

Facebook's Civil Rights Audit

The Auditors encourage Facebook to also address technical limitations of its API, in order to make this research more broadly accessible. Facebook has reported that its product team is working directly with researchers to improve these limitations.

Expanded Voting Reminders: In an effort to support an informed and engaged electorate, Facebook plans to run voter registration reminders for U.S. primary and general elections, and voting day reminders for primary and general elections in 2020.

In addition, Facebook will continue to engage with secretaries of state, elections directors, and national organizing bodies such as the National Association of State Secretaries of State and the National Association of State Election Directors, enabling them to report content that may violate Facebook's Community Standards. For example, Facebook continues to maintain an external escalation channel for election directors to report content to Facebook that may violate state election laws.

Continued External Partnerships & Engagement: Both through the civil rights audit and outside of the audit context, Facebook has engaged with external groups and organizations on election-related issues. Facebook recognizes the critical value of this engagement and commits to continuing to this work on issues surrounding the election and the census.

In the second half of this year, Facebook will convene meetings with voting rights organizations and advocates to provide a forum for flagging new voter or census suppression concerns or tactics, and to discuss how Facebook's policy and operations improvements are working.

Facebook will also continue its engagement with candidates and officials. In 2019, Facebook has already led dozens of training sessions, briefings, and webinars for officials and candidates at the federal, state, and local level to advise them on how to use Facebook's tools most effectively and how best to protect their offices and campaigns against security breaches. These include trainings at conferences for women entering politics, for local advocacy groups and nonprofits, and for Black and Puerto Rican legislators, as well as Democratic and Republican staff associations and party committees. Facebook will host additional trainings later this year at upcoming conferences, including those representing Black and Hispanic state legislators.

C. Prioritizing the 2020 Census

Apart from the presidential election, 2020 will be a critical year for an entirely different reason: it is a census year. The census is a constitutional requirement that serves as the foundation for allocating federal benefits and electoral representation. The significance of the census, coupled with the historical undercounting of certain groups, including Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other communities of color, immigrants, and people who are incarcerated, reinforces why the census is a critical focus area.

Through the audit, Facebook has committed to treating the 2020 Census with the same priority and focus as a high priority election. To that end, Facebook has agreed to take the following actions:

Census Interference Policy: Extending Facebook's voter suppression protections to the census, Facebook will launch a census interference policy in the fall of 2019. The policy will prohibit misrepresentations of census requirements, methods, or logistics, and census-related misinformation (threats of violence for participating in the census are already covered under Facebook's violence and incitement policy).

Census Training: In addition to the voting-related training described above, an expert consultant will also provide training to those responsible for census-related content or ad policies, census-related escalation teams, and anyone responsible for supervising content reviewers who will be enforcing Facebook's policy against census interference. The training will occur in early 2020, and will include explanation of the 2020 Census timeline and the significance of the census, current and/or historical examples of census suppression efforts, as well as discussion of what census-related content is prohibited on Facebook and any census enforcement and escalation protocols.

Proactive Detection of Census Interference: Facebook has committed to using proactive detection technology to identify content that violates Facebook's forthcoming census interference policy without waiting for users to report the content. Facebook is conducting research to inform the training of its algorithms for application to the 2020 Census. Facebook will also continue to work with the Audit Team to identify and engage census experts to assist the company in anticipating suppressive tactics and content and help support the company's proactive detection efforts.

Census Interference Reporting Partnerships: Paralleling the voting rights reporting partnerships described in the December 2018 Audit Update, Facebook will look to partner with census protection groups to flag for review by Facebook potentially suppressive census-related content they encounter.

Dedicated Census Resources and Operations: Facebook is creating a dedicated team focused on the 2020 Census, supervised by a single manager in the U.S. operations center, that will be responsible for developing and deploying Facebook's proactive detection tools. As Facebook continues its operations and resource deployment, Facebook commits to sharing more operational details and 2020 Census planning commitments.

Promoting Census Participation: Finally, Facebook will continue to engage with external stakeholders and partners to promote census participation. Facebook has already provided training to more than 20 different organizations on how to use its tools and products to increase awareness of the census and encourage participation. Facebook plans to conduct additional trainings and also establish internal protocols to promptly address census-related concerns escalated by external stakeholders.