

A Legislative Approach to Combating Fake News

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Abstract

- ❑ Fake news is false information present in any topic discussed in digital space.
- ❑ Our bill will attempt to hold online forums and platforms accountable for content shared on their sites.
- ❑ The goal of the bill is to ensure users know how their data is used in algorithms and content curation.
- ❑ Social media is not impartial to published content. Sites promote popular and well-liked content regardless of the information's validity.
- ❑ Content algorithms promote online community polarization by perpetuating echo chambers that increase confirmation bias. (Bakshy et al. 2015) 1

Introduction

- ❑ Intentionally fake news is created to deceive viewers and achieve some ulterior agenda, comparable to propaganda.
- ❑ Fake news causes echo chambers and misinformation loops, creating a polarized social media landscape.
- ❑ Our bill will limit user creation and consumption of deceptive content by penalizing platforms that do not take initiative to preventing the spread of misinformed content.
- ❑ Our bill seeks to place more responsibility on large media companies to ensure a cohesive online environment.

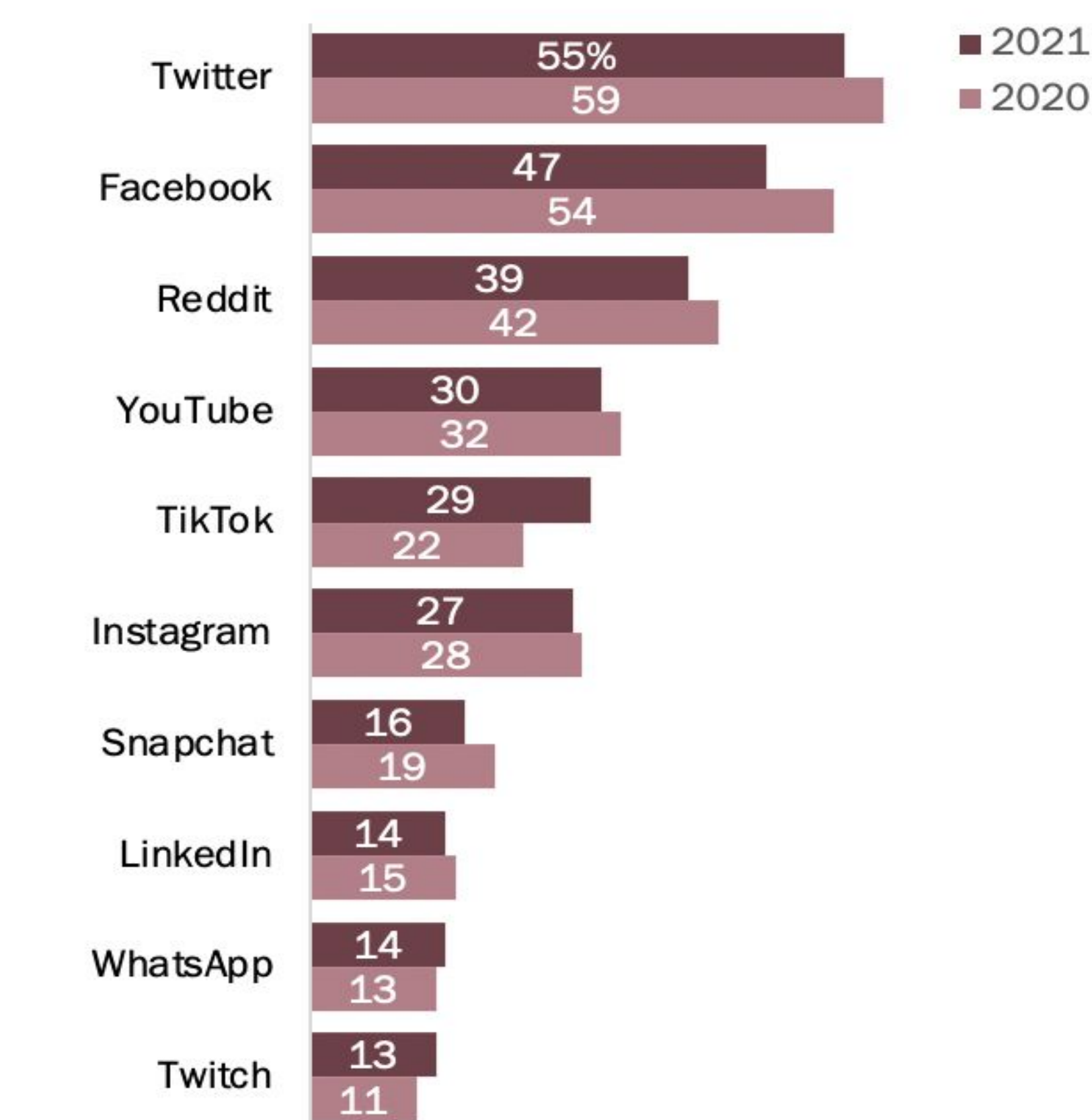
Bill Highlights

Regulates information shared on digital platforms	Targets corporations and platforms that act as public forums	Outlines criteria for violating entities
Considerations of free speech and other rights	To be enforced by the Federal Trade Commission	Outlines appropriate consequences for violating entities

Background Research

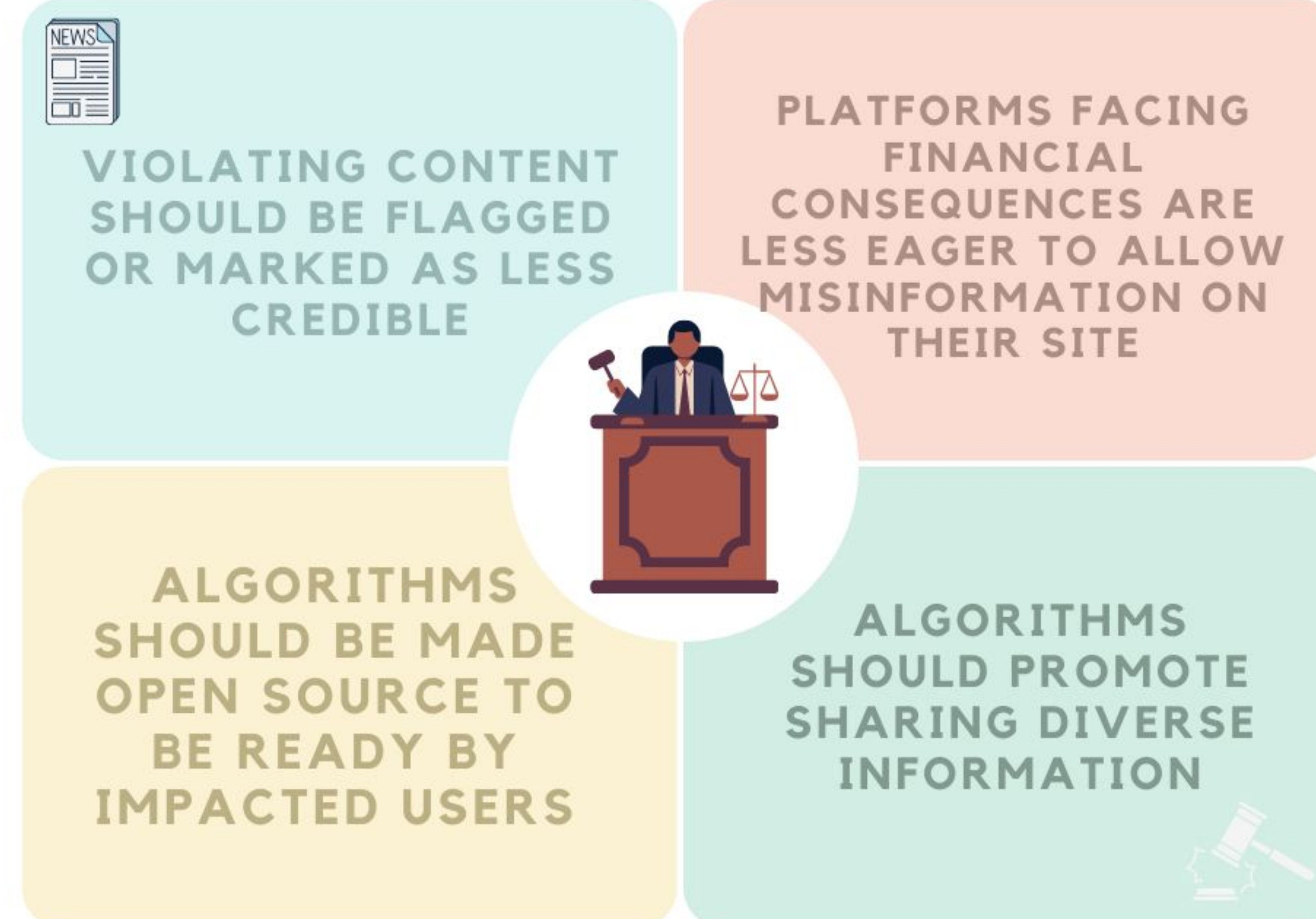
Large portion of Twitter users regularly get news there

% of each social media site's users who **regularly** get news there



- ❑ Information on social media is not explicitly fact checked or verified for truthfulness
- ❑ Social Media companies implement algorithms to determine what content is shown to users.
- ❑ Algorithms show users what they like: content by like-minded users or with reassuring information. This perpetuates echo chambers and confirmation bias.
- ❑ Social media companies are profit-seeking. The main objective is to earn revenue, not provide educational or trustworthy content to users.
- ❑ Most social media users get the majority of news information from a small number of online media platforms.

Desired Outcomes



Excerpts

Section II: Explanation of Terminology

For the purposes of this bill:

- (1) The term "fake news" means a piece of information presented visually, textually, or verbally that is objectively not true but presented to the public as being factual.
- (2) The term "misinformation loops" refer to situations in which an algorithm promotes misinformation and continues to do so with similar, likely false information repeatedly because the user doesn't, or cannot see any information from outside of this loop. These are repeating patterns of inaccurate information being perpetuated by individuals or groups.

Section IV: Consequences of Violation

For entities to be subject to the consequences of violation, they must violate all of the criteria provided in section III. Violating entities will be subject to punishment with regard to any prior violations of said criteria.

1st Violation

A warning is issued to violators. Violators will have up to six months to fix the issue with their platform internally. In this context, "fix" means to resolve the issue such that it does not violate any of the noted criteria.

Conclusions

- ❑ This bill is intended to place more responsibility on digital media platforms to identify, report, and flag intentionally fake news published on their sites.
- ❑ This bill will mitigate the spread of misinformation while adhering to first amendment rights.
- ❑ The bill has potential to impact public opinion and minimize divisiveness in the online forum space.
- ❑ It is vital that digital media platforms emphasize truthfulness and transparency to users who rely on them for news content.
- ❑ Algorithms have a significant impact on how users digest and interact with news of current events.

Citations

1. Bakshy E, Messing S, Adamic LA. 2015. Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook. Science. 348(6239):1130–1132. doi:10.1126/science.aaa1160.
2. Walker M, Matsa KE. 2021 Sep 20. News Consumption Across Social Media in 2021. Pew Research Center's Journalism Project. <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2021/09/20/news-consumption-across-social-media-in-2021/>.