of them, app research firm Sensor Tower told me. Facebook also has trackers in about 25 percent of websites, according to privacy software maker Ghostery." [Washington Post, Geoffrey Fowler, [8/29/21](#)]
- **Privacy Software Maker Ghostery Estimated Facebook Had Trackers In About 25 Percent Of Websites.** "How does Facebook's bigness hurt you and me? As Borovicka and I learned, Facebook takes a toll on your privacy — but perhaps not in the way you expect. It isn't just the Facebook app that's gobbling up your information. Facebook is so big, it has persuaded millions of other businesses, apps and websites to also snoop on its behalf. Even when you're not actively using Facebook. Even when you're not online. Even, perhaps, if you've never had a Facebook account. Here's how it works: Facebook provides its business partners tracking software they embed in apps, websites and loyalty programs. Any business or group that needs to do digital advertising has little choice but to feed your activities into Facebook's vacuum: your grocer, politicians and, yes, even the paywall page for this newspaper's website. Behind the scenes, Facebook takes in this data and tries to match it up to your account. It sits under your name in a part of your profile your friends can't see, but Facebook uses to shape your experience online. Among the 100 most popular smartphone apps, you can find Facebook software in 61 of them, app research firm Sensor Tower told me. Facebook also has trackers in about 25 percent of websites, according to privacy software maker Ghostery." [Washington Post, Geoffrey Fowler, [8/29/21](#)]

Washington Post's Geoffrey Fowler: "Facebook Has Become Too Big To Escape." "Megan Borovicka joined Facebook in 2013 and then forgot she even had an account. But Facebook never forgot about her. The 42-year-old Oakland, Calif., lawyer never picked any 'friends,' posted any status updates, liked any photos or even opened the Facebook app on her phone. Yet over the last decade, Facebook has used an invisible data vacuum to suction up very specific details about her life — from her brand of underwear to where she received her paycheck. 'It's a strange feeling,' Borovicka told me, after I showed her what Facebook knew about her. She paused looking at a string of shopping data from one Christmas when she was stuck with a sick kid while her husband went to Macy's. 'Why do they need to know that?' she said. 'I thought if I'm not using Facebook, I wouldn't be in its orbit.' Facebook has become too big to escape. We're rightly becoming more skeptical of Big Tech monopolies, and that should include the sheer volume of data they collect." [Washington Post, Geoffrey Fowler, [8/29/21](#)]

GOOGLE HAS FACED LAWSUITS AND HAD TO PAY RECORD FINES FOR VIOLATING PRIVACY LAWS MEANT TO PROTECT YOUNG CHILDREN ONLINE

2019: GOOGLE AND YOUTUBE HAD TO PAY A RECORD \$170 MILLION SETTLEMENT ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS IT HAD VIOLATED CHILD PRIVACY LAWS

HEADLINE: "YouTube Under Federal Investigation Over Allegations It Violates Children's Privacy" [Washington Post, [6/19/19](#)]

The Federal Trade Commission Launched An Investigation Into YouTube After Complaints From Consumer Groups And Privacy Advocates That It Failed To Protect Kids Who Used The Service And Improperly Collected Their Data. "The Federal Trade Commission launched its investigation after numerous complaints from consumer groups and privacy advocates, according to the four people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because such probes are supposed to be confidential. The complaints contended that YouTube, which is owned by Google, failed to protect kids who used the streaming-video service and improperly collected their data in violation of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, a 1998 law known as COPPA that forbids the tracking and targeting of users younger than age 13. The possibility of a hefty penalty against YouTube — including a settlement forcing YouTube to change its practices to better protect kids — could signal a new phase in the FTC's enforcement of the child-privacy law, which many critics say has grown weak amid technological changes over the past two decades." [Washington Post, [6/19/19](#)]

2019: Google And YouTube Agreed To A Record \$170 Million Settlement To Settle Allegations Brought By The FTC And New York Attorney General Arguing That Google Had Violated Child Privacy Laws. "Google LLC and its subsidiary YouTube, LLC will pay a record \$170 million to settle allegations by the Federal Trade Commission and the New York Attorney General that the YouTube video sharing service illegally collected personal information from children without their parents' consent. The settlement requires Google and YouTube to pay \$136 million to the FTC and \$34 million to New York for allegedly violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) Rule. The \$136 million penalty is by far the largest amount the FTC has ever obtained in a COPPA case since Congress enacted the law in 1998." [FTC, 9/4/19; Signed Consent Order, filed [9/4/19](#)]

- **A 1998 Federal Law Protected Children Under 13 By Requiring Parental Consent Before Companies Could Collect And Share Their Personal Information.** "Kids under 13 are protected by a 1998 federal law that requires parental consent before companies can collect and share their personal information. Under the 2019 settlement, Google agreed to work with video creators to label material aimed at kids. It said it would limit data collection when users view such videos, regardless of their age. But lawmakers say even after the settlement, YouTube Kids, which launched in 2015, continued to exploit loopholes and advertise to children. While it does not target ads based on viewer interests the way the main YouTube service does, it tracks information about what kids are watching in order to recommend videos. It also collects personally identifying device information." [Associated Press, [4/6/21](#)]

2020: GOOGLE FACED A SIMILAR LAWSUIT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM ACCUSING THE COMPANY OF VIOLATING CHILD PRIVACY LAWS

2020: Google Faced A \$3.2 Billion Lawsuit In The United Kingdom Over Allegations That It Violated Child Privacy Laws. "A new lawsuit filed in a United Kingdom court alleges that YouTube knowingly violated children's privacy laws in that country and seeks damages in excess of £2.5 billion (about \$3.2 billion). A tech researcher named Duncan McCann filed the lawsuit in the UK's High Court and is serving as representative claimant in the case—a similar, though not identical, process to a US class-action suit. Foxglove, a UK tech advocacy group, is backing the claim, it said today. 'YouTube, and its parent company Google, are ignoring laws designed to protect children,' Foxglove wrote in a press release. 'They know full well that millions of children watch YouTube. They're making money from unlawfully harvesting data about these young children as they watch YouTube videos—and then running highly targeted adverts, designed to influence vulnerable young minds.' A spokesperson for Google told Bloomberg News that YouTube is not intended for users under the age of 13. 'We launched the YouTube Kids app as a dedicated destination for kids and are always working to better protect kids and families on YouTube,' the company told Bloomberg." [Ars Technica, [9/14/20](#)]

GOOGLE CHOSE NOT TO DISCLOSE A DATA BREACH AFFECTING MILLIONS OF USERS IN ORDER TO AVOID REGULATORY SCRUTINY

December 2018: Google Disclosed That New Research Showed The Security Breach Had Affected 52.5 Million Users. "Google is shutting down its beleaguered social network sooner than expected in the wake of a new security issue that affected 52.5 million users. Google Plus received its initial kiss of death in early October, when the company revealed that a security bug had exposed the account information of 500,000 users, including their names, email addresses and occupations. At the time, Google planned to shut down the social network by August 2019. But in a blog post Monday Google wrote that it discovered a second bug that allowed the profile information of 52.5 million users to be viewable by developers, even if the profiles were set to private, using one of Google's application programming interfaces, or APIs, for six days in November. Once again, the available data included information like users' names, email addresses, occupations and ages." [CNBC, [12/10/18](#)]

Google Initially Found That Almost 500,000 Google+ Users Were Impacted By The Security Breach, Including Paying Customers Of G Suite. "During a two-week period in late March, Google ran tests to determine the impact of the bug, one of the people said. It found 496,951 users who had shared private profile data with a friend could have had that

data accessed by an outside developer, the person said. Some of the individuals whose data was exposed to potential misuse included paying users of G Suite, a set of productivity tools including Google Docs and Drive, the person said. G Suite customers include businesses, schools and governments." [Wall Street Journal, [10/8/18](#)]

Google Exposed The Private Data Of Hundreds Of Thousands Of Users Of The Google+ Social Network Between 2015 And 2018, And Did Not Disclose The Glitch Out Of Fears It Could Cause Regulatory Scrutiny. "Google exposed the private data of hundreds of thousands of users of the Google+ social network and then opted not to disclose the issue this past spring, in part because of fears that doing so would draw regulatory scrutiny and cause reputational damage, according to people briefed on the incident and documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. A software glitch in the social site gave outside developers potential access to private Google+ profile data between 2015 and March 2018, when internal investigators discovered and fixed the issue, according to the documents and people briefed on the incident. A memo reviewed by the Journal prepared by Google's legal and policy staff and shared with senior executives warned that disclosing the incident would likely trigger 'immediate regulatory interest' and invite comparisons to Facebook's leak of user information to data firm Cambridge Analytica." [Wall Street Journal, [10/8/18](#)]

Leaked Documents Showed That Google Decided Not To Disclose The Potential Data Breach Of Almost 500,000 Users In Part To Avoid Google CEO Sundar Pichai Being Subpoenaed To Testify Before Congress. "The document shows Google officials felt that disclosure could have serious ramifications. Revealing the incident would likely result 'in us coming into the spotlight alongside or even instead of Facebook despite having stayed under the radar throughout the Cambridge Analytica scandal,' the memo said. It 'almost guarantees Sundar will testify before Congress.'" [Wall Street Journal, [10/8/18](#)]

GOOGLE HAS BEEN SUED MULTIPLE TIMES OVER ITS LOCATION TRACKING POLICIES

2020: A CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT IN CALIFORNIA ALLEGED THAT GOOGLE CONTINUE TO TRACK USERS' LOCATION EVEN AFTER THEY SWITCHED OFF THE LOCATION HISTORY FEATURE AND WHILE THEY WERE IN "INCOGNITO MODE"

A California Class Action Lawsuit Alleged That Google Continued To Track Users' Locations Even After They Switched Off The Location History Feature. "Interestingly, the Arizona case may have breathed new life into another action that has been pending in the Northern District of California since 2018. As in the Arizona matter, the plaintiffs in a set of consolidated cases have alleged that Google continues to track users' locations even after they have switched off the location history feature on their smartphones." [Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, [10/26/20](#)]

- **Plaintiffs Filed A Class Action Lawsuit Alleging That Google Continues Collecting Data While Users Are In "Incognito Mode."** "In June, plaintiffs filed a class action in the Northern District of California, alleging that Google continues collecting data while users are browsing in 'Incognito' mode and asserting that this conduct violates the federal Wiretap Act, California's Invasion of Privacy Act (CIPA) and California's constitutional right of privacy, and constitutes the tort of intrusion upon seclusion." [Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, [10/26/20](#)]

2021: ARIZONA'S ATTORNEY GENERAL SUED GOOGLE OVER ITS LOCATION TRACKING POLICIES AND ALLEGED IT VIOLATED USERS' PRIVACY RIGHTS

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich Sued Google Over "Deceptive And Unfair" Location Tracking Policies That Violated Users' Privacy Rights. "A new version of Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich's lawsuit against tech behemoth Google alleges the company tracked users' location across third party apps and still gathered that information when devices connected to WiFi, even if location services were off. And company employees voiced concerns that the media, including The New York Times, would find out. [...] The complaint is part of an ongoing consumer fraud lawsuit Brnovich first filed in May 2020 alleging that Google's data collection schemes violated the state's Consumer Fraud Act, though large portions of the lawsuit were redacted by the court at Google's request. What has followed has been a legal battle over what has been able to be released." [Arizona Mirror, [5/24/21](#)]

2022: U.S. ATTORNEYS GENERAL SUED GOOGLE FOR TRACKING USERS' LOCATIONS AFTER THEY BELIEVED THE FEATURE HAD BEEN DISABLED

2022: The Attorneys General of Texas, Washington, Indiana, And DC Sued Google Alleged It Tracked Users' Locations After Consumers Believed They Had Disabled That Feature. "Texas, Indiana, Washington, and Washington, D.C., all filed parallel lawsuits against the tech company Monday, alleging it leads consumers to believe that turning off 'location history' will keep location data from being stored, when in actuality other settings and methods

continue to collect the information. All four lawsuits allege Google has been collecting the data since at least 2014 and used it to send targeted advertisements to consumers, earning Google billions in profits." [Law360, [1/24/22](#)]

CYBERSECURITY FIRM SAID TIKTOK'S DATA COLLECTION PRACTICES WERE "OVERLY INTRUSIVE" AND THE ONLY REASON FOR THEM WAS DATA HARVESTING

HEADLINE: "TikTok Shares Your Data More Than Any Other Social Media App — And It's Unclear Where It Goes, Study Says. " [CNBC, [2/8/22](#)]

HEADLINE: "TikTok Has Been Accused Of 'Aggressive' Data Harvesting. Is Your Information At Risk?" [The Guardian, [7/19/22](#)]

Cybersecurity Firm Review Of TikTok Found Data Collection Practices That Were "Overly Intrusive" And Suggested "The Only Reason This Information Has Been Gathered Is For Data Harvesting." "When the app is in use, it has significantly more permissions than it really needs,' said Robert Potter, co-CEO of Internet 2.0 and one of the editors of the report. 'It grants those permissions by default. When a user doesn't give it permission ... [TikTok] persistently asks. 'If you tell Facebook you don't want to share something, it won't ask you again. TikTok is much more aggressive.' The report labelled the app's data collection practices 'overly intrusive' and questioned their purpose. 'The application can and will run successfully without any of this data being gathered. This leads us to believe that the only reason this information has been gathered is for data harvesting,' it concluded." [The Guardian, [7/19/22](#)]

TIKTOK'S CODE COULD MONITOR KEYSTROKES AND USER CLICKS, WHICH COULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO CAPTURE SENSITIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION

HEADLINE: "TikTok Browser Can Track Users' Keystrokes, According To New Research." [New York Times, [8/19/22](#)]

TikTok's In-App Browser Includes Code That Can Monitor Keystrokes, User Clicks On Websites, Making It Possible For TikTok To Capture Sensitive Information Like Credit Card Numbers And Passwords. "When TikTok users enter a website through a link on the app, TikTok inserts code that can monitor much of their activity on those outside websites, including their keystrokes and whatever they tap on the page, according to new research shared with Forbes. The tracking would make it possible for TikTok to capture a user's credit card information or password. TikTok has the ability to monitor that activity because of modifications it makes to websites using the company's in-app browser, which is part of the app itself. When people tap on TikTok ads or visit links on a creator's profile, the app doesn't open the page with normal browsers like Safari or Chrome. Instead it defaults to a TikTok-made in-app browser that can rewrite parts of web pages. TikTok can track this activity by injecting lines of the programming language JavaScript into the websites visited within the app, creating new commands that alert TikTok to what people are doing in those websites." [Forbes, [8/18/22](#)]

- **Software Researcher, On TikTok Inserting Tracking Browser Code: "This Is A Non- Trivial Engineering Task. This Does Not Happen By Mistake Or Randomly."** "This was an active choice the company made,' said Felix Krause, a software researcher based in Vienna, who published a report on his findings Thursday. 'This is a non-trivial engineering task. This does not happen by mistake or randomly.' Krause is the founder of Fastlane, a service for testing and deploying apps, which Google acquired five years ago." [Forbes, [8/18/22](#)]

TikTok Confirmed Browser Code Capture Capabilities, Claimed It Wasn't Using Them. "TikTok strongly pushed back at the idea that it is tracking users in its in-app browser. The company confirmed those features exist in the code, but said TikTok is not using them." [Forbes, [8/18/22](#)]

TIKTOK REFUSED TO COMMIT TO CUTTING OFF THE FLOW OF U.S. DATA TO CHINA

HEADLINE: "TikTok Won't Commit To Stopping US Data Flows To China." [CNN, [9/14/22](#)]

September 2022: During Senate Homeland Security Hearing, TikTok Refused To Commit To Cutting Off Flow Of U.S. Data To China. "TikTok repeatedly declined to commit to US lawmakers on Wednesday that the short-form video app will cut off flows of US user data to China, instead promising that the outcome of its negotiations with the US government 'will satisfy all national security concerns.' Testifying before the Senate Homeland Security Committee, TikTok Chief Operating Officer Vanessa Pappas first sparred with Sen. Rob Portman over details of TikTok's corporate structure before being confronted — twice — with a specific request. 'Will TikTok commit to cutting off all data and data flows to China, China-based TikTok employees, ByteDance employees, or any other party in China that might have the capability to access information on US users?' Portman asked. ... Portman then pressed Pappas again to commit to

'cutting off all data and metadata flows to China,' but Pappas simply vowed that 'our final agreement with the US government will satisfy all national security concerns.' [CNN, [9/14/22](#)]

BYTEDANCE EMPLOYEES REPORTEDLY REPEATEDLY ACCESS NON-PUBLIC DATA ON U.S. TIKTOK USERS

HEADLINE: "Leaked Audio From 80 Internal TikTok Meetings Shows That US User Data Has Been Repeatedly Accessed From China." [Buzzfeed News, [6/17/22](#)]

Internal TikTok Meeting Audio Revealed China-Based ByteDance Employees Repeatedly Accessed Non-Public Data On U.S. TikTok Users Despite Company's Assurances On U.S.-Based Data Storage. "For years, TikTok has responded to data privacy concerns by promising that information gathered about users in the United States is stored in the United States, rather than China, where ByteDance, the video platform's parent company, is located. But according to leaked audio from more than 80 internal TikTok meetings, China-based employees of ByteDance have repeatedly accessed nonpublic data about US TikTok users — exactly the type of behavior that inspired former president Donald Trump to threaten to ban the app in the United States. The recordings, which were reviewed by BuzzFeed News, contain 14 statements from nine different TikTok employees indicating that engineers in China had access to US data between September 2021 and January 2022, at the very least. Despite a TikTok executive's sworn testimony in an October 2021 Senate hearing that a 'world-renowned, US- based security team' decides who gets access to this data, nine statements by eight different employees describe situations where US employees had to turn to their colleagues in China to determine how US user data was flowing. US staff did not have permission or knowledge of how to access the data on their own, according to the tapes." [Buzzfeed News, [6/17/22](#)]

TikTok Employees Remarkd "Everything Is Seen In China" And Referred To Beijing-Based Engineer As The "Master Admin" Who "Has Access To Everything." "Everything is seen in China,' said a member of TikTok's Trust and Safety department in a September 2021 meeting. In another September meeting, a director referred to one Beijing-based engineer as a 'Master Admin' who 'has access to everything.' (While many employees introduced themselves by name and title in the recordings, BuzzFeed News is not naming anyone to protect their privacy.)" [Buzzfeed News, [6/17/22](#)]

SENATE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE CALLED FOR AN FTC INVESTIGATION AFTER DISCOVERY THAT U.S. TIKTOK USER DATA WAS ACCESSIBLE TO BYTEDANCE EMPLOYEES IN CHINA

Senate Intelligence Committee Called For FTC Investigation After Revelation U.S. User Data Was Accessible To ByteDance Employees In China. "The leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee asked the Federal Trade Commission on Tuesday to investigate whether TikTok, the Chinese-owned video app, had misled the public about whether Beijing could have access to American user data. In a letter to Lina Khan, the chair of the F.T.C., Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, a Democrat who heads the Intelligence Committee, and Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, the panel's top Republican, said they were concerned about recent reports that TikTok's user data was accessible to employees of its parent company, ByteDance, in China. They also said they were worried that ByteDance was more involved in TikTok's decision making than the app had claimed in the past." [New York Times, [7/5/22](#)]

2019: THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION FINED TIKTOK \$5.7 MILLION FOR ITS PREDECESSOR'S VIOLATIONS OF U.S. CHILD PRIVACY LAW

HEADLINE: "The U.S. Government Fined The App Now Known As TikTok \$5.7 Million For Illegally Collecting Children's Data" [Washington Post, [2/27/19](#)]

2019: TikTok Predecessor Musical.ly Was Fined \$5.7 Million By The Federal Trade Commission For Violating U.S. Child Privacy Law. "Federal regulators fined social media app Musical.ly — now known as TikTok — \$5.7 million for illegally collecting the names, email addresses, pictures and locations of kids under age 13, a record penalty for violations of the nation's child privacy law. The fine results from a settlement between the Federal Trade Commission and TikTok, which merged with California-based Musical.ly in 2018, over allegations of illegal data collection of children. The TikTok app, like Musical.ly before it, allows users to make videos of themselves lip-syncing to millions of songs, including from children's movies, and is broadly popular among adults and children. TikTok is owned by a Chinese company. The FTC said TikTok had 65 million users registered in the United States, and as of Wednesday, it was the fourth and 25th-most popular free app on Google and Apple devices, respectively. The illegal data collection alleged by the FTC predates the merger with Musica.ly and, according to TikTok officials, is no longer in practice." [Washington Post, [2/27/19](#)]

TIKTOK, GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK ARE ALL DETRIMENTAL TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH AND THEY'VE BEEN SLOW TO ADDRESS IT, IF AT ALL

FACEBOOK KNEW INSTAGRAM WAS DETRIMENTAL TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH, PARTICULARLY TEEN GIRLS, BUT SAID THE OPPOSITE PUBLICLY

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM WERE INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED TO BE ADDICTIVE

HEADLINE: "How Instagram And Facebook Are Intentionally Designed To Mimic Addictive Painkillers" [Business Insider, [8/11/21](#)]

Former Employees From Big Tech Companies, Like Facebook And Google, Have Warned That The Companies Deliberately Design Apps To Be Addictive Because The More Time An Individual Spends On It The More Money The Company Makes. "Behavioral modification doesn't necessarily have to be a bad thing; apps can help us to become more productive or to do more exercise. However, several ex-employees of Apple, Google, and Facebook have warned that large tech companies deliberately design apps to be addictive. The logic is simple: the more time you spend on the app, the more profit it generates. According to these ex-employees' accusations, tech giants try to maximize the time you spend on an app to maximize their profit, regardless of its impact on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of its users." [Business Insider, [8/11/21](#)]

HEADLINE: "Teens Say Facebook's Addictive Instagram App Makes Them Anxious" [NPR, [10/10/21](#)]

INTERNAL FACEBOOK RESEARCH SHOWED THAT INSTAGRAM WAS CREATING BODY IMAGE ISSUES AND MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

HEADLINE: "Facebook Knows Instagram Is Toxic For Teen Girls, Company Documents Show" [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

March 2020: Internal Facebook Research Found "Thirty-Two Percent Of Teen Girls Said That When They Felt Bad About Their Bodies, Instagram Made Them Feel Worse." "About a year ago, teenager Anastasia Vlasova started seeing a therapist. She had developed an eating disorder, and had a clear idea of what led to it: her time on Instagram. [...] Around that time, researchers inside Instagram, which is owned by Facebook Inc., were studying this kind of experience and asking whether it was part of a broader phenomenon. Their findings confirmed some serious problems. 'Thirty-two percent of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse,' the researchers said in a March 2020 slide presentation posted to Facebook's internal message board, reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. 'Comparisons on Instagram can change how young women view and describe themselves.' For the past three years, Facebook has been conducting studies into how its photo-sharing app affects its millions of young users. Repeatedly, the company's researchers found that Instagram is harmful for a sizable percentage of them, most notably teenage girls. 'We make body image issues worse for one in three teen girls,' said one slide from 2019, summarizing research about teen girls who experience the issues. 'Teens blame Instagram for increases in the rate of anxiety and depression,' said another slide. 'This reaction was unprompted and consistent across all groups.'" [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

- **Facebook Internal Research In 2019: "We Make Body Image Issues Worse For One In Three Teen Girls."** "Around that time, researchers inside Instagram, which is owned by Facebook Inc., were studying this kind of experience and asking whether it was part of a broader phenomenon. Their findings confirmed some serious problems. 'Thirty-two percent of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse,' the researchers said in a March 2020 slide presentation posted to Facebook's internal message board, reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. 'Comparisons on Instagram can change how young women view and describe themselves.' For the past three years, Facebook has been conducting studies into how its photo-sharing app affects its millions of young users. Repeatedly, the company's researchers found that Instagram is harmful for a sizable percentage of them, most notably teenage girls. 'We make body image issues worse for one in three teen girls,' said one slide from 2019, summarizing research about teen girls who experience the issues." [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

Facebook Internal Research Knew That Unprompted, Teens Blamed Instagram For Increases In Anxiety And Depression. "Around that time, researchers inside Instagram, which is owned by Facebook Inc., were studying this kind of experience and asking whether it was part of a broader phenomenon. Their findings confirmed some serious problems. 'Thirty-two percent of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse,' the researchers said in a March 2020 slide presentation posted to Facebook's internal message board, reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. [...] 'Teens blame Instagram for increases in the rate of anxiety and depression,' said another slide. 'This reaction was unprompted and consistent across all groups.'" [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

- **14 Percent Of Teen Boys In The U.S. Said Instagram Made Them Feel Worse About Themselves.** “Teen boys aren’t immune. In the deep dive Facebook’s researchers conducted into mental health in 2019, they found that 14% of boys in the U.S. said Instagram made them feel worse about themselves. In their report on body image in 2020, Facebook’s researchers found that 40% of teen boys experience negative social comparison. ‘I just feel on the edge a lot of the time,’ a teen boy in the U.S. told Facebook’s researchers. ‘It’s like you can be called out for anything you do. One wrong move. One wrong step.’” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]
- **13 Percent Of British Users And Six Percent Of American Users Traced Suicidal Thoughts To Instagram.** “Around that time, researchers inside Instagram, which is owned by Facebook Inc., were studying this kind of experience and asking whether it was part of a broader phenomenon. Their findings confirmed some serious problems. ‘Thirty-two percent of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse,’ the researchers said in a March 2020 slide presentation posted to Facebook’s internal message board, reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. [...] Among teens who reported suicidal thoughts, 13% of British users and 6% of American users traced the desire to kill themselves to Instagram, one presentation showed.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

A ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT FOUND THAT INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK HAD NEGATIVE MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

A Royal Society For Public Health Report Found That Instagram Had The “Most Negative Overall Effect” On Young People’s Mental Health With Respect To Body Image, Sleep, Bullying, Anxiety, Depression And Loneliness. “A new report, #StatusOfMind, published by the Royal Society for Public Health in the UK examined the effects of social media on young people’s mental health. After surveying almost 1,500 people between the ages of 14-24, their findings offered a clear picture of how different social media platforms impact mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, sleep deprivation, and body-image. Instagram was found to have the most negative overall effect on young people’s mental health. The popular photo sharing app negatively impacts body image and sleep, increases bullying and ‘FOMO’ (fear of missing out), and leads to greater feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. The positive effects of Instagram include self-expression, self-identity, community building, and emotional support.” [PsychAlive, [May 2017](#)]

A Royal Society For Public Health Report Found That Facebook Had Similar Negative Effects As Instagram With Respect To Bullying, Fear Of Missing Out, Body Image, Anxiety, Depression And Loneliness. “A new report, #StatusOfMind, published by the Royal Society for Public Health in the UK examined the effects of social media on young people’s mental health. After surveying almost 1,500 people between the ages of 14-24, their findings offered a clear picture of how different social media platforms impact mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, sleep deprivation, and body-image. [...] Facebook was found to have similar negative effects to Instagram in the categories of bullying, FOMO, body image, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Facebook also has a particularly negative impact on sleep. However, Facebook had some strong positive effects as well, particularly in the categories of emotional support and community building.” [PsychAlive, [May 2017](#)]

WALL STREET JOURNAL: “THE FEATURES THAT INSTAGRAM IDENTIFIES AS MOST HARMFUL TO TEENS APPEAR TO BE AT THE PLATFORM’S CORE”

Wall Street Journal: “The Features That Instagram Identifies As Most Harmful To Teens Appear To Be At The Platform’s Core.” “The features that Instagram identifies as most harmful to teens appear to be at the platform’s core. The tendency to share only the best moments, a pressure to look perfect and an addictive product can send teens spiraling toward eating disorders, an unhealthy sense of their own bodies and depression, March 2020 internal research states. It warns that the Explore page, which serves users photos and videos curated by an algorithm, can send users deep into content that can be harmful. ‘Aspects of Instagram exacerbate each other to create a perfect storm,’ the research states. The research has been reviewed by top Facebook executives, and was cited in a 2020 presentation given to Mr. Zuckerberg, according to the documents.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

- **Facebook Internal Research Found Instagram, On Which People Tended Only To Share Best Moments And Its Addictive Nature Risked Pushing Teens To Eating Disorders, Depression, And An Unhealthy Sense Of Their Own Bodies.** “The features that Instagram identifies as most harmful to teens appear to be at the platform’s core. The tendency to share only the best moments, a pressure to look perfect and an addictive product can send teens spiraling toward eating disorders, an unhealthy sense of their own bodies and depression, March 2020 internal research states. It warns that the Explore page, which serves users photos and videos curated by an algorithm, can send users deep into content that can be harmful. ‘Aspects of Instagram exacerbate each other to create a perfect storm,’ the research states. The research has been reviewed by top Facebook executives, and was cited in a 2020 presentation given to Mr. Zuckerberg, according to the documents.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

Facebook Researchers Concluded Some Of The Problems Instagram Created With Teen Mental Health Were Specific To Instagram And Not Found In Social Media More Broadly. “The researchers are Facebook employees in areas including data science, marketing and product development who work on a range of issues related to how users interact with the platform. Many have backgrounds in computer science, psychology and quantitative and qualitative analysis. In five presentations over 18 months to this spring, the researchers conducted what they called a ‘teen mental health deep dive’ and follow-up studies. They came to the conclusion that some of the problems were specific to Instagram, and not social media more broadly. That is especially true concerning so-called social comparison, which is when people assess their own value in relation to the attractiveness, wealth and success of others. ‘Social comparison is worse on Instagram,’ states Facebook’s deep dive into teen girl body-image issues in 2020, noting that TikTok, a short-video app, is grounded in performance, while users on Snapchat, a rival photo and video-sharing app, are sheltered by jokey filters that ‘keep the focus on the face.’ In contrast, Instagram focuses heavily on the body and lifestyle. The features that Instagram identifies as most harmful to teens appear to be at the platform’s core.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

PUBLICLY FACEBOOK DOWNPLAYED INSTAGRAM’S NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON TEENS AND CLAIMED SOCIAL MEDIA HAD POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

Wall Street Journal: “In Public, Facebook Has Consistently Played Down The App’s Negative Effects On Teens, And Hasn’t Made Its Research Public Or Available To Academics Or Lawmakers Who Have Asked For It.” “In public, Facebook has consistently played down the app’s negative effects on teens, and hasn’t made its research public or available to academics or lawmakers who have asked for it. ‘The research that we’ve seen is that using social apps to connect with other people can have positive mental-health benefits,’ CEO Mark Zuckerberg said at a congressional hearing in March 2021 when asked about children and mental health. In May, Instagram head Adam Mosseri told reporters that research he had seen suggests the app’s effects on teen well-being is likely ‘quite small.’ In a recent interview, Mr. Mosseri said: ‘In no way do I mean to diminish these issues....Some of the issues mentioned in this story aren’t necessarily widespread, but their impact on people may be huge.’ He said he believes Facebook was late to realizing there were drawbacks to connecting people in such large numbers. ‘I’ve been pushing very hard for us to embrace our responsibilities more broadly,’ he said.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

Mark Zuckerberg In Congressional Hearing: “The Research That We’ve Seen Is That Using Social Apps To Connect With Other People Can Have Positive Mental-Health Benefits.” “In public, Facebook has consistently played down the app’s negative effects on teens, and hasn’t made its research public or available to academics or lawmakers who have asked for it. ‘The research that we’ve seen is that using social apps to connect with other people can have positive mental-health benefits,’ CEO Mark Zuckerberg said at a congressional hearing in March 2021 when asked about children and mental health. In May, Instagram head Adam Mosseri told reporters that research he had seen suggests the app’s effects on teen well-being is likely ‘quite small.’ In a recent interview, Mr. Mosseri said: ‘In no way do I mean to diminish these issues....Some of the issues mentioned in this story aren’t necessarily widespread, but their impact on people may be huge.’ He said he believes Facebook was late to realizing there were drawbacks to connecting people in such large numbers. ‘I’ve been pushing very hard for us to embrace our responsibilities more broadly,’ he said.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

Wall Street Journal: “Instead Of Referencing Their Own Data Showing The Negative Effects Of Instagram, Facebook Executives In Public Have Often Pointed To Studies From The Oxford Internet Institute That Have Shown Little Correlation Between Social-Media Use And Depression.” “Instead of referencing their own data showing the negative effects of Instagram, Facebook executives in public have often pointed to studies from the Oxford Internet Institute that have shown little correlation between social-media use and depression. Other studies also found discrepancies between the amount of time people say they use social media and the amount of time they actually use such services. Mr. Mosseri has pointed to these studies as evidence for why research using self-reported data might not be accurate. Facebook has in the past been a donor to a researcher at the Oxford institute, which is part of the research and teaching department of Britain’s Oxford University. Oxford’s lead researcher on the studies, Andrew Przybylski, who said he didn’t receive funding from Facebook, said companies like Facebook need to be more open about their research. ‘The data exists within the tech industry,’ he said. ‘Scientists just need to be able to access it for neutral and independent investigation.’ In an interview, Mr. Przybylski said, ‘People talk about Instagram like it’s a drug. But we can’t study the active ingredient.’” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

FACEBOOK WANTED TO EMULATE TIKTOK AND EXPAND ITS BASE OF YOUNG USERS DESPITE KNOWING ITS PRODUCTS WERE ALREADY DETRIMENTAL TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

FACEBOOK SOUGHT TO EXPAND ITS BASE OF YOUNGER USERS ON ITS PLATFORMS

Wall Street Journal Reported That Expanding Instagram’s Base Of Young Users Was “Vital” To Facebook’s Revenue, And It Didn’t Want To Jeopardize Its Engagement With The Platform. “Around that time, researchers inside Instagram, which is owned by Facebook Inc., were studying this kind of experience and asking whether it was part of a broader phenomenon. Their findings confirmed some serious problems. ‘Thirty-two percent of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse,’ the researchers said in a March 2020 slide presentation posted to Facebook’s internal message board, reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. [...] Expanding its base of young users is vital to the company’s more than \$100 billion in annual revenue, and it doesn’t want to jeopardize their engagement with the platform. More than 40% of Instagram’s users are 22 years old and younger, and about 22 million teens log onto Instagram in the U.S. each day, compared with five million teens logging onto Facebook, where young users have been shrinking for a decade, the materials show.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

Amid Concerns About Declining Usage, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg Said He Redirected Facebook Teams To “Make Serving Young Adults Their North Star.” “Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg says he’s redirected teams within his company to ‘make serving young adults their north star.’ The comment, made on a call with investors this afternoon, speaks to Facebook’s concerns about declining usage among teens and young adults. ‘So much of our services have gotten dialed to be the best for the most people who use them, rather than specifically for young adults,’ Zuckerberg said. [...] While the details are largely talk for now, it’s clear that Facebook has been thinking and planning this before now. The Verge reported today on leaked Facebook documents showing the company’s alarm at seeing declining usage, with a precipitous drop predicted in the years ahead. The documents also show ideas Facebook considered to increase usage among younger users, including revamped groups, job finding tools, and ‘mood feeds.’” [The Verge, [10/25/21](#)]

FACEBOOK WANTED TO EMULATE TIKTOK BY CREATING INSTAGRAM REELS AND A BISECTED FEED ON FACEBOOK SIMILAR TO TIKTOK’S SIGNATURE PRODUCT

HEADLINE: “Instagram Reels Copies TikTok, And Is An Example Of Everything Wrong With Facebook.” [Inc, [8/6/20](#)]

August 2020: Meta Rolled Out Instagram Reels In Direct Competition With TikTok’s Short Video Format. “If the news about TikTok, and the possibility that it might be sold to Microsoft, wasn’t interesting enough, on Wednesday Facebook released a direct competitor to the popular video sharing app called Instagram Reels. A new feature of Instagram that lets you record 15- second videos, set them to music, and share them as an Instagram Story, Reels can also be found in a special section of the Explore tab in the app. In almost every functional way, Reels is TikTok, but built into Instagram. If Facebook were to buy TikTok from its parent company ByteDance, and integrate it into Instagram as is, it would be this product.” [Inc, [8/6/20](#)]

HEADLINE: “Facebook Bets Its Users Really Want A TikTok Clone.” [Bloomberg, [7/27/22](#)]

July 2022: Meta Announced Facebook Would Launch Bisected Feed That Promoted “Discovery Engine” Featuring Content Chosen By Meta Algorithms, Similar To TikTok’s Signature Product. “Meta Platforms Inc. Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg made an announcement on July 21 that was confusing and somewhat misleading. In a Facebook post, he said he was breaking the social network’s feed into two sections. Because users care so much about content from their friends and families, Zuckerberg said, those posts would get their own tab. But when users open the app, they won’t see that tab but the one featuring Facebook’s ‘discovery engine,’ which features content chosen by Meta’s algorithms. It didn’t take much reading between the lines to see what Facebook was doing: copying TikTok, the video-sharing app that it increasingly sees as its main competitor. The friends-and-family stuff that Facebook has built its empire on is going to become less accessible as Meta experiments with showing users content from people they aren’t following. In theory, doing this could allow Facebook to refine its own version of TikTok’s famously effective algorithms for choosing content, helping it retain users.” [Bloomberg, [7/27/22](#)]

LAWMAKERS HAVE CALLED ON FACEBOOK TO BE MORE TRANSPARENT ABOUT ITS MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS ON TEENAGERS

Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) And Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) Called On Facebook To Release Its Internal Research On The Impact Of Its Platforms On Youth Mental Health. “At a congressional hearing this March, Mr. Zuckerberg defended the company against criticism from lawmakers about plans to create a new Instagram product for children under 13. When asked if the company had studied the app’s effects on children, he said, ‘I believe the answer is yes.’ In August, Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Marsha Blackburn in a letter to Mr. Zuckerberg called on him to release Facebook’s internal research on the impact of its platforms on youth mental health. In response, Facebook sent the senators a six-page letter that didn’t include the company’s own studies. Instead, Facebook said there are many challenges with conducting research in this space, saying, ‘We are not aware of a consensus among studies or experts about how much screen time is ‘too much,’ ‘ according to a copy of the letter reviewed by the Journal. Facebook also told

the senators that its internal research is proprietary and 'kept confidential to promote frank and open dialogue and brainstorming internally.'" [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) On Instagram's Impact On Teen Mental Health: "Facebook Seems To Be Taking A Page From The Textbook Of Big Tobacco —Targeting Teens With Potentially Dangerous Products While Masking The Science In Public." "A Facebook spokeswoman said the company welcomed productive collaboration with Congress and would look for opportunities to work with external researchers on credible studies. 'Facebook's answers were so evasive—failing to even respond to all our questions—that they really raise questions about what Facebook might be hiding,' Sen. Blumenthal said in an email. 'Facebook seems to be taking a page from the textbook of Big Tobacco—targeting teens with potentially dangerous products while masking the science in public.'" [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

- **Psychology Professor: "If You Believe [Tobacco Companies] Should Have Been More Truthful About The Link Between Smoking And Lung Cancer, Then You Should Probably Believe That Facebook Should Be More Upfront About Links To Depression Among Teen Girls."** "When told of Facebook's internal research, Jean Twenge, a professor of psychology at San Diego State University who has published research finding that social media is harmful for some kids, said it was a potential turning point in the discussion about how social media affects teens. 'If you believe that R.J. Reynolds should have been more truthful about the link between smoking and lung cancer, then you should probably believe that Facebook should be more upfront about links to depression among teen girls,' she said." [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

GOOGLE'S YOUTUBE HAS FAILED TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM DISTURBING OR INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT AND VIOLATED CHILD PRIVACY LAW

YOUTUBE REDESIGNED ITS ALGORITHM TO MAXIMIZE VIEWS IN A MOVE THAT MADE IT AN "ADDICTION ENGINE"

2012: YouTube Rewrote Its Algorithm To Maximize Views, Which YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki Cheered When She Took Over In 2014. "In 2012, YouTube concluded that the more people watched, the more ads it could run—and that recommending videos, alongside a clip or after one was finished, was the best way to keep eyes on the site. So YouTube, then run by Google veteran Salar Kamangar, set a company-wide objective to reach one billion hours of viewing a day, and rewrote its recommendation engine to maximize for that goal. When Wojcicki took over, in 2014, YouTube was a third of the way to the goal, she recalled in investor John Doerr's 2018 book Measure What Matters. 'They thought it would break the internet! But it seemed to me that such a clear and measurable objective would energize people, and I cheered them on,' Wojcicki told Doerr. 'The billion hours of daily watch time gave our tech people a North Star.' By October, 2016, YouTube hit its goal." [Bloomberg, [4/2/19](#)]

2015: YouTube Put In Place A New Algorithm, Criticized By A Computer Scientist As An "Addiction Engine" In Order To Drive More Views To Its Content And Make Profits. "That same fall, three Google coders published a paper on the ways YouTube's recommendation system worked with its mountain of freshly uploaded footage. They outlined how YouTube's neural network, an AI system that mimics the human brain, could better predict what a viewer would watch next. The research notes how the AI can try to suppress 'clickbait,' videos that lied about their subject and lost viewer's attention. [...] Rather than revamp its recommendation engine, YouTube doubled down. The neural network described in the 2016 research went into effect in YouTube recommendations starting in 2015. By the measures available, it has achieved its goal of keeping people on YouTube. 'It's an addiction engine,' said Francis Irving, a computer scientist who has written critically about YouTube's AI system. Irving said he has raised these concerns with YouTube staff. They responded with incredulity, or an indication that they had no incentives to change how its software worked, he said. 'It's not a disastrous failed algorithm,' Irving added. 'It works well for a lot of people, and it makes a lot of money.'" [Bloomberg, [4/2/19](#)]

EVEN AFTER A \$170 MILLION SETTLEMENT FOR VIOLATING CHILD PRIVACY LAW, YOUTUBE CONTINUED TO EXPLOIT LOOPHOLES

2015: CONSUMER ADVOCATES COMPLAINED THAT DISTURBING CONTENT WAS CONTAINED IN CONTENT MEANT FOR CHILDREN ON YOUTUBE KIDS

2015: Two Months After YouTube Kids Launched, Consumer Advocates Complained To The FTC About Disturbing Content Geared Towards Children On The Platform. "On Feb. 23, 2015, YouTube announced YouTube Kids, a stand-alone app built for children and child-appropriate entertainment. The idea was to make YouTube a safer platform for parents, who didn't want their children using the main site unsupervised. The initial blog post about the Kids app mentions that 'parents can rest a little easier knowing that videos in the YouTube Kids app are narrowed down to

content appropriate for kids.' Parental controls, including giving parents the ability to remove the search option from the app, giving their children access to 'just the pre-selected videos available on the home screen' were also included. The Kids App, according to Shimrit Ben-Yair, YouTube Kids Group's product manager, marked the 'first step toward reimagining YouTube for families.' Less than two months later, in May 2015, the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, a coalition of children's and consumers advocacy groups, complained to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) about content they called 'not only ... disturbing for young children to view, but potentially harmful.'" [Polygon, [12/8/17](#)]

- **A Consumer Advocate Complaint Noted That YouTube Kids Featured Sexual Content, Advertising For Alcohol, And Promotion Of Unsafe Behaviors.** "CDD and CCFC's further review of YouTube Kids demonstrates that the app is rife with videos that would not meet anyone's definition of "family friendly." In fact, YouTube Kids contains many videos that would not only be disturbing for young children to view, but potentially harmful. Over the course of our review of YouTube Kids, we found: Explicit sexual language presented amidst cartoon animation; A profanity-laced parody of the film Casino featuring Bert and Ernie from Sesame Street; Graphic adult discussions about family violence, pornography and child suicide; Jokes about pedophilia and drug use; Modeling of unsafe behaviors such as playing with lit matches; Advertising for alcohol products." [Campaign for a Commercial Free Child et. al., [5/19/15](#)]

2018: PARENTS AND MEDICAL EXPERTS EXPRESSED CONCERNS ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS MANIPULATED CONTENT ON YOUTUBE WAS HAVING ON CHILDREN

2018: Parents And Medical Experts Reported That People Were Manipulating Content From Well-Known Children's Franchises And Inserted Inappropriate Or Disturbing Content, Which Has Adverse Affects On Developing Brains. "As parents increasingly question the effects technology has on their children's health and well-being, many are alarmed by the slew of reports coming out about malicious content on YouTube targeting children as young as two years old. In recent months parents and psychotherapists have reported that perpetrators have manipulated content from well-known beloved children's franchises, such as Entertainment One's Peppa Pig, Nickelodeon's PAW Patrol and Disney's Frozen and Mickey Mouse, and inserted inappropriate and disturbing content involving popular characters. [...] According to medical experts, this content has an adverse effect on the developing brain. 'Children who repeatedly experience stressful and/or fearful emotions may underdevelop parts of their brain's prefrontal cortex and frontal lobe, the parts of the brain responsible for executive functions, like making conscious choices and planning ahead, said Donna Volpitta, Ed.D., founder of The Center for Resilient Leadership."

CNBC: "Mental Health Experts Warn That YouTube Is A Growing Source Of Anxiety And Inappropriate Sexual Behavior Among Kids Under The Age Of 13." "Since YouTube was founded in 2005 by former PayPal colleagues Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim (it was snapped up by Google for \$1.65 billion just a year and a half later), its popularity among children has surged. Now mental health experts warn that YouTube is a growing source of anxiety and inappropriate sexual behavior among kids under the age of 13, and parents and educators need to get involved. Watching 'fear-inducing videos cause the brain to receive a small amount of dopamine,' said Dr. Volpitta. Dopamine is produced in the body to promote reinforcement — it acts as a reward and creates a desire to do something over and over." [CNBC, [2/13/18](#)]

Child Psychotherapist Said She Has Seen A Rise In Cases Of Children Suffering From Anxiety Triggered By Videos They've Watched On YouTube And The Children Exhibited Loss Of Appetite, Sleeplessness, Crying Fits And Fear. "Natasha Daniels, LCSW, child psychotherapist in Chandler, Arizona, agrees. She is the founder of AnxiousToddlers.com, an educational website for parents. 'YouTube is an ongoing conversation in my therapy practice, which indicates there's a problem,' she said. Over the last five years, she said she has seen a rise in cases of children suffering from anxiety triggered by videos they have watched on YouTube. These children exhibit loss of appetite, sleeplessness, crying fits and fear. Daniels said parents should heed YouTube's terms of service, which states, 'The Service is not intended for children under 13.' She continues, 'I'm seeing this impacting kids between the ages of six to 12, but it's the younger ones that are really concerning.'" [CNBC, [2/13/18](#)]

- **Manipulated Children's Content Had Been Filtering Down To YouTube Kids, Which Was Supposed To Be Child-Friendly Content Only.** "As parents increasingly question the effects technology has on their children's health and well-being, many are alarmed by the slew of reports coming out about malicious content on YouTube targeting children as young as two years old. In recent months parents and psychotherapists have reported that perpetrators have manipulated content from well-known beloved children's franchises, such as Entertainment One's Peppa Pig, Nickelodeon's PAW Patrol and Disney's Frozen and Mickey Mouse, and inserted inappropriate and disturbing content involving popular characters. [...] What's worse, some of this content is filtering down into YouTube Kids, an app launched by Google in 2015 that has 11 million viewers and is supposed to contain only child-friendly content. These offending videos are only a fraction of YouTube's kid-friendly universe, yet they are another example of the potential for abuse on digital platforms that rely on algorithms to police content — and the latest in a string of reports that reveal the dark side of technology on young minds." [CNBC, [2/13/18](#)]

- **CNBC: “While Most Of The Digital Perpetrators Are Unknown, What Is Certain Is That Their Intent To Do Harm Is Deliberate, As It Is Quite Easy For A Child To Stumble Upon These Video Clips.”** "As parents increasingly question the effects technology has on their children’s health and well-being, many are alarmed by the slew of reports coming out about malicious content on YouTube targeting children as young as two years old. In recent months parents and psychotherapists have reported that perpetrators have manipulated content from well-known beloved children’s franchises, such as Entertainment One’s Peppa Pig, Nickelodeon’s PAW Patrol and Disney’s Frozen and Mickey Mouse, and inserted inappropriate and disturbing content involving popular characters. [...] While most of the digital perpetrators are unknown, what is certain is that their intent to do harm is deliberate, as it is quite easy for a child to stumble upon these video clips. For example, just five clicks into the popular ‘Dave and Ava — Nursery Rhymes and Baby Songs’ in YouTube’s ‘Up Next’ autofeed suggestions pulls up a scary video featuring Nickelodeon’s PAW Patrol characters. (PAW Patrol is a much-loved cartoon for children ages 2 to 5 about heroic dogs with human jobs.) The video, like most in this category, appears fairly innocuous in the first few minutes but becomes progressively darker with time." [CNBC, [2/13/18](#)]

2019: GOOGLE AND YOUTUBE HAD TO PAY A RECORD \$170 MILLION SETTLEMENT ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS IT HAD VIOLATED CHILD PRIVACY LAWS

2019: Google And YouTube Agreed To A Record \$170 Million Settlement To Settle Allegations Brought By The FTC And New York Attorney General Arguing That Google Had Violated Child Privacy Laws. “Google LLC and its subsidiary YouTube, LLC will pay a record \$170 million to settle allegations by the Federal Trade Commission and the New York Attorney General that the YouTube video sharing service illegally collected personal information from children without their parents’ consent. The settlement requires Google and YouTube to pay \$136 million to the FTC and \$34 million to New York for allegedly violating the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) Rule. The \$136 million penalty is by far the largest amount the FTC has ever obtained in a COPPA case since Congress enacted the law in 1998.” [FTC, 9/4/19; Signed Consent Order, filed [9/4/19](#)]

- **A 1998 Federal Law Protected Children Under 13 By Requiring Parental Consent Before Companies Could Collect And Share Their Personal Information.** "Kids under 13 are protected by a 1998 federal law that requires parental consent before companies can collect and share their personal information. Under the 2019 settlement, Google agreed to work with video creators to label material aimed at kids. It said it would limit data collection when users view such videos, regardless of their age. But lawmakers say even after the settlement, YouTube Kids, which launched in 2015, continued to exploit loopholes and advertise to children. While it does not target ads based on viewer interests the way the main YouTube service does, it tracks information about what kids are watching in order to recommend videos. It also collects personally identifying device information." [Associated Press, [4/6/21](#)]

2021: FEDERAL LAWMAKERS ACCUSED YOUTUBE OF NOT DOING ENOUGH TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM POTENTIALLY HARMFUL CONTENT ON ITS PLATFORM

HEADLINE: "Lawmakers Call YouTube Kids A ‘Wasteland Of Vapid’ Content" [Associated Press, [4/6/21](#)]

The House Oversight And Reform Subcommittee Sent A Letter To YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki Seeking Information On YouTube Kids And Accusing It Of Not Doing Enough To Protect Children From Potentially Harmful Content “A House subcommittee is investigating YouTube Kids, saying the Google-owned video service feeds children inappropriate material in a wasteland of vapid, consumerist content so it can serve them ads. The inquiry comes despite Google agreeing to pay \$170 million in 2019 to settle allegations that YouTube collected personal data on children without their parents’ consent. In a letter sent Tuesday to YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki, the U.S. House Oversight and Reform subcommittee on economic and consumer policy said YouTube does not do enough to protect kids from material that could harm them. Instead it relies on artificial intelligence and creators’ self-regulation to decide what videos make it on to the platform, according to the letter from the committee’s chairman, Illinois Democrat Raja Krishnamoorthi. And despite changes in the wake of the 2019 settlement, the letter notes, YouTube Kids still shows ads to children. But instead of basing it on kids’ online activity, it now targets it based on the videos they are watching.” [Associated Press, [4/6/21](#)]

- **House Oversight And Reform Subcommittee: “YouTube Kids Spends No Time Or Effort Determining The Appropriateness Of Content Before It Becomes Available For Children To Watch.”** "The congressional investigation comes a year into the pandemic that has shuttered schools and left parents who are working from home increasingly reliant on services such as YouTube to keep kids occupied. This has led to a rethinking of ‘screen time’ rules and guilt over the amount of time kids spend in front of screens, with some experts recommending that parents focus on quality, not quantity. But lawmakers say YouTube Kids is anything but quality. ‘YouTube Kids spends no time or effort determining the appropriateness of content before it becomes

available for children to watch,' the letter says. 'YouTube Kids allows content creators to self-regulate. YouTube only asks that they consider factors including the subject matter of the video, whether the video has an emphasis on kids characters, themes, toys or games, and more.'" [Associated Press, [4/6/21](#)]

- **House Oversight And Reform Subcommittee Said A High Volume Of Children's Videos On YouTube Smuggled Hidden Marketing And Advertising With Product Placements By "Children's Influencers" And YouTube Did Not Appear To Be Trying To Prevent "Such Problematic Marketing."** "Under the 2019 settlement, Google agreed to work with video creators to label material aimed at kids. It said it would limit data collection when users view such videos, regardless of their age. But lawmakers say even after the settlement, YouTube Kids, which launched in 2015, continued to exploit loopholes and advertise to children. While it does not target ads based on viewer interests the way the main YouTube service does, it tracks information about what kids are watching in order to recommend videos. It also collects personally identifying device information. There are also other, sneaky ways ads are reaching children. A 'high volume' of kids' videos, the letter says, smuggle hidden marketing and advertising with product placements by 'children's influencers,' who are often children themselves. 'YouTube does not appear to be trying to prevent such problematic marketing,' the letter says. The House research team found that only 4% of videos it looked at had a 'high educational value' offering developmentally appropriate material." [Associated Press, [4/6/21](#)]
- **Under A 2019 Settlement, Google Was Supposed To Work To Label Material Aimed At Kids, But Lawmakers Said YouTube Kids Continues To Exploit Loopholes And Advertise To Children.** "Under the 2019 settlement, Google agreed to work with video creators to label material aimed at kids. It said it would limit data collection when users view such videos, regardless of their age. But lawmakers say even after the settlement, YouTube Kids, which launched in 2015, continued to exploit loopholes and advertise to children. While it does not target ads based on viewer interests the way the main YouTube service does, it tracks information about what kids are watching in order to recommend videos. It also collects personally identifying device information." [Associated Press, [4/6/21](#)]

House Oversight And Reform Subcommittee Wanted YouTube To Turn Off All Advertisements For Children Seven Years Old And Under And To Give Parents The Ability To Turn Off The "Autoplay" Feature. "The House subcommittee is recommending YouTube turn off advertisements completely for kids aged 7 and under. It also asks that it give parents the ability to turn off the 'autoplay' feature, which is not currently possible (though parents are able to set a timer to limit their kids' video watching). The lawmakers are asking YouTube to provide them with information on YouTube Kids' top videos, channels and revenue information, as well as average time spent and number of videos watched, per user, among other information." [Associated Press, [4/6/21](#)]

DESPITE FAILING TO FIX IT'S OWN NEGATIVE AFFECTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE, YOUTUBE SOUGHT TO EMULATE TIKTOK

March 2021: YouTube Launched YouTube Shorts, A TikTok Clone, In The U.S. "YouTube Shorts, the company's short-form answer to TikTok, is launching in beta in the United States starting today. The short video format has already been available for several months in India, but today marks its debut stateside (along with the addition of several new features). For the beta launch, YouTube Shorts will feature all the basics of any TikTok clone: a multi-segment camera that makes it easy for creators to quickly string together clips, a wide selection of music tracks (with catalogs from 'over 250 labels and publishers'), and a robust-looking captioning tool, the last of which is debuting alongside the US launch. ...Like TikTok, users will be able to swipe through an endless, algorithmically generated feed of short videos, subscribe to their favorite creators, explore specific hashtags or sounds, and remix other videos' audio tracks. Even the interface looks similar to TikTok's player." [The Verge, [3/18/21](#)]

- **HEADLINE: "YouTube Shorts Is A TikTok Clone. It's Also YouTube's Master Plan."** [Protocol, [3/18/21](#)]

TIKTOK WAS INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED TO BE ADDICTIVE AND WAS ADDING TO THE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

RESEARCHERS FOUND THAT TIKTOK WAS INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED TO BE ADDICTIVE

HEADLINE: "New Study Identifies 'TikTok Addiction' And The Symptoms That Show Users Might Have It." [The Independent, [5/5/22](#)]

HEADLINE: "TikTok Brain Explained: Why Some Kids Seem Hooked On Social Video Feeds." [Wall Street Journal, [4/2/22](#)]

Study Found Personalized Videos From Recommendation Engine In Douyin – ByteDance’s TikTok Equivalent In China – Activated The Reward Centers Of Users’ Brains And Activated Areas Of The Brain Involved In Addiction.

"One of the few studies specifically examining TikTok-related effects on the brain focused on Douyin, the TikTok equivalent in China, made by the same Chinese parent company, ByteDance Ltd. It found that the personalized videos the app’s recommendation engine shows users activate the reward centers of the brain, as compared with the general-interest videos shown to new users. Brain scans of Chinese college students showed that areas involved in addiction were highly activated in those who watched personalized videos. It also found some people have trouble controlling when to stop watching. ‘We speculate that individuals with lower self-control ability have more difficulty shifting attention away from favorite video stimulation,’ the researchers at China’s Zhejiang University wrote." [Wall Street Journal, [4/2/22](#)]

TikTok Internal Document Indicated Platform’s “Ultimate Goal” Of Adding Daily Active Users By Optimizing Users’ “Retention” And “Time Spent” Metrics. "The document explains frankly that in the pursuit of the company’s ‘ultimate goal’ of adding daily active users, it has chosen to optimize for two closely related metrics in the stream of videos it serves: ‘retention’ — that is, whether a user comes back — and ‘time spent.’ The app wants to keep you there as long as possible. The experience is sometimes described as an addiction, though it also recalls a frequent criticism of pop culture. The playwright David Mamet, writing scornfully in 1998 about ‘pseudoart,’ observed that ‘people are drawn to summer movies because they are not satisfying, and so they offer opportunities to repeat the compulsion.'" [New York Times, [12/5/21](#)]

- **HEADLINE: “How TikTok Reads Your Mind.”** [New York Times, [12/5/21](#)]
- **Social Media Analyst On TikTok: “The Algorithm Tries To Get People Addicted Rather Than Giving Them What They Really Want.”** "To analysts who believe algorithmic recommendations pose a social threat, the TikTok document confirms their suspicions. ‘This system means that watch time is key. The algorithm tries to get people addicted rather than giving them what they really want,’ said Guillaume Chaslot, the founder of Algo Transparency, a group based in Paris that has studied YouTube’s recommendation system and takes a dark view of the effect of the product on children, in particular. Mr. Chaslot reviewed the TikTok document at my request." [New York Times, [12/5/21](#)]

TikTok’s Most Important Element Was Watch Time Of Individual Videos To Pinpoint “The Piece Of Content That You’re Vulnerable To, That Will Make You Click, That Will Make You Watch.” "While TikTok claims that it uses likes, comments, and shares as metrics to measure your engagement with specific content, the WSJ found that the most important element the app analyzed was the watch time on a video—whether you immediately clicked away, paused, or rewatched. The algorithm sees what you’re reacting to, and can quickly pinpoint ‘the piece of content that you’re vulnerable to, that will make you click, that will make you watch, but it doesn’t mean that you really like it and that it’s the content you enjoy the most,’ data scientist Guillaume Chaslot told WSJ upon reviewing their experiment. As a user’s stream becomes more niche, they’re more likely to encounter harmful content that is less vetted by moderators, according to the WSJ. This becomes a concern as TikTok’s user base tends to skew younger than other social media platforms like Facebook or Youtube." [Popular Science, [12/7/21](#)]

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WERE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO TIKTOK’S ADDICTIVE DESIGN PROMPTING CONCERNS ABOUT NEGATIVE MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS

Children And Young People Are Particularly Vulnerable To TikTok’s Short Content Format As Result Of Underdeveloped Prefrontal Cortexes, Which Directs Decision Making And Impulse Control And Guides Tasks That Require Prolonged Focus. "When kids do things that require prolonged focus, such as reading or solving math problems, they’re using directed attention. This function starts in the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for decision making and impulse control....Kids generally have a harder time doing this—and putting down their videogame controllers—because the prefrontal cortex isn’t fully developed until age 25. Dr. Manos said the ever-changing environment of TikTok doesn’t require sustained attention. ‘If kids’ brains become accustomed to constant changes, the brain finds it difficult to adapt to a nondigital activity where things don’t move quite as fast,’ he said. ...‘In the short-form snackable world, you’re getting quick hit after quick hit, and as soon as it’s over, you have to make a choice,’ said Mass General’s Dr. Marci, who wrote the new book ‘Rewired: Protecting Your Brain in the Digital Age.’ The more developed the prefrontal cortex, the better the choices." [Wall Street Journal, [4/2/22](#)]

- **Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Pediatrician: “TikTok Is A Dopamine Machine.”** "‘TikTok is a dopamine machine,’ said John Hutton, a pediatrician and director of the Reading & Literacy Discovery Center at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital. ‘If you want kids to pay attention, they need to practice paying attention.'" [Wall Street Journal, [4/2/22](#)]

HEADLINE: "Why Experts Worry TikTok Could Add To Mental Health Crisis Among US Teens" [CNN. [1/11/23](#)]

A Non-Profit Study Found TikTok May Surface Potentially Harmful Content Related To Suicide And Eating Disorders Within Minutes Of Them Creating An Account. "And one study from a non-profit group claimed TikTok may surface potentially harmful content related to suicide and eating disorders to teenagers within minutes of them creating an account. TikTok is far from the only social platform to be scrutinized by lawmakers and mental health experts for its impact on teens. Top execs from several companies, including TikTok, have been grilled in Congress on the matter." [CNN, [1/11/23](#)]

Psychologist Said TikTok's Algorithm Is "Very Sophisticated" And "Very Sticky," Which Keeps Teens Engaged On The Platform Longer. "But psychologist Dr. Jean Twenge said TikTok's algorithm in particular is 'very sophisticated' and 'very sticky,' which keeps teens engaged on the platform longer. TikTok has amassed more than one billion global users. Those users spent an average of an hour and a half per day on the app in last year, more than any other social media platform, according to the digital analytics platform SensorTower." [CNN, [1/11/23](#)]

TIKTOK AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA GIANTS FACED A CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT AND LAWSUIT FROM SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Seattle Public Schools Sued TikTok, Facebook And YouTube, Alleging The Platforms Exploit Children And Contribute To The Youth Mental Health Crisis. "The largest school district in Washington state is suing several major social media companies for creating apps that it says exploit children and contribute to a 'youth mental health crisis.' Seattle Public Schools filed a lawsuit against Facebook, Instagram and their parent company Meta as well as Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube and others for their roles in the allegations. The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington on Friday, alleges that the rapid growth platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok have seen is a result of designs and operations that 'exploit the psychology and neurophysiology of their users.' 'Defendants have successfully exploited the vulnerable brains of youth, hooking tens of millions of students across the country into positive feedback loops of excessive use and abuse of Defendants' social media platforms,' the complaint says, adding that their 'misconduct has been a substantial factor in causing a youth mental health crisis.'" [CBS News, 60 Minutes, [1/9/23](#)]

December 2022: More Than 1,200 U.S. Families Sued Meta, TikTok And YouTube For Allegedly Knowing They Were Negatively Affecting Children. "The lawsuit claims this was made possible by companies creating designs that 'promote excessive and problematic use' and manipulating the 'biochemical reaction' within users' psychology. This claim was at least somewhat supported by an internal document from Meta made public last year that reveals the tech giant knew its photo and video sharing app Instagram was making 1 in 3 teenage girls feel worse about their bodies while also leading them to dangerous content, such as disordered eating. In December, more than 1,200 families across the U.S. sued Meta as well as TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube and Roblox for allegedly knowing they were negatively impacting children." [CBS News, 60 Minutes, [1/9/23](#)]

FACEBOOK, GOOGLE AND TIKTOK HAVE ALL FACED ACCUSATIONS THAT THEIR ALGORITHMS AND CONTENT MODERATION POLICIES ARE DISCRIMINATORY

FACEBOOK HAS LONG BEEN ACCUSED OF USING AI THAT PROTECTS HATE SPEECH AGAINST MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND SUPPRESSES CONTENT FROM THOSE GROUPS

FACEBOOK'S CONTENT MODERATION RULES WERE FLAWED IN A WAY THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY SUPPRESSED HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

HEADLINE: "Facebook's Secret Censorship Rules Protect White Men From Hate Speech But Not Black Children" [ProPublica, [6/28/17](#)]

Facebook's Content Rules Only Detected Broad Groups Of People, Like "White Men," But Would Not Flag Hate Speech If A Protected Group Contained A Characteristic That Isn't Protected, Like "Female Drivers" Or "Black Children." "The reason is that Facebook deletes curses, slurs, calls for violence and several other types of attacks only when they are directed at 'protected categories'—based on race, sex, gender identity, religious affiliation, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation and serious disability/disease. It gives users broader latitude when they write about 'subsets' of protected categories. White men are considered a group because both traits are protected, while female drivers and black children, like radicalized Muslims, are subsets, because one of their characteristics is not protected. (The exact rules are in the slide show below.)" [ProPublica, [6/28/17](#)]

- **Facebook Allowed A Republican Congressman’s Post About Hunting Down And Killing “Radicalized” Muslims To Remain Up, But Took Down A Post From A Boston Poet Calling White People Racist.** "In the wake of a terrorist attack in London earlier this month, a U.S. congressman wrote a Facebook post in which he called for the slaughter of ‘radicalized’ Muslims. ‘Hunt them, identify them, and kill them,’ declared U.S. Rep. Clay Higgins, a Louisiana Republican. ‘Kill them all. For the sake of all that is good and righteous. Kill them all.’ Higgins’ plea for violent revenge went untouched by Facebook workers who scour the social network deleting offensive speech. But a May posting on Facebook by Boston poet and Black Lives Matter activist Didi Delgado drew a different response. ‘All white people are racist. Start from this reference point, or you’ve already failed,’ Delgado wrote. The post was removed and her Facebook account was disabled for seven days." [ProPublica, [6/28/17](#)]

ProPublica: Facebook’s “Hate-Speech Rules Tend To Favor Elites And Governments Over Grassroots Activists And Racial Minorities...In So Doing, They Serve The Business Interests Of The Global Company, Which Relies On National Governments Not To Block Its Service To Their Citizens.” "While Facebook was credited during the 2010-2011 ‘Arab Spring’ with facilitating uprisings against authoritarian regimes, the documents suggest that, at least in some instances, the company’s hate-speech rules tend to favor elites and governments over grassroots activists and racial minorities. In so doing, they serve the business interests of the global company, which relies on national governments not to block its service to their citizens." [ProPublica, [6/28/17](#)]

FACEBOOK REPORTEDLY REMOVED CONTENT FROM A DISABLED CREATOR AND THE EMPLOYEE’S REASONING WAS “SOME PEOPLE SEE DISABILITY AS DISTURBING”

2019: Facebook Reportedly Removed Content From A Disabled Creator And An Employee’s Reasoning Was That “Some People See Disability As Disturbing.” "Facebook has also come under fire for its policies toward disabled people. Earlier this year, the social network removed a video containing a sexy picture of amputee Vicky Balch on the Facebook page of Ability Access, which promotes the disabled community. A Facebook employee told Ability Access, ‘You will have to understand that some people see disability as disturbing.’ After a backlash, the company apologized for its choice of words, although it declined to restore the video, saying that Balch’s partial nudity violated standards around adult content, not any policies related to people with disabilities." [Slate, [12/4/19](#)]

FACEBOOK REPORTEDLY IGNORED INTERNAL RESEARCH THAT SHOWED ITS MODERATION TOOLS SHOWED RACIAL BIAS IN HOW IT REMOVED CONTENT

HEADLINE: "Facebook Ignored Racial Bias Research, Employees Say" [NBC News, [7/23/20](#)]

Eight Current And Former Facebook Employees Alleged Facebook Management Repeatedly Ignored And Suppressed Internal Research Showing Racial Bias In The Way The Platform Removed Content. "The researchers took their findings to their superiors, expecting that it would prompt managers to quash the changes. Instead, they were told not share their findings with co-workers or conduct any further research into racial bias in Instagram’s automated account removal system. Instagram ended up implementing a slightly different version of the new rules but declined to let the researchers test the new version. It was an episode that frustrated employees who wanted to reduce racial bias on the platform but one that they said did not surprise them. Facebook management has repeatedly ignored and suppressed internal research showing racial bias in the way that the platform removes content, according to eight current and former employees, all of whom requested anonymity to discuss internal Facebook business." [NBC News, [7/23/20](#)]

Internal Facebook Research Found A New Set Of Proposed Rules Meant To Crack Down On Bullying Made It 50 Percent More Likely That Black Users’ Accounts Were Automatically Disabled By The Moderation System Than White Users. "In mid-2019, researchers at Facebook began studying a new set of rules proposed for the automated system that Instagram uses to remove accounts for bullying and other infractions. What they found was alarming. Users on the Facebook-owned Instagram in the United States whose activity on the app suggested they were Black were about 50 percent more likely under the new rules to have their accounts automatically disabled by the moderation system than those whose activity indicated they were white, according to two current employees and one former employee, who all spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to talk to the media. The findings were echoed by interviews with Facebook and Instagram users who said they felt that the platforms’ moderation practices were discriminatory, the employees said." [NBC News, [7/23/20](#)]

Facebook Researchers Were Reportedly Told Not To Share Their Findings About The New Rules Or To Conduct Any Further Racial Bias Research. "The researchers took their findings to their superiors, expecting that it would prompt managers to quash the changes. Instead, they were told not share their findings with co-workers or conduct any further research into racial bias in Instagram’s automated account removal system. Instagram ended up implementing a slightly

different version of the new rules but declined to let the researchers test the new version. It was an episode that frustrated employees who wanted to reduce racial bias on the platform but one that they said did not surprise them. Facebook management has repeatedly ignored and suppressed internal research showing racial bias in the way that the platform removes content, according to eight current and former employees, all of whom requested anonymity to discuss internal Facebook business." [NBC News, [7/23/20](#)]

Facebook Employee Said The Company's Moderation Tools "Disproportionately Defend White Men." "This inequity is reflected in the levels of hate speech that is reported versus taken down automatically. According to a chart posted internally in July 2019 and leaked to NBC News, Facebook proactively took down a higher proportion of hate speech against white people than was reported by users, indicating that users didn't find it offensive enough to report but Facebook deleted it anyway. In contrast, the same tools took down a lower proportion of hate speech targeting marginalized groups including Black, Jewish and transgender users than was reported by users, indicating that these attacks were considered to be offensive but Facebook's automated tools weren't detecting them. The employee who posted the chart to Workplace, the internal version of Facebook, said that the findings showed that Facebook's proactive tools 'disproportionately defend white men.'" [NBC News, [7/23/20](#)]

HEADLINE: "Civil Rights Leaders Are Still Fed Up With Facebook Over Hate Speech" [Vox, [7/7/20](#)]

NOVEMBER 2021: META FINALLY SAID IT WOULD LOOK INTO WHETHER ITS PLATFORMS TREATED USERS DIFFERENTLY BASED ON RACE

November 2021: Meta Said It Would Look Into Whether Its Platforms Treated Users Differently Based On Race After Years Of Criticisms From Black Users About Racial Bias. "The parent company of Facebook and Instagram is looking into whether its platforms treat users differently based on race, after years of criticism particularly from Black users and its own employees about racial bias. [...] That includes Black users who say their posts about racism have been taken down for violating the company's hate speech rules. Facebook also apologized in September after a flaw in its artificial intelligence software led to a video of Black men being labeled as 'primates.'" [NPR, [11/18/21](#)]

September 2021: Facebook Had To Apologize After A Flaw In Its AI Software Led To A Video Of Black Men Being Labeled As "Primates." "The parent company of Facebook and Instagram is looking into whether its platforms treat users differently based on race, after years of criticism particularly from Black users and its own employees about racial bias. [...] That includes Black users who say their posts about racism have been taken down for violating the company's hate speech rules. Facebook also apologized in September after a flaw in its artificial intelligence software led to a video of Black men being labeled as 'primates.'" [NPR, [11/18/21](#)]

A Facebook Civil Rights Audit Found That It Put Free Speech Ahead Of Other Values, Which Undermined Its Efforts To Curb Hate Speech And Voter Suppression. "The announcement came as Meta gave an update on its response to a civil rights audit the company commissioned following widespread accusations that its products promote discrimination. The 2020 report, which came after two years of investigation by independent auditors, slammed the company for putting free speech ahead of other values, a decision the auditors said undermined its efforts to curb hate speech and voter suppression. The auditors said the company made 'vexing and heartbreaking decisions,' including refusing to take down posts by then-President Donald Trump that 'clearly violated' the company's policies on hate and violent speech and voter suppression; exempting politicians from third-party fact-checking; and being 'far too reluctant to adopt strong rules to limit [voting] misinformation and voter suppression.'" [NPR, [11/18/21](#)]

- **The Civil Rights Audit Found Facebook Refused To Take Down Posts By Then-President Donald Trump That "Clearly Violated" The Company's Policies On Hate And Violent Speech And Voter Suppression.** "The announcement came as Meta gave an update on its response to a civil rights audit the company commissioned following widespread accusations that its products promote discrimination. The 2020 report, which came after two years of investigation by independent auditors, slammed the company for putting free speech ahead of other values, a decision the auditors said undermined its efforts to curb hate speech and voter suppression. The auditors said the company made 'vexing and heartbreaking decisions,' including refusing to take down posts by then-President Donald Trump that 'clearly violated' the company's policies on hate and violent speech and voter suppression; exempting politicians from third-party fact-checking; and being 'far too reluctant to adopt strong rules to limit [voting] misinformation and voter suppression.'" [NPR, [11/18/21](#)]
- **The Civil Rights Audit Found Facebook Exempted Politicians From Third-Party Fact Checking And Was "Far Too Reluctant To Adopt Strong Rules To Limit [Voting] Misinformation And Voter Suppression."** "The announcement came as Meta gave an update on its response to a civil rights audit the company commissioned following widespread accusations that its products promote discrimination. The 2020 report, which came after two years of investigation by independent auditors, slammed the company for putting free speech ahead of other

values, a decision the auditors said undermined its efforts to curb hate speech and voter suppression. The auditors said the company made 'vexing and heartbreaking decisions,' including refusing to take down posts by then-President Donald Trump that 'clearly violated' the company's policies on hate and violent speech and voter suppression; exempting politicians from third-party fact-checking; and being 'far too reluctant to adopt strong rules to limit [voting] misinformation and voter suppression.'" [NPR, [11/18/21](#)]

The Anti-Defamation League Pointed To Whistleblower Documents That Showed Facebook Failed To Take Down Hate Speech Even Though Those Posts Violated Its Rules. "The ADL pointed to documents disclosed by whistleblower Frances Haugen showing Facebook has failed to take down hate speech, even though such posts violate its rules. And it said the company should hire more staff focused on civil rights, especially as it shifts its focus to building a new immersive virtual platform called the metaverse. 'Of Facebook's [60,000] employees, fewer than 10 are on the Civil Rights Team. Facebook must put civil rights expertise on EVERY team, including those building the Metaverse,' the ADL tweeted. 'If Facebook is trying to earn credibility, this clearly missed the mark.'" [NPR, [11/18/21](#)]

YOUTUBE HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF UNFAIRLY TARGETING MARGINALIZED GROUPS WHILE ALLOWING TOP CREATORS TO VIOLATE CONTENT MODERATION RULES

YOUTUBE CONTENT MODERATORS WERE REPORTEDLY TRAINED TO TREAT TOP CREATORS DIFFERENTLY THAN THOSE WITH FEWER FOLLOWERS

YouTube Moderators Were Reportedly Trained To Treat The Most Popular Video Producers Differently Than Those With Fewer Followers, Which Could Allow Hate Speech To Remain On The Platform. "The Washington Post reported earlier this month that moderators for YouTube are trained to treat the most popular video producers differently than others by, for instance, allowing hateful speech to remain on the site while enforcing their policies more stringently against creators with fewer followers. YouTube denied the claims. YouTube was buffeted by allegations in June that it failed to act against a popular video creator who repeatedly mocked a journalist for being openly gay and of Mexican descent." [Washington Post, [8/14/19](#)]

11 Current And Former YouTube Content Moderators Reportedly Said YouTube Gave More Lenient Punishments To Top Video Creators For Violating Rules That Banned Demeaning Speech, Bullying And Other Graphic Content. "YouTube stars attract millions of eyeballs and generate billions of dollars in ad revenue for the media giant, which pledges to run its business without tolerating hateful and otherwise harmful videos. But some of the workers hired to flag problematic content accuse YouTube of playing favorites, doling out more lenient punishments for top video creators whose work brings in the most money for the company. Eleven current and past moderators, who have worked on the front lines of content decisions, believe that popular creators often get special treatment in the form of looser interpretations of YouTube's guidelines prohibiting demeaning speech, bullying and other forms of graphic content." [Washington Post, [8/9/19](#)]

- **Washington Post: YouTube Moderators "Say That Their Recommendations To Strip Advertising From Videos That Violate The Site's Rules Were Frequently Overruled By Higher-Ups Within YouTube When The Videos Involved Higher Profile Content Creators Who Draw More Advertising."** "The moderators interviewed by The Washington Post say that their recommendations to strip advertising from videos that violate the site's rules were frequently overruled by higher-ups within YouTube when the videos involved higher profile content creators who draw more advertising. Plus, they say, many of the rules are ineffective and contradictory to start with. The moderators, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to protect their employment prospects, describe a demoralizing work environment marked by ad hoc decisions, constantly shifting policies and a widespread perception of arbitrary standards when it came to offensive content." [Washington Post, [8/9/19](#)]

AUGUST 2019: LGBTQ+ YOUTUBE CREATORS SUED THE COMPANY, ALLEGING IT UNFAIRLY SUPPRESSED, DEMONETIZED AND REMOVED THEIR CONTENT

August 2019: A Group Of LGBTQ+ Video Creators Sued YouTube, Accusing It Of Discriminating By Suppressing Their Content, Restricting Their Ability To Sell Advertising And Culling Their Subscribers. "A group of LGBT video creators is accusing YouTube of discriminating by suppressing their content, restricting their ability to sell advertising and culling their subscribers, according to a federal lawsuit filed Tuesday evening against the video site and its parent, Google. The suit adds to allegations against the video streaming site — by far the world's largest, with nearly 2 billion monthly viewers — that it enforces its policies unevenly and gives a pass to producers with large audiences, even when their content is hostile to gay, lesbian or other communities. [...] The suit by five LGBT creators, filed in federal court in San Jose, says YouTube deploys 'unlawful content regulation, distribution, and monetization practices that stigmatize, restrict, block, demonetize, and financially harm the LGBT Plaintiffs and the greater LGBT Community.'" [Washington Post, [8/14/19](#)]

The LGBTQ+ Creators Alleged YouTube's Software Algorithms And Human Reviewers Single Out And Remove Content That Features Words Common In The LGBTQ+ Community, Like "Gay," "Lesbian" Or "Bisexual." "As the leading video platform, YouTube wields tremendous power to make or break creators, who have few other options to turn to. It can pull levers to promote content it favors or to bury videos it seems less desirable. And because the software running YouTube is kept secret, creators are often left guessing when their content is suppressed. The LGBT creators allege YouTube's software algorithms, as well as its human reviewers, single out and remove content that features words common in the LGBT community, such as 'gay,' 'lesbian' or 'bisexual' and has caused them to lose advertising revenue. One of the lawsuit's allegations, that YouTube has a near monopoly over video content online, wades into a debate heating up in Washington. Antitrust regulators are reviewing whether Google and other tech companies have amassed too much power. The lawsuit alleges that it has." [Washington Post, [8/14/19](#)]

HEADLINE: "A Group Of Youtubers Is Trying To Prove The Site Systematically Demonetizes Queer Content" [Vox, [10/10/19](#)]

JUNE 2020: BLACK YOUTUBE CREATORS SUED YOUTUBE, ALLEGING IT UNFAIRLY REMOVED THEIR CONTENT WITHOUT EXPLANATION

HEADLINE: "Black Creators Sue YouTube, Alleging Racial Discrimination" [Washington Post, [6/18/20](#)]

June 2020: A Group Of Black YouTube Creators Sued The Platform Alleging It Had Been Systematically Removing Their Content Without Explanation. "A group of black YouTube creators filed suit against the company this week, alleging that the platform has been systematically removing their content without explanation. The suit, filed in federal court in northern California, outlines alleged discrimination against four creators, who post YouTube videos to earn advertising revenue. YouTube is part of tech giant Google. The suit is the latest allegation that YouTube's software, which can automatically remove videos suspected of violating the company's policies, discriminates against certain groups, such as LGBT people. It comes during a national reckoning over racial discrimination in which companies such as Google have promised to push for change." [Washington Post, [6/18/20](#)]

- **Washington Post: "The Suit Is The Latest Allegation That YouTube's Software, Which Can Automatically Remove Videos Suspected Of Violating The Company's Policies, Discriminates Against Certain Groups, Such As LGBT People."** "A group of black YouTube creators filed suit against the company this week, alleging that the platform has been systematically removing their content without explanation. The suit, filed in federal court in northern California, outlines alleged discrimination against four creators, who post YouTube videos to earn advertising revenue. YouTube is part of tech giant Google. The suit is the latest allegation that YouTube's software, which can automatically remove videos suspected of violating the company's policies, discriminates against certain groups, such as LGBT people. It comes during a national reckoning over racial discrimination in which companies such as Google have promised to push for change." [Washington Post, [6/18/20](#)]

DECEMBER 2020: YOUTUBE ANNOUNCED IT WOULD REVIEW ITS CONTENT MODERATION SYSTEM AFTER YEARS OF DENYING THAT IT UNFAIRLY TARGETED MARGINALIZED CREATORS

December 2020: After Years Of Denying Allegations That Its Algorithms Unfairly Target Marginalized Creators For Content Suppression Or Removal, YouTube Announced Plans To Proactively Identify "Gaps" In Its Moderation System. "For years, YouTube has denied accusations that its algorithms unfairly target marginalized creators for content suppression, demonetization, and removal. Today, it announced a plan to 'more proactively identify potential gaps in our systems that might impact a creator's opportunity to reach their full potential.' Starting next year, YouTube creators will be able to voluntarily share their gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity with YouTube. Data from those who choose to share will be examined to see 'how content from different communities is treated in our search and discovery and monetization systems,' Johanna Wright, YouTube's VP of product management, wrote in an official update." [TubeFilter, [12/3/20](#)]

TIKTOK HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF UNFAIRLY REMOVING AND FLAGGING CONTENT POSTED BY USERS BELONGING TO TRADITIONALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

TIKTOK ADMITTED THAT IT HAD AT ONE POINT SUPPRESSED CONTENT FROM HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED PEOPLE, CLAIMING IT WAS AN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT CYBERBULLYING

HEADLINE: "TikTok Admits It Suppressed Videos By Disabled, Queer, And Fat Creators" [Slate, [12/4/19](#)]

2019: TikTok Admitted That It Had Intentionally Suppressed Content From Creators It Assumed Were "Vulnerable To Cyberbullying" Like The Disabled. "TikTok, a social network video app with more than 1 billion downloads globally, admitted Tuesday to a set of policies that had suppressed the reach of content created by users assumed to be 'vulnerable to cyberbullying.' As examples of users 'susceptible to bullying or harassment,' the policy listed people with facial disfigurement, autism, Down syndrome, and 'Disabled people or people with some facial problems such as birthmark, slight squint and etc.'" [Slate, [12/4/19](#)]

Internal Documents Reportedly Showed TikTok Instructing Moderators To Suppress Posts Created By "Users Deemed Too Ugly, Poor Or Disabled For The Platform." "THE MAKERS OF TIKTOK, the Chinese video-sharing app with hundreds of millions of users around the world, instructed moderators to suppress posts created by users deemed too ugly, poor, or disabled for the platform, according to internal documents obtained by The Intercept. These same documents show moderators were also told to censor political speech in TikTok livestreams, punishing those who harmed 'national honor' or broadcast streams about 'state organs such as police' with bans from the platform." [The Intercept, [3/16/20](#)]

A BLACK CREATOR ALLEGED THAT TIKTOK'S ALGORITHM UNFAIRLY FLAGGED HIS CONTENT AS VIOLATING COMMUNITY RULES

HEADLINE: "TikTok Algorithm Error Sparks Allegations Of Racial Bias" [NBC News, [7/9/21](#)]

TikTok Creator Reportedly Tried To Post In Support Of Black Lives Matter, But Content Containing The Word "Black" Was Immediately Flagged As "Inappropriate Content." "A series of TikTok videos have gone viral featuring a user being censored for trying to put pro-Black Lives Matter phrases in his bio on the platform's Creator Marketplace. Ziggi Tyler, a popular Black TikTok creator with more than 370,000 followers, posted several videos this week demonstrating how he could not include phrases in his bio including the word 'Black' without being immediately flagged for 'inappropriate content.' The Creator Marketplace connects popular TikTok users with brands for promotions. Tyler tried a number of phrases, including ones declaring his support for 'Black Lives Matter,' 'black people,' 'black voices' and 'black success,' and simply stating 'I am a black man' — all of which would immediately trigger a pop-up message prompting him to 'remove any inappropriate content.' But putting 'supporting white supremacy' or 'supporting white success' in his bio did not prompt the same inappropriate content message. Neither did 'I am a neo-Nazi.'" [NBC News, [7/9/21](#)]

- **TikTok Creator Reportedly Tested The Algorithm With White Supremacist And Neo-Nazi Language And The App Did Not Give Him The Same Inappropriate Content Message.** "A series of TikTok videos have gone viral featuring a user being censored for trying to put pro-Black Lives Matter phrases in his bio on the platform's Creator Marketplace. Ziggi Tyler, a popular Black TikTok creator with more than 370,000 followers, posted several videos this week demonstrating how he could not include phrases in his bio including the word 'Black' without being immediately flagged for 'inappropriate content.' The Creator Marketplace connects popular TikTok users with brands for promotions. Tyler tried a number of phrases, including ones declaring his support for 'Black Lives Matter,' 'black people,' 'black voices' and 'black success,' and simply stating 'I am a black man' — all of which would immediately trigger a pop-up message prompting him to 'remove any inappropriate content.' But putting 'supporting white supremacy' or 'supporting white success' in his bio did not prompt the same inappropriate content message. Neither did 'I am a neo-Nazi.'" [NBC News, [7/9/21](#)]
- **HEADLINE: "These TikTok Creators Say They're Still Being Suppressed For Posting Black Lives Matter Content"** [TIME Magazine, [7/22/20](#)]

SEVERAL JEWISH TIKTOK CREATORS REPORTEDLY SAID THEIR CONTENT WAS REGULARLY REMOVED FOR ALLEGEDLY VIOLATING COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

Several Jewish TikTok Creators Reportedly Said Their Content Was Regularly Removed From The Platform For Alleged Violations Of Community Guidelines. "The incident is another instance of creators from marginalized communities alleging that they are being silenced on the platform. Several Jewish TikTok creators told NBC News in June that their content is regularly removed from the platform for alleged community guideline violations and they are often banned from posting for days at a time." [NBC News, [7/9/21](#)]