

POLICY FORUM

facebook

October 6, 2020

Recommendation: Definition of Public Figures

Organic Content Policy

Issue

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

Definition of Public Figures

Bullying and Harassment Status Quo - Definition

Who do we consider a public figure?

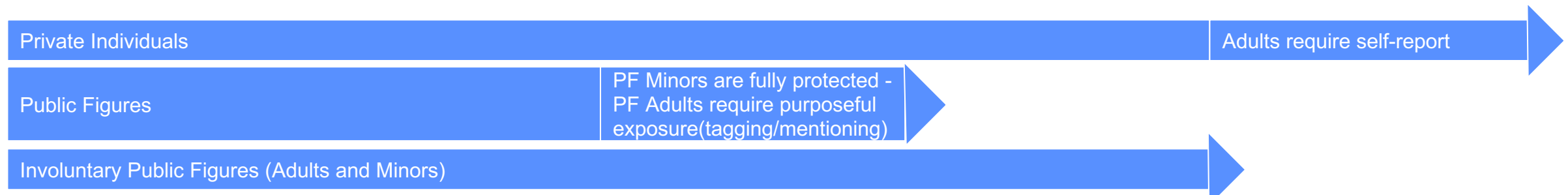
- People elected or assigned through a political process to a government position, or
- Political candidates running for office (for up to 30 days after the election if candidate is not elected to position), or
- People that have 100k+ fans or followers on one of their social media accounts, or
- People 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

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
<p>Attacks based on a sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or domestic abuse experience</p> <p>Calls for self-injury or suicide</p> <p>Derogatory terms related to sexual activity (e.g., “whore,” “slut”)</p> <p>Claims that a violent tragedy did not occur</p> <p>Claims that individuals are lying about being a victim of a violent tragedy</p> <p>Threats to release private info</p> <p>Statements of intent or advocating to engage in sexual activity</p> <p>Calls for or statements of intent to engage in, bullying and/or harassment of people</p>	<p>Calls for death or serious disease, epidemic disease or disability</p> <p>Claims about sexually transmitted diseases</p> <p>Derogatory terms related to female gendered cursing</p> <p>Praise, celebration, or mocking of their death (removed against adults when purposefully exposing)</p>	<p>Comparison to animals</p> <p>Negative photoshop</p> <p>Negative physical descriptions</p> <p>Ranking Individuals</p> <p>Sexualizing another adult</p> <p>Mocking bodily functions</p> <p>Physical bullying</p> <p>Praise, celebration, or mocking of their death</p>	<p>Targeted cursing</p> <p>Claims about romantic involvement, sexual orientation or gender identity</p> <p>Explicit exclusion of someone</p> <p>Negative character or ability claims</p> <p>Expressions of contempt or disgust</p>



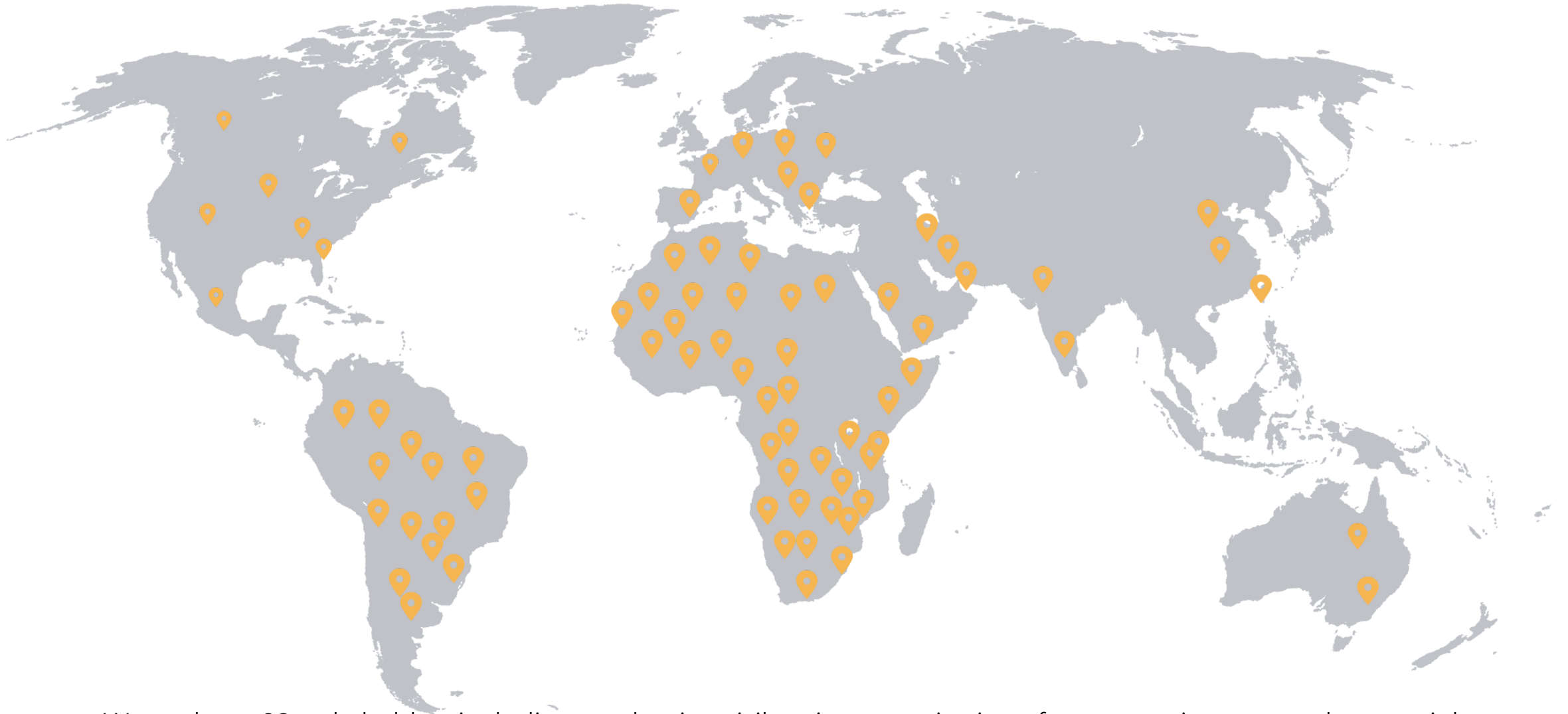
Definition of Public Figures

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

Definition of Public Figures

External Outreach



We spoke to 92 stakeholders including academics, civil society organisations, free expression experts, human rights defenders, journalists and celebrities.

Definition of Public Figures

External Outreach

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

Option 1

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

Option 2

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

Option 2

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

Option 3 (Rec)

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.

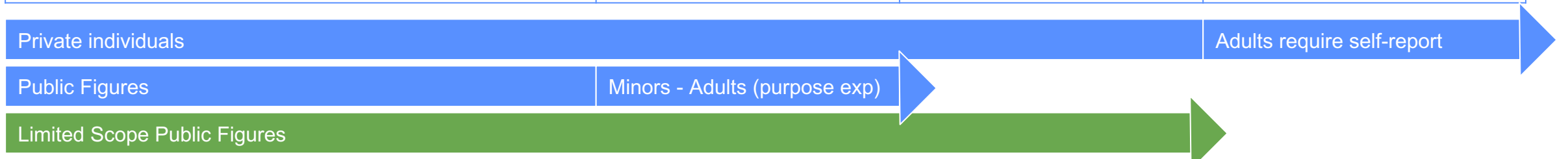
Groups of individuals:

- 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

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
<p>Attacks based on a sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or domestic abuse experience</p> <p>Calls for self-injury or suicide</p> <p>Derogatory terms related to sexual activity (e.g., “whore,” “slut”)</p> <p>Claims that a violent tragedy did not occur</p> <p>Claims that individuals are lying about being a victim of a violent tragedy</p> <p>Threats to release private info</p> <p>Statements of intent or advocating to engage in sexual activity</p> <p>Calls for or statements of intent to engage in, bullying and/or harassment of people</p>	<p>Calls for death or serious disease, epidemic disease or disability</p> <p>Claims about sexually transmitted diseases</p> <p>Derogatory terms related to female gendered cursing</p> <p>Praise, celebration, or mocking of their death (removed against adults when purposefully exposing)</p>	<p>Comparison to animals</p> <p>Negative photoshop</p> <p>Negative physical descriptions</p> <p>Ranking Individuals</p> <p>Sexualizing another adult</p> <p>Mocking bodily functions</p> <p>Physical bullying</p> <p>Praise, celebration, or mocking of their death</p>	<p>Targeted cursing</p> <p>Claims about romantic involvement, sexual orientation or gender identity</p> <p>Explicit exclusion of someone</p> <p>Negative character or ability claims</p> <p>Expressions of contempt or disgust</p>



Definition of Public Figures

Option 3: Refinements + Limited Scope Public Figures

Option 3 (Rec)

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

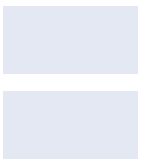
	 <p>Angelina Jolie <i>(Actress and Activist)</i></p>	 <p>Sister Mary Mananzan <i>(Feminist Activist)</i></p>	 <p>Michelle Bachelet <i>(Politician)</i></p>	 <p>Samar Badawi <i>(Human Rights Activist)</i></p>	 <p>Anatoly Kurmanaev <i>(Journalist)</i></p>	 <p>Piers Morgan <i>(TV personality)</i></p>	 <p>Cyril Ramaphosa <i>(Politician)</i></p>
Option 1	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure
Option 2	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure
Option 3	Public Figure	Limited Scope Public Figure	Public Figure	Limited Scope Public Figure	Limited Scope Public Figure	Public Figure	Public Figure

Definition of Public Figures

External Outreach



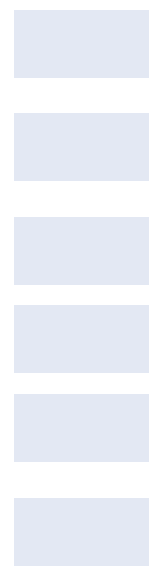
Option 1:
Status Quo



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

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