



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on May 25, 2021

## Project Veritas Exposes Facebook Censorship of Posts Promoting “Vaccine Hesitancy”

Facebook is suppressing “vaccine hesitancy,” limiting the reach of comments that express concerns about COVID-19 inoculations or share negative experiences, even if accurate, according to an [investigation](#) released Monday by Project Veritas.

The conservative media watchdog organization published a purported internal Facebook memo concerning “Vaccine Hesitancy Comment Demotion.” The policy aims to “drastically reduce user exposure to vaccine hesitancy,” the document states.



Project Veritas founder James O'Keefe / AP Images

Another document leaked to Project Veritas discusses how to flag and categorize “non-violating content” that “*raises questions* (italics added) about vaccination ... thereby contributing to vaccine hesitancy or refusal.”

Comments can be “demoted” on the platform if they are flagged as directly or indirectly discouraging people from getting vaccinated.

The vaccine hesitancy (VH) ratings are divided into tiers zero, one, and two, according to the leaked materials. Comments in tier zero are an explicit violation of Facebook policy, while those in tier one are counted as “Alarmism & Criticism,” according to the documents.

Tier two comments are “Indirect Vaccine Discouragement,” which include sharing “shocking stories” about side effects linked to the vaccines. Since such stories may deter others from taking the vaccine — even if they’re “potentially or actually true events or facts that raise safety concerns.” The company explains that such content should be discouraged because it could “present a barrier to vaccination in certain contexts.”

Facebook is also said to target comments that claim vaccination is unnecessary owing to plummeting COVID-19 cases and death rates, or argue for natural herd immunity against the virus. Such views are also considered “indirect discouragement” that could hurt immunization efforts.

“Based on that VH score, we will demote or leave the comment alone depending on the content within the comment,” a whistleblower identified as a data center technician, [told](#) Project Veritas founder James O’Keefe.

“They’re trying to control this content before it even makes it onto your page, before you even see it,” a whistleblower stated.

The documents indicate that the tech giant set up a “Vaccine Hesitancy Comment Demotion” tier system run on 1.5 percent of Facebook and Instagram accounts, which number nearly 3.8 billion worldwide.

The document added that the algorithm was the only tool Facebook had at the time to address “the high



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prevalence of vaccine hesitancy in Health comments,” and that a better “detection” tool would be implemented when available.

In response to the leaked documents, Facebook [confirmed](#) that the company “proactively announced this policy on our company blog and also updated our help center with this information.”

In February, the platform [announced](#) it was expanding its efforts to combat “false claims” about COVID-19 vaccines. The company said that since December 2020, when the vaccination campaign has just started to unroll, it removed “false claims” about COVID-19 vaccines that “have been debunked by public health experts.” Under the initiative, Facebook said it would remove content that claims “vaccines are not effective at preventing the disease they are meant to protect against” or that argues the jabs are “dangerous.”

Facebook’s “COVID-19 and Vaccine Policy Updates & Protections” [policy](#) specifies that it will remove “misinformation” that is “discouraging good health practices:”

There are a number of good health practices public health authorities advise people take to protect themselves from getting or spreading COVID-19. This includes wearing a face mask, social distancing, getting tested for COVID-19 and, more recently, getting vaccinated against COVID-19. Public health authorities have issued emergency use authorization for several COVID-19 vaccines, so in addition to false claims about face masks, social distancing and testing, we do not allow false claims about the vaccines or vaccination programs which public health experts have advised us could lead to COVID-19 vaccine rejection. This includes false claims about the safety, efficacy, ingredients, development, existence, or conspiracies related to the vaccine or vaccination program. As more information becomes available about COVID-19 vaccines, we will continue to iterate on how we apply this policy.

In March, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg [announced](#) that the company would add labels to posts about vaccines to counter misinformation.

“For example, we’re adding a label on posts that discuss the safety of COVID-19 vaccines that notes COVID-19 vaccines go through tests for safety and effectiveness before they’re approved,” Zuckerberg wrote.

The content crackdown comes amid growing concern about side effects that have been linked to the vaccines. Just recently, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) started [investigating](#) reports on heart inflammation in adolescents who received the Pfizer/BioNTech shot. Meanwhile, the CDC Vaccine Adverse Event Reaction (VAERS) [database](#) keep adding new cases of health implications following inoculation across all demographics.



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