

# Taking action to combat misinformation, polarization, and dangerous organizations

- Polarization
- Misinformation
- Dangerous Organizations

**JANUARY 2012** Facebook researchers produce a study about the extent to which online social networks actually increase the spread of novel information and diverse viewpoints

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**MAY 2015** Facebook data scientists produce a peer-reviewed study in *Science* quantifying how much ideologically diverse news and information individuals are exposed to in social media

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**DECEMBER 5, 2016** Facebook launches a hash-sharing program in conjunction with Google, Microsoft, and Twitter to help address terrorist content

**DECEMBER 15, 2016** Facebook launches an independent fact-checking program to rate and review the accuracy of content on its platform

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**JANUARY 31, 2017** Facebook announces updates to better rank posts in News Feed, including incorporating new signals to better identify and rank authentic content and a new way to predict and rank in real-time when posts might be more relevant to people

**APRIL 6, 2017** Facebook announces a new product to help people spot false news

**APRIL 25, 2017** Facebook announces Related Articles that appear before they read an article shared in News Feed; these additional articles, which appear for topics many people are talking about on Facebook, appear in a unit below the link and provide people easier access to additional perspectives and information, including articles by third-party fact checkers

**MAY 10, 2017** Facebook reduces links to misleading and spammy posts, which helped to reduce financially incentivized i just Ifalse news and misinformation

**MAY 17, 2017** Facebook announces new updates to reduce clickbait headlines

**JUNE 26, 2017** Facebook launches the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) in conjunction with Google, Microsoft, and Twitter with the purpose of sharing best practices and helping smaller companies identify modes to counter terrorist movements of all types online

**JUNE 30, 2017** Facebook announces updates to reduce low quality links from spammers in News Feed

**AUGUST 9, 2017** Facebook takes steps to address cloaking (i.e., disguising the true destination of an ad or post, or the real content of the destination page, in order to bypass Facebook’s review processes) so that users see more authentic content

**AUGUST 17, 2017** Facebook announces updates that will limit the spread of stories in News Feed that feature either fake video play buttons embedded in their imagery or videos of only a static image

**AUGUST 28, 2017** Facebook blocks ads from Pages that repeatedly share false news

**OCTOBER 5, 2017** Facebook announces a button that people can tap to easily access additional information and context about news articles without needing to go elsewhere

**OCTOBER 26, 2017** Facebook announces new features for Groups, including providing admins with tools to manage content in their Groups (e.g, the ability to prevent members from being able to comment, or to remove members from their Groups because of rule violations)

**DECEMBER 18, 2017** Facebook begins demoting individual posts from people and Pages that use engagement bait

**DECEMBER 20, 2017** Facebook launches ‘Related Articles’ to give people more information on content rated false by third-party fact-checkers, which replaced previous “Disputed Flags” labels on content rated false

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**JANUARY 11, 2018** Facebook announces a fundamental change to the way content is surfaced in people's News Feeds to prioritize posts from friends and family over news content, despite the fact that such a change substantially reduced time spent on the platform

**JANUARY 19, 2018** Facebook takes steps to help ensure news on Facebook is from trusted services

**JANUARY 22, 2018** As part of its ongoing 'Hard Questions' series, Facebook launches an effort to examine the effect of social media on democracy, including essays from three prominent academic experts

**MAY 23, 2018** Facebook announces new tools to support group admins and keep communities safe

**APRIL 8, 2018** Facebook launches a new initiative to help scholars assess social media's impact on elections, partnering with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Democracy Fund, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Charles Koch Foundation, the Omidyar Network, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

**JUNE 21, 2018** Facebook announces several steps to increase its efforts to fight false news, including expanding its fact-checking program to new countries, expanding its test to fact-check photos and videos, increasing the impact of fact-checking by using new techniques, taking action against new kinds of repeat offenders, and improving measurement and transparency by partnering with academics

**AUGUST 15, 2018** Facebook updates its policies to remove misinformation that has the potential to contribute to imminent violence and physical harm

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2018** Facebook expands fact-checking of photos and videos to all global partners

**OCTOBER 15, 2018** Facebook broadens its policies against voter suppression

**OCTOBER 30, 2018** Facebook bans the Proud Boys

**NOVEMBER 18, 2018** Mark Zuckerberg publishes "A Blueprint for Content Governance and Enforcement," saying that "we have a responsibility to keep people safe on our services, whether from terrorism, bullying, or other threats. We also have a broader social responsibility to help bring people closer together – against polarization and extremism"; the document describes relevant research findings and explains how

Facebook's systems are being updated to "penaliz[e] borderline content so it gets less distribution and engagement"

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**JANUARY 23, 2019** Facebook updates its recidivism policy to help ensure that Pages and Groups removed for violating Community Standards cannot be re-created easily

**APRIL 10, 2019** Facebook announces new steps to manage problematic content, including more accountability for group admins, a Group Quality feature, reduced distribution in News Feed for Groups that repeatedly share misinformation

**MAY 2019** Facebook expands its independent fact-checking to Instagram in the US with a global expansion in December 2019

**MAY 15, 2019** Facebook signs the Christchurch Call agreements, in which governments, industry, and civil society pledge to counter extremism together

**JUNE 14, 2019** Facebook improves how comments are ranked to show people those that are more relevant and of higher quality

**JULY 2, 2019** Facebook takes steps to reduce posts with exaggerated or sensational health claims and posts attempting to sell products or services based on health-related claims

**AUGUST 14, 2019** Facebook announces the Safe Communities Initiative, which it described as "an effort that started two years ago with the goal of protecting people using Facebook Groups from harm"; the initiative is focused on three key areas: (i) using proactive detection to moderate groups; (ii) tools for admins, and (iii) transparency and control for members

**OCTOBER 21, 2019** Facebook and Instagram add more prominent labels on top of content that received its strongest ratings

**NOVEMBER 2019** Facebook formalizes the Dangerous Organizations Strategic Network Disruptions initiative, beginning with several domestic white nationalist groups

**NOVEMBER 2019** Facebook launches Search Redirect initiative with Life After Hate; the program provides individuals that search for white nationalist related terms on platform contact information for Life After Hate to help them disengage from extremist movements

**DECEMBER 2019** Facebook reaches over 50 international fact-checking partners covering over 40 languages

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**JANUARY 6, 2020** Facebook announces policy to remove misleading manipulated media

**JANUARY 30, 2020** When the WHO declared Covid a public health emergency of international concern, Facebook and Instagram started to remove content with false claims or conspiracy theories about Covid that have been flagged by leading global health organizations and local health authorities that could cause harm to people who believe them

**FEBRUARY 2020** Facebook conducts the first of a series of Strategic Network Disruptions (SNDs) against the Proud Boys; the Online Safety Dangerous Organizations and Individuals (DOI) team tracks down over 800 Proud Boys assets (including accounts and complex objects such as Groups) and targets Groups and individual accounts for removal, effectively stopping the group from using Facebook as an organizing tool

**MARCH 2020** Facebook executes an SND and takes down 64 accounts, Groups, and Pages affiliated with a white supremacist group called the Northwest Front

**MARCH 18, 2020** Facebook launches the COVID-19 Information Center as a central place for people to get the latest news and information as well as resources and tips to stay healthy and support their family and community

**APRIL 22, 2020** Facebook announces extra steps to make Pages and accounts with large audiences more transparent, including providing the location of high-reach Facebook Pages and Instagram accounts on every post they share, so people have more information to help them gauge the reliability and authenticity of the content they see in their feeds

**MAY 1, 2020** Facebook bans use of the term “boogaloo” and similar terms when used with images or statements depicting armed violence

**MAY 28, 2020** Facebook expands identity verification to people who have a pattern of inauthentic behavior on Facebook and whose posts start to rapidly go viral in the US

**MAY 30 - JUNE 16, 2020** Facebook conducts an SND against accounts of the Proud Boys and American Guard, a white supremacist group, related to their efforts to antagonize racial justice protests in the US

**JUNE 4, 2020** Facebook starts labelling state-controlled media

**JUNE 5, 2020** Facebook states that it is moving to limit the further spread of Boogaloo pages and groups, no longer

recommending them to users and demoting them in search results

**JUNE 17, 2020** Facebook starts blocking ads from state-controlled media outlets targeted to people in the US

**JUNE 25, 2020** Facebook rolls out a global notification screen to give people more context about COVID-19 related links when they are about to share them

**JUNE 26, 2020** Facebook reaches 10 fact-checking partners in the US

**JUNE 30, 2020** Facebook designates a violent Boogaloo-affiliated network as a dangerous organization (thus banning it from the platform)

**JUNE 30, 2020** Facebook conducts an SND to remove a group called the Wolverine Watchmen, some members of which were charged in October 2020 in an alleged plot to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer

**AUGUST 2020** Facebook research and data scientists give a presentation focused on areas for improvement in the Group’s space when it comes to diminishing harmful content and extremism; Facebook takes a series of steps in response to the presentation, including removing civic groups from recommendation surfaces; limiting the number of Group invites a user can send; instituting a waiting period to prevent newly-created Groups from being recommended until quality can be assessed; requiring mandatory post approval by admins for groups with low integrity signals; turning off commenting on particular posts when hate speech was detected; removing non-recommendable groups that a user has joined as a factor for new groups recommended to that user

**AUGUST 11, 2020** Facebook adds two new ratings to the fact-checking program, Altered and Missing Context, and updated the warning labels used for Partly False and Missing Context ratings

**AUGUST 13, 2020** Facebook and Instagram launch the Voting Information Center as a one-stop-shop for reliable information about the US 2020 election

**AUGUST 19, 2020** Facebook announces restrictions that lead to the removal of thousands of Pages and Groups related to QAnon and militarized social movements, and provides a series of restrictions on those remaining, including limiting recommendations, reducing them in search, and removing Pages, Groups, and Instagram accounts associated with these groups where Facebook identified discussions of potential

violence, including when the accounts used veiled language and symbols to do so

**AUGUST 20, 2020** Facebook [announces the winners](#) of the company's February call for requests for proposals to study misinformation and polarization

**AUGUST 31, 2020** Facebook publicly [discloses](#) "Recommendation Guidelines" explaining long-running work to avoid recommending low-quality, objectionable, or sensitive posts, Groups, and Pages to people

**AUGUST 31, 2020** Facebook announces [groundbreaking research partnership](#) with independent external academics to help better understand the impact of Facebook and Instagram on key political attitudes and behaviors during the US 2020 elections. The research program was extended to cover the Georgia runoff elections in January.

**SEPTEMBER 3, 2020** Facebook announces it [won't accept new political ads](#) in the week before the election, and will attach an informational label to content that seeks to delegitimize the outcome of the election or discuss the legitimacy of voting methods, or content from any candidate or campaign that tries to declare victory before the final results are in

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2020** Facebook [expands](#) its downranking of content in Pages and Groups to those that have been restricted but not removed

**SEPTEMBER 17, 2020** Facebook [announces](#) a number of additional steps it is taking to increase integrity across Groups, including further steps to stop people who repeatedly violate our Community Standards from being able to create new groups, helping ensure Groups have an active admin, and removing health Groups from recommendations

**SEPTEMBER 2020** Facebook [conducts](#) a third SND against the Proud Boys, targeting accounts returning to Facebook to promote and coordinate the Proud Boys rally in Portland on September 26

**SEPTEMBER 29, 2020** Facebook [prohibits](#) ads that praise, support, or represent militarized social movements and QAnon

**SEPTEMBER 30, 2020** Facebook [takes steps](#) to address evidence that QAnon adherents are increasingly using the issue of child safety and hashtags like #savethechildren to recruit and organize by directing people to credible child safety resources when they search for certain child safety hashtags; for QAnon content debunked by third-party fact-checkers, Facebook also takes action to reduce that content in News Feed, filtering it

from Explore and hashtags on Instagram content, labeling it so that people who saw it, tried to share it, or already had shared it would see more context, and rejecting such content from ads

**OCTOBER 2020** Facebook reaches 80 independent fact-checking partners covering over 60 languages around the world

**OCTOBER 6, 2020** Facebook [announces](#) that it will remove any Facebook Pages, Groups, and Instagram accounts representing QAnon, even if they contain no violent content

**OCTOBER 7, 2020** Facebook [announces](#) it will temporarily stop running all social issue, electoral or political ads in the US after the polls close on November 3, to reduce opportunities for confusion or abuse

**OCTOBER 20, 2020** Facebook begins preventing, on a temporary basis, civic groups from being recommended in the US

**OCTOBER 21, 2020** Building on the pre-existing Redirect Program, Facebook [announces](#) that when someone searches for terms related to QAnon on Facebook and Instagram, it will redirect them to credible resources from the Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET), the academic research network of the GIFCT

**NOVEMBER 5, 2020** Facebook [removes](#) the Stop the Steal Group

**DECEMBER 3, 2020** Facebook announces it will start [removing false claims](#) about COVID-19 vaccines that have been debunked by public health experts on Facebook and Instagram

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**JANUARY 6, 2021** Attack on US Capitol; in response, that day and over the next few days, Facebook [announces](#) several additional temporary measures regarding Groups integrity, including increasing the requirement of certain Group admins to review and approve posts before they can go up; automatically disabling comments on posts in Groups that start to have a high rate of hate speech or content that incites violence; using AI to demote content that likely violates Facebook's policies; keeping in place the filtering to stop US civic group recommendations

**JANUARY 6, 2021** Facebook [places a 24-hour block](#) on President Trump's account

**JANUARY 7, 2021** Facebook indefinitely [extends](#) the block on President Trump's account

**JANUARY 11, 2021** Facebook announces that it is removing content containing the phrase “stop the steal” under its Coordinating Harm policy from Facebook and Instagram, following its removal of the original Stop the Steal group in November 2020

**JANUARY 15, 2021** Facebook blocks the creation of any new Facebook events happening in close proximity to locations including the White House, the US Capitol building and any of the state capitol buildings through Inauguration Day; Facebook’s operations center also conducts a secondary review of all Facebook events related to the inauguration and removes ones that violate its policies; Facebook continues to block event creation in the US by non-US based accounts and Pages; Facebook restricts some features for people in the US based on signals such as repeat violations of its policies; these restrictions include blocking these accounts from creating live videos or creating an event, Group or Page

**JANUARY 16, 2021** Facebook implements a temporary ban on weapon accessories and protective equipment ads at least through January 22; the ban is later lifted

**JANUARY 21, 2021** Facebook refers the indefinite block on President Trump’s account to the Oversight Board

**JANUARY 27, 2021** Facebook announces in an earnings call that the restrictions on civic group recommendations would be extended “long-term” and made global

**FEBRUARY 8, 2021** Facebook announces it is expanding efforts to remove false claims on Facebook and Instagram about COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccines and vaccines in general during the pandemic based on consultations with leading health organizations, including the WHO

**MARCH 15, 2021** Facebook and Instagram announce informational labels on content about COVID-19 vaccines, and Instagram launches the COVID-19 Information Center

**MARCH 17, 2021** Facebook announces additional Group integrity measures, including: showing recommendations for groups that start to violate rules lower in recommendations, making it less likely that people will discover them; letting people know when they’re about to join a group that has Community Standards violations, so they can make a more informed decision before joining; blocking people who have repeated violations in groups from being able to post or comment for a period of time in any group and removing their ability to invite others to any groups or create new groups, slowing down the reach of those looking to use Facebook for harmful purposes