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# **The 2020 U.S. elections on YouTube:** Retrospective

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# ■ Introduction

With so many viewers around the world coming to YouTube to learn about political leaders, participate in civic engagement, and develop considered opinions about current events, we have a responsibility to support an informed citizenry and foster healthy political discourse. To deliver on this responsibility, we remove content that violates our policies, raise authoritative news sources, reduce the spread of election-related misinformation, and provide a range of resources for civics partners such as government officials, candidates, civics organizations, and political Creators to ensure a broad range of voices are heard.

Throughout the 2020 U.S. election season, given the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, YouTube was a destination for people to learn more about where and how to vote, or to learn more about a candidate or an issue. Our main goal going into the election season was to make sure we connected people with authoritative information, while also limiting the reach of misinformation and removing harmful content.

The goal of this report is to provide a thorough overview of YouTube's work to support election integrity in the 2020 U.S. presidential and congressional elections. We have organized the aspects of our work along YouTube's four pillars of responsibility:



## Remove

content that violates our policies



## Raise

authoritative information on our platform



## Reduce

recommendations of borderline content



## Reward

trusted Creators

In addition, we highlight the ways that candidates, political organizations, and Creators used our platform to foster civic engagement and political discourse online, in the midst of a global pandemic.

We close this report with a few takeaways that will inform our work heading into future elections in the U.S. and internationally.



# Remove

Our [Community Guidelines](#) define what is not allowed on YouTube; they include established policies prohibiting hate speech, harassment, deceptive practices, and incitement to violence. We have several policies specific to election-related content, and we enforce these policies consistently, regardless of the Creator's political viewpoint or the perspectives expressed in the video. Our Community Guidelines apply to all content on YouTube, including video, livestreams, video metadata (e.g., title, description), and comments. Content providing sufficient [educational, documentary, scientific, or artistic](#) context may be allowed on YouTube.

## ■ Remove by the numbers

### For elections-related policies

**8K+ CHANNELS**

We have terminated over 8K channels and thousands of videos for violating our elections-related policies\*

**> 77%**

Over 77% of thousands of harmful and misleading elections-related videos that violated our elections-related policies were taken down before they had 100 views\*

### For all Community Guidelines



**9.3M**

Videos removed\*\*



**2M**

Channels removed\*\*

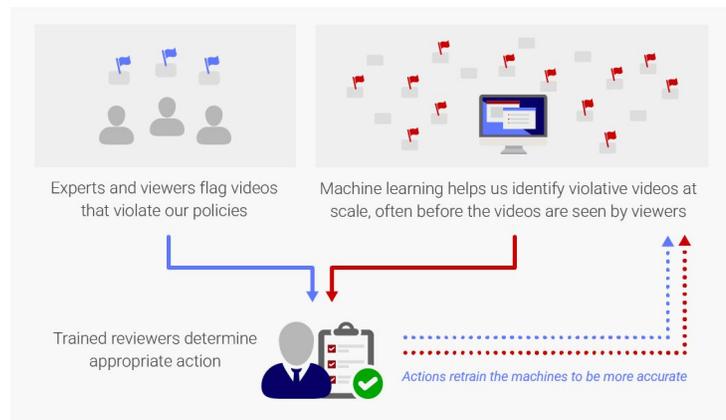


**906M**

Comments removed\*\*

## ■ Enforcement

We use a combination of people and machine learning to detect potentially problematic content at scale, and when we identify such content, human review verifies whether it violates our policies. If it does, the content is removed and is used to train our machines for better coverage in the future. By staying ahead of new technologies and tactics that could be used by malicious actors, including technically manipulated content such as "deep fakes," we are able to more quickly detect and remove misleading content. We also heavily invest in research and development.



*YouTube flagging and review decisions continuously improve our systems*

\*Data pulled from Sep 2020 - Nov 2020

\*\*Based on [YouTube Community Guidelines Enforcement Report, Oct - Dec 2020](#)



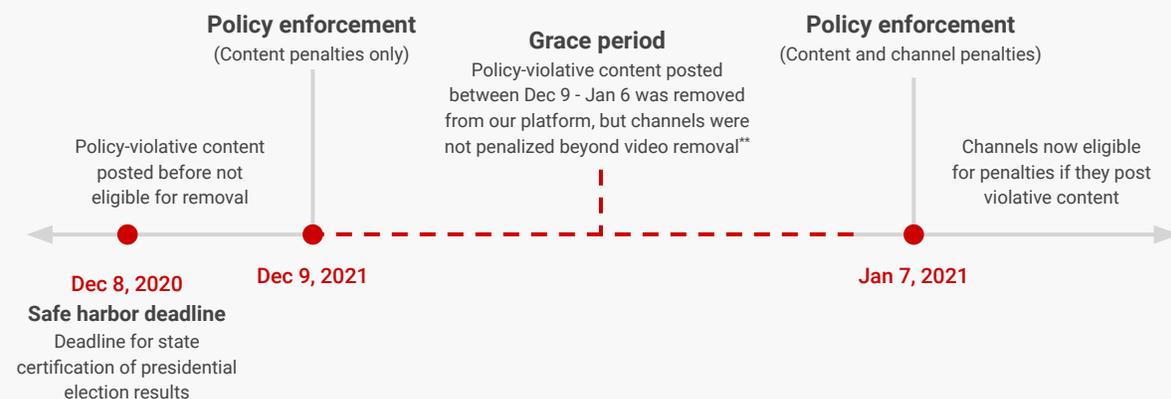
Our teams work hard to ensure that we are striking a balance between allowing for a broad range of political speech and adhering to our responsibility of making sure our platform isn't abused to incite real-world harm or broadly spread harmful misinformation. We engage with experts, researchers, and organizations to ensure that our policies and products are meeting that goal.

For the 2020 U.S. elections, we did this through a mix of longstanding election integrity policies and policy updates corresponding to key milestones in the electoral process. For example, throughout 2020, we identified and removed content misleading voters about where or how to vote to help ensure viewers saw accurate information about the upcoming election. After Election Day, viewers and YouTube Creators directed their attention to vote counting and certification, just as they did across other platforms, television, and other media.

December 8th marked the "safe harbor" deadline for states to certify their election results, a key milestone in the Electoral College process. Given that enough states certified their results to secure an Electoral College win for Biden, we began to remove content uploaded on or after December 9th that misled people by alleging that widespread fraud or errors changed the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election in accordance with our [Presidential Election Integrity policy](#). Content posted before that date is not considered to have violated our policies, but content posted that day forward is eligible for removal. It is standard for YouTube to allow a grace period on penalties after making a major policy update, and we did so for this policy until January 7, 2021. This means content that violated our policies posted between December 9th and January 6th was removed from our platform, but channels were not penalized beyond video removal. However, from January 7th, any content that violates this policy will be subject to our longstanding [three-strike system](#).

### Presidential Election Integrity policy enforcement timeline\*

This policy applies to content that advances false claims that widespread fraud, errors, or glitches changed the outcome of any past U.S. presidential election. We consider the 2020 U.S. presidential election a "past" election beginning on December 9, 2020—the day following the safe harbor deadline—for the purposes of this policy.



\*This applies to elections in the United States only. For the 2020 U.S. presidential election, this applies to content uploaded on or after December 9, 2020

\*\*Providing a grace period is common practice across our policies to give Creators a chance to understand updates and adjust to them

YouTube penalizes channels that violate our Community Guidelines via a strike system. Every channel on YouTube receives a warning for the first violation in the lifetime of the channel. Subsequent violations result in strikes. Each strike lasts for 90 days, and comes with a suspension of uploading privileges for a period of time—the first strike is a one week suspension, and a second strike after the first strike expires results in a two-week suspension. A channel that receives three strikes (not including a warning) in a 90-day period will be permanently terminated.



## ■ Election-related policies

The examples below illustrate policies relevant to election content. This content is available to all viewers in the [YouTube Help Center](#).

### **Deceptive practices policies**



#### **Manipulated media**

Content that has been technically manipulated or doctored in a way that misleads users (beyond clips taken out of context) and may pose a serious risk of egregious harm.

- EXAMPLES**
- Inaccurately translated video subtitles that inflame geopolitical tensions creating serious risk of egregious harm.
  - Videos that have been technically manipulated (beyond clips taken out of context) to make it appear that a government official is dead.
  - Misattributing a 10 year old video that depicts stuffing of a ballot box to a recent election.



#### **Voter suppression**

Content aiming to mislead voters about the time, place, means, or eligibility requirements for voting, or false claims that could materially discourage voting.

- EXAMPLES**
- Telling viewers they can vote through fake methods like texting their vote to a particular number.
  - Giving made up voter eligibility requirements like saying that a particular election is only open to voters over 50 years old.
  - Telling viewers an incorrect election date.
  - Claiming that a voter's political party affiliation is visible on a vote-by-mail envelope.



#### **Candidate eligibility**

Content that advances false claims related to the technical eligibility requirements for current political candidates and sitting elected government officials to serve in office. Eligibility requirements considered are based on applicable national law, and include age, citizenship, or vital status.

- EXAMPLES**
- Claims that a candidate or sitting government official is not eligible to hold office based on false information about the age required to hold office in that country.
  - Claims that a candidate or sitting government official is not eligible to hold office based on false information about citizenship status requirements to hold office in that country.
  - Claims that a candidate or sitting government official is ineligible for office based on false claims that they're deceased, not old enough, or otherwise do not meet eligibility requirements.





### Incitement to interfere in democratic processes

Content encouraging others to interfere with democratic processes, such as obstructing or interrupting voting procedures.

- EXAMPLES**
- Telling viewers to create long voting lines with the purpose of making it harder for others to vote.
  - Telling viewers to hack government websites to delay the release of election results.



### Presidential election integrity

Content that advances false claims that widespread fraud, errors, or glitches changed the outcome of any past U.S. presidential election (Note: this applies to elections in the United States only). For the U.S. 2020 presidential election, this applies to content uploaded on or after December 9, 2020.

- EXAMPLES**
- Claims that a candidate only won a swing state in the U.S. 2020 presidential election due to voting machine glitches that changed votes.
  - Claims that dead people voted in numbers that changed the outcome of the U.S. 2016 presidential election.
  - Claims that fake ballots were dumped to give one candidate enough votes to win a state in a past U.S. presidential election.

*We may allow content such as the examples above if it includes countervailing views or sufficient context in the images or audio of the video itself. Providing it in the title or description may be insufficient.*

In addition to those policies, several other policies in our Community Guidelines may be relevant to 2020 U.S. election content. These are outlined below.

## **Policies relating to violence, hate, and harassment**



### Violent or graphic content

Violent or gory content intended to shock or disgust viewers, or content encouraging others to commit violent acts are not allowed on YouTube.

- EXAMPLE**
- Encouraging others to go to a particular place to commit violence, to perform violence at a particular time, or to target individuals or groups with violence.



### Hate speech

We remove content promoting violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on attributes, including ethnicity, race, and immigration status.

- EXAMPLE**
- Encourage violence against individuals or groups based on any of the [attributes listed](#) in our policy. We don't allow threats on YouTube, and we treat implied calls for violence as real threats.





## Harassment

Content that threatens individuals is not allowed on YouTube. We also do not allow content that targets an individual with prolonged or malicious insults based on intrinsic attributes, including their protected group status or physical traits.

- EXAMPLES**
- Threatening someone's physical safety. This includes implied threats like "when I see you next, things will end badly for you," explicit threats like "when I see you on Saturday I'm going to punch you in the face," or implying violence by saying things such as "you better watch out" while brandishing a weapon.
  - Content that incites others to harass or threaten individuals on or off YouTube.
  - Content making implicit or explicit threats of physical harm or destruction of property against identifiable individuals.
  - Content that targets people as part of a harmful conspiracy theory where the theory has been linked to threats or violent acts.



## Content featuring firearms

YouTube doesn't allow livestreams that show someone holding, handling, or transporting a firearm.

- EXAMPLES**
- Livestreams that feature someone holding or handling a firearm, regardless of whether or not they are firing it.
  - Livestreams that feature someone transporting firearms from place to place, such as by carrying them or traveling with them by car, truck, or other vehicle.

We terminate channels for the following Community Guidelines violations:

## Policies relating to misrepresentation



### Impersonation

A channel that copies another channel's profile, background, or overall look and feel in such a way that makes it look like someone else's channel or that intends to look like someone else is posting. The channel does not have to be 100% identical, as long as the intent is clear to copy the other channel. We also terminate channels that misrepresent their country of origin or conceal their association with a government actor.

- EXAMPLES**
- Setting up a channel using the name and image of a person, and then pretending that person is posting content to the channel.
  - Channels impersonating an existing news channel.



### Fake engagement

YouTube doesn't allow anything that artificially increases the number of views, likes, comments, or other metric either through the use of automatic systems or by serving up videos to unsuspecting viewers. Additionally, content that solely exists to incentivize viewers for engagement (views, likes, comments, etc) is prohibited.

- EXAMPLE**
- Using someone else's real name, user name, image, brand, logo, or other personal information to trick people into believing you are that person.



## ■ Coordinated influence operations

To combat foreign and domestic coordinated influence operations looking to interfere in electoral processes, we coordinate closely with [Google's Threat Analysis Group \(TAG\)](#) to identify bad actors and terminate their channels and accounts. Through TAG, we work with other technology companies to share intelligence and best practices, as well as to share threat information with law enforcement. We publish information about action taken on YouTube accounts in Google's quarterly TAG bulletin.

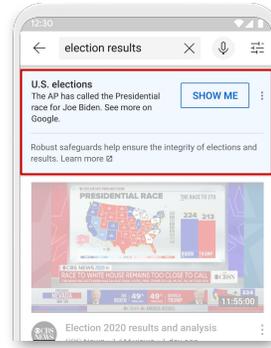
In October 2020, a [Threat Analysis Group](#) blog post provided an analysis of threat actor activity observed in the run up to the elections. We did not identify any significant coordinated influence campaigns targeting, or attempting to influence, U.S. voters on our platforms.

In addition to our ongoing TAG work, we participated in a number of cross-industry discussions with the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and other intragovernmental security agencies in the run up to the elections. These discussions enabled YouTube to better understand potential threats, as well as provide federal government agencies with a better understanding of our policies and election work.

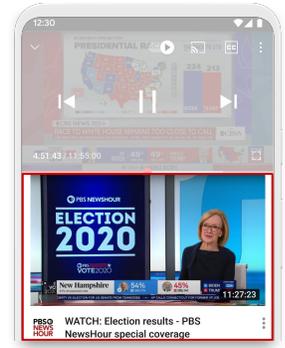




Political news and events can be subject to misinformation, so the availability of authoritative information sources is crucial. That's why we raise up authoritative voices, including news sources like NBC and CBS, for news and information in search results and "Up next" panels. We also leverage an array of information panels to provide viewers additional context and guide them toward authoritative information when they search for or view videos related to certain topics. Both of these mechanisms played key roles in our efforts for the 2020 U.S. elections.



Search results



"Up next" panel

## ■ Raise by the numbers

### In Search

**88%**

For the 2020 U.S. elections, on average 88% of the videos in top 10 search results related to the elections came from authoritative news sources\*

**8B**

Our election results information panels have collectively been shown over 8B times

**6M+**

During the 2020 U.S. elections, candidate information panels were surfaced for viewers over 6M times\*

### In Recommendations

**> 70%**

For the 2020 U.S. elections, over 70% of recommendations on U.S. election-related topics came from authoritative news sources, and the top recommended videos and channels for election-related content were primarily authoritative news sources\*

**14X**

For the 2020 U.S. elections, the top 10 authoritative news channels were recommended over 14 times more than the top 10 non-authoritative channels for election-related content\*

## ■ Authoritative news

To help viewers find relevant information, our search and recommendation algorithms are designed to raise authoritative content, and reduce the spread of borderline content and harmful misinformation. As a result of this ongoing work, we saw that on average 88% of the videos in top 10 search results related to the 2020 U.S. elections came from authoritative news sources (the rest include content such as news-based late-night shows, Creator videos, and commentary). In addition, over 70% of non-subscribed recommendations on U.S. election-related topics came from authoritative news sources, and the top recommended videos and channels for election-related content were primarily authoritative news. In fact, when it comes to election-related content, the top 10 authoritative news channels were recommended over 14 times more than the top 10 non-authoritative channels. The most viewed channels and videos were from news channels like NBC and CBS.



We also have a number of product features that help highlight content across our platform, including [Top News and Breaking News](#) shelves to highlight quality journalism, as well as [information panels](#) that indicate funding sources below videos from publishers that receive public or government funding. We have also expanded our [fact check information panels](#) to the United States. This feature provides context from third-party fact-checked articles above search results for relevant queries—including specific claims about the elections. Since November 3, 2020, relevant fact check information panels have been triggered in the U.S. above relevant election-related search results, including for voter fraud narratives such as “Dominion voting machines” and “Michigan recount.”

## Most recommended U.S. election-related content\*

### Top Channels

1. CBS News
2. ABC News
3. NBC News
4. CNN
5. Fox News

### Top Videos

1. ABC News - 2020 Election Results Live: Joe Biden Will Become 46th President of the United States | ABC News)
2. USA TODAY - WATCH: Election results for Trump, Biden and key swing state races | USA TODAY
3. CNBC - U.S. Covid-19 Cases Surge To Dangerous Levels As Election Results Pour In: CNBC After Hours
4. Fox News - Live 2020 Election Results: Joe Biden beats Donald Trump, Fox News projects
5. CBS News - Election 2020 results and analysis

## Most viewed U.S. election-related content\*

### Top Channels

1. ABC News
2. NBC News
3. USA TODAY
4. CNN
5. CBS News

### Top Videos

1. ABC News - 2020 Election Results Live: Joe Biden Will Become 46th President of the United States | ABC News)
2. USA TODAY - WATCH: Election results for Trump, Biden and key swing state races | USA TODAY
3. NBC News - Live: 2020 Election Results Map For Trump Vs. Biden | NBC News
4. CBS News - Election 2020 results and analysis
5. NBC News - Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Address The Nation | NBC News

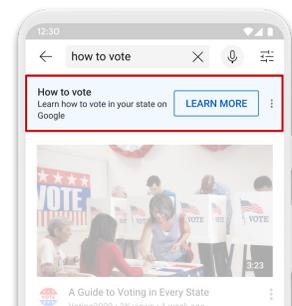
## Information panels

As part of our ongoing efforts to ensure viewers have access to high quality, authoritative information about important civic events, YouTube uses a variety of information panels to provide viewers with additional context in response to certain types of search queries and alongside certain types of video content. For the 2020 U.S. elections, we provided a range of new information panels in addition to our existing panels to provide additional context around election-related search results and video content. These panels directed viewers to a variety of sources, including Google Search’s election resources, the Bipartisan Policy Center, and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. The following are examples of relevant panels.

### Voting and candidate information panels

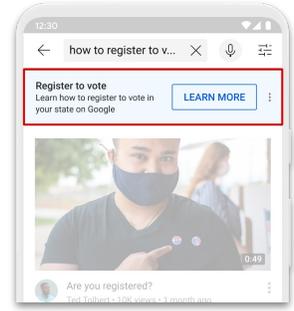
#### How to vote

We showed an information panel at the top of results when viewers searched YouTube for specific queries related to how to vote. This panel linked to Google’s “How to vote” feature, with authoritative information about how to vote in a viewer’s state, including details such as ID requirements, registration and voting deadlines, and guidance for different means of voting, such as in person or by mail.



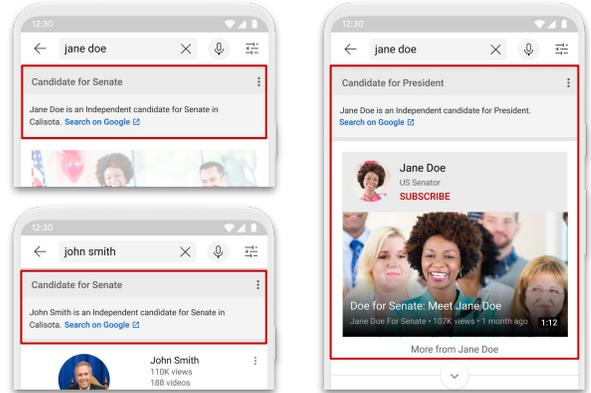
### Register to vote

When viewers searched for specific queries related to voter registration on YouTube, they were shown an information panel at the top of the page that linked to Google’s “How to register to vote” feature for their state. Information relating to how to register to vote included details such as deadlines, registration options, and an easy way to check the status of their registration.



### Candidate information

When a viewer searched for 2020 presidential or federal candidates on YouTube, we surfaced an information panel with information about that candidate—including party affiliation, office, and when available, the official YouTube channel of the candidate—above search results.



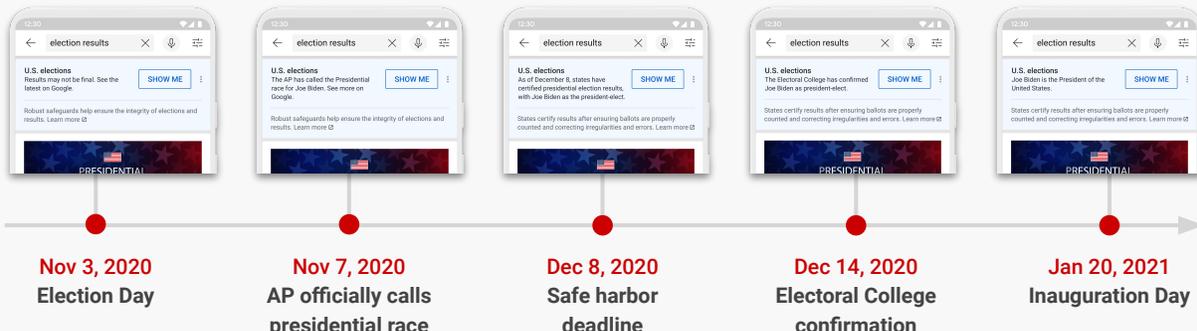
### Information panels to combat misinformation

#### Election results

On Election Day, we launched an election results information panel at the top of search results for a broad range of queries related to the elections and under videos with election-related content. Immediately following the election, we pointed to Google’s election results page, which included information from The Associated Press. In response to content trends observed on YouTube, we expanded this information panel with an additional link pointing to a page on the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency website that debunked false claims made about the integrity of the elections. Once the safe harbor deadline for state certification passed, we updated the panel again to point to the National Archives Office of the Federal Register page of record for the 2020 electoral college vote. This panel appeared under videos about the election and above election-related search results.

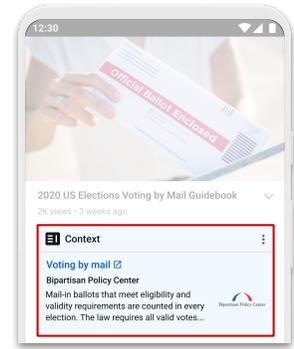
#### Election information panels timeline

Throughout the election cycle, we updated our elections results information panel in order to continue driving viewers to timely, authoritative elections information



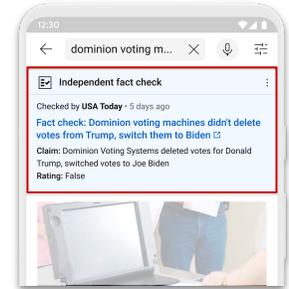
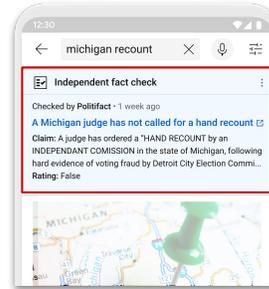
### Vote by mail

In 2018, we started to show [information panels](#) linking to third-party sources around a small number of well-established topics that are subject to misinformation, such as the moon landing or QAnon. For the 2020 U.S. elections, we added voting by mail to this set of topics. When U.S. viewers search for queries related to voting by mail or view a video with related content, we show an information panel that links to authoritative information from the Bipartisan Policy Center, a bipartisan think tank.



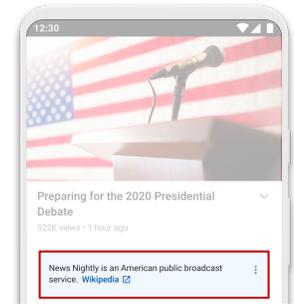
### Fact checks

In the spring of 2020, we rolled out our [fact check information panels](#) to the United States. This feature expanded on the [other ways](#) we raise and connect viewers with authoritative sources by providing fresh context from third-party fact-checked articles above search results for relevant queries—including specific claims about the elections. For example, in the time between when voting began and election results, our fact check panels triggered for search queries like “watermarked ballots” and “sharpie arizona.” In the wake of the January 6th incident at the Capitol, our fact check panels triggered articles debunking rumors that the perpetrators were antifa posing as Trump supporters when viewers searched for terms like “Michigan recount” and “Dominion voting machines”



### Publisher funding

We show [notices](#) below videos uploaded by news publishers that receive some level of government or public funding. Our goal is to equip viewers with additional information to help them better understand the sources of news content that they choose to watch on YouTube.



## Reduce

One of the main ways YouTube viewers find content is through recommendations. Limiting the reach of borderline content and prominently surfacing authoritative information are important ways we protect people from problematic content that doesn't violate our Community Guidelines. In January 2019, we announced that we would begin reducing recommendations of borderline content or videos that could misinform viewers in harmful ways. Since then, we've launched numerous changes to reduce recommendations of borderline content and harmful misinformation.

Determining what is harmful misinformation or borderline is tricky, especially for the wide variety of videos that are on YouTube. We rely on external evaluators located around the world to provide critical input on the quality of a video. These evaluators use public guidelines to guide their work. Each evaluated video receives up to 9 different opinions, and some critical areas require certified experts. For example, medical doctors provide guidance on the validity of videos about specific medical treatments to limit the spread of medical misinformation. Based on the consensus input from the evaluators, we use well-tested machine learning systems to build models. These models help review hundreds of thousands of hours of videos every day in order to find and limit the spread of borderline content. And over time, the accuracy of these systems will continue to improve.

Despite these encouraging results, we recognize there's always more to do. For example, while problematic misinformation represents a fraction of 1% of what's watched on YouTube in the U.S., we know we can further reduce that number. And some videos, while not recommended prominently on YouTube, continue to get high views, sometimes coming from other sites. We are continuing to consider this as well as other new challenges as we make ongoing improvements.

### ■ Reduce by the numbers

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**< 1%**

Borderline content makes up less than 1% of views\*



**70% ↓**

We saw a 70% average drop in borderline content watchtime after algorithm changes from non-subscribed recommendations\*

**100K+**

Hundreds of thousands of hours of videos are reviewed by models every day to find and limit the spread of borderline content



# \$ Reward

YouTube empowers Creators to earn money directly on our platform in a variety of different ways, including through placed advertising, merchandise sales, and subscriptions. From 2018 to 2020, we paid more than \$30 billion to Creators, artists, and media companies to support our Creator economy.

Creators must first be eligible for the YouTube Partner Program (YPP) in order to earn money from advertising on their videos and livestreams. Monetization is a privilege, and we only reward Creators who meet eligibility thresholds and follow our guidelines. We review Creators' channels prior to approving YPP applications, and review channel content periodically as well to ensure their content adheres to our Community Guidelines and advertiser-friendly content guidelines.

## YouTube Partner Program overview and eligibility



### 1. Be eligible for YPP

To apply for membership in YPP, channels must meet eligibility thresholds



### 2. Be accepted into YPP

Only channels that meet eligibility thresholds and follow all of our guidelines will be admitted to the program and eligible for monetization



### 3. Stay compliant with YPP

If ad monetization is turned on for a video, it must follow our monetization and advertiser-friendly content guidelines, to avoid having limited or no ads appear against it

## ■ Monetization of election-related content

Advertising is the primary way Creators can earn money on YouTube. Advertising revenue is generated when people watch ads that are running on videos. This revenue from ads is shared between YouTube and the Creator—thus empowering Creators to directly profit from their work. YPP Creators who monetize via advertising must adhere to our Ad-Friendly Guidelines for their content. These guidelines go above and beyond our Community Guidelines to hold monetized content to an even higher standard. If Creator content violates any of our Community Guidelines, including the election-related policies outlined in this response, that content will be removed from YouTube. If a video violates our Ad-Friendly Guidelines, we may demonetize or limit monetization on that video. Creators who repeatedly violate our rules may be suspended from YPP either temporarily or permanently, depending on the scope and frequency of violations.



## ■ Political advertising

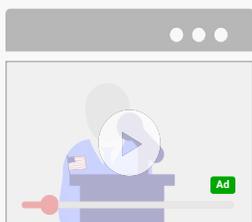
Throughout the course of the election cycle, both major presidential candidates ran advertisements on YouTube. Because [Google's ads policies](#) govern all ads that run on YouTube, every political ad that ran in the masthead or any other spot on our platform were subject to Google Ads policies specific to political advertising.

When it comes to elections, the Google Ads [Unreliable Claims](#) policy prohibits advertising content “making claims that are demonstrably false and could significantly undermine participation or trust in an electoral or democratic process.” We also applied the Sensitive Events policy to the 2020 U.S. elections after polls closed on November 3rd until December 10th of 2020, thus prohibiting ads attempting to profit from or exploit the elections. For example, advertising content that used keywords related to the 2020 U.S. elections in an attempt to drive additional traffic were considered violative.

Additionally, since January 6, 2021 we've been in a limited Sensitive Event, per our standard policies, given the violent events in Washington D.C. Effective January 14, 2021, we expanded that designation to include all political ads. While this policy is in place, advertisers are not able to run ads referencing candidates, the election, its outcome, the presidential inauguration, the presidential impeachment process, violence at the U.S. Capitol, or future planned protests on these topics.

Google Ads also does not allow granular microtargeting (including non-political ads). All advertisers must adhere to Google's advertising policies, which include strict verification and transparency guidelines for political advertisers. Verified U.S. political advertisers can only target election ads based on age, gender, location (e.g., postal code), and context (e.g., topics). We use both automated and human reviewers to check that our policies are being followed. Finally, clear disclosures are required for all election ads to help viewers better understand who is paying for them. This data is publicly available in Google's [Political Advertising Transparency Report](#).

### Google political ads overview



**01** Clear financial disclosure needed

**02** Does not microtarget

**03** Adheres to Google's advertising policies



# ■ Engagement

As a platform that welcomes diverse points of view and open discourse, we are proud of the role that YouTube can play in major civic moments. Alongside our always-on product features that raise information from authoritative sources on our platform, we adopt additional measures during key civics and election moments.

## ■ Engagement by the numbers

> 700

More than 700 federal candidates used YouTube to reach voters for the 2020 U.S. elections.

3X

Content from U.S. officeholders, candidates, and political channels was viewed 3x more in 2020 than 2016. Watchtime and subscribers added were both 4x more in 2020 than 2016.

## Voter education

1B+

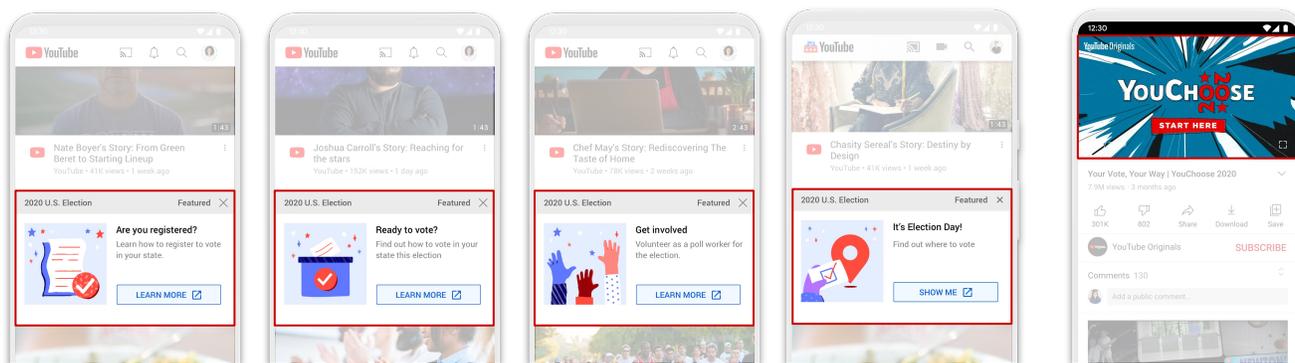
As of November 2020, our voter education PSAs, which helped people learn how to register, how to volunteer at polling locations, how to vote, and where to vote, were collectively shown over 1B times.

7M+

From October to November 2020, YouChoose 2020, our YouTube Originals voter education series which featured information on how to vote, was viewed over 7M times

## ■ Civics moments on YouTube

In addition to our information panels, we displayed information about voting and election results on the YouTube homepage. We also produced YouChoose 2020, a YouTube Original voter education series.

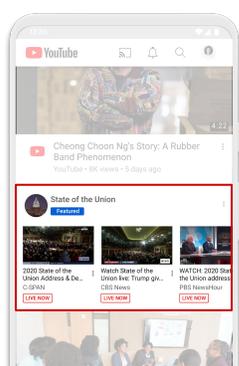


Voter reminders on the YouTube homepage

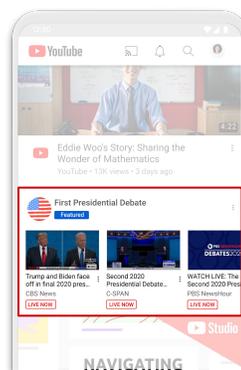
YouChoose 2020



In a year where physical distance changed the nature of political campaigning, YouTube provided a space for candidates in the 2020 U.S. elections at every level to reach voters via video messages and virtual campaign events, like town halls. Voters coming to YouTube had access to a range of information about candidates and their platforms, whether through candidate channels or news coverage of major happenings. This year, most of the Democratic & Republican National Conventions were conducted virtually. Like we have [in the past](#), YouTube livestreamed both conventions so viewers could follow the coverage on the YouTube channels of major news providers. We also work to make major live moments—like the [State of the Union](#), [Debates](#), [Election Day](#), and the [Presidential Inauguration](#)—easily accessible to a wide audience on our platform.



2020 State of the Union



2020 Presidential debate

YouTube offers a range of [tools and resources](#) to help civics partners build their brands and connect with constituents, including a series of guides to help partners get started. Throughout the 2020 U.S. election season, we saw candidates and campaigns use YouTube to directly speak to and hear from a diverse set of communities. They sat down for in-depth interviews with Creators and created videos explaining how they'll address America's most pressing issues. To do this, they've used a range of YouTube's features such as:

- [Cards and end screens](#), to encourage action beyond YouTube, including links to [approved crowdfunding sites](#)—which include ActBlue and WinRed.
- [Livestreaming](#), to hold events such as roundtables and press conferences, allowing for substantive discussions directly with the audience, in real time.
- [Stories](#) and [Community](#), to interact with voters and continue the conversation, even after an official campaign event.

To help navigate these features and ensure they're using YouTube effectively, candidates and campaigns across the political spectrum receive support from our partnerships team.

Some examples of how candidates and political voices used YouTube throughout this election cycle:

- [Vice President Mike Pence is interviewed by Ben Shapiro](#)
- [Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden hosts a virtual town hall on COVID-19](#)
- [Chairwoman of the Republican National Committee, Ronna McDaniel, is interviewed by Allie Beth Stuckey](#)
- [Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris discusses plans for small business owners with Complex](#)



## ■ Conclusion

We understand the need for intense scrutiny on our election-related work. Our teams work hard to ensure we are striking a balance between allowing for a broad range of political speech and making sure our platform isn't abused to incite real-world harm or broadly spread harmful misinformation. We welcome ongoing debate and discussion and will keep engaging with experts, researchers, and organizations to ensure that our policies and products are meeting that goal.

## ■ Additional resources

- [How YouTube Works](#)
- [YouTube Community Guidelines Enforcement Report](#)
- YouTube 2020 U.S. Elections blog posts:
  - [Dec 09, 2020](#)
  - [Nov 03, 2020](#)
  - [Oct 27, 2020](#)
  - [Sep 24, 2020](#)
  - [Aug 13, 2020](#)
  - [Feb 03, 2020](#)
- Partner resources
  - [Global Getting Started Guide for Civics](#)
  - [Livestreaming Guide for Civics](#)
- Political advertising
  - [Political advertising policies on YouTube](#)
  - [Political advertising report](#)

