

# **META FAILS TO KEEP KIDS SAFE**

## **META'S PLATFORMS WERE WIDELY USED BY CHILD PREDATORS FOR SPREADING INDECENT PHOTOS OF MINORS, CONNECTING WITH CHILDREN FOR GROOMING AND TRAFFICKING**

### **META'S PLATFORMS WERE CALLED A “PREDATOR'S PARADISE” FOR GIVING PEDOPHILES EASY ACCESS TO CHILDREN AND EASILY SPREADING IMAGERY OF CHILD SEX ABUSE**

- ***Meta's platforms reported tens of millions of child sex abuse images each year, a far higher number than their competitors.*** In 2022, it was found that 45% of U.S. Children aged 9 to 12 used Facebook every day. Yet in 2019, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation called Instagram a “predator's paradise” due to the abusive behaviors on the site. WIRED ran an article headlined “Facebook has a child predation program.” Year after year, Meta's platforms reported millions of photos and videos of children being abused. In 2018, 90% of the 45 million reports for online photos of children being abused came from Facebook. In 2019, Facebook was responsible 94% of the 69 million child sex abuse images reported by U.S. tech companies. In 2020, Facebook reported 20 million child sexual abuse images between Facebook and Instagram – 35 times more than the next highest reporter, Google. In 2021, The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children identified over 20.3 million reported incidents of child pornography or trafficking on Facebook, compared to 546,704 on Google.

### **FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM WERE THE LEADING PLATFORMS FOR CHILD GROOMING AND CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING**

- ***79% of all child sex trafficking in 2020 occurred on Meta's platforms.*** In 2019, the National Society For The Prevention of Cruelty to Children found that Instagram was the leading platform for child grooming in the U.K. The 2020 Federal Human Trafficking Report found that 65% of child sex trafficking victims recruited on social media were recruited from Facebook, with 14% being recruited on Instagram. Further, 22% of minors that used Instagram reported experiencing a sexually explicit interaction on the platform. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children found 5,000 recorded crimes of “sexual communication with a child” on Instagram during an 18-month period between 2017-2018. The primary age group being targeted in those crimes was 12-15 years old. “Many victims” of those crimes were under the age of 11 and some were as young as five years old.
- ***Meta's platforms hosted pages that posted indecent photos of children or promoted child sex abuse that had thousands of followers.*** A private Instagram account that promised photos of teenagers in swimwear had nearly 400,000 followers. A public Instagram account that posted photos of minors in swimwear had 43,000 followers. When a man was arrested for sexual exploitation of children online, he was able to continue to use two Instagram accounts to share images of minors for months after he was arrested. One of those accounts had nearly 90,000 followers and regularly posted images of teenagers and younger children in swimming attire.

### **META FAILED TO ADDRESS PREDATORY PROFILES AND GROUPS EVEN WHEN THEY WERE REPORTED**

- ***When child sex abuse profiles were flagged to Facebook and Instagram, the platforms repeatedly found they didn't violate community guidelines.*** The Guardian reported that Instagram failed to remove accounts that posted pictures of children in swimwear or partial clothing even after the accounts were flagged using Instagram's in-app reporting tool. When an abusive account with 33,000 followers was reported, Instagram responded that same day saying that “due to high volume” it was unable to view the report, yet its technology had found that the account “probably [didn't] go against our community guidelines” and stayed up for days after being reported. When a WIRED reporter searched merely the numbers 11, 12, 13 on Facebook, “23 of the first 30 results were groups targeting children of those ages” for sexual interactions or photos. When the reporter attempted to flag one of the groups to Facebook, an automated message replied a few days later saying the groups had been reviewed and did not violate any “specific community standards.” The reporter was then automatically recommended more child sexualization groups after his flags, saying “as reply after reply hit my inbox denying grounds for action, new child sexualization groups began getting recommended to me.”
- ***Meta failed to create systems that would detect and remove child abuse and sexualization because they didn't see a return on investment and found it “too complex.”*** A whistleblower told the SEC that Meta didn't know the full scale of the problem of child abuse material because it didn't track it. At Meta, senior managers would ask “what's the return on investment?” Meta even broke up a team it set up to develop software for detecting indecent videos of children because it was seen as “too complex.” The whistleblower called Meta's

efforts to remove child abuse material “inadequate” and “under-resourced.” Meta also inflated the success of their AI enforcement efforts, with a senior Facebook engineer acknowledging that broadly, the problem with AI enforcement was Meta “[did] not and possibly never [would] have a model that capture[d] even a majority of integrity harms, particularly in sensitive areas.” Other employees responsible for keeping Meta’s platforms free of offensive and dangerous content acknowledged that the company was nowhere close to being able to reliably screen it.

- **Despite outcry, Facebook created a kids version of their messenger app. Later, it was found Facebook Messenger Kids app had a flaw that allowed Minors to chat with unapproved adults.** Facebook faced criticism from a group of 100 experts, advocates, and parenting organizations when they were developing Facebook Messenger Kids, who said that the platform was “creating” the need in the market to target younger and younger children. Facebook failed to reach out to child safety advocates before launching their Messenger Kids app. Later, A loophole in the Facebook Messenger Kids app allowed users to invite kids to group chats even if unauthorized users were there too. The Verge reported that “thousands of children were left in chats with unauthorized users” calling it “a violation of the core promise of Messenger Kids.”
- **Meta planned on making messages across all their platforms encrypted by default despite the move being an impediment to stamping out child sex abuse.** The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children warned that plans to encrypt messages across Facebook and Instagram would allow child predators to operate with impunity across their apps. The FBI Director, Christopher Wray, said Facebook’s encryption plans would “blind themselves and law enforcement,” calling it a “dream come true” for child pornographers and predators. The UK National Crime Agency also spoke out, saying the move to encryption “degrade[d] safety systems” and weakened the platforms “ability to keep child users safe.” Despite the public outcry, Meta said it planned to make end-to-end encryption default on Facebook messenger by the end of 2023.
- **Meta continually opposed efforts by shareholders to examine the safety risks for children on their platforms.** In April 2023, Meta’s board recommended a “no” vote on a shareholder proposal that directed the Board of Directors to publish an annual report that included whether Meta had improved its performance globally regarding child safety impacts and actual harm reduction to children on its platforms. Meta responded by saying it disabled searches for certain terms in relation to self-harm and eating disorders and referred users to expert resources. Meta said it had worked on new features and technologies to “proactively detect accounts engaged in certain suspicious patterns of behavior. Meta said given their “ongoing efforts to address the topic,” they did not believe the report would provide “additional benefit to our shareholders.” In 2022, Meta’s board recommended voting “no” on a shareholder proposal for a report that assessed the risks of increased sexual exploitation of children as the company developed encryption tools. Meta said because of their “proactive detection of bad actors” and partnerships with child safety organizations, the report was “unnecessary.” Meta said they had “expanded” their work to detect and remove networks that violated their child exploitation policies. In 2021, Meta recommended voting “no” on a shareholder proposal that assessed the risk of increased sexual exploitation if they encrypted messages. Meta said they had “robust policies to help protect against child exploitation and content or behavior” on their platforms and called the report “unnecessary.” In 2020, Meta again recommended voting no on a shareholder proposal for the company to report an assessment of the risk of increased sexual exploitation of children while it developed encryption tools. Meta promised that it “fundamentally” did not allow “content or behavior [...] that puts the safety of children at risk.” Meta then promoted their “sophisticated technology and other techniques” to detect and remove child exploitation imagery, grooming, and inappropriate interactions between a minor and an adult.

## **INSTAGRAM WAS HARMFUL TO THE MENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY OF ITS NEARLY 22 MILLION DAILY TEEN USERS**

### **INSTAGRAM WAS - AT ITS CORE - A SOCIAL COMPARISON APP THAT CAUSED TEENS TO HAVE SELF-ESTEEM ISSUES, LED TO EATING DISORDERS AND ENABLED BULLIES**

- **Instagram’s core features – sharing only the best moments, the pressure to look perfect – were the most harmful to teens.** Frequent use of image-based social media platforms like Instagram was found to be linked to greater self-objectification. The Wall Street Journal said Instagram was “an addictive product” that led teens “spiraling towards eating disorders, an unhealthy sense of their own bodies, and depression.” According to Meta’s own research, teens blamed Instagram for mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Meta found that more than 40% of teen Instagram users reported feeling “unattractive” and said the feeling began on the app. 32% of teenage girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse. 14% of boys reported that Instagram made them feel worse about themselves. According to one teenager, “every time I feel good about myself, I go over to Instagram, and then it all goes away.” Another teenager said looking at her

peers' follower counts was a "kick in the gut." Studies have shown that adolescence was a period of social and personal identity formation and much of that development had become reliant on social media.

The American Psychological Association said Instagram's design "capitalize[d] on users' biological drive for social belonging and nudge[d] them to keep scrolling," and said it was problematic because of its "addictive nature" and lack of "stopping cues."

- **Meta knew the harms Instagram caused were unique to the platform and not found in social media more broadly.** Meta researchers concluded that some of the problems Instagram created for teen's mental health were specific to Instagram and not found in social media more broadly. Meta's internal research also found that Instagram risked pushing teens to eating disorders, depression, and an unhealthy sense of their own bodies. During a three-year study of how Instagram affected its young users, Meta found it was harmful to a sizeable percentage of them, most notably teenage girls. An internal Meta research slide said Instagram made "body issues worse for one-in-three girls." Yet, Meta also knew that strong negative emotions like negative social comparison kept users attention longer than other emotions. Despite this, Meta consistently played down Instagram's effects on teens, with Instagram's head, Adam Mosseri, telling reporters that the research he had seen suggested the app's effects on teen well-being was likely "quite small." Other internal documents showed that Meta made minimal efforts to address Instagram's impact on teens, and in fact had defunded it's mental health team.

## **CYBERBULLYING WAS RAMPANT ON INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK, WITH THE PLATFORMS HAVING THE HIGHEST RATE OF CYBERBULLYING COMPARED TO OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA APPS**

- **A McAfee study of 11,687 parents and children in 10 countries found that 80% of respondents reported bullying on Instagram, compared to 50% on TikTok and Snapchat.** According to the study, cyberbullying complaints were highest on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, with the rates of cyberbullying on Facebook being double that of Twitter and WhatsApp having four times more bullying than Discord. A 2017 Pew Research study found that 59% of teens reported being bullied online. The Atlantic said Instagram provided "a uniquely powerful set of tools" for bullying, including anonymous profiles, lack of adult oversight, and the potential for viral posts. Teenagers described how Instagram users used the ease of making anonymous profiles to create "hate pages" for bully victims. A teenager once explained that Instagram did not prevent cyberbullying because most of it occurred "over DM and in comments sections." Zuckerberg himself was personally warned that Meta was not on track to succeed in its efforts for core well-being topics like problematic use and bullying and harassment.

## **META'S PLATFORMS PUSHED TEENAGERS TO ACCOUNTS THAT GLORIFIED EATING DISORDERS**

### **INSTAGRAM DID LITTLE TO STOP ITS ALGORITHM FROM CONTINUING TO RECOMMEND EATING DISORDER CONTENT**

- **Internal documents revealed Meta was aware that Instagram was pushing girls to dangerous content like posts about eating disorders.** An Instagram employee ran an internal investigation on eating disorders by creating a fake profile for a 13-year-old girl looking for diet tips and was directed to graphic content and profiles pushing eating disorders. When CBS ran the same experiment, their 13-year-old fake account was able to sign up with no age verification and easily found content promoting anorexia and self-harm. A 2022 report by Fairplay found that Instagram's algorithm promoted an extensive network of pro-eating disorder content. Fairplay's report said there were over 90,000 unique accounts promoting eating-disorder content, which could collectively reach nearly 20 million users around the world.
- **An experiment by Tech Transparency Project (TTP) found Instagram recommended pages that explicitly promoted anorexia and bulimia to its teenage accounts.** In 2021, after the Francis Haugen disclosures, TTP found that Instagram made it "exceedingly easy to search for hashtags and terms associated with eating disorders on the platform." TTP: "Instagram not only fails to enforce its own policies, but it also proactively recommends toxic body image content to its adult and teen users." When TTP created a fake account pretending to be a teenager, they posted six pictures of thin bodies and used vocabulary in their bio that was common in eating disorder communities. Their account was soon flooded with recommendations for accounts promoting eating disorders. TTP said Instagram recommended their account follow a number of "thinfluencer" accounts that featured highly produced content with dangerous body images. After following a single account promoting eating disorders, Instagram recommended TTP's teen account follow "pro-ana" accounts that were associated with anorexia. Many of the "pro-ana" accounts the platform recommended had smaller following counts, which should've made it harder for the accounts to gain traction on the platform. TTP also found that fully spelled out hashtags for anorexia, bulimia, and the word for anorexia in German were still active. Worse, TTP said that resources for people suffering with eating disorders were "hard to find on Instagram."

## **KIDS AND TEENS COULD EASILY USE META'S PLATFORMS FOR FACILITATING DRUG DEALS**

### **DRUG DEALERS WERE WIDESPREAD ON META'S PLATFORMS AND THEIR ACCOUNTS WERE BOOSTED BY META'S ALGORITHMS**

- ***One in four kids said they had been advertised drugs on social media and Meta's platforms were called a "booming business" with drug deal.*** Instagram was said to promote a "booming business" for sales of cocaine, MDMA, painkillers and other drugs by the American Addiction Center. When Vice experimented with finding a drug dealer on Instagram, it only took them five minutes to be connected with a one who offered to meet up and sell them drugs. TPP conducted an experiment on drug sales by creating fake accounts for teens aged 13-years-old to 17-years-old and found Instagram "did nothing to prevent them from searching for drug-related content."
- ***Instagram "sped up the process" for finding and buying drugs by recommending drug seekers to other drug dealing accounts according to Tech Transparency Project, then did little to address them.*** TTP said Instagram's algorithms had automatic features that "sped up the process" for their teen accounts to locate and buy drugs. When TTP typed "buyxanax" into Instagram's search bar, the platform started auto-filing results for buying Xanax before the user was finished typing. According to TTP, "the entire process took seconds and involved just two clicks." And though Instagram removed the hashtag #mdma, TPP found that when their teen accounts started typing #mdma, Instagram auto-filled alternative hashtags like #mollymdma. After TTP's accounts began following an account for how to buy Xanax, Instagram's algorithm suggested it follow multiple accounts that sold Adderall. Further, TTP had drug dealers reaching out to their teen accounts, including one dealer who sent them a series of unsolicited phone calls. Another dealer sent TTP's account a direct message with a menu of products, prices, and shipping options without waiting for their account to initiate a conversation. TTP's director, Katie Paul, said it only took "20 seconds" for a kid to connect with a drug dealer – a dealer that knew they were engaging with a child. When TTP submitted the drug-related posts to Instagram, the platform said 72% of the flags did not violate their community guidelines despite them selling drugs. After Instagram claimed to have taken down one of the accounts TTP flagged, TTP found that the account and violating post was still active.

## **META PROMOTED CHILDREN MAKING UNAPPROVED PURCHASES ON THEIR PLATFORM**

### **META ENCOURAGED GAME DEVELOPERS TO LET CHILDREN SPEND MONEY WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS PERMISSION**

- ***Facebook manipulated underage users into paying for services within games, calling the practice "friendly fraud."*** Children as young as five years old were tricked into making purchases in the games, without realizing Facebook had stored their parent's credit cards. This led to clawback rates of 9%, well over the Federal Trade Commission's red flags for deceptive business practices. Internal Facebook communications showed that employees were aware of the practice and proposed reforms; however, Facebook rejected the reforms because they would hurt revenue. Nearly three years after the first internal communication of "friendly fraud," clawback rates remained the same, suggesting that Facebook did not address the problem.

## **META PLANNED TO OPEN UP IT'S VR WORLD, HORIZON WORLDS, TO CHILDREN EVEN THOUGH IT WAS ALREADY PLAGUED WITH ABUSIVE USERS**

### **META AND ZUCKERBERG KNEW CHILDREN'S SAFETY WOULD CONTINUE TO BE AN ISSUE IN THE METAVERSE BUT PUSHED FORWARD ANYWAYS**

- ***Meta planned to open Horizon Worlds to teenagers aged 13 to 17 to draw in more teen and young adult users even though older users had already reported being sexually harassed.*** Zuckerberg was reportedly warned that the issues of problematic use, bullying and other harms would follow them into the metaverse. Users as young as 15 that accessed Horizon Worlds were said to be exposed to racist insults and misogynistic language. In 2021, a Horizon World tester reported that she was virtually groped while in the VR space and that other people around her supported the behavior. The tester said when it came to sexual harassment, "being in VR add[ed] another layer that [made] the event even worse." They said, "there were other people who supported this behavior, which made me feel isolated in the plaza." Meta was even forced to create a 'personal boundaries' feature after beta testers faced virtual groping and harassment. In December 2021, MIT Technology Review wrote an article headlined "The Metaverse Has A Groping Problem Already."

## **META'S FUTURE RELIED ON A YOUNG USER BASE AND HAD LAID PLANS TO COURT THEM**

### **META SAW KIDS AS THEIR FUTURE AND REDIRECTED TEAMS TO MAKE SERVING YOUNG ADULTS THEIR "NORTH STAR"**

- ***The Wall Street Journal said Meta teams had "for years laying plans to attract preteens."*** An internal Meta document called "tweens" a "valuable but untapped audience." Zuckerberg said he was redirecting teams within his company to "make serving young adults their north star." The company had even formed a team to study preteens. The team set a three-year goal to create more products for preteens and commissioned strategy papers about the long-term business opportunities young users presented. Meta's effort to attract preteens was spurred by a fear that they could lose a new generation of users that was critical to its future. Meta considered it a "particularly concerning trend" that younger users were spending less time on their platforms and saw believed expanding Instagram's base of young users was "vital" to its revenue.

## **META'S PLATFORMS WERE THE TOP CHOICE OF CHILD PREDATORS WHO USED IT TO SPREAD INDECENT PHOTOS OF MINORS AND GROOM CHILDREN**

### **META'S PLATFORMS WERE CALLED A "PREDATOR'S PARADISE" – GIVING PEDOPHILES EASY ACCESS TO CHILDREN AND CHILD SEX ABUSE IMAGERY**

**2022: 45% Of US Children Aged 9 To 12 Reported Using Facebook Every Day.** "Even as debate over Congress' Earn It Act calls attention to the use of digital channels to distribute sexually explicit materials, we are failing to grapple with a seismic shift in the ways child sexual abuse materials are generated. Forty-five percent of US children aged 9 to 12 report using Facebook every day. (That fact alone makes mockery of Facebook's claim that they work actively to keep children under 13 off the platform.) According to recent research, over a quarter of 9- to 12-year-olds report having experienced sexual solicitation online." [WIRED, [3/13/22](#)]

**2019: The National Center On Sexual Exploitation Called Instagram A "Predators' Paradise" Due To The Abusive Behaviors On The Site.** "A group of international anti-sexual exploitation organizations on Wednesday blasted Instagram as a 'predators' paradise' as a part of a campaign to call out abusive behaviors on the popular photo platform. 'It's time to #WakeUpInstagram, and stop a predators' paradise from flourishing. Instagram needs to prioritize the safety of minors, not the accessibility of minors to adults, on its platform,' Haley Halverson, vice president of advocacy and outreach for the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, said in an emailed statement to Fox News." [Fox News, [11/20/19](#)]

**WIRED HEADLINE: "Facebook Has A Child Predation Problem."** [WIRED, [3/13/22](#)]

## **META REPORTED TENS OF MILLIONS OF INCIDENTS OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND TRAFFICKING EVERY YEAR, FAR MORE THAN ANY OTHER PLATFORM**

**In 2018, Tech Companies Reported More Than 45 Million Online Photos And Videos Of Children Being Abused, With More Than 90% Of The Reports Coming From Facebook.** "Facebook has been grappling with its role in the explosion of online child pornography. In 2018, tech companies reported more than 45 million online photos and videos of children being sexually abused. Facebook accounted for more than 90 percent of reports that tech companies flagged that year. Once Facebook Messenger — the company's main source of such imagery — is fully encrypted, it will be nearly impossible for Facebook to detect such images." [New York Times, [2/5/20](#)]

**In 2019, Facebook Was Responsible For 94% Of The 69 Million Child Sex Abuse Images Reported By US Tech Companies.** "Facebook responsible for 94% of 69 million child sex abuse images reported by US tech firms. The figures emerge as the UK is among seven nations warning of the impact of end-to-end encryption on public safety online. The figures emerged as seven countries, including the UK, published a statement on Sunday warning of the impact of end-to-end encryption on public safety online." [Sky News, [10/12/20](#)]

**In 2020, Meta Reported 20 Million Child Sexual Abuse Images Between Facebook And Instagram.** "Facebook reported more than 20 million child sexual abuse images on its platform in 2020, according to a new report by the National Council for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). According to the report released Wednesday, Facebook recorded 20,307,216 instances for child sexual exploitation on its platforms in 2020. The figures cover Instagram as well as the main Facebook site." [Insider, [2/26/21](#)]

- **Facebook Made 35 Times More Reports Than The Next Highest Reporter Google.** “According to the report released Wednesday, Facebook recorded 20,307,216 instances for child sexual exploitation on its platforms in 2020. The figures cover Instagram as well as the main Facebook site. Insider first reported the figures in January, when Facebook confirmed the number. The full report has figures for other companies, and shows that Facebook made more than 35 times as many reports as the next company on the list, Google. Facebook’s platforms contain the vast majority of all child sexual content flagged to the NCMEC, which represent a 31% increase on the 16 million images reported to them by the platform in 2019.” [Insider, [2/26/21](#)]

**February 2021: The National Center For Missing And Exploited Children Identified Over 20.3 Million Reported Incidents Of Child Pornography Or Trafficking On Facebook, Compared To 546,704 Incidents On Google.** “Last year, the vast majority of online child exploitation reports were found on Facebook, according to new data from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s (NCMEC) CyberTipline. The study identified over 20.3 million reported incidents related to child pornography or trafficking (classified as ‘child sexual abuse material’) on the social media site. By contrast, Google cited 546,704 incidents, Twitter had 65,062, Snapchat reported 144,095, and TikTok found 22,692. Facebook accounted for nearly 95 percent of the 21.7 million reports across all platforms.” [Daily Beast, [2/24/21](#)]

## FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM WERE THE LEADING PLATFORMS FOR CHILD GROOMING AND CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

### 79% OF ALL CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING OCCURRED ON META’S PLATFORMS

**2019: The National Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Children Found That Instagram Was The Leading Platform For Child Grooming In The U.K.** “The leading U.K. children’s charity, the NSPCC, has claimed that Instagram has become the leading platform for child grooming in the country. The research was based on freedom of information requests covering an 18-month period to September last year, during which there were more than 5,000 recorded crimes ‘of sexual communication with a child,’ and ‘a 200% rise in recorded instances in the use of Instagram to target and abuse children.’” [Forbes, [3/1/19](#)]

**The 2020 Federal Human Trafficking Report Found That 65% Of Child Sex Trafficking Victims Recruited On Social Media Were Recruited On Facebook, With 14% Being Recruited On Instagram.** “Instagram is consistently noted as a top platform used for grooming and child sex trafficking. The 2020 Federal Human Trafficking Report released by the Human Trafficking Institute found that 65% of child sex trafficking victims recruited on social media were recruited on Facebook, with Instagram cited as the second most frequently used platform (14%). The latest data from UK’s National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children noted Instagram as the most commonly used site for grooming, as flagged by police in 32% of instances in 2020 where the platform was known.” [National Center On Sexual Exploitation, Accessed [4/24/23](#)]

**22% Of Minors That Used Instagram Reported Experiencing A Sexually Explicit Interaction On The Platform.** “Instagram tied with Snapchat again as most popular platforms where the most survey participants said they have had an online sexual interaction (16% of all respondents). Sexually explicit interaction could include being asked to send a nude photo or video, go ‘on cam’ with a sexually explicit stream, being sent a sexually explicit photo (of themselves or another child), or sexually explicit messages, etc. Of those who use Instagram at least once a day, 22% reported experiencing a sexually explicit interaction on the platform (second only to Snapchat at 23%). Most disturbing, Thorn notes that among the most used platforms, Instagram (together with Snapchat) appears to host the highest concentration of sexually explicit interactions between minors and adults (13% of users).” [National Center On Sexual Exploitation, Accessed [4/24/23](#)]

**The National Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Children Found 5,000 Recorded Crimes Of “Sexual Communication With A Child” On Instagram In An 18-Month Period From 2017-2018.** “The leading U.K. children’s charity, the NSPCC, has claimed that Instagram has become the leading platform for child grooming in the country. The research was based on freedom of information requests covering an 18-month period to September last year, during which there were more than 5,000 recorded crimes ‘of sexual communication with a child,’ and ‘a 200% rise in recorded instances in the use of Instagram to target and abuse children.’” [Forbes, [3/1/19](#)]

- **The Primary Age Group Being Targeted In These Crimes Was 12-15 Years Of Age, With “Many Victims” Under The Age Of 11 And Some As Young As Five Years Old.** “The primary age group being targeted was 12-15 years of age, although there were many victims under the age of 11 and some as young as five. The NSPCC expects the real number of cases to be much higher than those reported to the police. The charity has an ongoing campaign, #WildWestWeb, calling for statutory regulation of social media. ‘On average,’ they claim, ‘ten online grooming offenses are recorded every single day by the police in the U.K. Social networks have become a

gateway for child abuse. Unregulated and unsafe, they're simply not doing enough to protect children." [Forbes, [3/1/19](#)]

## META'S PLATFORMS FAILED TO REMOVE PAGES HOSTING INDECENT PHOTOS OF CHILDREN - AND IN SOME CASES BOOSTED THEM

### INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS POSTING PICTURES OF MINORS IN SWIMSUITS HAD 400,000+ FOLLOWERS

**A Private Instagram Account That Promised Photos Of Teenagers In Swimwear Had Nearly 400,000 Followers.** "One Instagram profile posted photos and videos of minors in swimwear, with a request for "no creeps please." It had 2,167 followers. Another with similar swimwear-based content had 43,000 followers. Those were just the public groups. A private one, which also promised photos of teenagers in swimwear, had nearly 400,000 followers. Together with Durtschi's pages, the accounts identified by Forbes containing sexualized images of children and teenagers had a total of more than 500,000 followers." [Forbes, [6/25/22](#)]

- **A Forbes Review Found That A Public Instagram Account That Posted Photos Of Minors In Swimwear Had 43,000 Followers.** "Yet further searching found over a dozen other accounts that posted similar content to Durtschi's and had been visited by Instagram users who let it be known they found the minors sexually attractive. One Instagram profile posted photos and videos of minors in swimwear, with a request for "no creeps please." It had 2,167 followers. Another with similar swimwear-based content had 43,000 followers. Those were just the public groups. A private one, which also promised photos of teenagers in swimwear, had nearly 400,000 followers." [Forbes, [6/25/22](#)]

**A Man Arrested For Sexual Exploitation Of Children Online Was Able To Continue To Use Two Instagram Accounts To Share Images Of Minors For Months After He Was Arrested.** "Durtschi was arrested in March and indicted in April. He pleaded not guilty to charges of sexual exploitation of children. His attorney didn't respond to requests for comment. Durtschi's arrest, however, didn't have much of an effect on his Instagram presence. Using two other accounts, he appeared to have continued to use the site to share images of minors for months after he was charged and arrested. Forbes did a simple Google search for Durtschi's two deleted Instagram accounts. The first result — one that referenced his business name, as did his already-banned profiles — showed an active account that had nearly 90,000 followers and was regularly posting images of teenagers and possibly younger children wearing swimming attire." [Forbes, [6/25/22](#)]

- **The Predator Continued To Have An Active Account With Nearly 90,000 Followers, On Which He Was Regularly Posted Images Of Teenagers And Younger Children In Swimming Attire.** "Durtschi was arrested in March and indicted in April. He pleaded not guilty to charges of sexual exploitation of children. His attorney didn't respond to requests for comment. Durtschi's arrest, however, didn't have much of an effect on his Instagram presence. Using two other accounts, he appeared to have continued to use the site to share images of minors for months after he was charged and arrested. Forbes did a simple Google search for Durtschi's two deleted Instagram accounts. The first result — one that referenced his business name, as did his already-banned profiles — showed an active account that had nearly 90,000 followers and was regularly posting images of teenagers and possibly younger children wearing swimming attire." [Forbes, [6/25/22](#)]

### THE GUARDIAN REPORTED INSTAGRAM FAILED TO REMOVE ACCOUNTS THAT POSTED PICTURES OF CHILDREN IN SWIMWEAR EVEN AFTER THEY WERE REPORTED

**Instagram Failed To Remove Accounts That Posted Pictures Of Children In Swimwear Or Partial Clothing Even After The Accounts Were Flagged To Instagram Through An In-App Reporting Tool.** "Instagram is failing to remove accounts that attract hundreds of sexualised comments for posting pictures of children in swimwear or partial clothing, even after they are flagged to it through the in-app reporting tool. Instagram's parent company, Meta, claims it takes a zero-tolerance approach to child exploitation. But accounts that have been flagged as suspicious through the in-app reporting tool have been ruled acceptable by its automated moderation technology and remain live." [The Guardian, [4/17/22](#)]

**An Account Posting Photos Of Children In Sexualized Poses Was Reported Using The In-App Reporting Tool, But Instagram Responded That Same Day Saying "Due To High Volume" It Was Unable To View The Report.** "Instagram's parent company, Meta, claims it takes a zero-tolerance approach to child exploitation. But accounts that have been flagged as suspicious through the in-app reporting tool have been ruled acceptable by its automated moderation technology and remain live. In one case, an account posting photos of children in sexualised poses was

reported, using the in-app reporting tool, by a researcher. Instagram provided a same-day response saying that “due to high volume”, it had not been able to view the report, but that its “technology has found that this account probably doesn’t go against our community guidelines”. The user was advised to block or unfollow the account, or report it again. It remained live on Saturday, with more than 33,000 followers. Similar accounts – known as “tribute pages” – were also found to be running on Twitter.” [The Guardian, [4/17/22](#)]

- **Instagram Said Its “Technology Ha[d] Found That This Account Probably Doesn’t Go Against Our Community Guidelines.** “Instagram’s parent company, Meta, claims it takes a zero-tolerance approach to child exploitation. But accounts that have been flagged as suspicious through the in-app reporting tool have been ruled acceptable by its automated moderation technology and remain live. In one case, an account posting photos of children in sexualised poses was reported, using the in-app reporting tool, by a researcher. Instagram provided a same-day response saying that “due to high volume”, it had not been able to view the report, but that its “technology has found that this account probably doesn’t go against our community guidelines”. The user was advised to block or unfollow the account, or report it again. It remained live on Saturday, with more than 33,000 followers. Similar accounts – known as “tribute pages” – were also found to be running on Twitter.” [The Guardian, [4/17/22](#)]
- **The Account Remained Live Days Later With More Than 33,000 Followers.** “Instagram’s parent company, Meta, claims it takes a zero-tolerance approach to child exploitation. But accounts that have been flagged as suspicious through the in-app reporting tool have been ruled acceptable by its automated moderation technology and remain live. In one case, an account posting photos of children in sexualised poses was reported, using the in-app reporting tool, by a researcher. Instagram provided a same-day response saying that “due to high volume”, it had not been able to view the report, but that its “technology has found that this account probably doesn’t go against our community guidelines”. The user was advised to block or unfollow the account, or report it again. It remained live on Saturday, with more than 33,000 followers. Similar accounts – known as “tribute pages” – were also found to be running on Twitter.” [The Guardian, [4/17/22](#)]

## A WIRED REPORTER FOUND THAT FACEBOOK WAS RECOMMENDING GROUPS FOR CHILD SEX ABUSE MERELY AFTER WRITING THE NUMBERS 11, 12, 13 INTO THE SEARCH BAR...

**When A Wired Reporter Searched The Only Numbers 11, 12, 13 On Facebook, “23 Of The First 30 Results Were Groups Targeting Children Of Those Ages” For Sexual Interactions Or Pictures.** “While Trying To map the extent and impact of place-based Facebook groups where QAnon and allied disinformation spread, I went looking for Facebook groups with names including 10, 11, or 12. This was part of my work with the Pitt Disinformation Lab, and I was thinking of the 10th, 11th, or 12th wards of the city of Pittsburgh. What appeared instead was a group named “Buscando novi@ de 9,10,11,12,13 años.” Looking for a 9-year-old girlfriend? What? [...] This was not some outlaw 8Chan message board. It was cheerfully findable on Facebook. And, I began discovering in alarm, it was not the only one. Indeed, as late as January 2022—three months into my efforts to get action taken against them—if I searched 11, 12, 13 on the platform, 23 of the first 30 results were groups targeting children of those ages, with group names that included the words boyfriend/girlfriend, novio/a, or niños/nñas, sometimes along with ‘pervertidos,’ ‘hot,’ etc. They totaled over 81,000 members.” [WIRED, [3/13/22](#)]

## ...FACEBOOK REPEATEDLY DENIED TAKING ACTION AGAINST THE CHILD SEX ABUSE PAGES AFTER THE REPORTER FLAGGED THEM – THEN RECOMMENDED MORE

**When A WIRED Reported Attempted To Report The Profiles To Facebook, An Automated Message Came Back A Few Days Later Saying The Group Had Been Reviewed And Did Not Violate Any “Specific Community Standards.”** “OF COURSE I reported the group I had accidentally uncovered. I used Facebook’s on-platform system, tagging it as containing ‘nudity or sexual activity’ which (next menu) ‘involves a child.’ An automated response came back days later. The group had been reviewed and did not violate any ‘specific community standards.’ If I continued to encounter content ‘offensive or distasteful to you’—was my taste the problem here?—I should report that specific content, not the group as a whole.” [WIRED, [3/13/22](#)]

**The Reporter Was Recommended More Child Sexualization Groups After He Reported The Profiles.** “What became ever clearer as I struggled to get action is that technology’s limits were not the problem. The full power of AI-driven algorithms was on display, but it was working to expand, not reduce, child endangerment. Because even as reply after reply hit my inbox denying grounds for action, new child sexualization groups began getting recommended to me as ‘Groups You May Like.’ Each new group recommended to me had the same mix of cartoon-filled come-ons, emotional grooming, and gamified invites to share sexual materials as the groups I had reported.” [WIRED, [3/13/22](#)]

- **Wired Reporter: “As Reply After Reply Hit My Inbox Denying Grounds For Action, New Child Sexualization Groups Began Getting Recommended To Me.”** “What became ever clearer as I struggled to get action is that technology’s limits were not the problem. The full power of AI-driven algorithms was on display, but it was working to expand, not reduce, child endangerment. Because even as reply after reply hit my inbox denying grounds for action, new child sexualization groups began getting recommended to me as ‘Groups You May Like.’ Each new group recommended to me had the same mix of cartoon-filled come-ons, emotional grooming, and gamified invites to share sexual materials as the groups I had reported.” [WIRED, [3/13/22](#)]

## META FAILED TO CREATE SYSTEMS THAT WOULD DETECT AND REMOVE CHILD ABUSE FROM THEIR PLATFORM

### META DIDN’T KEEP TRACK OF CHILD ABUSE ON THEIR PLATFORM BECAUSE THEY DIDN’T SEE A RETURN ON INVESTMENT AND FOUND IT “TOO COMPLEX”

**A Whistleblower Told The SEC That Facebook Didn’t Know The Full Scale Of The Problem Of Child Abuse Material Because It Didn’t Track It.** “Facebook says it uses technology known as PhotoDNA and VideoDNA, which automatically scan for known child abuse images - each image recovered by law enforcement worldwide and referred to the American National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, is given a unique identifying code. Other accusations from the whistleblower include: Facebook doesn’t know the full scale of the problem of child abuse material because it ‘doesn’t track it’ A constant question allegedly asked by senior managers was ‘what’s the return on investment?’” [BBC, [10/28/21](#)]

- **At Facebook, Senior Managers Would Ask “What’s The Return On Investment.”** “Facebook says it uses technology known as PhotoDNA and VideoDNA, which automatically scan for known child abuse images - each image recovered by law enforcement worldwide and referred to the American National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, is given a unique identifying code. Other accusations from the whistleblower include: Facebook doesn’t know the full scale of the problem of child abuse material because it ‘doesn’t track it’ A constant question allegedly asked by senior managers was ‘what’s the return on investment?’ The whistleblower told the SEC that this was a legitimate business question, “but not when it comes to public safety issues as critical as child sex abuse.”” [BBC, [10/28/21](#)]

**The Whistleblower Said Meta Broke Up A Team It Set Up To Develop Software For Detecting Indecent Videos Of Children Because It Was Seen As “Too Complex.”** “In a sworn statement to the SEC, which regulates securities markets and protects investors, the individual said there was no solution to illegal material at Facebook because there had not been ‘adequate assets devoted to the problem’. They claim that a small team set up to develop software which could detect indecent videos of children was broken up and redeployed, because it was seen as ‘too complex’. Facebook says it uses technology known as PhotoDNA and VideoDNA, which automatically scan for known child abuse images - each image recovered by law enforcement worldwide and referred to the American National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, is given a unique identifying code.” BBC, [10/28/21](#)]

**A Whistleblower Said Meta’s Efforts To Remove Child Abuse Material Were “Inadequate” And “Under-Resourced.”** “A former Facebook employee has told US authorities the company’s efforts to remove child abuse material from the platform were ‘inadequate’ and ‘under-resourced’. The allegations are contained in documents seen by BBC News and submitted to the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) two weeks ago. The anonymous whistleblower says moderators are “not sufficiently trained and are ill prepared”. Facebook said in a statement: ‘We have no tolerance for this abhorrent abuse of children and use sophisticated technologies to combat it.’” [BBC, [10/28/21](#)]

### META INFLATED THE SUCCESS OF THEIR AI’S ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS AND WAS NOWHERE CLOSE TO HAVING AN AI THAT COULD SUCCESSFULLY DO SO

**Facebook Inflated The Success Of Their Platform’s AI Enforcement Efforts.** “The documents reviewed by the Journal also show that Facebook two years ago cut the time human reviewers focused on hate-speech complaints from users and made other tweaks that reduced the overall number of complaints. That made the company more dependent on AI enforcement of its rules and inflated the apparent success of the technology in its public statistics. According to the documents, those responsible for keeping the platform free from content Facebook deems offensive or dangerous acknowledge that the company is nowhere close to being able to reliably screen it.” [WSJ, [10/17/21](#)]

- **Senior Facebook Engineer: “The Problem Is That We Do Not And Possibly Never Will Have A Model That Captures Even A Majority Of Integrity Harms, Particularly In Sensitive Areas.”** “According to the documents, those responsible for keeping the platform free from content Facebook deems offensive or dangerous

acknowledge that the company is nowhere close to being able to reliably screen it. 'The problem is that we do not and possibly never will have a model that captures even a majority of integrity harms, particularly in sensitive areas,' wrote a senior engineer and research scientist in a mid-2019 note. He estimated the company's automated systems removed posts that generated just 2% of the views of hate speech on the platform that violated its rules." [WSJ, [10/17/21](#)]

### **Employees Responsible For Keeping Meta's Platforms Free From Offensive And Dangerous Content**

**Acknowledged That The Company Was Nowhere Close To Being Able To Reliably Screen It.** "According to the documents, those responsible for keeping the platform free from content Facebook deems offensive or dangerous acknowledge that the company is nowhere close to being able to reliably screen it. 'The problem is that we do not and possibly never will have a model that captures even a majority of integrity harms, particularly in sensitive areas,' wrote a senior engineer and research scientist in a mid-2019 note." [WSJ, [10/17/21](#)]

## **META'S FACEBOOK KIDS MESSENGER APP HAD FLAWS THAT ALLOWED PREDATORS TO BYPASS PROTECTIVE MEASURES AND CONNECT WITH KIDS**

### **A GROUP OF 100 EXPERTS, ADVOCATES AND PARENTING ORGANIZATIONS CRITICIZED FACEBOOK'S MESSENGER KIDS APP, YET META FAILED TO MEET WITH THEM**

**A Group Of 100 Experts, Advocates, And Parenting Organizations Criticized Facebook's Messenger Kids App, Claiming That Facebook Was "Creating" The Need In The Market To Target Younger And Younger Children.** "A group of 100 experts, advocates and parenting organizations is contesting Facebook's claims of filling a need. Led by the Boston-based Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, the group includes psychiatrists, pediatricians, educators and the children's music singer Raffi Cavoukian. 'Messenger Kids is not responding to a need — it is creating one,' the letter states. 'It appeals primarily to children who otherwise would not have their own social media accounts.' Another passage criticized Facebook for 'targeting younger children with a new product.'" [Associated Press, [1/30/18](#)]

**Facebook Failed To Reach Out To Children Safety Advocates Including Common Sense Media And Campaign For A Commercial Free Childhood Before Launching The Messenger Kids App.** "Equally notable are the experts Facebook did not consult. Although Facebook says it spent 18 months developing the app, Common Sense Media and Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, two large nonprofits in the field, say they weren't informed about it until weeks or days before the app's debut. 'They had reached out to me personally Friday before it launched, when obviously it was a fait accompli,' says Josh Golin, executive director of Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood. Facebook, he says, is 'trying to represent that they have so much more support for this than they actually do.' Academics Sherry Turkle and Jean Twenge, well-known researchers whose work on children and technology is often cited, didn't know about the app until after it launched." [Wired, [2/14/18](#)]

### **A FLAW IN THE MESSENGER KIDS APP ALLOWED KIDS TO CHAT WITH UNAPPROVED ADULTS**

**A Flaw In The Facebook Messenger Kids App Allowed Minors To Chat With Unapproved Adults.** "Democratic senators wrote to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg Tuesday, probing the company on whether it has done enough to protect children's privacy after The Verge reported last month on a flaw in the Messenger Kids app that allowed minors to chat with unapproved adults. Late last month, Facebook alerted parents of the flaw and notified them that the group chats created by way of it were being shut down by the company. Messenger Kids allows parents to approve of users that their children can speak with in the app." [The Verge, [8/6/19](#)]

- **A Loophole In The App Allowed Users To Invite Kids To Group Chats Even If Unauthorized Users Were There Too.** "Senators are questioning Facebook again. This time their concerns are related to a technical error that let thousands of kids join group chats with unauthorized users, The Verge reports. Senators Edward Markey (D-Mass.) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) wrote a letter to Mark Zuckerberg today, asking whether Facebook has done enough to protect children's online safety. Last month, a report by The Verge revealed the technical error in Messenger Kids. The app is supposed to require parental permission before kids chat with other users. But a loophole allowed approved users to invite kids to group chats, even if unauthorized users were there too. In response, Facebook reportedly alerted parents to the flaw and shut down group chats created through the loophole." [Engadget, [8/6/19](#)]

**The Verge: Due To The Bug, "Thousands Of Children Were Left In Chats With Unauthorized Users, A Violation Of The Core Promise Of Messenger Kids."** "The bug arose from the way Messenger Kids' unique permissions were applied in group chats. In a standard one-on-one chat, children can only initiate conversations with users who have been

approved by the child's parents. But those permissions became more complex when applied to a group chat because of the multiple users involved. Whoever launched the group could invite any user who was authorized to chat with them, even if that user wasn't authorized to chat with the other children in the group. As a result, thousands of children were left in chats with unauthorized users, a violation of the core promise of Messenger Kids." [\[The Verge, 7/22/19\]](#)

## META PLANNED ON MAKING MESSAGES ON INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK ENCRYPTED BY DEFAULT DESPITE THE MOVE DECREASING ITS ABILITY TO STAMP OUT CHILD ABUSE

**The National Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Children Warned That Facebook's Plan To Encrypt All Of Its Messaging Platforms Would Allow Child Predators To Operate With Impunity Across All Of Their Apps.** "New opponents confronted Facebook on Wednesday as it moves forward with a plan to encrypt all of its messaging platforms: child welfare advocates who said that encryption would allow child predators to operate with impunity across the company's apps. [...] 'Facebook has a responsibility to work with law enforcement and to prevent the use of your sites and services for sexual abuse,' a group of 129 child protection organizations, led by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, said in a letter to the Silicon Valley company. 'An increased risk of child abuse being facilitated on or by Facebook is not a reasonable trade-off to make.'" [\[New York Times, 2/5/20\]](#)

**FBI Director Christopher Wray Said Facebook's Encryption Plans Would "Blind Themselves And Law Enforcement" To Child Pornography And Predators.** "In a hearing with the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, Christopher Wray, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, also criticized Facebook on its encryption plans, calling it a 'dream come true' for predators and child pornographers who use the services to traffic in illicit material. 'If Facebook moves forward with the plans that they have at the moment, we will be blinded,' Mr. Wray said. 'They will blind themselves and law enforcement.'" [\[New York Times, 2/5/20\]](#)

- **Wray Said The Encryption Plans Were A "Dream Come True" for Predators And Child Pornographers.** "In a hearing with the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, Christopher Wray, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, also criticized Facebook on its encryption plans, calling it a 'dream come true' for predators and child pornographers who use the services to traffic in illicit material. 'If Facebook moves forward with the plans that they have at the moment, we will be blinded,' Mr. Wray said. 'They will blind themselves and law enforcement.'" [\[New York Times, 2/5/20\]](#)

**The UK National Crime Agency Said Meta's Encryption Choice "Degrade[d] Safety Systems And Weaken[ed] The Ability To Keep Child Users Safe."** "The announced implementation of E2EE on Meta platforms Instagram and Facebook is an example of a purposeful design choice that degrades safety systems and weakens the ability to keep child users safe," the global task force said in a statement on the UK National Crime Agency's website. 'Meta is currently the leading reporter of detected child sexual abuse to NCMEC,' the task force said, referring to the US-based National Center for Missing & Exploited Children." [\[Ars Technica, 4/19/23\]](#)

## DESPITE THE PUBLIC OUTCRY, META CONTINUED TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THEIR ENCRYPTION EFFORT

**Meta Said It Planned To Make End-To-End Encryption Default On Facebook Messenger At The End Of 2023 Even After Being Contacted About Child Abuse Concerns.** "A Meta spokesperson said the company's plan to make end-to-end encryption the default in Facebook Messenger is still on track to be completed this year. "End-to-end encryption is already optional on Messenger. Our plan is to fully roll it out, and make it default for Messenger users, sometime in 2023. We provide regular updates on our progress," Meta said. The plan for default end-to-end encryption applies to Instagram messages, too, but the Instagram rollout may not happen in 2023, the spokesperson said." [\[Ars Technica, 4/19/23\]](#)

## META CONTINUALLY OPPOSED EFFORTS BY THEIR SHAREHOLDERS TO EXAMINE THE RISKS OF ENCRYPTING MESSAGES WHEN IT CAME TO STAMPING OUT CHILD ABUSE

## IN 2023, META'S BOARD RECOMMENDED VOTING NO ON A SHAREHOLDER PROPOSAL THAT DIRECTED THE BOARD TO PUBLISH AN ANNUAL REPORT ON CHILD HARM REDUCTION

## META SAID IT IMPLEMENTED SYSTEMS TO PROACTIVELY ADDRESS CHILD ABUSE AND HARMFUL CONTENT AND DIDN'T THINK THE REPORT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL

April 2023: Meta's Board Recommended Voting "NO" On A Shareholder Proposal Directing Its Board Of Directors Publish An Annual Report That Included Whether Meta Had Improved It Performance Globally Regarding Child

**Safety Impacts And Actual Harm Reduction To Children On Its Platform.** “Meta states that it has no tolerance for child exploitation or bullying and is developing new child safety features for selected products and age groups. Yet, Meta has no publicly available, company-wide child safety or harm reduction performance targets for investors and stakeholders to judge the effectiveness of Meta’s announced tools, policies and actions. Resolved: Shareholders request that, within one year, the Board of Directors adopts targets and publishes annually a report (prepared at reasonable expense, excluding proprietary information) that includes quantitative metrics appropriate to assessing whether Meta has improved its performance globally regarding child safety impacts and actual harm reduction to children on its platforms. [...] We regularly collaborate with a group of external advisors for our youth efforts that includes third-party experts and professionals across online safety, privacy, media literacy, mental health, and child psychology. We work with the Safety Advisory Council, comprised of leading, independent internet safety organizations from around the world, who provide expertise, perspective, and insights that inform our approach to safety [...] Given our ongoing efforts to address this topic, the board of directors does not believe that the requested report would provide additional benefit to our shareholders. Therefore, our board of directors recommends that our shareholders vote against this proposal. The board of directors recommends a vote AGAINST the shareholder proposal.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/14/23](#)]

- **Meta Said It Disabled Searches For Certain Terms Relation To Self-Harm And Eating Disorders And Referred Users To Expert Resources.** “We have sought to remove known suicide and self-harm related posts from places where people discover new content, removed certain hashtags and accounts from appearing in search and have added sensitivity screens to blur certain content that could have a negative impact on someone searching. In addition, we have disabled searches for certain terms relating to self-harm and eating disorders and instead refer users to expert resources. •The Sensitive Content Control, which gives users control over sensitive content, has only two options for teens: “Standard” and “Less.” New teens on Instagram under 16 years old are defaulted into the “Less” state, making it more difficult for them to come across potentially sensitive content or accounts in Search, Explore, Hashtag Pages, Reels, Feed Recommendations, and Suggested Accounts.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/14/23](#)]
- **Meta Said It Had Worked on New Features, Tools And Technologies, Including AI, To “Proactively Detect Accounts Engaged In Certain Suspicious Patterns Of Behavior.”** “Our policies prohibit content or behavior that exploits children and we seek to prevent this activity through a number of measures, including using technology, such as artificial intelligence. Over the last few years, we have worked on several new features, tools and technologies, including artificial intelligence to proactively detect accounts engaged in certain suspicious patterns of behavior. For example, to protect teens from unwanted contact from adults, we seek to limit adults from messaging teens who do not follow them on Instagram. We also show Safety Notices to teens if an adult who they are connected to tries to direct message them.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/14/23](#)]
- **Meta: “Given Our Ongoing Efforts To Address This Topic, The Board Of Directors Does Not Believe That The Requested Report Would Provide Additional Benefit To Our Shareholders.”** “We regularly collaborate with a group of external advisors for our youth efforts that includes third-party experts and professionals across online safety, privacy, media literacy, mental health, and child psychology. We work with the Safety Advisory Council, comprised of leading, independent internet safety organizations from around the world, who provide expertise, perspective, and insights that inform our approach to safety [...] Given our ongoing efforts to address this topic, the board of directors does not believe that the requested report would provide additional benefit to our shareholders. Therefore, our board of directors recommends that our shareholders vote against this proposal. The board of directors recommends a vote AGAINST the shareholder proposal.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/14/23](#)]

## IN 2022, META’S BOARD RECOMMENDED VOTING NO ON A SHAREHOLDER PROPOSAL THAT ASSESSED THE RISK OF INCREASED SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IF THEY ENCRYPTED MESSAGES

**April 2022: Meta Rejected A Shareholder Proposal For The Board Of Directors To Issue A Report That Assessed The Risk Of Increased Sexual Exploitation Of Children As The Company Developed Encryption Tools.** “RESOLVED: Shareholders request that the Board of Directors issue a report by February 2023 assessing the risk of increased sexual exploitation of children as the Company develops and offers additional privacy tools such as end-to-end encryption. The report should address potential adverse impacts to children (18 years and younger) and to the company’s reputation or social license, assess the impact of limits to detection technologies and strategies, and be prepared at reasonable expense and excluding proprietary/confidential information [...] Given our active approach to addressing child exploitation, including our proactive detection of bad actors, as well as partnerships with international child safety organizations, and our ongoing transparency on this topic, our board of directors believes that the preparation of the report contemplated by this proposal is unnecessary. Therefore, our board of directors recommends that our shareholders vote against this proposal. The board of directors recommends a vote AGAINST the shareholder proposal.” [SEC, Schedule 14A, [4/8/22](#)]

- **Meta Said Because Of Their “Proactive Detection Of Bad Actors” And Partnerships With Child Safety Organizations, The Report Was “Unnecessary.”** Given our active approach to addressing child exploitation, including our proactive detection of bad actors, as well as partnerships with international child safety organizations, and our ongoing transparency on this topic, our board of directors believes that the preparation of the report contemplated by this proposal is unnecessary. Therefore, our board of directors recommends that our shareholders vote against this proposal. The board of directors recommends a vote AGAINST the shareholder proposal.” [SEC, Schedule 14A, [4/8/22](#)]
- **Meta Said They Had “Expanded” Their Work To Detect And Remove Networks That Violated Their Child Exploitation Policies.** “Our tools look for signals and patterns of suspicious activity, and with this data, we work with experts to better understand how bad actors connect with their victims in the first place. We have also expanded our work to detect and remove networks that violate our child exploitation policies, similar to our efforts against coordinated inauthentic behavior and dangerous organizations. Response. We take action to fight abusive behavior and protect minors even in an encrypted environment. We also actively upgrade our response mechanisms and collect data that we use to build our knowledge and capabilities to evolve our technology and approach. Our teams use actionable reporting to gather evidence to take action against bad actors. For example: •We have made efforts to make people aware of their reporting options at more places within our products, such as when someone blocks another user or deletes a message thread.” [SEC, Schedule 14A, [4/8/22](#)]

## IN 2021, META’S BOARD RECOMMENDED VOTING NO ON A SHAREHOLDER PROPOSAL THAT ASSESSED THE RISK OF INCREASED SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IF THEY ENCRYPTED MESSAGES

**April 2021: Then-Facebook (Meta) Recommended Voting No A Shareholder Proposal That The Board Of Directors Issue An Assessment Of The Risk Of Increased Sexual Exploitation Of Children When They Were Working On Encryption.** “A letter from 120+ child protection organizations wrote Facebook saying its encryption plans ‘presents an unacceptable risk to children, and would arguably make your services unsafe’ [...] RESOLVED: Shareholders request that the Board of Directors issue a report by February 2022 assessing the risk of increased sexual exploitation of children as the Company develops and offers additional privacy tools such as end-to-end encryption. The report should address potential adverse impacts to children (18 years and younger) and to the company’s reputation or social license, assess the impact of limits to detection technologies and strategies, and be prepared at reasonable expense and excluding proprietary/confidential information [...] Given our active approach to addressing child exploitation, including our proactive detection of bad actors, as well as partnerships with international child safety organizations, and our ongoing transparency on this topic, our board of directors believes that the preparation of the report contemplated by this proposal is unnecessary. Therefore, our board of directors recommends that our shareholders vote against this proposal.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/9/21](#)]

- **Meta Said They Had “Robust Policies To Help Protect Against Child Exploitation And Content Or Behavior On Our Platform.”** “The report should address potential adverse impacts to children (18 years and younger) and to the company’s reputation or social license, assess the impact of limits to detection technologies and strategies, and be prepared at reasonable expense and excluding proprietary/confidential information. We have robust policies to help protect against child exploitation and content or behavior on our platform that puts the safety of children at risk. We believe we have led the industry in developing new ways to prevent, detect, and respond to abuse, which are the three key elements in our strategy to combat abuse. Prevention. Our work focuses in particular on preventing abuse from happening in the first place through the use of our platforms.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/9/21](#)]
- **Meta Said Because Of Their “Proactive Detection Of Bad Actors” And Partnerships With Child Safety Organizations, The Report Was “Unnecessary.”** Given our active approach to addressing child exploitation, including our proactive detection of bad actors, as well as partnerships with international child safety organizations, and our ongoing transparency on this topic, our board of directors believes that the preparation of the report contemplated by this proposal is unnecessary. Therefore, our board of directors recommends that our shareholders vote against this proposal.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/9/21](#)]

## IN 2020, META’S BOARD RECOMMENDED VOTING NO ON A SHAREHOLDER PROPOSAL THAT ASSESSED THE RISK OF INCREASED SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IF THEY ENCRYPTED MESSAGES

**April 2020: Then-Facebook (Meta) Rejected A Shareholder Proposal For The Company To Report An Assessment Of The Risk Of Increased Sexual Exploitation Of Children As It Developed Encryption Tools.** “Shareholders believe that the company needs to report on its assessment of the risk of increased sexual exploitation of children as it develops and offers additional privacy tools such as end-to-end encryption. We ask that you vote for Item 10: Report on Online Child Sexual Exploitation [...] Given our existing approach to addressing child exploitation, including our proactive

detection of harmful content and accounts, our partnerships with law enforcement and NGOs, and our historical and ongoing transparency on this topic, our board of directors believes that the preparation of the report contemplated by this proposal is unnecessary and not beneficial to our stockholders. Therefore, our board of directors recommends that our stockholders vote against this proposal.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/10/20](#)]

- **Facebook Promised That It “Fundamentally” Did Not Allow “Content Or Behavior On Our Services That Puts The Safety Of Children At Risk.”** “FACEBOOK OPPOSING STATEMENT We fundamentally do not allow content or behavior on our services that puts the safety of children at risk. Our Community Standards ban child exploitation and to help avoid even the potential for abuse, we take action on certain kinds of nonsexual child nudity content, as well. We have industry-leading efforts in a number of areas to address these issues. For years we have been tackling the issue of child exploitative imagery with advanced technologies, industry collaboration through the Technology Coalition, and partnerships with child safety NGOs like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), Thorn, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), Child Helpline International, ECPAT International, and others.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/10/20](#)]
- **Facebook Ensured That It Used “Sophisticated Technology And Other Techniques” To Detect And Remove Child Exploitation Imagery As Well As Grooming And Inappropriate Interactions Between A Minor And An Adult.** “Our work with external experts, including the Facebook Safety Advisory Board, which is comprised of independent online safety organizations and experts from around the world, continually informs and improves our policies and enforcement around online safety issues, especially with regards to children. We use sophisticated technology and other techniques not only to detect child exploitation imagery and remove it, but also to detect and prevent grooming or potentially inappropriate interactions between a minor and an adult. We deploy technology across all of our platforms to proactively surface as much illegal child exploitative content as we can, including through detection technology, machine learning and artificial intelligence techniques, and open-sourcing photo- and video-matching technology. We also publish Transparency Reports to provide visibility into the prevalence of these issues and our effectiveness in combating them. In our November 2019 Community Standards Enforcement Report, we communicated the removal of approximately 11.6 million pieces of content that violated our policy on child nudity and sexual exploitation of children.” [SEC, DEF 14A, [4/10/20](#)]

## INSTAGRAM WAS KNOWN TO BE HARMFUL TO THE MENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY OF ITS NEARLY 22 MILLION DAILY TEEN USERS

### INSTAGRAM WAS AT ITS CORE A SOCIAL COMPARISON APP HARMFUL TO TEENS AND CAUSED SELF-ESTEEM ISSUES, LED TO EATING DISORDERS AND ENABLED BULLIES

**22 Million Teens Logged Onto Instagram In The U.S. Every Day.** “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.” [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

**The Features That Were Core To Instagram – A Tendency To Share Only The Best Moments, The Pressure To Look Perfect - Were The Most Harmful To Teens.** “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. 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.” [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

**Frequent Use Of Image-Based Social Media Like Instagram Was Linked To Greater Self-Objectification.** “While many of these choices are played out in an online or virtual environment, the consequences of these choices translate over into the real world prompting both psychological and physical effects. More frequent use of image-based social media platforms like Instagram is linked to greater self-objectification, especially when the user engages with celebrity culture (Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2017). However, this link is also present when the user engages with non-celebrities on social media as well.” [Davis, Objectification, Sexualization, and Misrepresentation: Social Media and the College Experience, [7/13/18](#)]

**Wall Street Journal: Instagram Was “An Addictive Product” That Led Teens “Spiraling Toward Eating Disorders, An Unhealthy Sense Of Their Own Bodies And Depression.”** “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. 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." [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

## TEENS BLAMED INSTAGRAM FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES LIKE ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

### INSTAGRAM MADE A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF TEENS FEEL WORSE ABOUT THE WAY THEY LOOKED AND WHO THEY WERE

**An Internal Meta Research Slide Said Teens Were Blaming Instagram For "Increases In The Rate Of Anxiety And Depression."** "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." [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

**Facebook Found That More Than 40% Of Teen Instagram Users Reported Feeling "Unattractive," A Feeling That They Feeling Began On The App.** "But a mounting body of Facebook's own evidence shows Instagram can be damaging for many. In one study of teens in the U.S. and U.K., Facebook found that more than 40% of Instagram users who reported feeling "unattractive" said the feeling began on the app. About a quarter of the teens who reported feeling "not good enough" said the feeling started on Instagram. Many also said the app undermined their confidence in the strength of their friendships." [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

- **32% Of Teenage Girls Said That When They Felt Bad About Their Bodies, Instagram Made Them Feel Worse.** "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." [WSJ, [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](#)]
- **Teenager: "Every Time I Feel Good About Myself, I Go Over To Instagram, And Then It All Goes Away."** "Eva Behrens, a 17-year-old student at Redwood High School in Marin County, Calif., said she estimates half the girls in her grade struggle with body-image concerns tied to Instagram. 'Every time I feel good about myself, I go over to Instagram, and then it all goes away,' she said. When her classmate Molly Pitts, 17, arrived at high school, she found her peers using Instagram as a tool to measure their relative popularity. Students referred to the number of followers their peers had as if the number was stamped on their foreheads, she said. Now, she said, when she looks at her number of followers on Instagram, it is most often a 'kick in the gut.'" [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]
- **Teenager: Looking At Her Peers' Followers Was A "Kick In The Gut."** "Eva Behrens, a 17-year-old student at Redwood High School in Marin County, Calif., said she estimates half the girls in her grade struggle with body-image concerns tied to Instagram. 'Every time I feel good about myself, I go over to Instagram, and then it all goes away,' she said. When her classmate Molly Pitts, 17, arrived at high school, she found her peers using Instagram as a tool to measure their relative popularity. Students referred to the number of followers their peers had as if the number was stamped on their foreheads, she said. Now, she said, when she looks at her number of followers on Instagram, it is most often a 'kick in the gut.'" [Wall Street Journal, [9/14/21](#)]

**Adolescence Was A Period Of Personal And Social Identity And Much Of That Development Became Reliant On Social Media.** "Similarly, Appel, Gerlach, and Crusius (2016) found that passive Facebook use predicts social comparison and envy, which in turn lead to depression. Adolescence is the period of personal and social identity formation (Erikson, 1950), and much of this development is now reliant on social media. Due to their limited capacity for self-regulation and their vulnerability to peer pressure, adolescents may not evade the potentially adverse effects of social media use, and

consequently, they are at greater risk of developing mental disorder.” [Keles, McCrae, Grealish, A Systematic Review: The Influence Of Social Media On Depression, Anxiety And Psychological Distress In Adolescents, [3/3/19](#)]

## PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE NOTED THE ISSUES TO USERS' MENTAL HEALTH PRESENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS LIKE INSTAGRAM...

**American Psychological Association Said Instagram Design “Capitalize[d] On Users’ Biological Drive For Social Belonging And Nudge[d] Them To Keep On Scrolling.** “Still, there is plenty of cause for concern. Studies have linked Instagram to depression, body image concerns, self-esteem issues, social anxiety, and other problems. By design, the app capitalizes on users’ biological drive for social belonging—and nudges them to keep on scrolling. “There’s something about the interactions occurring on social media that makes them qualitatively different from in-person interactions,” some of which are intentionally part of the way apps are designed, said Mitch Prinstein, APA’s chief science officer.” [American Psychological Association, [12/2/21](#)]

**APA Said Instagram Was Problematic Because Of “Its Addictive Nature” And Lack Of “Stopping Cues.”** “How use affects mental health Part of what makes Instagram problematic is its addictive nature. Unlike a magazine, television show, or video game, the platform rarely delivers “stopping cues”—or gentle nudges that prompt users to move on to a different activity, said psychologist Adam Alter, PhD, a professor of marketing at New York University’s Stern School of Business. Instead, it continually serves up content, driving users back to the top of their feeds to repeat the descent.” [American Psychological Association, [12/2/21](#)]

**It Was Posited That Because Adolescents Had A Limited Capacity For Self-Regulation And Were Vulnerable To Peer Pressure, They Were Susceptible To The Adverse Effects Of Social Media.** “Similarly, Appel, Gerlach, and Crusius (2016) found that passive Facebook use predicts social comparison and envy, which in turn lead to depression. Adolescence is the period of personal and social identity formation (Erikson, 1950), and much of this development is now reliant on social media. Due to their limited capacity for self-regulation and their vulnerability to peer pressure, adolescents may not evade the potentially adverse effects of social media use, and consequently, they are at greater risk of developing mental disorder.” [Keles, McCrae, Grealish, A Systematic Review: The Influence Of Social Media On Depression, Anxiety And Psychological Distress In Adolescents, [3/3/19](#)]

## META FOUND THAT THE HARMS INSTAGRAM CAUSED WERE UNIQUE TO THE PLATFORM AND NOT FOUND IN SOCIAL MEDIA MORE BROADLY

### META WAS WELL AWARE OF THE HARM IT CAUSED ITS YOUNG USERS – MUCH LIKE IT WAS AWARE THAT NEGATIVE SOCIAL COMPARISONS KEPT USERS ATTENTION

**Meta Researchers Concluded That 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](#)]

**Meta’s Internal Research Found Instagram 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](#)]

**During A Three-Year Study Of How Instagram Affected Its Young Users, Meta Found It Was Harmful To A Sizeable Percentage Of Them, Most Notably Teenage Girls.** “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." [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

**An Internal Meta Research Slide Note Instagram Made "Body Issues Worse For One In Three Girls."** "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." [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

**Instagram Knew That Strong Negative Emotions, Such As Negative Social Comparison, Kept Users' Attention Longer Than Other Emotions.** "But Instagram knows full well that this not true. In fact, their very business model is predicated on how much they can manipulate users' behavior to boost engagement and extend time spent on the platform, which the platform then monetizes to sell to advertisers. Instagram is literally selling users' attention. The company knows that strong negative emotions, which can be provoked by negative social comparison, keep users' attention longer than other emotions—and Instagram's algorithms are expressly designed to push teens toward toxic content so that they stay on the platform. For teens struggling with body image, anxiety, or other mental health issues, negative social comparison is a dangerous trap, intensifying their engagement with the platform while worsening their symptoms." [Harvard School Of Public Health, [10/8/21](#)]

## **META DOWNPLAYED THE HARMS IT'S PLATFORMS CAUSED TEENS IN PUBLIC AND MADE LITTLE EFFORT TO ADDRESS THEM INTERNALLY**

**Despite Internal Research Showing Otherwise, Meta Consistently Played Down Instagram's Effects On Teens.** "Instagram is well positioned to resonate and win with young people," said a researcher's slide posted internally. Another post said: 'There is a path to growth if Instagram can continue their trajectory.' 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." [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

**Instagram's Head, Adam Mosseri, Had Previously Told Reporters That The Research He Had Seen Suggested The App's Effects On Teen Well-Being Was Likely "Quite Small."** "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." [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

**Internal Facebook Documents Showed That The Platform Made Minimal Efforts To Address Instagram's Impact On Teens.** "The Instagram documents form part of a trove of internal communications reviewed by the Journal, on areas including teen mental health, political discourse and human trafficking. They offer an unparalleled picture of how Facebook is acutely aware that the products and systems central to its business success routinely fail. The documents also show that Facebook has made minimal efforts to address these issues and plays them down in public. The company's research on Instagram, the deepest look yet at what the tech giant knows about its impact on teens and their mental well-being, represents one of the clearest gaps revealed in the documents between Facebook's understanding of itself and its public position." [WSJ, [9/14/21](#)]

## **META ACTIVELY SHUT DOWN PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE IT'S PLATFORMS IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH**

**Instead Of Moving To Address The Problems Around Children Using Instagram And Facebook, Meta Defunded Its Mental Health Team.** "Another unsealed portion of the filing contends that instead of moving to address the problems around children using Instagram and Facebook, Meta defunded its mental health team. The filing says Zuckerberg was personally warned: 'We are not on track to succeed for our core well-being topics (problematic use, bullying & harassment, connections, and SSI), and are at increased regulatory risk and external criticism. These affect everyone, especially Youth and Creators; if not addressed, these will follow us into the Metaverse.'" [LA Times, [3/13/23](#)]

**Facebook Shut Down A Team Focused On User Well-Being In 2019.** “A Facebook team focused on user well-being suggested a range of fixes, and the company implemented some, building in optional features to encourage breaks from social media and to dial back the notifications that can serve as a lure to bring people back to the platform. Facebook shut down the team in late 2019. A company spokeswoman said Facebook in recent months has begun formulating a new effort to address what it calls problematic use alongside other well-being concerns, such as body image and mental health.” [WSJ, [11/5/21](#)]

## CYBERBULLYING WAS RAMPANT ON INSTAGRAM, WITH NEARLY 80% OF 11,000+ FAMILIES SURVEYED REPORTING EXPERIENCING CYBERBULLYING

### INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP HAD THE HIGHEST RATE OF CYBERBULLYING COMPARED TO OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA APPS

**In A McAfee Study Of 11,687 Parents And Children In 10 Countries, Nearly 80% Of Respondents Reported Cyberbullying On Instagram, Compared To 50% On TikTok And Snapchat.** “The California-based firm said cyberbullying occurs more than twice as often on Facebook as on Twitter and four times more on WhatsApp, the most popular messaging app among children, than on rival Discord. And nearly 80% of families reported cyberbullying on Instagram, compared to 50% on TikTok and Snapchat. ‘Most social media sites require children to be age 13 and older to use these sites, yet the majority of parents are the ones who sign up their children under the age of 13 for these accounts,’ Ross Ellis, founder of the advocacy group STOMP Out Bullying, said in a comment on the study.” [Washington Times, [8/10/22](#)]

**According To The McAfee Study, Cyberbullying Complaints Were Highest On Facebook, WhatsApp And Instagram Compared To Other Social Media Apps.** “A pair of wide-ranging social media studies released Wednesday finds cyberbullying complaints highest on Meta’s Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram platforms as teens increasingly switch to TikTok. In a global survey of 11,687 parents and their children in 10 countries, computer security company McAfee found Facebook leading all platforms for complaints, with 65% of Americans witnessing bullying — including racism and threats of physical harm — and 67% experiencing it. The California-based firm said cyberbullying occurs more than twice as often on Facebook as on Twitter and four times more on WhatsApp, the most popular messaging app among children, than on rival Discord.” [Washington Times, [8/10/22](#)]

- Cyberbullying Occurred At Double The Rate On Facebook Than On Twitter, And Four Times More On WhatsApp Than On Discord.** “A pair of wide-ranging social media studies released Wednesday finds cyberbullying complaints highest on Meta’s Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram platforms as teens increasingly switch to TikTok. In a global survey of 11,687 parents and their children in 10 countries, computer security company McAfee found Facebook leading all platforms for complaints, with 65% of Americans witnessing bullying — including racism and threats of physical harm — and 67% experiencing it. The California-based firm said cyberbullying occurs more than twice as often on Facebook as on Twitter and four times more on WhatsApp, the most popular messaging app among children, than on rival Discord.” [Washington Times, [8/10/22](#)]

### OVERALL, NEARLY 60% OF TEENS HAD BEEN BULLIED ONLINE

**A Pew Research Study Found That 59% Of Teens Were Bullied Online.** “But when those friendships go south, the app can become a portal of pain. According to a recent Pew survey, 59 percent of teens have been bullied online, and according to a 2017 survey conducted by Ditch the Label, a nonprofit anti-bullying group, more than one in five 12-to-20-year-olds experience bullying specifically on Instagram. ‘Instagram is a good place sometimes,’ said Riley, a 14-year-old who, like most kids in this story, asked to be referred to by her first name only, ‘but there’s a lot of drama, bullying, and gossip to go along with it.’” [[The Atlantic, 10/10/18](#)]

### TEENS SAID INSTAGRAM’S EASY SIGN UP PROCESS MADE IT EASIER FOR BULLY’S TO CREATE “HATE PAGES” FOR THEIR VICTIMS

**The Atlantic: Instagram “Provide[d] A Uniquely Powerful Set Of Tools” For Bullying, Including Anonymous Profiles, Lack Of Adult Oversight, And Potential For Viral Posts.** “Teenagers have always been cruel to one another. But Instagram provides a uniquely powerful set of tools to do so. The velocity and size of the distribution mechanism allow rude comments or harassing images to go viral within hours. Like Twitter, Instagram makes it easy to set up new, anonymous profiles, which can be used specifically for trolling. Most importantly, many interactions on the app are hidden from the watchful eyes of parents and teachers, many of whom don’t understand the platform’s intricacies.” [[The Atlantic, 10/10/18](#)]

**Teenagers Described How Instagram Users Used The Ease Of Making Anonymous Profiles To Create “Hate Pages” For Bully Victims.** “Because bullying on your main feed is seen by many as aggressive and uncool, many teens create hate pages: separate Instagram accounts, purpose-built and solely dedicated to trashing one person, created by teens alone or in a group. They’ll post bad photos of their target, expose her secrets, post screenshots of texts from people saying mean things about her, and any other terrible stuff they can find. ‘I’ve had at least 10 hate pages made about me,’ said Annie, a 15-year-old who asked to be referred to by a pseudonym. ‘I know some were made in a row by the same person, but some were from different people. They say really nasty things about you, the most outrageous as possible.’” [\[The Atlantic, 10/10/18\]](#)

**A Teenager Explained That Instagram Did Not Prevent Cyberbullying Because Most Cyberbullying Occurred “Over DM And In Comments Sections.”** “The scariest thing about being attacked by a hate page, teens say, is that you don’t know who is doing the attacking. ‘In real-life bullying, you know what’s doing it,’ said Skye, a 14-year-old. ‘Hate pages could be anyone. It could be someone you know, someone you don’t know—you don’t know what you know, and it’s scary because it’s really out of control at that point. Teachers tell you with bullying [to] just say ‘Stop,’ but in this case you can’t, and you don’t even know who to tell stop to.’ Aside from hate pages, teens say most bullying takes place over direct message, Instagram Stories, or in the comments section of friends’ photos. ‘Instagram won’t delete a person’s account unless it’s clear bullying on their main feed,’ said Hadley, a 14-year-old, ‘and, like, no one is going to do that. It’s over DM and in comment sections.’” [\[The Atlantic, 10/10/18\]](#)

**Zuckerberg Was Reportedly Personally Warned That Meta Was Not On Track To Succeed In Its Effort For Core Well-Being Topics Like Problematic Use And Bullying & Harassment.** “Another unsealed portion of the filing contends that instead of moving to address the problems around children using Instagram and Facebook, Meta defunded its mental health team. The filing says Zuckerberg was personally warned: ‘We are not on track to succeed for our core well-being topics (problematic use, bullying & harassment, connections, and SSI), and are at increased regulatory risk and external criticism. These affect everyone, especially Youth and Creators; if not addressed, these will follow us into the Metaverse.’” [\[LA Times, 3/13/23\]](#)

## META’S PLATFORMS PUSHED ACCOUNTS GLORIFYING EATING DISORDERS ON TEENAGERS

### INSTAGRAM PUSHED GIRLS TO CONTENT GLORIFYING EATING DISORDERS AND DID LITTLE TO STOP THEIR ALGORITHM FROM CONTINUING RECOMMENDED THE CONTENT

#### AN INTERNAL DOCUMENT SHOWED THAT META’S OWN EMPLOYEES KNEW INSTAGRAM PUSHED DANGEROUS CONTENT ON GIRLS

**An Internal Document Revealed That Meta Knew Instagram Was Pushing Girls To Dangerous Content Like Posts About Eating Disorders.** “A previously unpublished internal document reveals Facebook, now known as Meta, knew Instagram was pushing girls to dangerous content. In 2021, according to the document, an Instagram employee ran an internal investigation on eating disorders by opening a false account as a 13-year-old girl looking for diet tips. She was led to graphic content and recommendations to follow accounts titled ‘skinny binge’ and ‘apple core anorexic.’” [\[CBS News, 12/11/22\]](#)

**An Instagram Employee Ran An Internal Investigation On Eating Disorders By Creating A Fake Profile For A 13-Year-Old Girl Looking For Diet Tips And Was Directed To Graphic Content And Profiles Pushing Eating Disorders.** “In 2021, according to the document, an Instagram employee ran an internal investigation on eating disorders by opening a false account as a 13-year-old girl looking for diet tips. She was led to graphic content and recommendations to follow accounts titled “skinny binge” and “apple core anorexic.” Other internal memos show Facebook employees raising concerns about company research that revealed Instagram made 1-in-3 teen girls feel worse about their bodies, and that teens who used the app felt higher rates of anxiety and depression.” [\[CBS News, 12/11/22\]](#)

**When CBS Ran The Same Experiment, Their 13-Year-Old Fake Account Was Able To Sign Up With No Age Verification And Was Able To Easily Find Content Promoting Anorexia And Self-Harm.** “Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, declined 60 Minutes’ request for an interview, but its global head of safety Antigone Davis said, ‘we want teens to be safe online’ and that Instagram doesn’t “allow content promoting self-harm or eating disorders.’ Davis also said Meta has improved Instagram’s ‘age verification technology.’ But when 60 Minutes ran a test two months ago, a producer was able to lie about her age and sign up for Instagram as a 13-year-old with no verifications. 60 Minutes was also able to search for skinny and harmful content. And while a prompt came up asking if the user wanted help, we instead clicked “see posts” and easily found content promoting anorexia and self-harm.” [\[CBS News, 12/11/22\]](#)

## A STUDY RUN BY FAIRPLAY FOUND THAT INSTAGRAM WAS HOSTING OVER 90,000 UNIQUE ACCOUNTS THAT PROMOTED EATING DISORDER CONTENT

**In 2022, A Report By Fairplay Found That Instagram's Algorithm Promoted An Extensive Network Of Pro-Eating Disorder Content.** "A report published this month by marketing watchdog Fairplay finds that Instagram's algorithm promotes an extensive network of pro-eating disorder content. According to the report, 'Designing for Disorder,' there are over 90,000 unique accounts promoting such content, all of which collectively reaches some 20 million users around the world. More troublingly, the report notes that one in three exposed accounts belong to someone under the age of 18. Meta, Instagram's parent company, derives an estimated \$227.9 million in revenue from followers within this toxic ecosystem." [Fast Company, [4/18/22](#)]

- **The Report Said There Were Over 90,000 Unique Accounts Promoting Eating-Disorder Content, Which Could Collectively Reach Nearly 20 Million Users Around The World.** "A report published this month by marketing watchdog Fairplay finds that Instagram's algorithm promotes an extensive network of pro-eating disorder content. According to the report, 'Designing for Disorder,' there are over 90,000 unique accounts promoting such content, all of which collectively reaches some 20 million users around the world. More troublingly, the report notes that one in three exposed accounts belong to someone under the age of 18. Meta, Instagram's parent company, derives an estimated \$227.9 million in revenue from followers within this toxic ecosystem." [Fast Company, [4/18/22](#)]

## AN EXPERIMENT BY TECH TRANSPARENCY PROJECT FOUND INSTAGRAM RECOMMENDED ACCOUNTS THAT EXPLICITLY PROMOTED ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA

**In 2021, After The Francis Haugen Disclosures, Tech Transparency Project (TPP) And Reset Found That Instagram Continued Recommended Accounts That Explicitly Promoted Anorexia And Bulimia.** "Researchers found that Instagram recommended accounts full of disturbing images of underweight women to users who showed an interest in getting thin. Many of the recommended accounts explicitly promoted anorexia and bulimia, listing goal weights as low as 77 pounds. The investigation also revealed just how easy it is to get pulled into Instagram's 'thinfluencer' culture, with anorexia 'coaches' reaching out with unsolicited offers to provide weight loss advice. Meanwhile, Instagram makes it exceedingly easy to search for hashtags and terms associated with eating disorders on the platform. According to documents leaked earlier this year by Facebook whistleblower Francis Haugen, Instagram executives are acutely aware of the effects of content promoting unhealthy body ideals on young users." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

## INSTAGRAM MADE IT "EXCEEDINGLY EASY" TO SEARCH FOR EATING DISORDER CONTENT ON THE PLATFORM

**TPP Said Instagram Made It "Exceedingly Easy To Search For Hashtags And Terms Associated With Eating Disorders On The Platform.** "Researchers found that Instagram recommended accounts full of disturbing images of underweight women to users who showed an interest in getting thin. Many of the recommended accounts explicitly promoted anorexia and bulimia, listing goal weights as low as 77 pounds. The investigation also revealed just how easy it is to get pulled into Instagram's 'thinfluencer' culture, with anorexia 'coaches' reaching out with unsolicited offers to provide weight loss advice. Meanwhile, Instagram makes it exceedingly easy to search for hashtags and terms associated with eating disorders on the platform. According to documents leaked earlier this year by Facebook whistleblower Francis Haugen, Instagram executives are acutely aware of the effects of content promoting unhealthy body ideals on young users." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

- **TPP: "Instagram Not Only Fails To Enforce Its Own Policies, But It Also Proactively Recommends Toxic Body Image Content To Its Adult And Teen Users."** "Our research reveals multiple loopholes in Instagram's product design and safety policies, which make Instagram a danger to the mental health and physical well-being of one its most vulnerable user groups: people with eating disorders. Instagram not only fails to enforce its own policies, but it also proactively recommends toxic body image content to its adult and teen users. In this way, Instagram fuels the idealization and marketization of dangerous body ideals, while fostering communities." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

## WHEN TPP CREATED A FAKE ACCOUNT MIMICKING A TEENAGER, INSTAGRAM RETURNED NUMEROUS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EATING DISORDER ACCOUNTS

**TPP's Fake Teenage Account Posted Six Pictures Of Thin Bodies And Used Vocabulary In Their Bio That Were Common In Eating Disorder Communities – The Account Was Soon Flooded With Recommendations For Accounts Promoting Eating Disorders.** "To examine whether Instagram affords a higher level of protection to minors,

we repeated the same experiment with a second account for a 14-year-old. We explicitly stated the age in the bio for that account. During this process, when our hypothetical users followed just one account associated with eating disorders, Instagram started recommending similar accounts. For example, when our first test user started following a verified account with over 700,000 followers, run by a figure with a fan base in the "thinfluencer" community, Instagram's algorithm suggested we also follow so-called "pro-ana" accounts. ("Ana" is a common shorthand for anorexia nervosa.) It's easy to see how this could send a vulnerable person down a rabbit hole that normalizes toxic body images and extreme weight loss." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

- **Instagram Recommended Their Teen Experiment Account Follow A Number Of "Thinfluencer" Accounts That Featured Highly Produced Content With Dangerous Body Images.** "In the teen user's Discovery tab, Instagram recommended a number of large "thinfluencer" accounts that had at least 1,000 followers and featured highly produced content with dangerous body images. At the same time, Instagram's "Discover people" feature (found in a user's profile) recommended smaller private accounts of young users oriented around extreme weight loss. This all creates a troubling ecosystem: "Thinfluencer" accounts on Instagram promote unhealthy body ideals, while peer communities of young users encourage each other to pursue those ideals." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

**After Following A Single Account Promoting Eating Disorders, Instagram Suggested TPP's Teen Account Follow "Pro-Ana" Accounts That Were Associated With Anorexia.** "To examine whether Instagram affords a higher level of protection to minors, we repeated the same experiment with a second account for a 14-year-old. We explicitly stated the age in the bio for that account. During this process, when our hypothetical users followed just one account associated with eating disorders, Instagram started recommending similar accounts. For example, when our first test user started following a verified account with over 700,000 followers, run by a figure with a fan base in the "thinfluencer" community, Instagram's algorithm suggested we also follow so-called "pro-ana" accounts. ("Ana" is a common shorthand for anorexia nervosa.) It's easy to see how this could send a vulnerable person down a rabbit hole that normalizes toxic body images and extreme weight loss." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

## THE ACCOUNTS INSTAGRAM RECOMMENDED TPP'S PROFILE FOLLOW HAD SMALLER FOLLOWER COUNTS WHICH USUALLY STRUGGLED TO GAIN TRACTION

**Many Of The "Pro-Ana" Accounts Recommended By Instagram Had Smaller Follower Counts, Which Would Usually Have A Hard Time Gaining Traction On The Platform.** "Interestingly, many of the pro-ana accounts recommended by Instagram had smaller follower counts. Accounts like these would normally have a hard time getting traction on the platform, but Instagram's algorithmic amplification actively promoted them to new users, helping them find a broader audience. The growth curve of our first test account further illustrates the problem of algorithmic amplification on Instagram. The account's audience increased by more than seven fold in the three weeks after its last activity, suggesting that Instagram recommended it to other users." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

## INSTAGRAM CONTINUED TO HOST CONTENT THAT HAD HASHTAGS WITH WORDS LIKE ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA SPELLED OUT IN FULL

**TPP Found That Fully Spelled Out Hashtags For Anorexia, Bulimia And The Word For Anorexia In German Were Still Active.** "During our experiment, Instagram blocked the hashtags #ana (short for anorexia) and #mia (short for bulimia), but our researchers found that the fully spelled out hashtags for #anorexia, #bulimia, and #magersucht (anorexia in German) were still active. What's more, typing "ana" or "mia" into the Instagram search bar as non-hashtags still yields a significant amount of content promoting eating disorders." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

## TPP NOTED THERE WERE SCANT RESOURCES ON INSTAGRAM FOR USERS STRUGGLING WITH EATING DISORDERS

**TPP Said That Resources For People Suffering With Eating Disorders Were "Hard To Find On Instagram."** "Take the page for the hashtag #th1n, a reference to "thin." On the app, Instagram showed a warning on the #th1n page that the content may go against its Community Guidelines. Yet the same #th1n page on the Instagram website included no such warnings, despite the presence of some graphic eating disorder content. Moreover, without a prompt, resources for people suffering from eating disorders are hard to find on Instagram. A user must click on their profile icon, then click "Settings," then click "Help" in the sidebar menu, then click "Help Center," then click on the drop-down menu for "Privacy, Safety, and Security," and finally click "About Eating Disorders." [Tech Transparency Project, [12/8/21](#)]

## KIDS AND TEENS COULD EASILY USE META'S PLATFORMS TO FACILITATE DRUG DEALS

## DRUG DEALERS WERE WIDESPREAD ON META'S PLATFORMS AND THEIR ACCOUNTS WERE EVEN RECOMMENDED BY META'S ALGORITHM

### ONE IN FOUR KIDS WERE ADVERTISED DRUGS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, WITH INSTAGRAM DRUG DEALS BEING A “BOOMING BUSINESS”

**One In Four Kids Had Been Advertised Drugs On Social Media.** “According to drug harm reduction advocacy group Volteface, one in four young people have been advertised drugs on social media. The majority of listings seen were for cannabis, but cocaine, MDMA, Xanax and nitrous oxide were also high up on the list. On Instagram, it only took VICE host Tir Dhondy five minutes to get in touch with a dealer who offered to meet her to sell drugs. One dealer told her: ‘Anyone can sell nowadays. You see little kids, 12-year-olds and everything, setting up accounts. It’s easy, isn’t it? You can sit at home, make an account and make money. Who doesn’t want to do that?’” [Vice, [2/6/20](#)]

**DigitalTrends: The American Addiction Center Found A “Booming Business” Of Illicit Codeine, MDMA, Weed, Painkillers And Coke Sales On Instagram.** “VentureBeat’s own investigations correlated Instagram and its inherent drugs problem twice going back 2014. The Guardian reported Instagram’s role in drug peddling in 2016. A 2019 study published in the International Journal of Drug Policy highlighted how platforms like Instagram act as a quick, convenient, and secure method for buying illicit drugs. VICE documented Instagram’s drugs problem twice back in 2019 and 2020. American Addiction Centers’ research also exposed a booming business of illicit codeine, MDMA, marijuana, painkillers, and cocaine sales on Instagram.” [Digital Trends, [1/17/22](#)]

## EXPERIMENTS TO SEE HOW EASY DRUGS COULD BE PROCURED ON META'S PLATFORMS RESULTED IN NEAR INSTANTANEOUS CONNECTIONS WITH DRUG DEALERS

### VICE FOUND THAT IT ONLY TOOK FIVE MINUTES TO BE CONNECTED TO A DRUG DEALER ON INSTAGRAM

**Vice Found That On Instagram, It Only Took Five Minutes To Get In Touch With A Dealer Who Offered To Meet Up And Sell Them Drugs.** “According to drug harm reduction advocacy group Volteface, one in four young people have been advertised drugs on social media. The majority of listings seen were for cannabis, but cocaine, MDMA, Xanax and nitrous oxide were also high up on the list. On Instagram, it only took VICE host Tir Dhondy five minutes to get in touch with a dealer who offered to meet her to sell drugs. One dealer told her: ‘Anyone can sell nowadays. You see little kids, 12-year-olds and everything, setting up accounts. It’s easy, isn’t it? You can sit at home, make an account and make money. Who doesn’t want to do that?’”

## AN EXPERIMENT BY THE TECH TRANSPARENCY PROJECT FOUND THAT INSTAGRAM “DID NOTHING” TO PREVENT THEIR FAKE TEEN ACCOUNTS FROM SEARCHING FOR DRUGS

**A Tech Transparency Project Experiment Found That When They Created Fake Accounts For Teens Aged 13 Years Old To 17 Years Old, Instagram “Did Nothing To Prevent Them From Searching For Drug-Related Content.”** “Some of the accounts used the names of fictional characters from popular television shows, like Lisa Simpson from “The Simpsons,” and Michael Scarn, a personality of character Michael Scott on “The Office.” In all cases, despite the fact that these were minor accounts, Instagram did nothing to prevent them from searching for drug-related content—and the platform’s automatic features even sped up the process. For example, when one of our teen users started typing the phrase ‘buyxanax’ into Instagram’s search bar, the platform started auto-filling results for buying Xanax before the user was even finished typing.” [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

**TPP Said Instagram’s Algorithm Had Automatic Features That “Even Sped Up The Process” For Their Teen Accounts To Buy Drugs.** “Some of the accounts used the names of fictional characters from popular television shows, like Lisa Simpson from “The Simpsons,” and Michael Scarn, a personality of character Michael Scott on “The Office.” In all cases, despite the fact that these were minor accounts, Instagram did nothing to prevent them from searching for drug-related content—and the platform’s automatic features even sped up the process. For example, when one of our teen users started typing the phrase ‘buyxanax’ into Instagram’s search bar, the platform started auto-filling results for buying Xanax before the user was even finished typing.” [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

## INSTAGRAM STARTED AUTO FILLING RESULTS FOR BUYING XANAX BEFORE TPP'S ACCOUNT EVEN FINISHED TYPING “BUYXANAX” IN THE SEARCH BAR

**When One Of TPP's Fake Teen Accounts Started Typing The Phrase "buyxanax" into Instagram's Search Bar, The Platform Started Auto-Filling Results For Buying Xanax Before The User Was Finished Typing.** "In all cases, despite the fact that these were minor accounts, Instagram did nothing to prevent them from searching for drug-related content—and the platform's automatic features even sped up the process. For example, when one of our teen users started typing the phrase "buyxanax" into Instagram's search bar, the platform started auto-filling results for buying Xanax before the user was even finished typing. When the minor clicked on one of the suggested accounts, they instantly got a direct line to a Xanax dealer. The entire process took seconds and involved just two clicks." [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

- **TPP: "The Entire Process Took Seconds And Involved Just Two Clicks."** "In all cases, despite the fact that these were minor accounts, Instagram did nothing to prevent them from searching for drug-related content—and the platform's automatic features even sped up the process. For example, when one of our teen users started typing the phrase "buyxanax" into Instagram's search bar, the platform started auto-filling results for buying Xanax before the user was even finished typing. When the minor clicked on one of the suggested accounts, they instantly got a direct line to a Xanax dealer. The entire process took seconds and involved just two clicks." [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

**Though Instagram Removed The Hashtag #mdma, When One OF Their Teen Accounts Started Typing #mdma, Instagram Auto-Filled Alternative Hashtags Like #mollymdma.** "Instagram has banned some drug-related hashtags, but amplifies other hashtags for the same drugs, making it easy for teens to find them. For example, Instagram removed the hashtag #mdma, for the party drug MDMA or ecstasy. But when one of our teen accounts typed #mdma in the Instagram search bar, the platform auto-filled alternative hashtags for the drug, including #mollymdma, which incorporates "molly," a slang term for MDMA. Instagram is not only missing these easy-to-identify alternative drug hashtags, but is actually suggesting them to users, undermining its own enforcement efforts." [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

## INSTAGRAM'S ALGORITHM SUGGESTED TPP'S ACCOUNTS FOLLOW ACCOUNTS THAT SOLD ADDERALL AFTER THEY SEARCHED FOR HOW TO BUY XANAX

**After A TPP Account Began Following An Account For How To Buy Xanax, Instagram's Algorithm Suggested It Follow Multiple Accounts That Sold Adderall.** "Using an account for a 15-year-old, TTP began by searching for how to buy Xanax, and followed one of the accounts suggested by Instagram. Instagram then suggested more accounts to follow, including one selling Adderall, the prescription stimulant. Following that account led to more suggestions, including one for another Adderall account. It's easy to see how a teen could be led down a rabbit hole of prescription drugs on the platform." [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

## TPP'S TEEN ACCOUNTS WERE DIRECTLY REACHED OUT TO BY DRUG DEALERS, INCLUDING A SERIES OF UNSOLICITED PHONE CALLS FROM ONE DEALER

**TPP Found Drug Dealers Actively Reaching Out To Their Teen Experiment Accounts, With One Account Following A Xanax-Selling Account Recommended By Instagram Receiving A Series Of Unsolicited Phone Call From The Dealer.** "At times, drug dealers actively reached out to TTP's teen users. The same minor user who followed a Xanax-selling account recommended by Instagram received a series of unsolicited phone calls from the dealer looking to make a sale. In another case, after a minor user followed an Instagram account selling drugs, the dealer sent a direct message with a menu of products, prices, and shipping options without waiting for the buyer to initiate a conversation." [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

**One Of TPP's Teen Experiment Accounts Was Direct Messaged By A Dealer It Followed With A Menu Of Products, Prices And Shipping Options Without Waiting For Their Account To Initiate A Conversation.** "At times, drug dealers actively reached out to TTP's teen users. The same minor user who followed a Xanax-selling account recommended by Instagram received a series of unsolicited phone calls from the dealer looking to make a sale. In another case, after a minor user followed an Instagram account selling drugs, the dealer sent a direct message with a menu of products, prices, and shipping options without waiting for the buyer to initiate a conversation." [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

## TPP'S DIRECTOR SAID IT ONLY TOOK 20 SECONDS FOR THEIR ACCOUNTS TO BE CONNECTED WITH DRUG DEALERS WHO KNEW THEY WERE CONNECTED WITH A KID

**TPP's Director, Katie Paul, Said It Took Only "20 Seconds" For A Kid To Connect With A Drug Dealer, Who Knew They Were Connected With A Child.** "I would encourage Congress to ask him if he allows children to use Instagram and if he monitors their activity," said Katie Paul, TPP's director. 'It takes 20 seconds to connect with a purported drug

trafficker. The accounts are telling you they are children. That's the most shocking thing. The platform's business model clearly relies on being able to access younger users. If they are unable to do that without pushing kids to these risks, that requires a much deeper investigation from lawmakers.”” [NBC News, [12/7/21](#)]

## WHEN TPP SUBMITTED THE DRUG-RELATED POSTS, INSTAGRAM SAID 72% OF THEIR FLAGGED POSTS DID NOT VIOLATE THEIR POLICIES

**TPP Submitted 50 Posts To Instagram That Appeared To Violate The Platform's Policies Against Selling Drugs, But After A Review, Instagram Responded That 72% Of The Flagged Posts Did Not Violate Its Guidelines Despite Them Selling Drugs.** “Following that account led to more suggestions, including one for another Adderall account. It's easy to see how a teen could be led down a rabbit hole of prescription drugs on the platform. During the course of TPP's investigation, our researchers submitted 50 posts to Instagram that appeared to violate the company's policies against selling drugs. After review, Instagram responded that 72% of the flagged posts (36) did not violate its Community Guidelines, despite clear signs of drug dealing activity.” [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

## AN ACCOUNT INSTAGRAM ACKNOWLEDGED VIOLATED THEIR POLICIES WAS STILL ACTIVE AFTER BEING REPORTED

**Instagram Claimed It Had Taken Down An Entire Account After TPP Submitted Their Violation Flags, But When TPP Checked Later, The Account And Violating Post Was Still Active.** “After review, Instagram responded that 72% of the flagged posts (36) did not violate its Community Guidelines, despite clear signs of drug dealing activity. In the end, Instagram removed 12 of the posts and said it took down an entire account that had violated company policy. However, when TPP checked later, the account in question was still active (along with its violating post). Instagram's review of one other post flagged by TPP was still pending.” [Tech Transparency Project, [1/11/22](#)]

## META PROMOTED CHILDREN MAKING UNAPPROVED PURCHASES ON THEIR PLATFORM

### FACEBOOK ENCOURAGED GAME DEVELOPERS TO LET CHILDREN SPEND MONEY WITHOUT THEIR PARENT'S PERMISSION, NAMING THE PRACTICE “FRIENDLY FRAUD”

**Facebook Engaged In A Practice They Called “Friendly Fraud” To Dupe Children Out Of Money By Encouraging Game Developers To Let Children Spend Money Without Their Parents’ Permission.** “Facebook orchestrated a multiyear effort that duped children and their parents out of money, in some cases hundreds or even thousands of dollars, and then often refused to give the money back, according to court documents unsealed tonight in response to a Reveal legal action. The records are part of a class-action lawsuit focused on how Facebook targeted children in an effort to expand revenue for online games, such as Angry Birds, PetVille and Ninja Saga. Facebook encouraged game developers to let children spend money without their parents' permission – something the social media giant called 'friendly fraud' – in an effort to maximize revenues, according to a document detailing the company's game strategy.” [Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

- **Underage Users Often Did Not Realize They Were Spending Money On Facebook.** “Sometimes the children did not even know they were spending money, according to another internal Facebook report. Facebook employees knew this. Their own reports showed underage users did not realize their parents' credit cards were connected to their Facebook accounts and they were spending real money in the games, according to the unsealed documents.” [Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

**The Friendly Fraud Occurred Because Facebook Secretly Stored Credit Card Information And Used Practices That Did Not Seem Like They Were Charging Money Inside The Games.** “An internal Facebook survey of users found that many parents did not even realize Facebook was storing their credit card information, according to an unsealed document. And parents also did not know their children could use their credit card without re-entering a password or some other form of verification. Perhaps even worse, the children didn't even realize they were spending real money within the game, because as Stewart would later write, 'It doesn't necessarily look like 'real' money to a minor.'” [Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

**Children Spent \$3.6 Million From October 2010 To January 2011 On Facebook Games.** “A few months before she launched her project in mid-2011, Facebook had uncovered some troubling data about the children playing its games. They were requesting refunds and demanding chargebacks at extraordinarily high rates. The company had analyzed data on game revenue from children for the time period Oct. 12, 2010, through Jan. 12, 2011. The children had 'spent a whopping \$3.6 million' during the three-month period, according to the report. But the company had discovered that more than 9 percent of the money it made from children was being clawed back by the credit card companies. The average age of those playing Angry Birds was 5 years old, according to Facebook's analysis.” [Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

## THESE PRACTICES EXPLOITED CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS 5 YEARS OLD, AND THE SYSTEM WAS DESIGNED TO CONCEAL THESE PURCHASES

**The Average Age Of The Children Playing And Spending Money On The Game “Angry Birds” On Facebook Was 5 Years Old.** “A few months before she launched her project in mid-2011, Facebook had uncovered some troubling data about the children playing its games. They were requesting refunds and demanding chargebacks at extraordinarily high rates. The company had analyzed data on game revenue from children for the time period Oct. 12, 2010, through Jan. 12, 2011. The children had ‘spent a whopping \$3.6 million’ during the three-month period, according to the report. But the company had discovered that more than 9 percent of the money it made from children was being clawed back by the credit card companies. The average age of those playing Angry Birds was 5 years old, according to Facebook’s analysis.”

[Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

**Only 50% Of Facebook Customers Received Receipts For Their Transactions.** “And that wasn’t the only problem. Only about 50 percent of Facebook’s customers were receiving receipts for their transactions, according to another unsealed document.”

[Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

**A Facebook Employee Noted That The System To Let Users Report Problems With Credit Card Charges Was An “Infinite-Loop Of Questions” That Would Cause Users To Give Up Rather Than File Claims.** “Their system that was supposed to let users report problems was itself riddled with issues, according to the unsealed documents. ‘I was stuck in an infinite-loop of questions just today,’ wrote an employee testing it. ‘It feels like the form is this Frankenstein beast that we’ve bolted together over the last 6 months or so.’ Another employee responded, ‘This makes us think – how many users give up.’”

[Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

## FACEBOOK IGNORED WARNINGS FROM THEIR OWN EMPLOYEES ABOUT THESE PRACTICES, PRIORITIZING REVENUE OVER PROTECTING CHILDREN

**Facebook Ignored Warnings From Their Employees That They Were Defrauding Children, Passing Over A Proposal To Fix The Problem In Favor Of Maximizing Revenues.** “For years, the company ignored warnings from its own employees that it was bamboozling children. A team of Facebook employees even developed a method that would have reduced the problem of children being hoodwinked into spending money, but the company did not implement it, and instead told game developers that the social media giant was focused on maximizing revenues.”

[Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

**The Revenue Facebook Earned Off Of “Friendly Fraud” On Children Had Large Chargeback Rates, Far Exceeding The Federal Trade Commission’s Red Flag For Deceptive Business Practices.** “The revenue Facebook earned off children had such large chargeback rates – a process in which the credit card company is forced to step in and claw back money on behalf of parents – that it far exceeded what the Federal Trade Commission has said is a red flag for deceptive business practices. Despite the many warning signs, which continued for years, Facebook made a clear decision. It pursued a goal of increasing its revenues at the expense of children and their parents.”

[Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

**A Facebook Employee Wrote That Ending The “Friendly Fraud” On Children Would Result In Lower Revenue.** “Then the employee wrote what is a common theme throughout the unsealed documents: ‘if we were to build risk models to reduce it, we would most likely block good TPV.’ ‘TPV’ is total purchase value, also called revenue. If Facebook tried to stop children and their parents from unwittingly spending money, it would hurt the company’s revenue.”

[Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

**More Than Three Years After Facebook First Internally Discussed The Problem Of “Friendly Fraud,” Clawback Rates Remained At 9 Percent, Suggesting The Company Had Not Adequately Addressed The Problem.** “Among those sealed documents was one that showed Facebook’s problems had not gone away. As of 2014, Children and their parents were still clawing back money from Facebook at extremely high rates. About 9 percent of the revenue Facebook made off kids was eventually charged back by the credit card companies as recently as March 2014. That is nearly identical to the extraordinary rates Facebook first noticed more than three years earlier. In effect, the company had done nothing to change it.”

[Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

**More Than Three Years After Facebook First Internally Discussed The Problem Of “Friendly Fraud,” Clawback Rates Remained At 9 Percent, Suggesting The Company Had Not Adequately Addressed The Problem.** “Among those sealed documents was one that showed Facebook’s problems had not gone away. As of 2014, Children and their parents were still clawing back money from Facebook at extremely high rates. About 9 percent of the revenue Facebook made off kids was eventually charged back by the credit card companies as recently as March 2014. That is nearly identical to the extraordinary rates Facebook first noticed more than three years earlier. In effect, the company had done nothing to change it.”

[Reveal, [1/24/19](#)]

## META PLANNED TO OPEN UP IT'S VR WORLD, HORIZON WORLDS, TO CHILDREN EVEN THOUGH IT WAS ALREADY PLAGUED WITH ABUSIVE USERS

### META AND ZUCKERBERG KNEW CHILDREN'S SAFETY WOULD CONTINUE TO BE AN ISSUE IN THE METAVERSE BUT PUSHED FORWARD ANYWAYS

#### META HOPED TO OPEN UP HORIZON WORLDS TO TEENS AGED 13 TO 17

**Meta Was Revamping It's Horizon Worlds Metaverse App In An Attempt To Draw In More Teen And Young-Adult Users.** "Facebook parent Meta Platforms Inc. META -0.08%decrease; red down pointing triangle is revamping its fledgling Horizon Worlds metaverse app, seeking to draw in more teen and young-adult users after working to improve the service's design, according to a memo sent to the team working on the initiative. The new strategy includes opening up Horizon to teens aged 13 to 17, the memo says. The app is currently available to people 18 and older. A teen launch for Horizon could happen as soon as March, according to people familiar with the matter." [WSJ, [2/7/23](#)]

- **Meta Planned To Open Up Horizon Worlds To Teens Aged 13 To 17.** "Facebook parent Meta Platforms Inc. META -0.08%decrease; red down pointing triangle is revamping its fledgling Horizon Worlds metaverse app, seeking to draw in more teen and young-adult users after working to improve the service's design, according to a memo sent to the team working on the initiative. The new strategy includes opening up Horizon to teens aged 13 to 17, the memo says. The app is currently available to people 18 and older. A teen launch for Horizon could happen as soon as March, according to people familiar with the matter." [WSJ, [2/7/23](#)]

**Zuckerberg Was Warned About The Issues With Problematic Use, Bullying And Others Would Follow Them Into The Metaverse.** "Another unsealed portion of the filing contends that instead of moving to address the problems around children using Instagram and Facebook, Meta defunded its mental health team. The filing says Zuckerberg was personally warned: 'We are not on track to succeed for our core well-being topics (problematic use, bullying & harassment, connections, and SSI), and are at increased regulatory risk and external criticism. These affect everyone, especially Youth and Creators; if not addressed, these will follow us into the Metaverse.'" [LA Times, [3/13/23](#)]

**Users As Young As 15 That Had Accessed Horizon Worlds Were Exposed To Racist Insults And Misogynistic Language.** "Before we make Horizon Worlds available to teens, we will have additional protections and tools in place to help provide age-appropriate experiences for them," a company spokesperson told CBS News. 'Quest headsets are for people 13+ and we encourage parents and caretakers to use our parental supervision tools, including managing access to apps, to help ensure safe experiences.' Some users as young as 15 are already on Horizon Worlds and they have been exposed to racist insults and misogynistic language, advocates wrote, while pointing to a CCDH study published last month. Researchers from the study recorded interactions from 100 of Horizon Worlds' most populated spaces and found that minors occupy 66 of those VR worlds." [CBS News, [4/14/23](#)]

#### 70 ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND ONLINE PRIVACY WROTE ZUCKERBERG ABOUT THEIR CONCERNS THAT HORIZON WORLDS WOULD EXPOSE KIDS TO BULLYING

**70 Advocates For Children's Rights And Online Privacy Sent A Letter To Meta CEO Zuckerberg Arguing That Allowing Minors Onto Their Metaverse Platform, Horizon Worlds, Would Expose Them To Bullying.** "The metaverse is no place for kids, according to a group of more than 70 advocates for children's rights and online privacy. Those concerned are asking Facebook's parent company, Meta, to abandon its plans to attract young teens onto its Horizon Worlds metaverse platform because, they say, doing so will likely expose minors to sexually explicit and homophobic content. Top executives at the Center for Digital Democracy, the Center for Countering Digital Hate, Fairplay and other organizations sent a letter to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Friday arguing that allowing minors onto Horizon would also expose them to bullying." [CBS News, [4/14/23](#)]

### THE PROBLEMS KIDS FACED ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM WOULD ONLY GROW IN HORIZON WORLDS, AS ADULTS WERE ALREADY FACING HARASSMENT AND ABUSE ON IT

#### MULTIPLE ADULT HORIZON WORLD USERS REPORTED BEING SEXUALLY HARASSED AND GROPED IN THE METAVERSE

**MIT Technology Review HEADLINE, December 2021: "The Metaverse Has A Groping Problem Already."** [MIT Tech Review, [12/16/21](#)]

**Meta Was Forced To Create A ‘Personal Boundaries’ Feature In Horizon World’s After Beta Testers Faced Virtual Groping And Harassment.** “Horizon Worlds, Meta’s (Facebook’s) social virtual reality platform, is getting a new “Personal Boundaries”(opens in a new tab) to help stop virtual groping after the app’s beta testers faced harassment(opens in a new tab). The Personal Boundary is a four-foot barrier between avatars designed to be always on by default. While the concept image portrays a bubble, the actual boundary will be invisible in Worlds.” [Mashable, [4/5/22](#)]

- **A Horizon World Tester Said When It Came To Sexual Harassment, “Being In VR Add[ed] Another Layer That [Made] The Event More Intense.”** “Safety is a big concern for a VR environment like Horizon Worlds, where you can easily interact with someone you don’t know. Earlier this month, a beta tester posted in the official Horizon group on Facebook about how her avatar was groped by a stranger. ‘Sexual harassment is no joke on the regular internet, but being in VR adds another layer that makes the event more intense,’ she wrote. ‘Not only was I groped last night, but there were other people there who supported this behavior which made me feel isolated in the Plaza.’” [The Verge, [12/9/21](#)]
- **Horizon Worlds Tester: “Not Only Was I Groped Last Night, But There Were Other People There Who Supported This Behavior Which Made Me Feel Isolated In The Plaza.”** “Safety is a big concern for a VR environment like Horizon Worlds, where you can easily interact with someone you don’t know. Earlier this month, a beta tester posted in the official Horizon group on Facebook about how her avatar was groped by a stranger. ‘Sexual harassment is no joke on the regular internet, but being in VR adds another layer that makes the event more intense,’ she wrote. ‘Not only was I groped last night, but there were other people there who supported this behavior which made me feel isolated in the Plaza.’” [The Verge, [12/9/21](#)]

## META’S FUTURE WAS RELIANT ON A YOUNG USER BASE AND LAID PLANS TO COURT THEM

### META SAW KIDS AS THEIR FUTURE AND REDIRECTED TEAMS TO MAKE SERVING YOUNG ADULTS THEIR “NORTH STAR”

#### FACEBOOK HAD BEEN LAYING THE GROUND WORK TO ATTRACT PRETEENS BEYOND WHAT WAS PUBLICLY KNOWN...

**Wall Street Journal: Facebook Teams “Have For Years Been Laying Plans To Attract Preteens That Go Beyond What Is Publicly Known.”** “Facebook Inc. has come under increasing fire in recent days for its effect on young users and its efforts to create products for them. Inside the company, teams of employees have for years been laying plans to attract preteens that go beyond what is publicly known, spurred by fear that Facebook could lose a new generation of users critical to its future. Internal Facebook documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal show the company formed a team to study preteens, set a three-year goal to create more products for them and commissioned strategy papers about the long-term business opportunities presented by these potential users. In one presentation, it contemplated whether there might be a way to engage children during play dates. ‘Why do we care about tweens?’ said one document from 2020. ‘They are a valuable but untapped audience.’” [Wall Street Journal, [9/28/21](#)]

**An Internal Facebook Document Called “Tweens” A “Valuable But Untapped Audience.”** “In one presentation, it contemplated whether there might be a way to engage children during play dates. ‘Why do we care about tweens?’ said one document from 2020. ‘They are a valuable but untapped audience.’ Facebook isn’t the only technology company to court children and face scrutiny for doing so. Virtually every major social-media platform, including ByteDance Ltd.’s TikTok and YouTube, has confronted legal or regulatory problems related to how children use its products.” [WSJ, [9/28/21](#)]

**The Verge HEADLINE, Oct 2021: “Facebook Says It’s Refocusing Company On ‘Serving Young Adults.’”** “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.” [The Verge, [10/25/21](#)]

**Zuckerberg Said He Was Redirecting Teams Within His Company 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.” [The Verge, [10/25/21](#)]

- **One Of The More Immediate Shifts Meta Planned On Was “Significant Changes” To Instagram Like A Focus On Video.** “Facebook usage among older users will grow slower than it otherwise would have because of the changes, Zuckerberg said. Even with those tradeoffs, he said, “I think it’s the right approach.” Zuckerberg expects the changes to take years. One of the more immediate shifts could be to Instagram, which he says will see “significant changes” to lean further into video and make Reels ‘a more central part of the experience.’ The shift toward video is very clearly a response to TikTok, which Zuckerberg called ‘one of the most effective competitors we’ve ever faced.’” [The Verge, [10/25/21](#)]

**Facebook Formed A Team To Study Preteens, Set A Three-Year Goal To Create More Products For Them And Commissioned Strategy Papers About The Long-Term Business Opportunities Young Users Presented.** “Inside the company, teams of employees have for years been laying plans to attract preteens that go beyond what is publicly known, spurred by fear that Facebook could lose a new generation of users critical to its future. Internal Facebook documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal show the company formed a team to study preteens, set a three-year goal to create more products for them and commissioned strategy papers about the long-term business opportunities presented by these potential users. In one presentation, it contemplated whether there might be a way to engage children during play dates.” [WSJ, [9/28/21](#)]

## ...BECAUSE THEY FEARED LOSING A NEW GENERATION USERS CRITICAL TO ITS FUTURE

**Meta’s Effort To Attract Preteens To Their Platforms Were Spurred By A Fear That Facebook Could Lose A New Generation Of Users Critical To Its Future.** “Facebook Inc. has come under increasing fire in recent days for its effect on young users and its efforts to create products for them. Inside the company, teams of employees have for years been laying plans to attract preteens that go beyond what is publicly known, spurred by fear that Facebook could lose a new generation of users critical to its future. Internal Facebook documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal show the company formed a team to study preteens, set a three-year goal to create more products for them and commissioned strategy papers about the long-term business opportunities presented by these potential users.” [WSJ, [9/28/21](#)]

**Facebook Considered It A “Particularly Concerning Trend” That Younger Users Were Spending Less Time On The Site.** “Messages sent by teens were down 16 percent from the previous year, while messages sent by users aged 20–30 were flat. A ‘particularly concerning trend,’ according to one slide, was that time spent in the Facebook app by young people in the US had declined from the period before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic last year, when usage of Facebook’s services momentarily spiked across the board.” [The Verge, [10/25/21](#)]

**Wall Street Journal: Meta’s Future Depended On Recruiting Young Users.** “It isn’t uncommon for companies to pursue young people as customers. Yet the work is sensitive for the social-media giant: Facebook and Instagram prohibit children from using their apps before their teenage years, but the company’s future depends on ultimately recruiting them. ‘If kids are under 13, they’re not allowed on Instagram and they should not be using our service,’ said Mr. Mosseri in a written statement for this article.” [WSJ, [9/28/21](#)]

## ZUCKERBERG’S REPUTATION WAS ONE THAT PLACED GROWTH OVER USER SAFETY

**Washington Post Headline: “The Case Against Mark Zuckerberg: Insiders Say Facebook’s CEO Chose Growth Over Safety.”** “Late last year, Mark Zuckerberg faced a choice: Comply with demands from Vietnam’s ruling Communist Party to censor anti-government dissidents or risk getting knocked offline in one of Facebook’s most lucrative Asian markets. [...] So Zuckerberg personally decided that Facebook would comply with Hanoi’s demands, according to three people familiar with the decision, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe internal company discussions. Ahead of Vietnam’s party congress in January, Facebook significantly increased censorship of ‘anti-state’ posts, giving the government near-total control over the platform, according to local activists and free-speech advocates. Zuckerberg’s role in the Vietnam decision, which has not been previously reported, exemplifies his relentless determination to ensure Facebook’s dominance, sometimes at the expense of his stated values, according to interviews with more than a dozen former employees. That ethos has come under fire in a series of whistleblower complaints filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission by former Facebook product manager Frances Haugen.” [Washington Post, [10/25/21](#)]

## AND EXPANDING ITS YOUNGER USER BASE WAS VITAL TO THAT GROWTH

**Wall Street Journal: Expanding Instagram’s Base Of Young Users Was “Vital” To Facebook’s Revenue, And It Doesn’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](#)]