Our Bullying and Harassment Policy differentiates between public figures and private individuals, with the aim of allowing critical commentary of those in the public eye. Discussion of public figures nonetheless must comply with our Community Standards, and we will remove content about public figures that violates other policies. However, recognizing that the nature and publicity of this critical speech may have a bearing on some public figures, we want to revisit the definition of a public figure under our policy and explore any potential changes or distinctions within our current framework.
Definition of Public Figures

Overview

**Recommendation**

Introducing the concept of “limited scope” public figures and increasing the threshold for becoming a public figure

**Source**

XFN Feedback

**External Outreach**

92 External Engagements

**Working Groups**

6 XFN Working Groups
Who do we consider a public figure?

- People elected or assigned through a political process to a government position, or
- Political candidates running for office (for up to 30 days after the election if candidate is not elected to position), or
- People that have 100k+ fans or followers on one of their social media accounts, or
- People who are employed by broadcast or news publications to write/speak publicly, or
- People who are mentioned in the title, subtitle, or preview of 5 or more news articles or media pieces within the last 2 years as determined by local news search

Note: We currently make a distinction for Involuntary Public Figures, granting them increased protections due to the involuntary nature of their fame
## Definition of Public Figures

### Bullying and Harassment Status Quo - Protections From Attacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 1</th>
<th>Tier 2</th>
<th>Tier 3</th>
<th>Tier 4</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attacks based on a sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or domestic abuse experience</td>
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### Private Individuals
- Adults require self-report

### Public Figures
- PF Minors are fully protected - PF Adults require purposeful exposure (tagging/mentioning)

### Involuntary Public Figures (Adults and Minors)
Definition of Public Figures

Research Findings

- Defining public figures through their profession, the number of followers they have, and their engagement with fame (the majority of the status quo policy) is aligned with research findings.

- However, public figures who are also members of more vulnerable groups (e.g., women, the LGBTQ+ Community, BIPOC) struggle to handle the volume of abuse and harassment directed toward them online.

- This not only impacts the targeted public figure, but also increases users’ exposure to potentially harmful content simply due to the reach and following of public figures online.

Sources: Internal Research, Bakshy et al. 2011, Citron 2020, Ruiz Gómez 2019
We spoke to 92 stakeholders including academics, civil society organisations, free expression experts, human rights defenders, journalists and celebrities.
Key Themes:

- Intersectionality, identity, and context is critical when defining public figures, especially for the vulnerable or marginalised.

- There should be a further distinction drawn within public figure designations, considering who wields power and influence.

- Free expression experts cautioned against only allowing content that contributes to public debate as this would impact the organic dynamics of freedom of expression.
## Definition of Public Figures

### Option 1: Status Quo

#### Groups of individuals:
- Private Individuals (adults and minors)
- Public Figures (adults and minors)
- Involuntary Public Figures (adults and minors)

#### Pros
- No additional operational lift
- Allows for maximum political speech and public discourse about public figures

#### Cons
- Doesn’t account for differing levels of fame or different types of public figures
- Considers all employees of news agencies as public, irrespective of their level of fame
- No documented rationale behind the 100K threshold of fans or followers
Definition of Public Figures
Option 2: Refinements to Existing Definition

Who do we consider a public figure? (new)
Our Bullying and Harassment policy differentiates between public figures and private individuals, to allow for critical commentary of those in the public eye. A public figure is someone who engages with their established public credentials and might have the capacity to influence or communicate to large groups of individuals.

What’s the threshold to become a public figure?

- Heads of State, or
- Members of the executive or legislative branches of government at state, national, or supranational level, or
- Political candidates running for office (for up to 30 days after election if candidate is not elected to position), or
- People that have 1M fans or followers on one of their social media accounts, or
- People who are mentioned in the title of 5 or more news articles or media pieces within the last 2 years, as determined by local news search
Definition of Public Figures
Option 2: Refinements to Existing Definition

Changes:
- Move thresholds
- Introduce definition of public figure

Pros
- Adds a rationale to our definition of public figure
- Better assesses individuals based on their level of fame, and not only whether or not they write publicly or simply appear named in an article
- Still allows critical commentary of those with a big platform
- Uses company data to determine appropriate follower thresholds

Cons
- Does not account for different levels of fame and types of public figures
- Treats all public professions equally, without accounting for those in more vulnerable positions
Definition of Public Figures
Option 3: Refinements + Limited Scope Public Figures

Who do we consider a limited scope public figure?
A person is considered a limited scope public figure when their primary fame is limited to one of the following specific scopes: Human Rights Activism, Journalism, or those who become famous through involuntary means. Wherein a public figure has broader fame (e.g., both an actor and an activist), they are not considered to be limited scope public figures. Determination of limited scope public figures is made on a case-by-case basis by Organic Content Policy.

Groups of individuals:
- Private Individuals (adults and minors)
- Public Figures (adults and minors)
- Limited Scope Public Figures (new):
  - Involuntary Public Figures (adults and minors)
  - Human Rights Activists (new)
  - Journalists (new)
# Definition of Public Figures

**Option 3: Refinements + Limited Scope Public Figures**

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**Private individuals**

- Adults require self-report

**Public Figures**

- Minors - Adults (purpose exp)

**Limited Scope Public Figures**
Definition of Public Figures
Option 3: Refinements + Limited Scope Public Figures

Changes:
- Make all the refinements under option 2
- Introduce the concept of “Limited Scope” public figures

Pros
- Adds a rationale to our definition
- Provides increased protections to activists and journalists, who are often in vulnerable positions
- Better accounts for different types of public figures
- Still allows critical commentary of those with a big platform

Cons
- Adds process to designate individuals manually by Content Policy
- Removes more speech about activists and journalists, which could be considered a part of public discourse
## Definition of Public Figures

### Examples

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Angelina Jolie (Actress and Activist)</th>
<th>Sister Mary Mananzan (Feminist Activist)</th>
<th>Michelle Bachelet (Politician)</th>
<th>Samar Badawi (Human Rights Activist)</th>
<th>Anatoly Kurmanaev (Journalist)</th>
<th>Piers Morgan (TV personality)</th>
<th>Cyril Ramaphosa (Politician)</th>
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Definition of Public Figures

External Outreach

Option 1: Status Quo

Option 2: Refinements to existing thresholds

Option 3: Refinements + Ltd Scope PF (Rec)
Next Steps

Definitions
- Continue to work on definitions within limited scope public figures with relevant XFN partners

Operations
- Work with CI and CO to operationalise the list of limited scope public figures

Comms
- Work with Comms on strategy for communicating this change externally

Launch
- Proposed launch date: May 2021
facebook