

# What ‘The Social Dilemma’ Gets Wrong

We should have conversations about the impact of social media on our lives. But ‘The Social Dilemma’ buries the substance in sensationalism.

Rather than offer a nuanced look at technology, it gives a distorted view of how social media platforms work to create a convenient scapegoat for what are difficult and complex societal problems. The film’s creators do not include insights from those *currently* working at the companies or any experts that take a different view to the narrative put forward by the film. They also don’t acknowledge—critically or otherwise—the efforts already taken by companies to address many of the issues they raise. Instead, they rely on commentary from those who haven’t been on the inside for many years. Here are the core points the film gets wrong.

## 1

### ADDICTION

Facebook builds its products to create value, not to be addictive

Our News Feed product teams are not incentivized to build features that increase time-spent on our products. Instead we want to make sure we offer value to people, not just drive usage.

For example, in 2018 we changed our ranking for News Feed to prioritize meaningful social interactions and deprioritize things like viral videos. The change led to a decrease of 50M hours a day worth of time spent on Facebook. That isn’t the kind of thing you do if you are simply trying to drive people to use your services more.

We collaborate with leading mental health experts, organizations and academics, and have our research teams devoted to understanding the impact that social media may have on people’s well-being.

We want people to control how they use our products, which is why we provide time management tools like an activity dashboard, a daily reminder, and ways to limit notifications. We’ve already started dedicating product teams to focus on other areas like loneliness, racial justice, mentorship, mental health, and responsible innovation.

We will continue innovating and coming up with [new tools to help](#) people stay safe.

## 2

### YOU ARE NOT THE PRODUCT

Facebook is funded by advertising so that it remains free for people

Facebook is an ads-supported platform, which means that selling ads allows us to offer everyone else the ability to connect for free. This model allows small businesses and entrepreneurs to grow and compete with bigger brands by more easily finding new customers. But even when businesses purchase ads on Facebook, they don’t know who you are. We provide advertisers with reports about the kinds of people who are seeing their ads and how their ads are performing, but we don’t share information that personally identifies you unless you give us permission. We don’t sell your information to anyone. You can always see the ‘interests’ assigned to you in your ad preferences, and if you want, remove them.

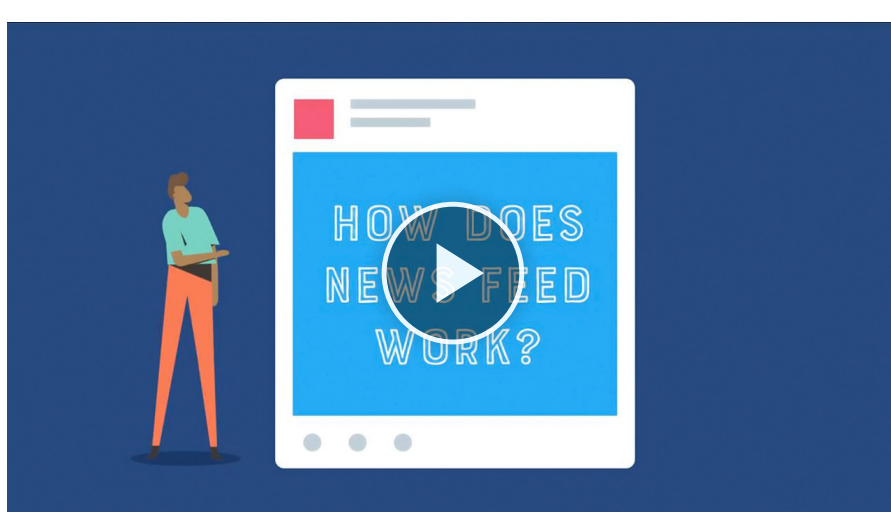
## 3

### ALGORITHMS

Facebook’s algorithm is not ‘mad.’ It keeps the platform relevant and useful

Facebook uses algorithms to improve the experience for people using our apps—just like any dating app, Amazon, Uber, and countless other consumer-facing apps that people interact with every day. That also includes Netflix, which uses an algorithm to determine who it thinks should watch ‘The Social Dilemma’ film, and then recommends it to them. This happens with every piece of content that appears on the service.

Algorithms and machine learning improve our services. For example, at Facebook, we use them to show content that’s more relevant to what people are interested in, whether it’s posts from friends or ads. Portraying algorithms as ‘mad’ may make good fodder for conspiracy documentaries, but the reality is a lot less entertaining.



## 4

### DATA

Facebook has made improvements across the company to protect people’s privacy

Over the last year, we [have made significant changes](#) as part of our agreement with the Federal Trade Commission. We’ve created new safeguards for how data is used, given people new controls on how to manage their data and now have thousands of people working on privacy related projects so that we can continue to meet our privacy commitments and keep people’s information safe.

Despite what the film suggests, we have policies that prohibit businesses from sending us sensitive data about people, including users’ health information or social security numbers, through business tools like the Facebook Pixel and SDK. We do not want this data and we take steps to prevent potentially sensitive data sent by businesses from being used in our systems.

We have called publicly for regulators around the world to join us in helping to get the rules of the internet right and we support regulation that can guide the industry as a whole. This is something we’ve asked of leaders, not run from.

## 5

### POLARIZATION

We take steps to reduce content that could drive polarization

The truth is that polarization and populism have existed long before Facebook and other online platforms were created and we consciously take steps within the product to manage and minimize the spread of this kind of content.

The overwhelming majority of content that people see on Facebook is not polarizing or even political—it’s everyday content from people’s friends and family.

While some posts from more polarizing news sources get a lot of interactions, likes or comments, this content is a tiny percentage of what most people see on Facebook. News from these kinds of Pages doesn’t represent the most viewed news stories on Facebook either.

We reduce the amount of content that could drive polarization on our platform, including links to clickbait headlines or misinformation.

We conduct our own research—and [directly fund](#) that of independent academics—to better understand how our products might contribute to polarization so that we can continue to manage this responsibly.

## 6

### ELECTIONS

Facebook has made investments to protect the integrity of elections

We’ve acknowledged that we made mistakes in 2016. Yet the film leaves out what we have done since 2016 to build strong defenses to stop people from using Facebook to interfere in elections. We’ve improved our security and now have some of the most sophisticated teams and systems worldwide engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior over the past couple of years, including ahead of other major global elections since 2016.

To make ads—in particular political and social ones—more transparent, in 2018 we created an Ad Library which makes all ads running on Facebook visible to people, even if you didn’t see the ad in your own feed. And we label and archive any social issue and election ads in that Library for seven years. We also have policies prohibiting voter suppression and in the U.S., between March and May this year alone, we removed more than 100,000 pieces of Facebook and Instagram content for violating our voter interference policies.

In addition, we’ve kicked off other efforts to secure the integrity of the U.S. election by encouraging voting, connecting people to reliable election information, and updated our policies to counter attempts by a candidate or campaign to prematurely declare victory or delegitimize the election by questioning official results.

## 7

### MISINFORMATION

We fight fake news, misinformation, and harmful content using a global network of fact-checking partners

The idea that we allow misinformation to fester on our platform, or that we somehow benefit from this content, is wrong. Facebook is the only major social media platform with a global network of more than 70 fact-checking partners, who review content in different languages around the world. Content identified as false by our fact-checking partners is labelled and down-ranked in News Feed. Misinformation that has the potential to contribute to imminent violence, physical harm, and voter suppression is removed outright, including misinformation about COVID-19.

We don’t want hate speech on our platform and work to remove it, despite what the film says. While even one post is too many, we’ve made major improvements on this. We removed over 22 million pieces of hate speech in the second quarter of 2020, over 94% of which we found before someone reported it—an increase from a quarter earlier when we removed 9.6 million posts, over 88% of which we found before some reported it to us.

We know our systems aren’t perfect and there are things that we miss. But we are not idly standing by and allowing misinformation or hate speech to spread on Facebook.