

Document 1- Social media now main source of news in US, research suggests

This article sums up [the Digital News Report 2025](#), a thorough yearly analysis conducted by the Reuters Institute of Journalism at the University of Oxford.
See their executive summary (text and podcast) [HERE](#)

BBC News, 17 June 2025 - Ian Youngs, Culture reporter

Social media and video networks have become the main source of news in the US, overtaking traditional TV channels and news websites, research suggests.

More than half (54%) of people get news from networks like Facebook, X and YouTube - overtaking TV (50%) and news sites and apps (48%), according to the Reuters Institute.

"The rise of social media and personality-based news is not unique to the United States, but changes seem to be happening faster – and with more impact – than in other countries," a report found.

Podcaster Joe Rogan was the most widely-seen personality, with almost a quarter (22%) of the population saying they had come across news or commentary from him in the previous week.

The report's author Nic Newman said the rise of social video and personality-driven news "represents another significant challenge for traditional publishers".

The institute also highlighted a trend for some politicians to give their time to sympathetic online hosts rather than mainstream interviewers.

It said populist politicians around the world are "increasingly able to bypass traditional journalism in favour of friendly partisan media, 'personalities', and 'influencers' who often get special access but rarely ask difficult questions, with many implicated in spreading false narratives or worse".

Despite their popularity, online influencers and personalities were named as a major source of false or misleading information by almost half of people worldwide (47%) - putting them level with politicians.

The report also stated that usage of X for news is "stable or increasing across many markets", with the biggest uplift in the US.

It added that since Elon Musk took over the network in 2022, "many more right-leaning people, notably young men, have flocked to the network, while some progressive audiences have left or are using it less frequently".

In the US, the proportion that self-identified as being on the right tripled after Musk's takeover.

In the UK, right-wing X audiences have almost doubled.

Rival networks like Threads, Bluesky and Mastodon are "making little impact globally, with reach of 2% or less for news", it stated.

Other key findings about news sources:

- TikTok is the fastest-growing social and video network, used for news by 17% of people around the world, up four percentage points since last year.
- The use of AI chatbots to get the news is on the rise, and is twice as popular among under-25s than the population as a whole.
- But most people think AI will make news less transparent, accurate and trustworthy.
- All generations still prize trusted brands with a track record for accuracy, even if they don't use them as often as they once did

The report is in its 14th year and surveyed almost 100,000 people in 48 countries.

Document 2 -The Role of Alternative Social Media in the News and Information Environment

Reprot, Pew Research Center, October 6 2022

Free speech ideals, heated political themes prevail on these sites, which draw praise from their users and skepticism from other Americans

BYGALEN STOCKING,AMY MITCHELL,KATERINA EVA MATSA,REGINA WIDJAYA,MARK JURKOWITZ,SHREENITA GHOSH,AARON SMITH,SARAH NASEERANDCHRISTOPHER ST. AUBIN

Alternative social media sites attract a small, loyal base of news consumers; top accounts often espouse pro-Trump, pro-America, religious themes

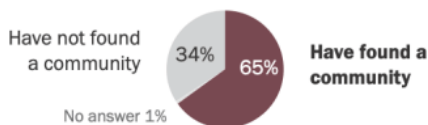


6%

of U.S. adults **regularly** get news from at least one of these sites:

BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social

% of alternative social media news consumers who say they ___ of people that share their views



15%

of prominent alternative social media accounts have been **banned or demonetized** by other social media sites

% of prominent alternative social media accounts that have appeals to each value

26%

Right-leaning/
Trump supporting



21%

Patriotism/
Pro-America



21%

Religious
identity



Note: N=1,400 prominent accounts (200 sampled from the accounts on each site with the most followers). See methodology for more details.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 16-22, 2022; Pew Research Center analysis of 200 prominent accounts on each alternative social media site conducted June 2022.

"The Role of Alternative Social Media in the News and Information Environment"

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In recent years, several new options have emerged in the social media universe, many of which explicitly present themselves as alternatives to more established social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube – especially by opposing free speech restrictions they say are rife at those sites.

These newer sites have created a small but satisfied community of news consumers, many of whom say one of the major reasons they are there is to stay informed about current events, according to a new Pew Research Center study. The study included a survey of U.S. adults along with an audit of seven alternative social media sites – BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social – and a detailed analysis of prominent accounts and content across them.

Although fewer than one-in-ten Americans say they use any of these sites for news, most who do say they have found a community of like-minded people there. And news consumers on the four sites with large enough numbers to be analyzed individually – Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social – largely say they are satisfied with their experience getting news on the sites, that they find the information there to be mostly accurate, and that the discussions are mostly friendly.

At the same time, however, the study finds signs that these sites may be another symptom of the increasingly polarized public discourse – and Americans’ partisan divisions in the broader news media environment.

A majority of those who regularly get news from at least one of the seven alternative social media sites (66%) identify as Republicans or lean toward the Republican Party, in contrast with the news consumers on more established social media sites, who largely identify as Democrats or lean Democratic. And this trend is common among prominent accounts as well, with about a quarter of these accounts (26%) identifying as conservative or Republican or supportive of former President Donald Trump or his “Make America Great Again” movement. In addition, many prominent accounts express other values such as patriotism and religious identity.

Several sites are linked to conservative backers – including Truth Social, which was launched by Trump about a year after he was “indefinitely” and “permanently” suspended from Facebook and Twitter. This is not a unique phenomenon: The study found a noteworthy percentage of prominent accounts on these seven newer sites (15%) have been banned or demonetized elsewhere on social media.

Perhaps connected to that, Americans who have heard of these sites but do not use them as sources for news are skeptical of them. When asked for the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about alternative social media sites, people in this category commonly cite inaccuracy and misinformation, political bias and the political right, and extremism and fringe ideas.

Other elements of the study speak to some of these associations. A small but measurable share of prominent accounts across these sites (6%) mention a connection to the set of conspiracy theories known as QAnon. And an analysis of recent content posted by prominent accounts on these sites finds that the most common phrases include some that are controversial and even inflammatory such as wariness toward vaccines and negative associations with LGBTQ people. Moreover, one of the most prevalent destinations for links found in these posts is The Gateway Pundit, a digital outlet that has been criticized for publishing false information.

These are some of the key themes to emerge from this major new study, which was designed to look at multiple aspects of the world of alternative social media. It examines those who turn to these sites for news, explores how the sites present themselves, and reports on the kinds of accounts that draw the most attention and the types of conversations taking place there.

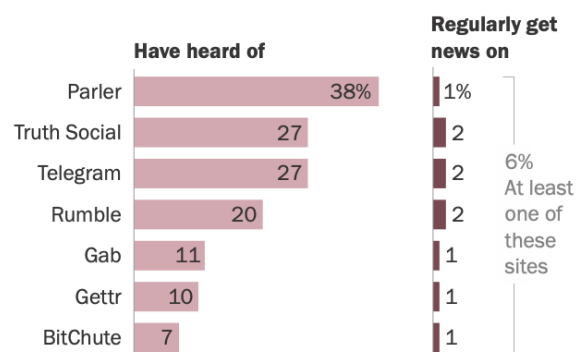
For the first component, researchers conducted a survey of news consumers on seven sites: BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social. Four of these – Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social – had enough news consumers to do a deeper dive.

Next, researchers conducted an audit of all seven sites that explored elements of how the sites present themselves, privacy features, and other characteristics. Researchers then analyzed 200 prominent accounts sampled from those with the highest number of followers on each of these sites. They examined these 1,400 accounts for several attributes, including how they describe themselves in their profiles. Finally, researchers collected all 585,470 posts published by these accounts in June 2022 and examined their key phrases, themes and the links included in the posts. For more details, see the methodology. The rest of this overview discusses the key findings of the study in more detail.

Alternative social media sites have small, largely Republican audiences; prominent accounts tend to emphasize right-leaning identities and religious and patriotic values

Wide variance in the sites Americans have heard of, but few get news on any

% of U.S. adults who ___ each alternative social media site



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 16-22, 2022. "The Role of Alternative Social Media in the News and Information Environment"

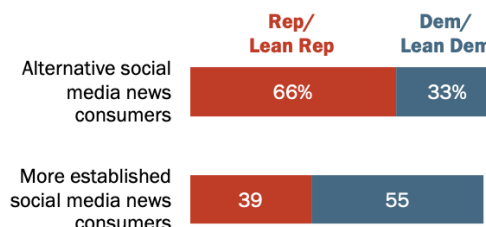
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These sites have become a refuge for some who feel they do not have a home on the more established sites. Still, relatively few Americans use these alternative social media sites for news – though larger portions have heard

of each of them. Parler is the best known of the seven sites named in the survey, with 38% of U.S. adults saying they are familiar with it. The share who get news on these sites is much smaller: Just 6% of Americans get news from at least one of the seven sites mentioned, and no single site is used for news by more than 2% of U.S. adults.

About two-thirds of alternative social media news consumers are Republicans

% of each group who are ...



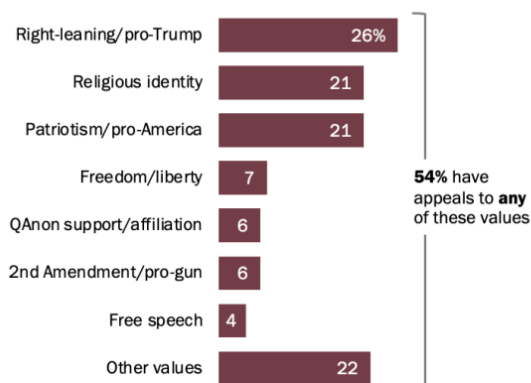
Note: "Alternative social media news consumers" are the 6% of U.S. adults who report regularly getting news on at least one of the following social media sites: BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social. "More established social media news consumers" are those who report regularly getting news on at least one of the following social media sites: Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. Alternative social media news consumers may also get news on more established social media sites and vice versa. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 16-22, 2022. "The Role of Alternative Social Media in the News and Information Environment"

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The news consumers on these sites lean heavily Republican. A majority of those who get news from at least one of the seven alternative social media sites (66%) are Republican or lean Republican. This is in contrast with more established social media sites, where news consumers are more likely to be Democrats or lean Democratic. (For more about news consumers on these more established sites, read our Social Media and News Fact Sheet.)

About a quarter of prominent alternative social media accounts link themselves to GOP, Trump

% of prominent alternative social media accounts that have appeals to each value in their profiles



Note: N=1,400 prominent accounts. 200 were sampled from each of seven alternative social media sites: BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social. Prominent accounts are those with the highest number of followers on each site. Accounts may express more than one value appeal. See methodology for more details. "Other values" include value appeals that appeared less frequently than others, including opposition to Big Tech, opposition to mainstream media, and ethnic identity. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 200 prominent accounts on each site conducted June 2022.

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This report also looks at a sample of 200 of the prominent accounts on each site – those with the greatest number of followers – to determine what kinds of accounts tend to gain the most traction on alternative social media.

Roughly half (54%) of prominent accounts appeal to some kind of value or political orientation in their profiles. The most common of these values was right-leaning – 26% of prominent accounts expressed some kind of right-leaning or pro-Trump appeal – more of which centered around Trump or his “Make America Great Again” movement than with the Republican Party or conservative ideology. Other expressed values included appeals to a religious identity (21% of prominent accounts), patriotism/pro-America views (21%), freedom and liberty (7%), pro-gun or pro-Second Amendment positions (6%), and support for the set of conspiracy theories known as QAnon (6%).

A close look at who is behind the prominent accounts shows that about eight-in-ten (83%) are run by individuals. That can mean either a single person with a noted affiliation to an organization or one without any organizational affiliation. Another 12% are organizations, including news organizations, nonprofit groups and others. Along with a prevalence of conservative values and identities in prominent account profiles, political topics were common in the content posted there. This study collected all posts published by the 1,400 prominent accounts in June 2022 and identified those that were about five politically oriented topics: abortion; guns, gun control and shootings; the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and subsequent congressional hearings; LGBTQ issues; and vaccines.

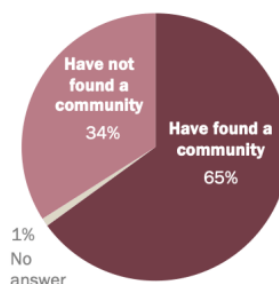
The discussion around these issues often reflects fringe and controversial worldviews on the political right. For

instance, some of the most common terms in posts about the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol include “political prisoner,” “DC gulag,” “unselect committee,” “witch hunt” and “sham hearing.” Meanwhile, posts about vaccines indicate a deep and consistent concern about the impact of vaccination. These posts regularly refer to a small group of influential vaccine skeptics. The most common terms in these posts point to a widespread fear of real but rare impacts of vaccination (“side effect,” “adverse reaction,” “blood clot,” “heart inflammation”) but also diseases or symptoms for which the medical literature finds little evidence of being tied to vaccines (“[sudden adult] death syndrome,” “sperm count”). And posts about LGBTQ issues commonly referred to drag queen “story hour” (a common target of anti-LGBTQ groups) or derisive allegations toward gay and transgender individuals, such as “pedo” and “groomer,” implying that they prey on children. See Appendix C.

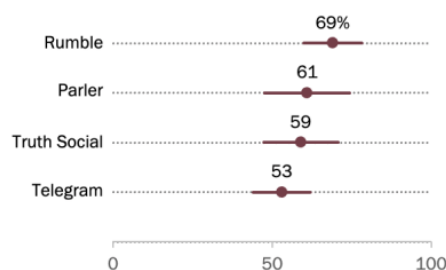
Most alternative social media news consumers feel a sense of community on these sites, which prominently identify themselves as havens of free speech

Most alternative social media news consumers feel a sense of a community there and say discussions are friendly

% of alternative social media news consumers who say they ___ of people who share their views there



Among those who regularly get news on each site, % who say discussions they see on those sites are mostly friendly



Note: “Alternative social media news consumers” are the 6% of U.S. adults who report regularly getting news on at least one of the following social media sites: BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social. In the second graphic, respondents who did not give an answer not shown; BitChute, Gab and Gettr not shown due to insufficient sample size. Lines surrounding data points represent the margin of error of each estimate. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 16-22, 2022.

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About two-thirds of individuals who get news on at least one of the seven alternative social media sites (65%) say they have found a community of like-minded people there. In a related finding, those who get news from Rumble, Parler, Truth Social and Telegram are far more likely to see these spaces as friendly than unfriendly. About half or more of those who get news on each of them – ranging from 53% to 69% – characterize the discussions they see on these sites as mostly friendly, while no more than a third of each site’s news consumers say the conversation there is mostly unfriendly (the rest say conversation is about an equal mix of friendly and unfriendly).

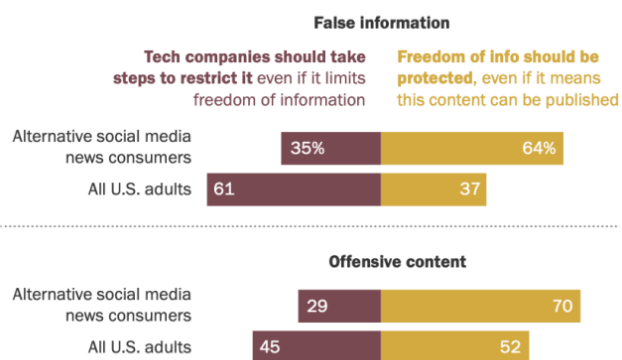
In some cases, the activity on these sites moves beyond the digital realm. One-third of alternative social media news consumers (33%) say they have participated in an in-person political rally or other political activity they learned about on these sites, and a similar share (36%) have donated money to accounts they follow on these sites.

A central way these sites depict themselves, one that may help give users that sense of community, is as welcoming havens for free speech as well as antidotes to the censorship and “cancel culture” they say exist on more established social media sites. Indeed, all of the seven sites examined explicitly state that they support free speech.

That message has clearly resonated with those turning to those sites for news. When users of alternative social media sites were asked to describe, in their own words, the first thing that comes to their mind in connection with these sites, 22% mentioned something related to the concept of freedom of speech, anti-censorship and an alternative to more established social media – far more common than any other type of response.

Alternative social media news consumers more likely than Americans overall to favor free speech protection over safeguards against false or offensive content

% who say the following about false information and offensive content online



Note: Respondents who did not answer not shown. “Alternative social media news consumers” are the 6% of U.S. adults who report regularly getting news on at least one of the following social media sites: BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 16-22, 2022. “The Role of Alternative Social Media in the News and Information Environment”

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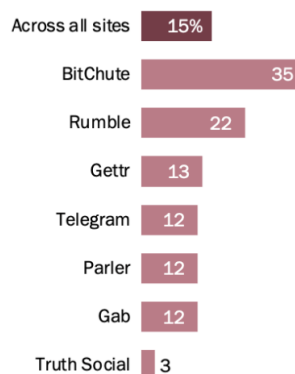
Alternative social media news consumers are particularly supportive of these concepts. Compared with Americans

overall, alternative social media news consumers are more likely to say that freedom of information should be protected – even if it means allowing false information and offensive content online – than they are to say technology companies should take steps to restrict false information. For example, nearly two-thirds of alternative social media news consumers (64%) favor the protection of free speech even if it brings with it some false content, while the majority of all U.S. adults (61%) prefer that tech companies take steps to restrict this kind of content even if it limits freedom of information.

15% of prominent accounts on alternative social media sites were banned elsewhere

15% of prominent alternative social media accounts have been banned or demonetized on other social media sites

% of prominent accounts on each alternative social media site that have been banned or demonetized by other social media sites



Note: N=1,400 prominent accounts. 200 were sampled from the accounts with the most followers on each of the seven alternative social media sites listed above. See methodology for more details. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 200 prominent accounts on each alternative social media site conducted June 2022. “The Role of Alternative Social Media in the News and Information Environment”

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The free speech philosophies of these alternative social media sites have attracted some user accounts that were banned elsewhere. This may be connected to the perception among Americans who are aware of these sites but don’t get news there that the sites host misinformation. Indeed, 15% of prominent accounts across the seven sites, including Trump’s account, have been indefinitely or permanently suspended, banned or demonetized on more established social media. This is particularly common on BitChute, a video-focused site, where about a third of prominent accounts (35%) have been banned or demonetized elsewhere.

In a number of cases the banning or demonetization was based on evidence that they had spread misinformation and inaccurate information (one example being COVID-19 vaccine skeptic Dr. Robert Malone).

That perception clearly exists among the larger segment of the public that does not use these alternative social media sites for news. When asked to name the first thing that

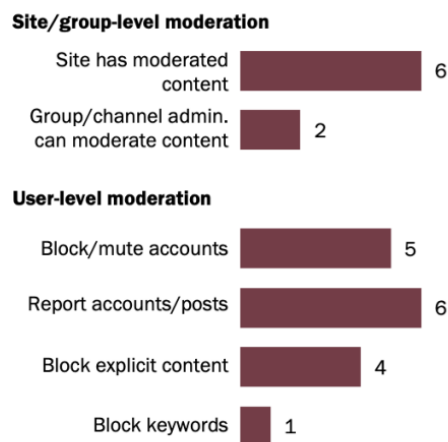
comes to mind when they think of alternative social media sites, adults who have heard about these alternative social media sites but do not get news on them most commonly voice thoughts of inaccuracy and misinformation: 16% of responses. Another 11% of these U.S. adults cite political bias or associate the sites with the political right, and 6% associate alternative social media with extremism or consider them dangerous. Those who get news on these sites are less likely to mention these ideas and more likely to associate them with a lack of censorship or as alternatives to Big Tech.

The content on these sites also raises some questions about the credibility of the information found there. In June 2022, the most prominent accounts commonly linked to digital-only outlets such as The Gateway Pundit, Rebel News, Zero Hedge and Breitbart – each of which have been banned or demonetized by technology companies or other social media sites for misinformation or hate speech. Overall, during this period, there was a clear preference for material from other social media (45% of links) and relatively new, digital-only news sites (20%) rather than legacy news organizations like print publications (4%), radio or podcast sites (1%) or television (1%) sites. In fact, the same share of links went to The Gateway Pundit as to all print publications combined (4%).

Almost all alternative social media sites studied moderate content to some extent and also give users the option to do so

Most alternative social media sites in the study moderate their content to at least some extent

Of seven alternative social media sites studied, number that moderate content on their site in each of the following ways



Note: Sites audited are BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Telegram, Rumble, and Truth Social. Data reflects the state of each site when collected; sites may have changed since then. Researchers reviewed terms of service, “About” pages and similar sections of the websites and examined features of the websites available to logged-in users.

Source: Data from Pew Research Center audit of seven alternative social media sites, collected April 2022 and verified August-September 2022.

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Notwithstanding their allegiance to free speech, almost all of the sites analyzed have at least some restrictions on content.

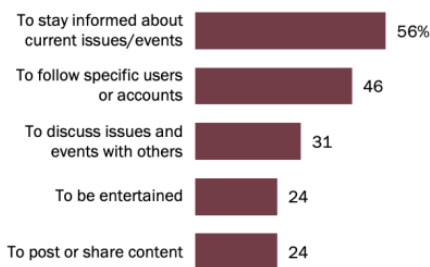
Every one of the sites, with the exception of Gab, moderates user content beyond the existing legal requirements to remove illegal content and cooperate with law enforcement requests.¹ In some cases, sites have agreed to certain restrictions due to outside pressure from governments or mobile app stores like Apple’s App Store or the Google Play Store. This moderation includes removing posts that may contain violent, racist or offensive content and, in some cases, for the political viewpoint expressed.

In addition, almost all these sites give their users options to control the content they see. Five sites let users block or mute other users from their news feed, six sites let users report either accounts or posts, and four of the sites allow users to block explicit content.

Alternative social media news consumers largely satisfied with news they find there, which is often government and political news they wouldn’t have seen elsewhere

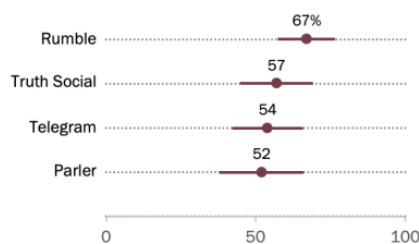
Staying informed about current events is a top reason people use alternative social media sites ...

% of alternative social media news consumers who say each is a major reason they use these sites



... and users are generally satisfied with their news experience

Among those who regularly get news on each site, % who say they are at least somewhat satisfied with getting news on the site



Note: "Alternative social media news consumers" are the 6% of U.S. adults who report regularly getting news on at least one of the following social media sites: BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social. BitChute, Gab and Gettr not shown in the second chart due to insufficient sample size. Lines surrounding data points represent the margin of error of each estimate. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 16-22, 2022. "The Role of Alternative Social Media in the News and Information Environment"

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For many users, these sites are an important source of information about current events – often government and politics news – and they report finding news that they wouldn’t necessarily find elsewhere.

A majority of those who get news on at least one of the seven sites (56%) say a major reason they go to these sites is to stay informed about current events and issues. And much of what they see is government and political news: 52% say this is the most common type of news they come across on these sites.

In general, alternative social media news consumers like their experience there. About half or more of news consumers on Rumble, Truth Social, Telegram and Parler say they are very or somewhat satisfied with the experience of getting news there, and this overall satisfaction extends to their perception of the accuracy of the information they find. Fewer of the news consumers on each of these sites – roughly a quarter or less – say they are *dissatisfied* with the experience, while the rest say they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

These news consumers also say that much of the news they see on alternative social media sites is information they wouldn’t find elsewhere. Roughly half of news consumers who get news on at least one of the seven sites (52%) say they at least fairly often come across news on these sites that they would not have seen elsewhere, with an additional 32% who sometimes encounter unique news there.

Document 3 - How social media is mainstreaming far-right rhetoric

It used to be that the far right were set apart from polite society, but it’s easy to find views once seen as extreme on Facebook today. And frontbench politicians are taking note
The Guardian, Poppy Noor, Mon 13 Oct 2025

A few decades ago, it was pretty obvious who was in a far-right group. Maybe they had a skinhead, an 88 tattoo or were part of the National Front. Most likely, they knew as well as anyone that *their own views* were fringe. No more. Last year, people took to the streets in Southport, setting a mosque, a Citizen’s Advice Bureau and a police van (among other things) on fire and smashing the windows of a hotel housing asylum seekers. Some of those arrested had been active on Facebook groups run by ordinary members of the public: people happy to post what once would have been viewed as extreme thoughts openly on Facebook. This sort of merging of extremism with everyday life is snowballing. During Conservative party conference, the Guardian revealed one of the most senior Tories had been recorded admitting dismay at not seeing enough white faces in a town – and when the leader of the party was asked about it, she defended him. And not long

ago, whether Rishi Sunak was truly “English” became a hot topic thanks to those extreme views being aired by those in discussion with former Spectator editor Fraser Nelson and Michael Gove.

How did views once thought of as far-right become a part of mainstream debate? I asked **Pamela Duncan**, data projects editor at the Guardian, who has spent a year studying this exact phenomenon.

After **the Southport riots**** last year, when around two dozen people were arrested due to social media posts relating to them, Pamela sat down with a question: in what sort of online culture were those people immersed? “Our mentality was, if those comments had reached a criminal bar ... what sort of environment were they participating in where could these things could be said?” she said.

The data team found the public-facing Facebook profiles of those charged, and 16 different groups in their broader network, interlinked via common admins and moderators running them. They examined the posts of those groups, and found that many, knowingly or not, were interacting with content which one expert said “echoed fascist methods used throughout history”.

There was a wide range of activity on the groups but most worrying were posts that followed a pattern of dehumanisation and demonisation of migrants – accounting for one-in-10 posts captured by the Guardian – Muslims and non-white people – who were often portrayed as dangerous, deceitful, criminal or culturally incompatible with UK life.

Some posts used subtle insinuations about “military-aged men” and “grooming gangs” – as a sort of coded language for the inherent threat that immigrants pose. Others simply labelled all immigrants as “illegals” or an “invasion”. Some were plain racist. Other key themes emerged: of a deep distrust in the government and its institutions, misinformation and conspiracy theories, many containing far-right tropes as well as evidence of white nativism.

Now Pamela says she has seen similar language being used by mainstream politicians.

“I’ve been watching a lot of what’s coming out of **the [party] conferences*** in the past few weeks, and what’s struck me has been that the kind of rhetoric we are seeing in these groups is now being reflected in mainstream speeches,” says Pamela.

Most obvious are the comments coming out of the Reform conference – in particular, Pamela points to people like Zia Yusuf, who spoke about the “invasion of our country” by “tens of thousands of fighting aged males”.

Shocking, perhaps, but also maybe what to expect of Reform. What’s more astonishing is how it has bled into the discourse within the Conservative party recently.

No white faces

I almost choked on my cornflakes on Tuesday morning, listening to **Kemi Badenoch*** respond to comments that **Robert Jenrick***, the shadow secretary for justice, made about Handsworth at a dinner in the West Midlands. He compared the area to a slum, and stated he “hadn’t seen another white face” in the 90 minutes he was there, adding: “that’s not the country I want to live in”.

Appearing on Radio 4’s Today Programme, Badenoch first suggested the Guardian’s recording could have been taken out of context, adding: “What really worries me is that there are a lot of people in Birmingham who are not integrating.” Pressed on whether the number of white people you see in an area is a good measure of integration, Badenoch said: “I’m making a far more important point ... What I don’t want is for us to not say anything because everybody’s scared about offending someone else, and

then we end up having huge scandals like **the grooming scandal**** where I remember a parent telling me that she was arrested because the police said she was racist because she pointed out that her child had gotten into a car with Asian men.”

I asked Pamela whether this sort of rhetoric chimes with what she’s seen posted on far-right Facebook groups.

“This idea of grooming gangs, military aged men – these are the new dog whistles, and they are the tell tale signs,” she said.

Another thing the team found was how these Facebook groups drove anti-establishment ideas, and experts said that this language ultimately ends up benefiting Reform. That mistrust of institutions grew into something more insidious in the wake of the riots: with people posting in support of the Southport rioters, and taking issue with people being jailed for online offences.

In her closing speech at party conference, Badenoch also seemed to take offence at the law being used against people who have said illegal things online: “Hundreds of thousands of police hours are wasted every year on non-crime hate incidents and form filling officers chasing tweets instead of thieves,” she said.

Could the Tories be seeking to benefit from the same anti-establishment rhetoric that Reform has, now that they’re no longer in power? Judging intent is always hard, says Pamela, but the signals are clear. She points to Jenrick doing a bit with a periwig at conference, and talking about supposed links between judges who support open borders and their rulings.

“I was really shocked by Jenrick taking out the wig and undermining how judges are appointed, talking about two-tier sentencing rules and guidelines. That’s something that we saw reflected in our research as well,” Pamela says.

Illusory effect

One of the problems with the way far-right rhetoric has spread on social media is that many people – faced with the same information again and again – start to think “if I’ve seen it so many times, it must be true”.

But considering the amount of misinformation there is online, compounded with the widespread failure of social media companies to moderate this sort of content on their platforms, the danger is that people increasingly live in worlds where they believe fringe, often verifiably false views are more popular than they are. As Prof Sander van der Linden, an expert in the impact of conspiracy and misinformation and its connection to extremism put it in our reporting: “You may be able to find two people in your neighbourhood who feel the same way, but now you can connect with thousands of individuals who feel the same way as you in a matter of seconds, which leads to a misperception about what the consensus is in society.”

But what is the impact when similar rhetoric comes from the leaders of mainstream parties?

“It definitely feeds into the normalisation of this language,” says Pamela. “There is a validation when it’s put in the mouths of more serious politicians. They are getting airtime, and their quotes will be clipped and posted, put on television and will be heard, potentially, by millions.”

She adds that it’s not just Reform – with their references to “invasions” of migrants during party conference – that are guilty of this.

“We saw it even with Keir Starmer, with his speech on us becoming a nation of strangers not so long ago,” she says. The prime minister may now say he regrets those words, but “we should not forget that he said them,” says Pamela. “The breadth of the problem seems so great, and nobody seems to be hitting the brakes on it,” she continues. “It just seems to be getting worse and worse.”

Document 4 - Inside the far-right social media ecosystem normalising extremist ideas in UK politics

The Conversation October 16 2025

Ed Harrison, PhD Candidate, Institute for Digital Security and Behaviour, University of Bath

Olivia Brown, Associate Professor in Digital Futures, University of Bath

Last September, Reform leader Nigel Farage dismissed a policy of mass deportations as a “political impossibility”. Now, a year on, the party has pledged to deport up to 600,000 illegal migrants and retrospectively strip indefinite leave to remain from people already settled in the UK.

This is a drastic lurch to the right, even for Reform. Only last year the party was saying it seeks to represent the “silent majority” and keep out “extremists”.

In explaining this shift, Reform politicians would probably claim this is what the silent majority wants. They would point to a hardening of public opinion on illegal migration.

They would want to avoid the accusation they have given in to extremists by proposing these policies. Reform has, after all, sought to distance itself from the far-right with every step it takes towards the mainstream.



Tommy Robinson attends the Unite the Kingdom rally in London. Alamy

But an analysis of social media suggests something else. Many people and groups on the radical and far-right are harnessing a process known as audience capture in order to influence political policy.

A group of anonymous X accounts is said to follow a “posting-to-policy” strategy. These accounts – some of which are run by disaffected Westminster professionals – post to inject their grievances into online discourse.

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Their goal is to see their narratives circulate and gain popularity within rightwing networks. Once established, they hope political actors, many of whom follow them, will take up the ideas.

Use and discussion of the “Boriswave” is an example of this. The term, which refers to a rise in non-EU immigration under former prime minister Boris Johnson, originated and proliferated from this network. It is now commonly used in the mainstream and was deployed by Reform to justify its proposal to revoke indefinite leave to remain.

Another example is the motability scheme, a programme that helps eligible disabled individuals lease a car. It was first highlighted and heavily criticised by anonymous accounts on X for being wasteful and subject to fraudulent abuse, and has dominated much of the discussion on welfare reform in 2025. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch recently promised to restrict eligibility to the scheme.

While many of these accounts are anonymous, some are more out in the open. Online conservatives such as Connor Tomlinson and Steven Edington have boasted of how their work has helped move Reform to the right.

Further to the online activities of aggrieved anonymous online users and disaffected conservatives, are the cases of ex-Reform politicians MP Rupert Lowe and Advance UK leader Ben Habib. Both left the party in acrimonious circumstances, both now lead alternative movements, and both are pushing Reform to adopt more radical policies.

Lowe has called Reform’s pledge to deport up to 600,000 illegal migrants “pathetic” and has suggested it be quadrupled. Habib attended the far-right Unite the Kingdom protests in September.



Rupert Lowe is no longer a Reform MP but still influences its policies via online networks. Alamy Add these forces together and you get what amounts to a rightwing arms race – communities of social media users pushing for more radical policies in an attempt to change the norms and policies of Reform and the right.

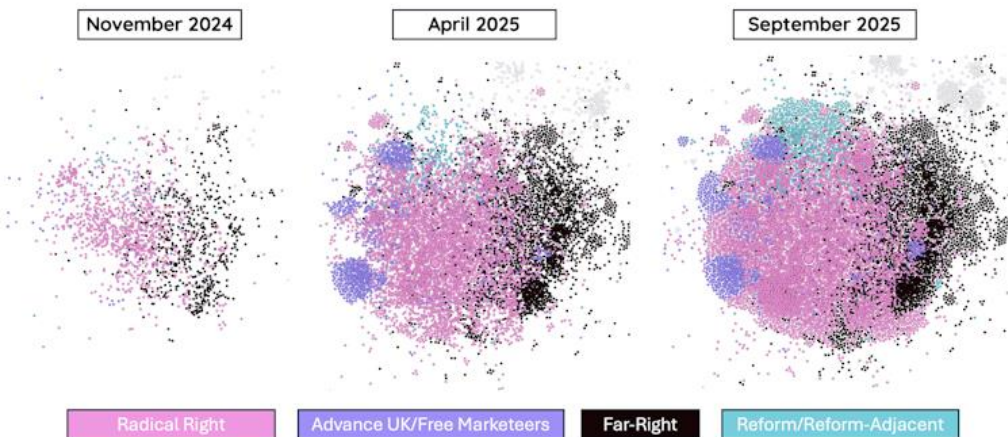
How an idea spreads

To explore this dynamic, and how Reform’s recent u-turn has been shaped by it, we analysed the online networks that drove conversation about “mass deportations” on X over the past year. Using computational methods, we identified four distinct sub-communities defined by their retweet relationships. These sub-communities were formed around far-right influencers, radical right influencers, Advance UK/free-marketeer influencers – and around the Reform party.

Reposting network of discussion of mass deportation on X:

Sub-Communities	Key Influencers
Far-Right	Tommy Robinson & Britain First
Radical Right	Rupert Lowe & Rafe Heydel-Mankoo
Advance UK/Free Marketeers	Ben Habib & Douglas Carswell
Reform/Reform-Adjacent	Zia Yusuf & Matthew Goodwin

The online conservative voices influencing Reform policy. CC BY-ND Discussion of mass deportations in 2024 was almost exclusively dominated by the far-right and the anonymous accounts of the radical right. Fast forward to April 2025 and we find Lowe, Habib and a wider range of rightwing influencers have entered the conversation in support of the policy. Finally, in September, following Reform’s August announcement, you can see Farage and key Reform personnel supplant the influencers as players in a movement they had little role in creating. In doing so, the party has aligned itself with a policy that less than a year ago it vehemently rejected.



How individual users (each represented by a dot) contribute to the mainstreaming of an idea.

This offers only a snapshot of discussions on social media and cannot account for the wider political and socioeconomic factors influencing these shifts. It does, however, demonstrate how narratives in far-right and fringe online ecosystems can migrate into more mainstream discourse over time and help shape the norms and policies of whole political movements. It is difficult to imagine this happening without the new role of X under Elon Musk. With far-right figures now allowed back onto the platform, and the liberalisation of its algorithms to push more extreme content, the result has been the amplification and normalisation of more radical views and rhetoric.



Ben Habib has launched Advance UK with the support of Tommy Robinson and Elon Musk. Alamy

Researchers have highlighted how, as a result of this, social media begins to function like a funhouse mirror, distorting political reality. Because online debate is dominated by a small number of extreme voices (10% of users produce 97% of political content), it projects a skewed and unrepresentative picture of public opinion.

This, in turn, blurs users' sense of which norms and views are mainstream. The fact that offline, the majority is said to oppose the retrospective removal of indefinite leave to remain, only adds weight to the argument that Reform's policy shifts are being driven by a small number of influential online voices rather than the voices of the masses.

Where once social media played a role more akin to that of a town hall, allowing people to express their views and support for political parties, it is now increasingly reflective of the strategic activities of a select influential few.

While the extent of this is unclear, we have to wonder if Reform's perceptions of public opinion are being distorted by the funhouse mirror that X has increasingly become. And while the party is polling ahead of all others, that has implications for the future direction of the UK.

● About Restore Britain

<https://restorebritain.substack.com/p/the-10-principles-of-restore-britain>

Rupert Lowe and the rise of zombie politics

The stable, socially rooted party system of the postwar period is being washed away by a new volatility.

By Joe Slater *The New Statesman*, 3 April 2026



What kind of political party does this man lead? (Photo by Leon Neal/Getty Images)

In February, Rupert Lowe announced that his pressure group Restore Britain would formally become a political party. Within a few weeks it claimed to have over 100,000 registered members. It has one MP, no local associations, and a platform designed to appeal almost exclusively to those who feel Nigel Farage has lost his edge. What it does have is a large and energetic social media following, which in 2026 might be all a political party needs.

Labour spent much of February consumed by a procedural row over whether Andy Burnham could stand in a by-election. The answer depended on the views of the party's National Executive Committee, a body made up of assorted representatives from trade unions, constituency parties and socialist societies. In the end, that machinery ground on, and Burnham was mangled by it.

Both Labour and Restore Britain are, in the language of British democracy, political parties. It's not obvious that they have anything else in common.

Political competition in Britain has always been shaped by the society sitting beneath it. The postwar system that came to define modern British politics reflected this with unusual clarity. Labour was created to represent the industrial working class and the Conservatives came to represent everyone else. That sharp class divide produced a distinctive set of political institutions – mass memberships, local associations, seaside party

conferences, stable electoral coalitions – that came to define what a political party was supposed to look like.

And for decades this form of political competition worked. In the 1950s, the Conservative Party alone had nearly three million members. Constituency associations were serious local institutions, embedded in the social fabric of the communities they represented. To join a political party was not an act of consumer choice but an expression of identity, a statement about who you were, where you came from, and which side of the fundamental dividing line of British life you stood on. The party structure mirrored the class structure. Each reinforced the other.

Over time, these foundations weakened. Britain's postwar industrial economy declined, class identities loosened and new fault lines – immigration, nationalism, education – began to cut across the old dividing lines rather than along them.

At the 2024 election, for the first time in its history, Labour performed better with managers than with manual workers. The class system that underpinned British politics has gone, replaced not by a new alignment but something more like an absence, a fragmented, volatile social order that no longer provides stable foundations for political life. The old parties have failed to respond, weighed down by the very institutions that once made them formidable. This is the “zombie era”: an old political order collapsing, its shell still in place.

Labour is in many ways the most exposed to this new order, an organisation explicitly designed for a world that no longer exists. The trade union block votes, the Constituency Labour Parties, the laborious internal machinery were all built to represent an industrial working class that barely exists and certainly no longer votes Labour. But the Conservatives' supposed flexibility has hardly helped them, as they've lurched between electoral coalitions for more than a decade.

Against these incumbents, a new kind of political organisation has emerged. As with much of 21st century British politics, Nigel Farage is its pioneer. Over the past decade he has moved from one shell of a political party to another, finally perfecting the form with Reform UK: a party initially set up as a literal corporation, run by one man, and built almost entirely around a single issue. Reform's social roots are, at present, limited to a branded pub.

The Greens have arrived at a similar destination by a different route. Zack Polanski has hijacked a legacy

institution and repurposed it, pivoting the Greens away from their foundational environmentalism to fill the gap left by the Corbyn-era Labour Party. Farage and Polanski share a method, not an ideology: both understood how social media had lowered the barriers to political organisation, making it possible to build a mass following without anything in the way of organisational infrastructure.

Both have amassed huge memberships. But what does party membership even mean in 2026? Not much more than paying a few pounds and sharing something on TikTok. British politics has become a landscape of pop-up parties, each representing an ever narrower slice of the electorate.

Social media may have lowered the barriers to political organisation, but AI is removing them entirely. Until recently, even the most stripped-back of political campaigns still needed some human infrastructure – people to draft policy, manage communications, run a campaign. That constraint is disappearing. An AI model can read a government data release, draft a response and circulate a press release before a legacy party has scheduled the meeting to discuss.

Some campaigners are already going further, using AI-generated “synthetic” audiences to test messages and model public opinion. An artificial room full of ‘Stevenage Women’ can be created in seconds. The machinery of a political party is becoming something one person can run from a kitchen table.

This is a description of what's already beginning to happen, not some sort of wild futurism. The barriers that once made building a political party so difficult – money, expertise, sheer human bodies – are falling away. Very soon we will live in a world where a single person can stand up a political campaign with nothing more than a social media account and an AI subscription.

The zombie era of British politics will not last forever. But what comes next is not a return to the stable, socially rooted party system of the postwar period. The same technology that allowed Farage to build a mass party from almost nothing continues to accelerate. The barriers to political organisation are still falling.

The result is a politics of permanent fragmentation, where parties form and dissolve around issues, personalities and viral moments, is not a passing phase. It is the direction of travel, and there is no obvious force that might reverse it.

blogs.lse.ac.uk March 30th 2023

(LSE = London School of Economics)

The last 15 years have seen the Republican Party move farther to the right than its Democratic counterpart has moved to the left. Could the GOP's embrace of more radical policy preferences and a more combative communication style be linked to the rise of far-right media websites? In new research, [Mike Cowburn](#) and [Curd B. Knüpfer](#) track the influence of far-right news websites on Republican members of Congress. They find that the more a Republican House representative engaged with these sites, the more their communication was radicalized during the Trump presidency.

Republican intra-party conflict was again in the news at the start of this year, with an important minority of US House representatives refusing to support the election of Speaker Kevin McCarthy across fifteen rounds of voting. Recognition of the party's internal conflicts has been growing among media commentators and academics since the emergence of Tea Party in 2009. The past decade has also been marked by a broad acknowledgement that the Republican Party has become increasingly radical in policy preferences, communication style, and (non-)adherence to democratic norms. This period has also witnessed a rise in far-right alternative news sources, which promote conspiratorial beliefs.

Our research shows that Republican members of Congress frequently refer to these far-right news sources. Representatives who are identifiably on the right of the party share more content from "alternative media" sources online. We argue that this marks an emerging fault line within the GOP. Not all Republican politicians are willing to engage with this far-right content. And those that do are noticeably further to the right on other measures, such as voting behavior and membership of ideological groups like the House Freedom Caucus.

Importantly, we show that the more a Republican representative engaged with these sites, the more their communication was radicalized during the Trump presidency. This trend has important implications for both asymmetric polarization and Republican intra-party division. Many Republican politicians are increasingly catering to niche and hyperpartisan news environments which incentivize them to adopt more radical positions.

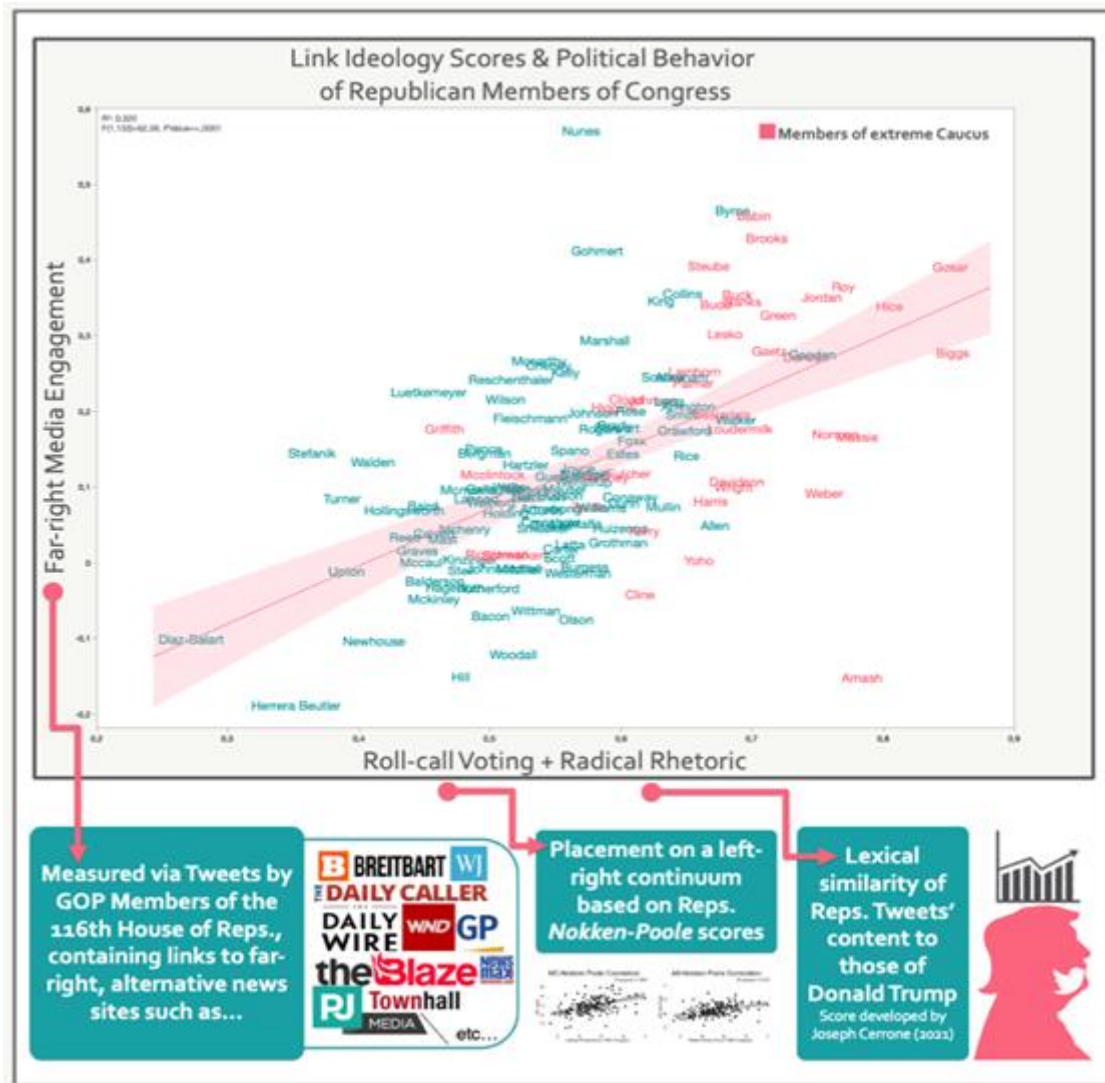
In our research, we analyze hyperlinks to news sources found on the Twitter feeds of Republican House Members in the 116th Congress. Because ideological positions are contestable, we use three independent approaches to classify the links we find. Our first metric gauges the partisanship of websites by identifying whether audiences that link to them tilt liberal or conservative. The second metric classifies sites according to crowdsourced and expert-based evaluations of partisan bias. The third metric is a smaller sample of qualitatively assessed collection of websites deliberately presenting themselves as a right-wing "alternative" to more established media sources. Sites such as *Breitbart*, *The Daily Caller* and *The Federalist* were identified as right-wing under all three metrics. These sites have been shown to have influenced the wider media ecosystem and agenda since 2016.

Having identified representatives' online media patterns, we are able to position Republican politicians based on their media diet. The positions on scales are closely linked to representatives' behavior in Congress and align with other measures of online communication.

Media Consumption Aligns with Radicalization

Our scales are very good at predicting the increasing radicalization of how individual members of Congress communicate. Given Trump's dominance over the GOP since taking office and his unusual, if not unique, rhetorical approach, we consider similarity with his language as evidence of rhetorical radicalization. Using an approach developed by George Washington PhD student [Joseph Cerrone](#), we compare representatives' language to that of Donald Trump. Even controlling for factors such as voting record, caucus membership, district partisanship, racial and economic factors, our media scales were the strongest predictor of an increasingly Trumpian communicative style. Put simply, engaging with far-right alternative news was closely associated with radicalization.

Figure 1 – Link ideology scores and political behavior of Republican members of Congress



An Asymmetric Media Environment

Contemporary US politics is increasingly marked by forms of asymmetric polarization. This means that one party—the GOP—is shifting rightward far more quickly than its Democratic counterpart is moving to the left. In recent years, similar trends have been emerging in other democratic countries.

How can this radicalization be explained? Though there are doubtless multiple causes at work here, our research demonstrates that the shifting information environment, which (some) elites cater to for attention, is supplying them with agenda items and talking points shared by their potential constituents. As data on shifting news consumption dynamics indicate, many Republican voters are also increasingly tapping into an alternative sphere of information production. Here too, a vast alternative informational ecosystem has emerged on the right, with no equivalent counterpart on the American left, either in size or connection to the formal apparatus of the Democratic Party. The effects of these novel forms of connectivity between emerging ideological, highly partisan actor types and political parties is still understudied. More work needs to be done to explain the mechanisms by which a changing information environment might foster or incentivize forms of political posturing and pull politicians to embrace more extreme positions.

- *This article is based on the paper ‘The Emerging Fault Line of Alternative News: Intra-Party Division in Republican Representatives’ Media Engagement’ in Party Politics.*

About the authors

Mike Cowburn is a postdoctoral researcher of digital democracy at the European University Viadrina. His research interests include intra-party factions, candidate selection, and political communication.

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Document 6 - Influenceurs d'extrême droite | Reportage | ARTE Regards

À l'ère des réseaux sociaux, les influenceurs d'extrême droite sont des acteurs incontournables du marché de l'information. Ils jouent désormais un rôle clé dans la montée du nationalisme autoritaire en Europe. Caisse de résonance des désirs et des peurs de leur communauté, ils font mouche, particulièrement auprès des jeunes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4e0dJ3rGZQ>

Document 7 – PODCAST - The Power of right-wing influencers – WIRED, October 20, 2025

<https://www.wired.com/story/uncanny-valley-podcast-the-new-power-of-far-right-influencers/>

In this episode of *Uncanny Valley*, we discuss the impacts of antifa's designation as a domestic terrorist group as author Mark Bray faces new harassment from the far-right.

History professor Mark Bray is no stranger to death threats. As the author of the book *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*, published in 2017, he has received backlash and harassment from far-right circles for almost a decade. But things recently escalated after the Trump administration designated antifa as a “domestic terrorist organization,” and far-right influencers with a newfound power targeted Bray.

Document 8 - 'It's frightening': How far right is infiltrating everyday culture

Extremist messaging now woven into music and YouTube videos, with one expert saying: 'You can be radicalised sitting on your couch'

Ashifa Kassam *European community affairs correspondent*
The Guardian, Sat 27 Dec 2025

The two men chop peppers, slice aubergines and giggle into the camera as they delve into the art of vegan cooking. Both are wearing ski masks and T-shirts bearing Nazi symbols.

The German videos – titled Balaclava Kitchen – started in 2014 and ran for months before YouTube took down the channel for violating its guidelines.

But it offered a glimpse of how far-right groups have seized on cultural production – from clothing brands to top 40 music – to normalise their ideas, in a process that researchers say has hit new heights in the age of social media.

“It’s frightening, honestly,” said Katherine Kondor, a researcher with the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies. “You can be radicalised sitting on your couch.”

In affiliation with the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Kondor is leading a six-country project looking at how the extreme right uses aesthetics, from fitness influencers to memes and stickers, to spread their views across Europe.

From Sweden to Spain, researchers found that extremist messaging was woven through cultural aspects of everyday life, both online and offline.

“In Hungary we have some examples of extreme right bands becoming mainstream because they’re on the top 40 chart. I mean, what’s more normal than being on the top 40?” Kondor said.

“I have a stepson who sometimes sends videos and then I go down the rabbit hole to see who created them and it turns out it’s a far-right influencer.”

So-called “tradwives”, referring to female content creators who promote traditional gender roles on social media, are another example.

As the numbers of women embracing the concept online surges, the content’s far-right roots have been increasingly obscured. Even so, the views they often promote – from anti-feminism to a nostalgia for an imagined past – continue to boost far-right aims.

These cultural elements serve as gateways, at times helping to reel people into extremism, Kondor said. “I think there’s a mistaken idea that people join the far right because they believe in that ideology and want to meet like-minded people,” she said. “But that’s not how it works.”

While there are some who are driven by prejudices against certain groups or specific beliefs, or others who tag along with friends who are already involved, many are lured by the subcultures that encase these movements, she said.

“They start listening to a band that they really like and start going to concerts of that band. Then they start meeting people there and it can escalate in that way,” Kondor explained.

“When people find things that work for their aesthetic or their vibe, or they find music that they really like, that can really influence a person.”

The link between extreme ideas and the cultural tools they opt to use is not always straightforward, she added, citing the example of a group of far-right extremists in the Netherlands with a penchant for hosting wine-tasting events.

“They’ve also started their own food delivery,” she said. “It’s just wild that you can be ordering food from the far right and not know.”

Extremists have long used culture to foster a sense of belonging among its members and gain attention among the wider public, said Greta Jasser, a research associate at Germany's Institute for Democracy and Civil Society, which is also part of the six-country project.

Previously, however, their strength in doing so relied on the talent pool of their members, as musicians, artists and camera operators were needed to create content. With the advent of generative AI, this is no longer the case.

"Now there's technology that we can use to generate an image or video in an instant or music within just a couple of minutes," said Jasser. "So the playbook is old, but the speed is much faster."

The economics of social media have also transformed the process, leading to questions regarding who is creating far-right content and their motivations.

"It could be posted by a bot. It could be anyone and anything wanting to generate income from producing as many AI videos and images as possible," said Jasser.

"Which then interestingly calls into question how ideologically driven many of these accounts are, or if it's a way to generate revenue."

As the research continues, Kondor and her team have been weighing how best to educate the public about their findings, mulling strategies such as online content or tools that could help people better recognise the far right and the myriad of cultural elements they're producing.

"I think it's often shocking to people," said Kondor. "Right now it's dangerous because we're seeing a steady rise of the far right in every aspect of society. It's more important than ever to figure out how to mitigate this."

Document 9 - 'Fighting age males' and coded swastikas: How the far-right is using gaming to recruit the next generation of Nazis

Far right actors have used gaming to recruit youngsters for some time but experts say they are increasingly using codes and imagery to avoid moderation.

[Billy Briggs](#), *The Ferret*, March 01 2026

<https://www.theferret.scot/about/>

Far-right groups are increasingly using coded language and imagery on gaming platforms to bypass content moderators and radicalise young people, experts have warned.

Extremists use gaming as an initial place of a bonding before directing young people to platforms like [Telegram](#) and [Discord](#) where the content becomes more overtly ideological and racist.

The phrase "fighting age males" and words like "invaders" are often used by far-right groups like Britain First and Patriotic Alternative to depict asylum seekers and refugees as security threats. Experts say both groups are active in online gaming and streaming.

Academics spoke to The Ferret following revelations that Scotland's terrorism prevention programme witnessed a [record number](#) of referrals last year – with the highest proportion made over far right concerns. There were 162 referrals in 2024/25, an increase of 42 per cent compared to the previous year – and 38 per cent related to extreme right wing concerns.

There are also fears that more teenagers could be groomed online due to rising youth unemployment in the UK.

Far right groups recruit online and [British](#) and [US intelligence](#) agencies have previously warned that extremists exploit the gaming environment to target young people.

Call of Duty, a first-person military shooter game, has been used by far-right groups as a recruiting tool for teenage gamers, as has Minecraft, an "open world" creative building game often played by younger children. Both games have millions of online players.

Online gaming involves interactive gameplay with real-time conversations, often anonymously, creating relationships among users that might not exist in the real world and experts warn this environment provides opportunities for groups to target young people who may be susceptible to [extremist messaging](#).

Dr William Allchorn, a senior research fellow at Anglia Ruskin University's international policing and public protection research institute, told The Ferret there's been a "notable shift" recently toward less "overt branding" inside gaming by far right actors.

He argued there is an urgent need for digital literacy for parents and police so they better understand how these platforms and subcultures operate.

Gaming companies said they are fully committed to child online safety and that "violent extremist content" is prohibited.

Gaming and terrorism

Far right actors trying to recruit young people through gaming include the white-nationalist group Patriotic Alternative, which is currently active at anti-asylum protests in Scotland. During lockdown, Patriotic Alternative targeted youngsters and with [Call of Duty](#) gaming tournaments and – according to researchers at Anglia Ruskin University – it live-streamed events on YouTube to children as [young as 12](#) years old.

The white nationalist group remains "considerably active in gaming spaces", according to Dr Allchorn, who [published research](#) after interviewing platform moderators who said there was inconsistent enforcement due to the complexity of harmful content.

Patriotic Alternative did not reply to a request for comment. Its leader Mark Collett has reportedly said they are not extremist, do not promote violence and peacefully campaign for the rights of what he calls indigenous British people.

The proscribed neo-Nazi terror group Atomwaffen Division is also believed to target gamers. In 2018, the BBC revealed it had found several individuals in the UK corresponding with its members over Discord, an online gaming chat platform. They launched their own group known as Sonnenkrieg Division, which was later proscribed. It was linked to the now banned System Resistance Network, which was active in Dundee, as reported by The Ferret.

“They're looking out for individuals that might be expressing grievances, young people that might align with their ideology,” Allchorn said. “They're inhabiting spaces, usually with an anonymised profile, using language that they know won't trigger automated moderation.”

Code words used include “great replacement” which alludes to a conspiracy theory and “14” or “14 words” which is numeric shorthand tied to a white supremacist slogan.

Hidden symbols to circumvent banned words that would be picked up by automated moderation tools, Allchorn added, including symbols stitched together to represent a swastika.

They're looking out for individuals that might be expressing grievances, young people that might align with their ideology. They're inhabiting spaces, usually with an anonymised profile, using language that they know won't trigger automated moderation. — Dr William Allchorn, Anglia Ruskin University

After initial contact in gaming spaces, conversations frequently move to encrypted apps, where explicit white supremacist propaganda appears. “The gaming space functions as the discovery layer,” Allchorn said, adding that the “ideological consolidation” occurs in private channels on platforms like Discord where conversations shift toward grievance narratives including migration, cultural replacement, masculinity, and anti-LGBT rhetoric.

“In our study, we've seen cases where younger users were gradually invited into invite-only servers where more explicit white nationalist material was shared,” he added.

On platforms such as Twitch – an interactive livestreaming service for gaming – some streamers “cultivate apolitical gaming personas” but introduce political commentary incrementally, Allchorn said, adding that younger viewers who spend hours in livestream chats can “develop loyalty that makes ideological messaging feel personal rather than propagandistic”.

Ben Rich, a senior lecturer at Curtin University, Australia, who researches extremism and disinformation, said extremists have been using digital platforms to spread their ideas for “quite some time”. He said they include more traditional spaces like Facebook and Twitter/X but also more “novel ones” like Discord, and video games -

especially ones with “large audience bases” like Roblox, an online game platform and game creation system used by primary school aged children.

“This can greatly empower the ability to isolate, groom and recruit without the same kind of constraints that would be more likely to be present in the real world,” he argued. According to The Global Network on Extremism and Technology, Minecraft, one of the world's most popular online games, has been turned into a “tool for ideological grooming and radicalisation” by far-right extremists.

Minecraft has 200 million players a month and it allows user-generated content “creating vulnerabilities” that extremists can exploit, the report said. It added that far-right groups have “learned to speak the cultural language” of gaming communities and the use of Minecraft is part of a larger trend which it calls the “gamification of hate”.

This can greatly empower the ability to isolate, groom and recruit without the same kind of constraints that would be more likely to be present in the real world. — Ben Rich, Curtin University, Australia

Minecraft's popularity with younger users make it an especially risky case, the report said, adding that by 2024, 43 per cent of Minecraft's player base are aged 15 to 21. “While most players use these features harmlessly, far-right actors have exploited this freedom to build propaganda-filled environments, memorialise violent events, and embed hate speech into virtual architecture,” the report continued.

US intelligence agencies said users have replicated and role played prominent attacks in online games, including an attack in 2019 when a violent white supremacist targeted two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Islamic State, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq, has used gaming in recruitment videos.

The Counter Extremist project said last week that far-right groups are active on the gaming platform Roblox where they post white supremacist messages.

In November, the UK's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation issued a warning after ITV News found examples of extremist content available on Roblox.

Young people radicalised online

A young Scot called Felix Winter was jailed for six years last year after threatening to carry out a mass shooting at his Edinburgh school. The court heard the 18-year-old had been “radicalised” online, spending more than 1,000 hours in contact with a pro-Nazi Discord group.

Winter held racist and pro-Nazi views and “idolised” the killers behind the 1999 Columbine High School massacre in the US, the court heard. He had been referred to the UK-wide Prevent counter terrorism programme four times.

Under the Prevent scheme schools and other public bodies are required to report people who show signs of being drawn into violent extremism.

The latest figures on referrals to Prevent, the anti-terror scheme, show that children aged under 15 accounted for 37 per cent of referrals in Scotland. About 27 per cent came

from the north of Scotland and the most common reason was Islamist extremism.

Youth unemployment

Experts also said the rising number of jobless youngsters in the UK was a cause for concern. Latest figures show unemployment for those aged between 16 and 24 has risen to 16.1 per cent, its highest in more than 10 years.

Allchorn said that while there is not a “linear relationship” between unemployment and radicalisation, rising youth unemployment means more “discretionary time online”.

“Gaming becomes a primary social arena,” he said. “For a small subset of already alienated young people, that combination — isolation, time, grievance, and exposure to recruiters embedded in gaming culture — can create a vulnerability window,” he said.

“It’s important to stress that the overwhelming majority of young gamers are not at risk. The issue is not gaming per se, but the permeability of large, youth-dense digital spaces where moderation is inconsistent, lone use is pervasive and grievance narratives are actively seeded.”

Joshua Thorburn, an academic at Monash University, Australia, researching misogyny, said it is difficult to determine the relationship between time spent online and radicalisation but he added that high youth unemployment is concerning. “Young people who find themselves in a precarious economic situation have valid grievances,” he said.

“However, such grievances can be easily misdirected towards out-groups far-right extremists have long villainised. Most typically, immigrants and ethnic minorities. However, for many in far-right/manosphere spaces, the increased participation of women in the workforce is argued to have come at the expense of men.”

What the platforms say

A spokesperson for Microsoft, which owns Minecraft, said it has a “longstanding commitment” to child online safety and prohibits violent extremist content. “We leverage a variety of systems that empower players to enjoy a safe experience, including chat filtering, in-game reporting, parental controls, and more,” they added.

“If content violates our community standards, we have dedicated teams for review and moderation, who also work in coordination with Microsoft’s extensive security and threat analysis teams. On private servers that are set up independently by users outside of Minecraft’s systems, we investigate reported violations and apply enforcement mechanisms as needed.”

A Roblox spokesperson said it enforces a “strict policy” prohibiting content or behaviour that “incites, condones, supports, glorifies, or promotes any extremist organisation or individual”, adding that “swift action” is taken against content or accounts found to have broken its rules.

They added: “We use advanced AI technology to review all images, text, and avatar items prior to publishing, in order to prevent known extremist iconography from being posted while our default chat filters are designed to block the sharing of personal information and stop attempts to direct younger users to other platforms where moderation standards may be less stringent.”

Roblox works with law enforcement, civil society groups, and other organisations with specific subject matter expertise in countering those who would seek to promote violent extremism, the spokesperson continued. “While no system is perfect, our commitment to safety never ends. We continue to strengthen protections to help keep our users safe and encourage anyone who sees anything concerning on Roblox to report it to us.”

Telegram said it “blocks tens of thousands of groups and channels daily and removes millions of pieces of content” that violate its terms of service, including incitement to violence, sharing child abuse materials, and trading illegal goods.

Discord, Twitch, Call of Duty and Britain First were asked to comment.

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Document 10 - How Hate Groups and Terrorists Use Gaming Platforms to Recruit Young Children

Fringe movements are using games and other online platforms to draw growing numbers of children to their causes, new data and dozens of interviews show

By Pranav Baskar, *The New York Times*, Feb. 11, 2026

Taking a page from the child molesters’ playbook, hate groups and terrorist organizations are exploiting games like Minecraft and Roblox and other popular online platforms to recruit a new generation of extremists, researchers say.

Across Europe and North America, children now account for 42 percent of terrorism-related investigations — a threefold rise since 2021, according to the United Nations’ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, an agency that identifies emerging terrorism

trends. In Europe, from 20 to 30 percent of the counterterrorism workload now involves minors as young as 12 and 13, according to unpublished data compiled by the International Center for Counter-Terrorism, a research group in The Hague.

“It’s a trend that has been taken to the extreme,” said the organization’s director, Thomas Renard. He called the numbers “shocking” and like “nothing we have ever seen before.”

Violent ideological groups from across the political spectrum, attuned to the online era, are finding new

members faster than governments are devising strategies to respond, U.N. investigators say.

As extremist recruitment evolves, the age of people entering their fold has been rapidly lowering in the West, according to more than two dozen radicalization experts, youth counselors and people affected by extremism interviewed by The New York Times.

Intelligence agencies in the United States and Australia, for example, have warned of extremists using video games like Roblox and social networking communities like Discord to recruit and train new conscripts. Researchers have documented digital worlds in games on Minecraft and Roblox where players can simulate terrorist violence and mass shootings, like the 2019 attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in which 51 people were killed.

“Extremists are able to create these games themselves, and if they make it something children are interested in, they can get a certain profile of child to join,” said Jean Slater, who researches violent extremist movements, with a focus on Roblox. “People just assume regulators have taken care of this, because there’s no way a platform would allow an adult to talk to a 9-year-old.”

Roblox, in a statement to The Times, said content that glorifies hate “has no place” on the platform, and said it used a variety of measures such as A.I. detection and monitoring teams to identify users promoting extremism. “No system is perfect, so we work every day to improve our systems, and we encourage parents to talk to their children about online risks,” it said.

Minecraft, which offers similar creative freedom to host private servers and design maps, has been used to build “propoganda-filled environments, memorialize violent events, and embed hate speech,” according to a report by the Global Network on Extremism and Technology, a research group affiliated with King’s College London.

In a statement, Microsoft, which owns Minecraft, wrote that it “prohibits extremist content” and uses “proactive detection technologies” to ensure safety. The company said it uses chat filtering, in-game reporting and parental controls on official servers, and applies “enforcement mechanisms as needed” on private servers.

Terrorism proceedings involving minors are often shrouded from the public because of the defendants’ ages, making it more difficult to understand how they became radicalized. But in recent years, some high-profile cases have led experts to point to online platforms.

In Britain, in 2022, a 15-year-old girl groomed by a neo-Nazi in Texas became one of the youngest people arrested on terrorism charges after she downloaded bomb-making guides and posted about blowing up a synagogue. She later died by suicide.

In Estonia, a 13-year-old-boy was found in 2020 to be the commander of a self-styled global neo-Nazi group plotting attacks in Western cities through a Telegram channel.

Whether the ideas being instilled in young people now will one day result in acts of violence is impossible to predict, but the authorities say they are puzzled by the sudden spike

in recruitment. Much of the increase has come in the last year and a half, according to the International Center for Counter-Terrorism, though the rise of extreme content online long precedes that.

In many cases, minors swing between competing belief systems — from white power to jihadism — which some argue suggests the problem stems more from loneliness than ideology.

“We can’t always put our finger on why there seems to be a turning point,” Mr. Renard said. “Part of it is a bit of a snowball effect. Perhaps what is happening is we are now confronted with several things that come together quite nicely: the first digital generation, young people who grew up with smartphones in their hands and parents who were quite permissive.”

Radical groups across the ideological spectrum have adapted to those generational changes.

Video games are not their only tool. Children are also being radicalized through what U.N. investigators call “sophisticated funnel strategies.” These guide young people from mainstream platforms like TikTok and X to more extremist communities on channels like Discord or Telegram that are less moderated.

Both the F.B.I. and the authorities in Canada have also raised alarm recently over so-called com networks, transnational groups of loosely organized nihilist extremists who target children online. Sometimes, they pressure children to film themselves engaging in self-harm or sexually explicit or violent acts, and then use the video as blackmail, according to the F.B.I.

“For a long time, your typical contact point would be social media,” said Arno Michaelis, a onetime neo-Nazi who now works with Parents for Peace, a U.S.-based group that helps families affected by extremism across North America. “But it’s a big concern to me that the recruitment has moved outside of social media through platforms that parents would think are more innocuous.”

Image

The far right in particular has made efforts to become more appealing to boys and young men, and less visible to the authorities.

One way is through so-called active clubs, all-white combat groups that train young men for the race war they believe is coming. The model has spread across 27 countries, and a quarter of the newly founded groups are “youth clubs” aimed at boys age 15 to 17, according to the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism.

“It took me a few months to realize I was in it,” said one young Swede who ultimately left the club. “You first believe that people from the Third World don’t belong here. Then you start to believe racial theory.” He spoke on the condition of anonymity because he fears reprisals by members of the club. His account was verified by his counselor.

“At rock bottom,” he said, “I would say if you would ask me then if Hitler did anything wrong, I would have said ‘no.’”

Potential recruits often demonstrate traits that make them seem more vulnerable than other people or socially lost, said Allizandra Herberhold, who works with families and individuals, particularly young women, at Parents for Peace.

“If the fact that you’re white trumps any other achievement, you’re going to cling onto that,” Ms. Herberhold said. “It’s the one thing that gives you a sense of purpose, and not feel like a total failure.”

Child radicalization has torn some families apart, and there is little escaping it.

In a small coastal town in British Columbia, a 15-year-girl began chatting online with a man who tagged himself on Discord as a “national socialist groomer,” according to her parents, Ann and Shawn, who asked to be identified only by their middle names to protect their daughter’s privacy.

[Explainer](#)

Document 11 - What are the new UK online safety rules and how will age checks on adult content be enforced?

From 25 July websites and apps will be required to protect children by filtering out harmful content and verifying ages

Dan Milmo *and* Robert Booth, *The Guardian*, Thu 24 Jul 2025 14.53 CEST

Children’s online safety in the UK is having its seatbelt moment. On Friday social media and other internet platforms will be required to implement safety measures protecting children or face large fines.

It is a significant test for the Online Safety Act, a landmark piece of legislation that covers the likes of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Google. Here is a guide to the [new rules](#).

What is happening on 25 July?

Companies within the scope of the act must introduce safety measures to protect children from harmful content. This means all pornography sites must have in place rigorous age-checking procedures. Ofcom, the UK communications regulator and the act’s enforcer, [found that](#) 8% of children aged eight to 14 had visited an online pornography site or app over a month-long period.

Social media platforms and large search engines must also prevent children from accessing pornography and material that promotes or encourages suicide, self-harm and eating disorders. This has to be kept off children’s feeds entirely. Hundreds of companies are affected by the rules.

Platforms will also have to suppress the spread of other forms of material potentially harmful to children including the promotion of dangerous stunts, encouraging the use of harmful substances and enabling bullying.

What are the recommended safety measures?

Measures under the codes include: algorithms that recommend content to users must filter out harmful material; all sites and apps must have procedures for taking down dangerous content quickly; and children must have a “straightforward” way to report concerns. Adherence is

Over the next two years, they said, she became obsessed with Nazism and began cutting herself more intensely, encouraged by an online community of extremists who advised her to resist her family’s help.

“They’re telling her: Don’t take the medication or listen to your parents. Get out of there,” said Shawn. “Those guys were able to emotionally bond her to an ideology — to this day, she feels like it saved her.”

Now, their daughter lives in a group home and refuses to come home. Her parents, who describe themselves as on the political left, are shocked.

“It’s just completely shattered our world. It’s heartbreaking,” Ann said. “If it can happen in our household, it can happen anywhere.”

not mandatory if companies believe they have valid alternative measures to meet their child safety obligations. The “riskiest” services, which include big social media platforms, could be required to use “highly effective” age checks to identify under-18 users. If social media platforms that contain harmful content do not introduce age checks, they will need to ensure there is a “child appropriate” experience on the site.

X has said if it is unable to determine whether a user is 18 or over, they will be defaulted into sensitive content settings and will not be able to view adult material. It is also introducing age estimation technology and ID checks to verify if users are under 18. Meta, the owner of Instagram and Facebook, says it already has a multilayered approach to age checking. This includes its teen account feature – a default setting for anyone under 18 – that it says already provides an “age appropriate” experience for young users.

Mark Jones, a partner at the law firm Payne Hicks Beach, said: “Ultimately it is going to be for Ofcom to decide whether these measures meet the requirements under the OSA [Online Safety Act] and, if not, to hold the companies to account.”

The Molly Rose Foundation, a charity established by the family of the British teenager Molly Russell, who took her own life in 2017 after viewing harmful content online, said the measures did not go far enough. It has called for additional changes such as blocking dangerous online challenges and requiring platforms to proactively search for, and take down, depressive and body image-related content.

How would age verification work?

Age assurance measures for pornography providers supported by Ofcom include: facial age estimation, which assesses a person's likely age through a live photo or video; checking a person's age via their credit card provider, bank or mobile phone network operator; photo ID matching, where a passport or similar ID is checked against a selfie; or a "digital identity wallet" that contains proof of age.

Ria Moody, a lawyer at the law firm Linklaters, said: "Age assurance measures must be very accurate. Ofcom has said that self-declaration of age, or terms of service saying users must be over 18, are not highly effective measures and so platforms should not rely on these alone."

What does that mean in practice?

Pornhub, the most-visited provider of online pornography to the UK, has said it will introduce "regulator approved age assurance methods" by Friday. It has yet to say what these methods will be. OnlyFans, another site which carries pornography, already uses facial age verification software. It does not store an image of the user's face but estimates age using data taken from millions of other images. A company called Yoti provides that software and also does so for Instagram.

Reddit started checking ages last week for its forums and threads which include mature content. It is using technology made by a company called Persona, which verifies age through an uploaded selfie or a photo of government ID. Reddit does not have access to the photos but stores the verification status to avoid users having to repeat the process too often.

How accurate is facial age verification?

See also

- **Beyond Andrew Tate: the imitators who help promote misogyny online**

'Manosphere' influencers profit from pushing sexist ideas alongside more innocuous lifestyle advice

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2025/mar/19/beyond-andrew-tate-the-imitators-who-help-promote-misogyny-online>

- **Captain. Leader. Far-right sympathiser. Terry joins ranks of football's radicalised**

[Jonathan Liew](#), *The Guardian*, Thu April 30 2026

John Terry's journey into the internet pipeline is by no means an isolated case – what makes footballers so susceptible?

<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2026/apr/30/john-terry-joins-ranks-of-footballs-radicalised>

Software allows a website or app to set a "challenge" age – such as 20 or 25 – to limit the number of underage people who slip through the net. When Yoti set a challenge age of 20, fewer than 1% of 13- to 17-year-olds were incorrectly let through.

What other methods are there?

An equally direct method is to require users to show a piece of formal identification such as a passport or a driving licence. Again, the ID details do not need to be stored and can be used solely to verify access.

Will every site carrying pornography carry out the age checks?

They should, but many smaller sites are expected to try ignoring the rule, fearing it will damage demand for their services. Industry insiders say that those ignoring the rules may wait to see how Ofcom responds to breaches before deciding how to act.

How will the child protection measures be enforced?

Ofcom can deploy a range of punishments under the act. Companies can be fined up to £18m or 10% of global turnover for breaches, or whichever is greater. In the case of Meta, such a fine would equate to \$16bn. Sites or apps can also receive formal warnings. For extreme breaches, Ofcom can ask a court to prevent the site or app from being available in the UK.

Senior managers at tech companies will also be criminally liable for repeated breaches of their duty of care to children and could face up to two years in jail if they ignore enforcement notices from Ofcom.

Document 12 - The Who's Who of MAGA Influencers You Should Know About by Now

Welcome to Trump 2.0, where these creators have the ears not only of their audiences but of the president as well.



Photo-illustration: WIRED Staff; Getty Images

Over the weekend, I went to DC to meet with all of the right-wing influencers and content creators who made President Donald Trump’s 2024 win possible. They were *everywhere*.

The 2024 election was the influencer election and inauguration was no different: There were dozens of pre- and post-inaugural parties and balls this weekend, as well as the big event itself. Theo Von sat in front of Jake and Logan Paul under the Capitol rotunda (well, until the podcaster’s chair collapsed). Ben Shapiro, Matt Walsh, and Brett Cooper walked the Turning Point USA red carpet and posed for selfies with fans. Jessie Reed Kraus, writer of the HouseInhabit newsletter, hung out with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. at the Make America Healthy Again ball Monday night.

In August, I published a guide on the Republican and Democratic influencers shaping the 2024 election. The influencers and content creators still matter, and they will be communicating and guiding policy decisions for years to come.

Welcome to Trump 2.0, where these creators have the ears not only of their audiences but of the president as well. Here are some of the ones to keep an eye on over the next four years.

The Podcasters and Streamers

The 2024 election was the breakout cycle for podcasters in politics. Most of the shows Trump went on catered to the manosphere, a loose network of creators who push misogynistic, racist, and pro-male ideology online. This includes people like **Joe Rogan, Andrew Schulz, the Paul brothers, and Adin Ross**, who shared their Trump interviews with millions and millions of their fans. There’s a second branch too, made up of creators who have branded themselves as the intellectual wing of the modern Republican party, like **Ben Shapiro, Dave Rubin, and Lex Fridman**. Fridman’s YouTube podcast reaches millions of viewers every week. Shapiro’s show is one of the most popular ones on Spotify.

These podcasters have amplified Trump and his agenda with very little, if any, pushback. They will likely be key in rallying support for Trump administration decisions.

I spoke briefly with Shapiro on Sunday night, asking what comes next for the GOP and podcasting. “The power continues to grow,” he said. “Legacy media’s completely blown itself out. We’re focused on expanding, not only our brand, but there’s so many other brands that need expansion, I think that it’s gonna be a very rich time for the podcast industry.”

The Meme Pages

DC Draino, the Typical Liberal, RagingAmericans, and Snowflaketears are some of the largest pro-MAGA meme pages on Instagram. Combined, these accounts have over 6 million followers. They act as conduit between GOP leadership priorities and platforms like X and Instagram.

Think of their accounts as news aggregators for people who otherwise may not be consuming it.

The Organizers

While the Democrats worked with influencers over the last election cycle too, no PAC or campaign organized them as effectively and efficiently as the right. Because of Turning Point USA and its leader, **Charlie Kirk**, many of the GOP's most popular creators see each other at least a few times a year at the organization's summits and trainings. According to interviews with some of the right's top organizers, that infrastructure is only going to grow over the next four years. The organizers themselves have also become influencers to watch.

I wrote about an influencer party (and victory lap) hosted over Inauguration weekend that was put on by **CJ Pearson** and **Raquel Debono**. Pearson, a conservative creator with more than 500,000 X followers, cochairs the Republican National Committee's youth advisory council. He's played a key role in the party's adoption of influencers and is planning additional trainings with organizations like the Heritage Foundation.

Debono, the chief marketing officer at Date Right, the conservative dating platform, boasts tens of thousands of followers of her own. More importantly, however, she's become the premiere party host for young people on the right, engineering a fratty, downtown club scene for young Republicans. Trump campaign adviser **Alex Bruesewitz** was key in striking many of the creator partnerships that won Trump millions of views.

These events and collabs not only teach creators how to better communicate their values, but define the cultural vibe and set the tone for right-wing content.

The Substackers

Memes and three-hour podcast interviews are powerful tools, but they're not for everyone. For some audiences, including older ones, reading is their favorite means of consuming information. Substack has found a home with these users, replacing the 2000s political blogosphere.

Jessica Reed Kraus runs the HouseInhabit Substack, which touts nearly 500,000 subscribers. Throughout the 2024 election cycle, she aligned herself closely with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and the Make America Healthy Again movement. She's become one of the most influential right-leaning writers who primarily caters to women.

And there's **Curtis Yarvin**, the techno monarchist philosopher king of Substack. Yarvin threw his own inauguration weekend party that drew "2016-era MAGA figures" like Jack Posobiec and Red Scare podcasters Anna Khachiyan and Dasha Nekrasova. Yarvin's influence among the powerful Silicon Valley oligarchs and the irony-poisoned former leftists like Nekrasova positions him as a powerful intellectual and cultural force under the new administration—especially since Vice President JD Vance is a fan of his work.

All of these creators and influencers, regardless of their platform, will be an instrumental part of the Trump White House's media apparatus. Trump's press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, has even suggested that they may be invited to join the legacy media for daily press briefings. Unlike traditional journalists, though, they are not bound to any ethical guidelines. We've already seen the lengths to which many of these people will go for views. How far will they go for Trump?

Document 13 - Tommy Robinson: the voice of Britain's far-right

The best-known figure on the UK's extreme-right has been accused of playing a part in inciting the recent riots



Tommy Robinson outside Westminster Magistrates court in London (Image credit: Getty Images_Mark Kerrison)

The Week UK, August 24, 2024

On 29 July, the day of the attack on a group of young girls in Southport, far-right influencer Tommy Robinson repeated on X the false rumour that a Muslim asylum seeker who'd arrived on a Channel boat was the culprit. On the site, where he has nearly one million followers, he repeatedly linked the stabbings to the Muslim community, and said that the Government was "gaslighting" the public about the events. In the days after the attack, his X posts received an average of around 54 million daily views.

Robinson has become the figurehead for Britain's decentralised, or "post-organisational" far-right: rather than trying to run a political party, he builds support by spreading his beliefs online. His ideas clearly resonate with many Britons. Several thousand supporters marched in his "patriotic rally" in London on Saturday 27 July, the largest far-right demonstration since the collapse of the EDL. And he attracts vocal support and funding from the US, where he has become a darling of the Trumpian and libertarian Right.

Who is Tommy Robinson?

The 41-year-old's real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon. He grew up in Luton, in Bedfordshire, a town with a large Muslim minority. He was an apprentice aircraft engineer at Luton Airport, but in 2005 he assaulted an off-duty police officer during a drunken row, which resulted in a 12-month sentence. In 2004, he had joined the far-right British National Party. By that time, he'd had a long association with football gangs linked to Luton Town FC (his nom de guerre was supposedly taken from a notorious Luton Town hooligan). In early 2009, the Islamist extremist group al-Muhajiroun protested noisily in Luton against a parade by members of the Royal Anglian Regiment, who were returning from service in Afghanistan. In response, Robinson and others linked to football gangs formed the English Defence League (EDL), which held anti-Islam demonstrations across England.

What happened to the EDL?

In its first few years, it grew fast, holding protests in areas with big Muslim populations, sometimes thousands strong, at which there were frequent violent clashes. Then in the early 2010s, the EDL declined amid internal divisions, and after it was revealed that members had links to the Norwegian white supremacist mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik. Robinson was convicted for assaulting a fellow member in 2011, and received a suspended sentence. In 2013, he underwent an unexpected political conversion and left the EDL, citing the "dangers of far-right extremism", supported by the anti-extremist think-tank Quilliam. This proved short-lived: Robinson reverted to far-right politics, with an attempt to set up a UK branch of the European counter-jihadist organisation Pegida.

What has Robinson done since?

He has set himself up as a journalist and online influencer. From 2017, he was a correspondent for Rebel News, a Canadian far-right website, and made films about the "grooming gangs" run by Asian men in Northern towns and cities. While reporting he has twice been convicted of contempt of court for making prejudicial public claims about grooming cases. In 2019, he ran as an independent candidate for North West England in European elections, receiving only 2.2% of the vote. Since then, he has turned away from electoral politics.

What does he believe in?

The two main themes of his thinking are opposition to immigration and to Islam. As he put it in a recent interview: "We're losing our culture. We're losing our identity. We're being replaced. We're becoming minorities in most major cities. We're being driven out of our own country, our own towns." In 2016, he said: "I'm not far-right, I'm just opposed to Islam. I believe it's backward and it's fascist." He made this argument in detail in "Mohammed's Koran: Why Muslims Kill For Islam", a 2017 book he co-wrote. His social media feeds return continually to immigrant – and particularly Muslim – criminality.

Robinson also believes that Western elites have plotted against ordinary people to allow this immigration to occur. He also often states that Britain has a "two-tier police force" that comes down "like a ton of bricks" on white miscreants, but is soft on migrant criminals. Robinson believes that the mainstream media has connived in this by failing to report on these issues fairly.

Ought his views to be censored?

In general, Robinson stops short of directly inciting violence, and has never been prosecuted for that. But his influence has long been linked to far-right violence. The

wife of Darren Osborne, who carried out the attack on Finsbury Park mosque in 2017, stated that Osborne had "been watching a lot of Tommy Robinson stuff on the internet", and had been "brainwashed". Robinson was banned from Facebook and Instagram in 2019, for "posting material that uses dehumanising language and calls for violence targeted at Muslims". In 2018, he was banned from Twitter for violating its rules on "hateful conduct": he had, to take only one example, liked a post calling on people to "make war" on Muslims. But, following Elon Musk's purchase of the site, Robinson's account was reinstated late last year.

Police are allegedly investigating his role in the riots. He could be vulnerable under the new Online Safety Act, which makes it an offence to convey false information likely "to cause non-trivial psychological or physical harm".

What about Robinson's legal woes?

On top of his two assault convictions, in 2013 Robinson was jailed for ten months for travelling to the US on another man's passport. The following year, he was sentenced to 18 months for mortgage fraud. In 2017, he

was convicted of contempt of court: he had recorded a report outside a trial in Canterbury Crown Court, in which he described the defendants – before the verdict was reached – as "Muslim child rapists". He was given a suspended sentence, which became a nine-month jail sentence after he reported live outside Leeds Crown Court during a similar trial; he not only once again broadcast prejudicial comments, but also confronted the defendants, risking the trial's collapse.

In July 2021, Robinson was ordered to pay £100,000 in damages for libelling Jamal Hijazi, a 15-year-old Syrian refugee who had been badly bullied at his school in Huddersfield; Robinson had claimed, baselessly, that the boy "violently attacks" English girls. He then repeated these claims in his film, "Silenced", which portrays him as a free-speech martyr. Robinson was due in the High Court in late July, because he had broken an injunction preventing him from releasing the film. Instead, he left the UK for Cyprus; he has yet to return. Robinson's tax affairs are also reportedly under investigation.

Document 14 - Stoking hate: Elon Musk and Tommy Robinson

SENSEMAKER - Tortoise Media, Tuesday 6 August 2024 - Producer and Reporter, Xavier Greenwood

Tommy Robinson, who has been accused of stoking the anti-immigration riots, owes his huge platform to Elon Musk.

As violent riots spread across the UK last week, Tommy Robinson made an appearance on the Alex Jones Show from a luxury resort in Cyprus. The far-right agitator was ebullient – and made a point of thanking Elon Musk for giving a “voice for the truth”.

So what? Robinson, who has been accused of stoking the anti-immigration riots, owes his huge platform to Musk. The billionaire owner of X rescued Robinson from the digital wilderness by restoring his account last November. In the past few days Musk has:

- responded to a post by Robinson criticising Keir Starmer’s response to the widespread disorder – amplifying it to Musk’s 193 million followers;
- questioned Robinson’s recent arrest under anti-terror laws, asking what he did that was “considered terrorism”; and
- allowed Robinson’s banned documentary, which repeats false claims about a Syrian refugee against a UK high court order, to rack up over 33 million views on X.

It was the screening of this documentary at a demonstration in London last month that prompted Robinson’s arrest under counter-terrorism powers. Robinson left the UK the day before he was due in court, and is currently believed to be staying at a five-star hotel in Ayia Napa. He is due in court for a full contempt hearing in October.

None of this has stopped Robinson incessantly tweeting about the riots, where far-right groups have regularly chanted his name. He has:

- falsely claimed that people were stabbed by Muslims in Stoke-on-Trent and Stirling;
- called for mass deportations, shared demonstration posters, and described violent protests in Southport as “justified”; and
- shared a video that speculated that the suspect in the Southport stabbings was Muslim, a widespread piece of disinformation that helped trigger the riots across the country.

Making the weather. The far-right activist has nearly 900,000 followers on X, but reaches a much larger number of people. Tortoise calculated that Robinson’s 268 posts over the weekend had been seen over 160 million times by late Monday afternoon.

Analytics published by Robinson last week showed that his posts had been viewed 1.2 billion times in the three months to August, with 4.5 million people visiting his profile. Every data point indicates that Robinson’s platform on X has massively grown over the past six months.

Tommy Robinson's Twitter followers



Robinson has called Musk “the best thing to happen for free speech this century”. He’s perhaps not the only person to feel this way. The far-right activist is part of a wider constellation of agitators, right-wing media commentators, online influencers and self-styled news aggregators who have used X to foment unrest in recent days. “It’s like a school of fish,” said Joseph Mulhall, director of research at the advocacy group Hope Not Hate. “People like Tommy Robinson are the weathermakers.”

Absolute state. Mulhall described a decentralised “post-organisational network” of accounts consuming, creating and engaging with far-right content. These accounts include Musk, who has called himself a free-speech absolutist. On Sunday Musk, who lives 5,000 miles from the streets of Middlesbrough and Rotherham, responded to a tweet that blamed what was happening in the UK on its diversity. He wrote that “if incompatible cultures are brought together without assimilation, conflict is inevitable”. Later he replied to a video of riots in Liverpool: “Civil war is inevitable”.

A spokesperson for Starmer said there was “no justification” for Musk’s comments, and that the “organised violent tuggery” happening in the UK has no place on the streets or online.

The role of X and its owner in stirring up the riots will put to test the UK’s online safety bill, which is designed to hold social media companies to account.

“Elon Musk needs to be called into parliament,” said Mulhall. “Twitter should be facing extraordinary scrutiny, both legal and financial. Musk as an individual and the platform that he’s curating is having a disastrous effect on our streets and in our communities.”

What’s more. Yesterday afternoon Musk responded directly to a social media post from Starmer, questioning the prime minister’s pledge to protect mosques. Robinson continued to post about the riots from his sunbed. Neither is behaving as if they have much to fear.

Document 15 - Southport stabbings: how online disinformation ignited unrest across the UK

Technology

Tortoise, Friday 2 August 2024, Producer and Reporter, [Xavier Greenwood](#)

Axel Rudakubana has been named as the 17 year-old charged with three counts of murder and 10 counts of attempted murder at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport. Rudakubana was not initially named as he is a minor.

The judge lifted the anonymity order on Thursday, but Rudakubana had been successfully identified online as early as Tuesday. Internet users pieced together his identity after the BBC reported that the teenage suspect was born in Cardiff, with parents from Rwanda.

The murder of Bebe, six years old, Elsie, seven, and Alice, nine, has been followed by violent far-right protests across the country. These riots were fuelled by disinformation that the suspect was a Muslim asylum seeker called Ali Al-Shakati.

The first known use of this name was by Bernie Spofforth, an X-user who has previously spread Covid and climate disinformation, and appeared on GB News as an anti-lockdown campaigner.

The Southport murders triggered a range of disinformation from major accounts on X. The YouTuber Andrew Tate falsely claimed the attacker was an “illegal migrant”, the former boxer Anthony Fowler posted a video saying it was a “fellow from Syria”, while a third account called Europe Invasion said the suspect was a “Muslim immigrant”. These three posts alone have had 26 million views and impressions. None have been removed.

Disinformation that the attacker was called Ali Al-Shakati appears to have spread organically, but the name was also suggested to users as a trending topic in the UK.

Many of the major right-wing accounts who incorrectly named the suspect cited a report from a news website called Channel3 Now. The origins of the site, which is makeshift and posted graphic photos of children being treated at the scene, are unclear. The earliest videos on its Youtube channel are in Russian. After a five-year gap, the channel began posting about Pakistan and later US news. This drastic change in subject matter suggests the account may have been hijacked and then repurposed.

Tortoise could only find one named author on the news site, a young man who runs a lawn mowing business in Nova Scotia in Canada. The site has apologised about falsely naming the Southport suspect, saying its article did not meet its “standards of reliability and integrity”. That was too late to stop the pursuant violence.

In Southport, London and Hartlepool, far-right protesters threw bricks, injured police, shouted racist chants, and set vehicles on fire. A video posted online showed Hartlepool rioters cheering as a person of colour walking past was punched in the face. Police are investigating the assault.

Far-right groups appeared to mobilise, in part, through TikTok, with screenshots encouraging people to organise then shared on Telegram and X. One user who shared a protest poster wrote that children were being slaughtered at “the alter [sic] of uncontrolled mass migration.”

Locals in Southport, a community in grief, have been left to pick up the pieces. A mother of one of the victims called for the violence to stop, saying “we don’t need this”. The protesters who descended on the seaside town shouting “English ‘til I die” aren’t thought to be local.

On Wednesday, Southport residents came together to repair a mosque deliberately targeted in the riot. Young children were among those who helped.

Document 16 - L'extrême droite de Twitter peut remercier Elon Musk

Slate, Vincent Bresson – Édité par Diane Francès – 31 janvier 2023

Le rachat de Twitter par le milliardaire s'est accompagné d'une nouvelle politique de modération favorable aux franges les plus radicales, qui font leur grand retour sur le réseau social.

«Venez comme vous êtes.» C'est peu ou prou le message envoyé par Twitter ces derniers jours en réintégrant de nombreuses personnalités d'extrême droite. Banni fin 2021, Renaud Camus a pu réintégrer la

plateforme le 25 janvier et il ne s'est pas privé de rattraper le temps perdu en tweetant de manière compulsive, relayant au passage ses vieilles publications. «*Un charter qui décolle c'est une prison qui ferme*», a-t-il ainsi retweeté, comme pour tester la nouvelle politique de modération de la plateforme rachetée par Elon Musk.

Le retour de l'homme qui a mis le «grand remplacement» sur toutes les lèvres à l'extrême droite a immédiatement été salué par Gilbert Collard, un temps

cadre du Rassemblement national avant de passer à Reconquête, et par Damien Rieu, ancien porte-parole de Génération identitaire rallié à Éric Zemmour.

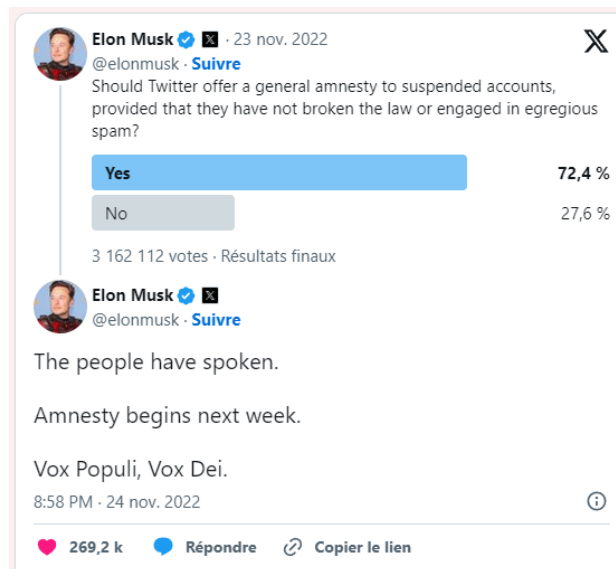
Twitter ne s'est pas arrêté en si bon chemin. Par un tir groupé, la plateforme a également mis fin à la suspension de Jean Messiha, lui aussi banni en 2021. «L'oiseau est libre! Jean Messiha est de retour! Merci beaucoup Elon Musk!», s'est empressé de commenter l'ex-soutien du RN et de Reconquête.



Le compte «Alain Soral» de la messagerie Telegram revendique également la réouverture du compte de l'essayiste antisémite. Petite subtilité: son compte n'est toujours pas accessible depuis la France (une contrainte pas bien compliquée à contourner avec un VPN).

Modération à la sauce Musk

Quelques semaines après avoir officiellement racheté Twitter fin octobre, Elon Musk ouvrait les hostilités en tweetant: «Le peuple a parlé. L'amnistie commence la semaine prochaine. Vox Populi, Vox Dei.» Le patron de Tesla a le beau rôle et il se l'est lui-même attribué. Avec cette annonce, il jure respecter les résultats d'un sondage publié sur son compte à propos d'une «amnistie générale» des comptes suspendus.



Du côté de l'extrême droite, le message est reçu cinq sur cinq. Contrairement à Donald Trump qui n'a encore réinvesti sa plateforme préférée, l'antisémite et négalionniste Hervé Ryssen, condamné à plusieurs reprises, n'a pas attendu bien longtemps avant de tweeter à nouveau.

D'autres, comme Pierre-Nicolas Nups, responsable Lorraine du Parti de la France condamné pour incitation à la violence et à la haine homophobe en 2018, ont même pu revenir sur la plateforme avant le sondage. Comme Hervé Ryssen, ce cadre d'un mouvement proche de Reconquête ne se prive pas d'user à l'excès de la «liberté» mise en avant par Elon Musk. Sous un tweet expliquant que «le premier amour d'Hitler était Juif», il répond qu'«elle lui a brisé le cœur, donc il lui a niqué sa race». Des propos qui, six jours après avoir été publiés, sont toujours en ligne.

Cette résurgence des composantes les plus radicales de l'extrême droite sur Twitter était si prévisible... qu'elle l'a elle-même vue venir. Dès les premières rumeurs sur le rachat de Twitter par le patron de Tesla, Mathieu Goyer, jeune responsable Civitas Paris, s'amusait à prédire le futur de la plateforme avec jubilation: «Nous allons peut-être pouvoir voir le retour sur Twitter des comptes de Donald Trump, Rivarol, Alain Soral, Égalité & Réconciliation, Hervé Ryssen, Thais d'Escufon... et tant d'autres. Le rachat de Twitter annonce vraiment une grande bonne nouvelle.»

Force est de constater que la prédiction s'est révélée juste: une grosse partie de ces personnalités a déjà retrouvé une place sur le réseau social. Elon Musk, l'extrême droite lui dit merci.

«Un Twitter enfin libre!»

Elon Musk s'époumone à force de le répéter: son rachat de Twitter s'accompagnera d'une plus grande liberté d'expression. Cette communication a très vite séduit l'extrême droite française qui, à l'image de

Mathieu Goyer de Civitas, voit le milliardaire comme un allié de circonstance lui permettant de tenir tous types de propos. Mais que gagne le patron de Tesla dans cette affaire? Le rachat de Twitter n'a pour le moment rien du bon plan côté financier. Il permet à Elon Musk, tout au plus, de renforcer son image de libertarien et de se mettre dans la poche les militants les plus dissidents de son réseau social. Une façon peut-être également de tenter de le redynamiser en le polarisant.

Quelle que soit la manière dont Elon Musk en tire parti, cette nouvelle politique de modération ne profite pas seulement à l'extrême droite française, mais aussi aux sphères pour qui la pandémie n'est que conspiration. Opposé aux restrictions sanitaires et grand pourfendeur du «Great Reset», l'ufologue Silvano Trotta a, lui aussi, bénéficié de l'«amnistie générale». Loin de Twitter, il avait réuni avec succès une nouvelle communauté sur la messagerie Telegram. Il n'a pourtant pas boudé la possibilité de retrouver ses 90.000 abonnés sur le réseau social à l'oiseau bleu, tweetant mi-décembre:



Tout le monde ne se montre pas aussi satisfait que Silvano Trotta. Quelques déçus constatent qu'il existe

toujours une modération sur le réseau social, aussi infime soit-elle. Thomas Joly, président du Parti de la France, en a fait les frais à la mi-décembre. «La liberté d'expression sur Twitter version Elon Musk atteint très vite ses limites», s'est-il indigné, sur Telegram, après la suspension de son compte.

Donald Trump bientôt de retour?

Sans surprise, un mouvement similaire se produit de l'autre côté de l'Atlantique. Banni d'Instagram, de Twitch, de TikTok et de YouTube, le streamer nationaliste blanc Nick Fuentes, pour qui Hitler était «vraiment cool», a vu son compte Twitter débloqué le 24 janvier. Un «Space» sur Twitter et puis s'en va: moins de vingt-quatre heures après avoir été autorisé, son compte a été de nouveau fermé à la suite de propos antisémites. D'autres figures extrémistes américaines comme Ryan Dawson et Andrew Anglin sont, pour le moment, toujours les bienvenues.

À un peu plus d'un an de la présidentielle américaine, c'est peu dire que Donald Trump est très attendu sur Twitter. L'ancien président des États-Unis avait fait du réseau social son arme de communication préférée. Avec la reprise en main de la plateforme par Elon Musk et la politique d'«amnistie générale», le chef de file de l'alt-right est en droit de revenir. Et ce n'est peut-être qu'une question de mois.

Selon le magazine Rolling Stone, le milliardaire attendrait l'expiration en juin prochain de son contrat d'exclusivité avec Truth, le réseau social qu'il avait créé dans la foulée de son bannissement. Après des midterms décevantes pour les Républicains, récupérer 87 millions de twittos aidera-t-il Trump à regagner sa place à la Maison-Blanche?

Elon Musk's Grokipedia Pushes Far-Right Talking Points

The new AI-powered Wikipedia competitor falsely claims that pornography worsened the AIDS epidemic and that social media may be fueling a rise in transgender people.

REECE ROGERS, WIRED, OCT 27, 2025

ON MONDAY, ELON Musk's xAI startup launched Grokipedia, which the billionaire is pitching as an AI-generated alternative to the crowdsourced encyclopedia Wikipedia. Musk first announced the project in late September on his social media platform X, saying it would be "a massive improvement over Wikipedia," and "a necessary step towards the xAI goal of understanding the Universe."

Musk said last week that he had delayed the launch of Grokipedia because his team needed "to do more work to purge out the propaganda." When Grokipedia eventually dropped on Monday, WIRED was initially unable to access the website and received an automated message that it was blocked.

When we finally got access to it, WIRED found that the online encyclopedia contained lengthy entries generated by AI. While many of the pages WIRED saw on launch day appeared fairly similar to Wikipedia in terms of tone and content, a number of notable Grokipedia entries denounced the mainstream media, highlighted conservative viewpoints, and sometimes perpetuated historical inaccuracies.

The Grokipedia entry about the slavery of African Americans in the US includes a section outlining numerous “ideological justifications” made for slavery, including the “Shift from Necessary Evil to Positive Good.” The end of the entry focuses on criticisms of The 1619 Project, which it says incorrectly framed “slavery as the central engine of the nation's political, economic, and cultural development.”

Entries for more recent historical events put conservative perspectives at the center. When WIRED searched for “gay marriage” in Grokipedia, no entry popped up, but one of the on-screen suggestions was for “gay pornography” instead. This entry in Grokipedia falsely states that the proliferation of porn exacerbated the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s.

“This marked the onset of what would become a devastating crisis disproportionately affecting gay male communities, where behaviors idealized in pornography—such as unprotected receptive anal intercourse and multiple anonymous partners—aligned directly with primary transmission routes, leading to rapid seroconversion rates,” the Grokipedia entry claims.

xAI did not immediately return a request for comment.

The Grokipedia entry for “transgender” includes two mentions of “transgenderism,” a term commonly used to denigrate trans people. The entry also refers to trans women as “biological males” who have “generated significant conflicts, primarily centered on risks to women's safety, privacy, and sex-based protections established to mitigate male-perpetrated violence.” The opening section highlights social media as a potential “contagion” that is increasing the number of trans people.

WIRED magazine’s entry in Grokipedia mentions Musk’s own criticism of the publication. “High-profile detractors, including Elon Musk in February 2025, have labeled Wired as devolving into ‘far-left wing propaganda,’ arguing it abandoned technology-focused reporting for ideologically driven narratives that normalize heavy-handed oversight of private enterprise,” the entry says. Grokipedia also claims WIRED is emblematic of the “mainstream media's systemic leftward lean.”

The entry for US president Donald Trump also includes a swipe at the media for its allegedly “left-leaning bias” in coverage of the ongoing federal government shutdown. It accuses CNN and The New York Times of “amplifying shutdown narratives that attribute blame primarily to Republicans despite bipartisan failures.” (CNN and The New York Times did not immediately respond to requests for comment.)

The entries on Grokipedia definitely don’t skimp in terms of word count. The Grokipedia entry for “Elon Musk” is just short of 11,000 words, has over 300 website references, and includes sections like “Criticisms of Regulation and Woke Culture” as well as “Advocacy for Multiplanetary Life and Population Growth.” Musk’s Wikipedia entry, in comparison, clocks in at under 8,000 words.

Grokipedia’s suggested search terms related to Elon Musk include “Elon Musk (disambiguation)” and “Elon Musk filmography.” In comparison, when searching Grokipedia for OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, the top suggestion on Monday was “Removal of Sam Altman from OpenAI,” referring to a brief incident in 2023 when Altman was temporarily removed by OpenAI’s board of directors before returning as CEO.

More here:

- **An investigation about Tenet Media**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/media/2024/09/05/tenet-media-russia-rt-tim-pool/>

- **False information cases in wake of riots test UK’s online safety law – *The Financial Times***

<https://www.ft.com/content/39d93099-e27c-4b86-bd37-d49e61ed70d8>

- **'High risk' of further far-right riots if disinformation isn't curbed – Times Radio**

An analysis on how the police needs to respond fast-spreading disinformation online – The closing of the information gap

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FW2wHjBEM08&ab_channel=TimesRadio