

# Has Facebook Been Misused

## Facebook

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Facebook is an American social media and social networking service owned by the American technology conglomerate Meta. Created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg with four other Harvard College students and roommates, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes, its name derives from the face book directories often given to American university students. Membership was initially limited to Harvard students, gradually expanding to other North American universities.

Since 2006, Facebook allows everyone to register from 13 years old, except in the case of a handful of nations, where the age requirement is 14 years. As of December 2023, Facebook claimed almost 3.07 billion monthly active users worldwide. As of November 2024, Facebook ranked as the third-most-visited website in the world, with 23% of its traffic coming from the United States. It was the most downloaded mobile app of the 2010s.

Facebook can be accessed from devices with Internet connectivity, such as personal computers, tablets and smartphones. After registering, users can create a profile revealing personal information about themselves. They can post text, photos and multimedia which are shared with any other users who have agreed to be their friend or, with different privacy settings, publicly. Users can also communicate directly with each other with Messenger, edit messages (within 15 minutes after sending), join common-interest groups, and receive notifications on the activities of their Facebook friends and the pages they follow.

Facebook has often been criticized over issues such as user privacy (as with the Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal), political manipulation (as with the 2016 U.S. elections) and mass surveillance. The company has also been subject to criticism over its psychological effects such as addiction and low self-esteem, and over content such as fake news, conspiracy theories, copyright infringement, and hate speech. Commentators have accused Facebook of willingly facilitating the spread of such content, as well as exaggerating its number of users to appeal to advertisers.

## Meta Platforms

*technology companies Criticism of Facebook Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal – 2010s social media data misuse 2021 Facebook leak – Document leak regarding*

Meta Platforms, Inc. is an American multinational technology company headquartered in Menlo Park, California. Meta owns and operates several prominent social media platforms and communication services, including Facebook, Instagram, Threads, Messenger and WhatsApp. The company also operates an advertising network for its own sites and third parties; as of 2023, advertising accounted for 97.8 percent of its total revenue.

The company was originally established in 2004 as TheFacebook, Inc., and was renamed Facebook, Inc. in 2005. In 2021, it rebranded as Meta Platforms, Inc. to reflect a strategic shift toward developing the metaverse—an interconnected digital ecosystem spanning virtual and augmented reality technologies.

Meta is considered one of the Big Five American technology companies, alongside Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft. In 2023, it was ranked 31st on the Forbes Global 2000 list of the world's largest public companies. As of 2022, it was the world's third-largest spender on research and development,

with R&D expenses totaling US\$35.3 billion.

## History of Facebook

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The history of Facebook traces its growth from a college networking site to a global social networking service. It was launched as TheFacebook in 2004, and renamed Facebook in 2005.

Founded by Mark Zuckerberg and his college roommates Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes at Harvard University, it was initially limited to Harvard students. It expanded to other colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and gradually most universities in the United States and Canada, corporations, and by 2006 to everyone with a valid email address along with an age requirement of being 13 or older. Facebook introduced key features like the News Feed in 2006, which became central to user engagement. By 2007, Facebook surpassed MySpace in global traffic and became the world's most popular social media platform. The company focused on generating revenue through targeted advertising based on user data, a model that drove its rapid financial growth. In 2012, Facebook went public with one of the largest IPOs in tech history. Acquisitions played a significant role in Facebook's dominance. In 2012, it purchased Instagram, followed by WhatsApp and Oculus VR in 2014, extending its influence beyond social networking into messaging and virtual reality. These moves helped Facebook maintain its position as a leader in the tech industry.

Despite its success, Facebook has faced significant controversies. Privacy concerns surfaced early, including criticism of its data collection practices. The Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal in 2018 revealed misuse of user data to influence elections, sparking global outcry and leading to regulatory fines and hearings. Facebook has been accused of enabling the spread of misinformation and hate speech and influencing political outcomes, prompting debates about content moderation and social media's role in society. The platform has frequently updated its algorithms to balance user experience with engagement-driven revenue, but these changes have sometimes drawn criticism for amplifying divisive content. Facebook's role in global events, including its use in organizing movements like the Arab Spring and, controversially, its impact on events like the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar, highlights its dual nature as a tool for empowerment and harm.

In 2021, Facebook rebranded as Meta, reflecting its shift toward building the "metaverse" and focusing on virtual reality and augmented reality technologies. Facebook continues to shape digital communication, commerce, and culture worldwide, with billions of users making it a key organisation in the 21st century.

## Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal

*about the data misuse was disclosed in March 2018 by Christopher Wylie, a former Cambridge Analytica employee. In response, Facebook apologized for their*

In the 2010s, personal data belonging to millions of Facebook users was collected by British consulting firm Cambridge Analytica for political advertising without informed consent.

The data was collected through an app called "This Is Your Digital Life", developed by data scientist Aleksandr Kogan and his company Global Science Research in 2013. The app consisted of a series of questions to build psychological profiles on users, and collected the personal data of the users' Facebook friends via Facebook's Open Graph platform. The app harvested the data of up to 87 million Facebook profiles. Cambridge Analytica used the data to analytically assist the 2016 presidential campaigns of Ted Cruz and Donald Trump. Cambridge Analytica was also widely accused of interfering with the Brexit referendum, although the official investigation recognised that the company was not involved "beyond some initial enquiries" and that "no significant breaches" took place.

In interviews with The Guardian and The New York Times, information about the data misuse was disclosed in March 2018 by Christopher Wylie, a former Cambridge Analytica employee. In response, Facebook apologized for their role in the data harvesting and their CEO Mark Zuckerberg testified in April 2018 in front of Congress. In July 2019, it was announced that Facebook was to be fined \$5 billion by the Federal Trade Commission due to its privacy violations. In October 2019, Facebook agreed to pay a £500,000 fine to the UK Information Commissioner's Office for exposing the data of its users to a "serious risk of harm". In May 2018, Cambridge Analytica filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy.

Other advertising agencies have been implementing various forms of psychological targeting for years and Facebook had patented a similar technology in 2012. Nevertheless, Cambridge Analytica's methods and their high-profile clients — including the Trump presidential campaign and the UK's Leave.EU campaign — brought the problems of psychological targeting that scholars have been warning against to public awareness. The scandal sparked an increased public interest in privacy and social media's influence on politics. The online movement #DeleteFacebook trended on Twitter.

## Criticism of Facebook

*Facebook (and parent company Meta Platforms) has been the subject of criticism and legal action since it was founded in 2004. Criticisms include the outsize*

Facebook (and parent company Meta Platforms) has been the subject of criticism and legal action since it was founded in 2004. Criticisms include the outsize influence Facebook has on the lives and health of its users and employees, as well as Facebook's influence on the way media, specifically news, is reported and distributed. Notable issues include Internet privacy, such as use of a widespread "like" button on third-party websites tracking users, possible indefinite records of user information, automatic facial recognition software, and its role in the workplace, including employer-employee account disclosure. The use of Facebook can have negative psychological and physiological effects that include feelings of sexual jealousy, stress, lack of attention, and social media addiction that in some cases is comparable to drug addiction.

Facebook's operations have also received coverage. The company's electricity usage, tax avoidance, real-name user requirement policies, censorship policies, handling of user data, and its involvement in the United States PRISM surveillance program and Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal have been highlighted by the media and by critics. Facebook has come under scrutiny for 'ignoring' or shirking its responsibility for the content posted on its platform, including copyright and intellectual property infringement, hate speech, incitement of rape, violence against minorities, terrorism, fake news, Facebook murder, crimes, and violent incidents live-streamed through its Facebook Live functionality.

The company and its employees have also been subject to litigation cases over the years, with its most prominent case concerning allegations that CEO Mark Zuckerberg broke an oral contract with Cameron Winklevoss, Tyler Winklevoss, and Divya Narendra to build the then-named "HarvardConnection" social network in 2004, instead allegedly opting to steal the idea and code to launch Facebook months before HarvardConnection began. The original lawsuit was eventually settled in 2009, with Facebook paying approximately \$20 million in cash and 1.25 million shares. A new lawsuit in 2011 was dismissed. This, alongside another controversy involving Zuckerberg and fellow co-founder and former CFO Eduardo Saverin,

was further explored in the 2010 American biographical drama film The Social Network. Some critics point to problems which they say will result in the demise of Facebook. Facebook has been banned by several governments for various reasons, including Syria, China, Iran and Russia.

## Project X Haren

*way, the girl hoped to obtain a head count. One of her friends's friends misused the invitation and invited 500 people himself. This triggered a snowball*

Project X Haren was an event that started out as a public invitation to a birthday party by a girl on Facebook, but ended up as a gathering of tens of thousands of youths causing riots on 21 September 2012 in the town of Haren, Groningen, Netherlands.

The event was unprecedented in the Netherlands, but in June 2011, a German girl had posted similar birthday invitations on the internet. Hundreds of mostly drunk youths gathered in Hamburg, Germany, causing a great deal of damage and rioting against the police.

## Ray-Ban Meta

*criticism stemming from mistrust over Facebook's privacy controls. The small size of the recording indicator light has also led to criticism. The partnership*

Ray-Ban Meta is a series of smartglasses created by Meta Platforms and EssilorLuxottica. They include two cameras, open-ear speakers, a microphone, and touchpad built into the frame. They are the second generation of a line of smartglasses released by major companies including Snap Inc and Google and are designed as one component of Facebook's plans for a metaverse.

Unlike other smart glasses, the Ray-Ban Meta glasses do not include any HUD or AR head-mounted display. Meta announced them on September 27, 2023. They use a Qualcomm Snapdragon AR1 Gen1 processor, upgrade of the cameras to 12 MP, improved audio, livestreaming to Facebook and Instagram, and Meta AI. On April 23, 2024, Meta announced an update to Meta AI on the smart glasses to enable multimodal input via computer vision.

They received criticism stemming from mistrust over Facebook's privacy controls. The small size of the recording indicator light has also led to criticism.

## Social media

*ResearchGate, LinkedIn, Facebook, X, and Academia.edu. The most common platforms are X and blogs. The use of social media reportedly has improved the interaction*

Social media are new media technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing and aggregation of content (such as ideas, interests, and other forms of expression) amongst virtual communities and networks. Common features include:

Online platforms enable users to create and share content and participate in social networking.

User-generated content—such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through online interactions.

Service-specific profiles that are designed and maintained by the social media organization.

Social media helps the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups.

The term social in regard to media suggests platforms enable communal activity. Social media enhances and extends human networks. Users access social media through web-based apps or custom apps on mobile devices. These interactive platforms allow individuals, communities, businesses, and organizations to share, co-create, discuss, participate in, and modify user-generated or self-curated content. Social media is used to document memories, learn, and form friendships. They may be used to promote people, companies, products, and ideas. Social media can be used to consume, publish, or share news.

Social media platforms can be categorized based on their primary function.

Social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn focus on building personal and professional connections.

Microblogging platforms, such as Twitter (now X), Threads and Mastodon, emphasize short-form content and rapid information sharing.

Media sharing networks, including Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat, allow users to share images, videos, and live streams.

Discussion and community forums like Reddit, Quora, and Discord facilitate conversations, Q&A, and niche community engagement.

Live streaming platforms, such as Twitch, Facebook Live, and YouTube Live, enable real-time audience interaction.

Decentralized social media platforms like Mastodon and Bluesky aim to provide social networking without corporate control, offering users more autonomy over their data and interactions.

Popular social media platforms with over 100 million registered users include Twitter, Facebook, WeChat, ShareChat, Instagram, Pinterest, QZone, Weibo, VK, Tumblr, Baidu Tieba, Threads and LinkedIn. Depending on interpretation, other popular platforms that are sometimes referred to as social media services include YouTube, Letterboxd, QQ, Quora, Telegram, WhatsApp, Signal, LINE, Snapchat, Viber, Reddit, Discord, and TikTok. Wikis are examples of collaborative content creation.

Social media outlets differ from old media (e.g. newspapers, TV, and radio broadcasting) in many ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, relevancy, and permanence. Social media outlets operate in a dialogic transmission system (many sources to many receivers) while traditional media operate under a monologic transmission model (one source to many receivers). For instance, a newspaper is delivered to many subscribers, and a radio station broadcasts the same programs to a city.

Social media has been criticized for a range of negative impacts on children and teenagers, including exposure to inappropriate content, exploitation by adults, sleep problems, attention problems, feelings of exclusion, and various mental health maladies. Social media has also received criticism as worsening political polarization and undermining democracy. Major news outlets often have strong controls in place to avoid and fix false claims, but social media's unique qualities bring viral content with little to no oversight. "Algorithms that track user engagement to prioritize what is shown tend to favor content that spurs negative emotions like anger and outrage. Overall, most online misinformation originates from a small minority of "superspreaders," but social media amplifies their reach and influence."

Zalgo text

*Zalgo text, also known as cursed text or glitch text, is digital text that has been modified with numerous combining characters, Unicode symbols used to add*

Zalgo text, also known as cursed text or glitch text, is digital text that has been modified with numerous combining characters, Unicode symbols used to add diacritics above or below letters, to appear frightening or glitchy.

Named for a 2004 Internet creepypasta story that ascribes it to the influence of an eldritch deity, Zalgo text has become a significant component of many Internet memes, particularly in the "surreal meme" culture. The formatting of Zalgo text also allows it to be used to halt or impair certain computer functions, whether intentionally or not.

Smash or pass?

*acknowledged that it "can be, and has been, misused in harmful ways". Richards compared the game to FaceMash, a predecessor to Facebook, in which users rated the*

Smash or pass? is a game in which players evaluate the sexual desirability of an individual, declaring whether they would hypothetically want to "smash" them (have sex with them) or "pass" (choose not to). The subject of discussion may be a celebrity, a fictional character, or an individual known personally to the players.

The game has seen spikes of popularity on the Internet, including on Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. It has also been used as a form of sexual harassment, including through the uploading of photographs of people without their consent.

The name comes from a slang meaning of smash meaning "have casual sex", which is attested from the early 2000s. The game's terminology is also used metaphorically to evaluate things outside the sexual sphere, like food or festival performances.

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