

Feb 15, 2023 - Technology

# Online content policing loses steam



Scott Rosenberg

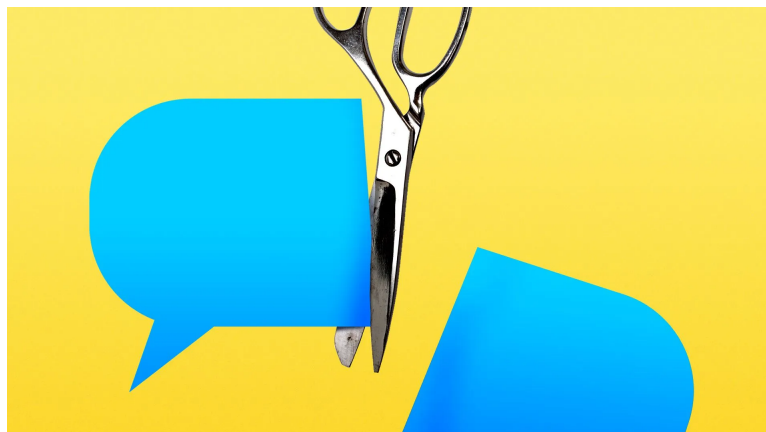


Illustration: Annelise Capossela/Axios

On tech's biggest platforms, efforts to limit undesirable content are splintering as corporate priorities change.

**Why it matters:** Major online platforms that once competed to display their vigilance against [misinformation](#), abuse and hate speech are now choosing decidedly different roads on how to police their content.

**Driving the news:** The Oversight Board that handles appeals of Facebook's content decisions [announced](#) Tuesday it would speed up some of its processes and take on more cases.

- The changes, which promise decisions "within days in urgent cases," could allow the independent organization to serve as more of a real-time participant in Facebook's enforcement of its rules.
- But the announcement is also another reminder that the company is increasingly willing to outsource critical decisions about its content policy.

**The big picture:** After the 2016 U.S. presidential election and Facebook's

Cambridge Analytica controversy, large social media platforms all sought to show the public and lawmakers that they were cracking down on what critics identified as a deluge of misinformation and toxic posts.

- The companies, operating in parallel, tightened policies and hired legions of moderators in a campaign that continued through the COVID-19 pandemic, when platforms were flooded with medical misinformation.

**But that consensus approach** is ebbing today.

**Meta's platforms**, including Facebook and Instagram, increasingly rely on the Oversight Board to resolve or assist with the toughest questions they face — like the recent decision [to allow former president Donald Trump back](#) onto Facebook.

- The company still has large content moderation teams both in-house and through contractors. But its recent focus on building a metaverse has moved the attention of CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his key lieutenants away from content concerns.

**Twitter under Elon Musk**, meanwhile, has

chosen a radically different course. The service recently offered a [broad amnesty](#) to accounts previously banned for violating its rules after a survey of Musk's Twitter followers supported the move.

- Musk has said he favors broad free speech principles, but critics have argued his changes have [resulted in a surge](#) of racist, anti-semitic and anti-LGBTQ speech and other kinds of extremism on Twitter.
- Musk's massive staff cuts at Twitter also decimated the teams that previously handled making and enforcing its content policies, particularly outside the U.S.

**At Google's YouTube**, recent layoffs included several managers and experts on content policy, per [the New York Times](#).

- "Responsibility remains our top priority," YouTube spokesperson Elena Hernandez said in a statement. "We'll continue to support the teams, machine learning, and policies that protect the YouTube community, and pursue this work with the same focus and rigor moving

forward."

**Between the lines:** Platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube increasingly rely on automated systems to flag content that might violate their policies.

- But the policies are set by people, and human moderators must still review decisions, handle tougher cases and resolve complaints.

**Our thought bubble:** It's not surprising that, at a moment when an economic slowdown is triggering widespread layoffs in the industry, companies would pick content moderation as a prime area for cutbacks. After all, these departments are not directly responsible for revenue.

- But they do play a big role in placating advertisers who don't want their messages to run next to hate-filled screeds. And even sites dedicated to "free speech" need to enforce laws governing underage users, terrorist content and more.

**What's next:** The [advent of generative AI](#) could lead to a new onslaught of automated social media posts that further test platforms' ability to protect their users'

conversations.

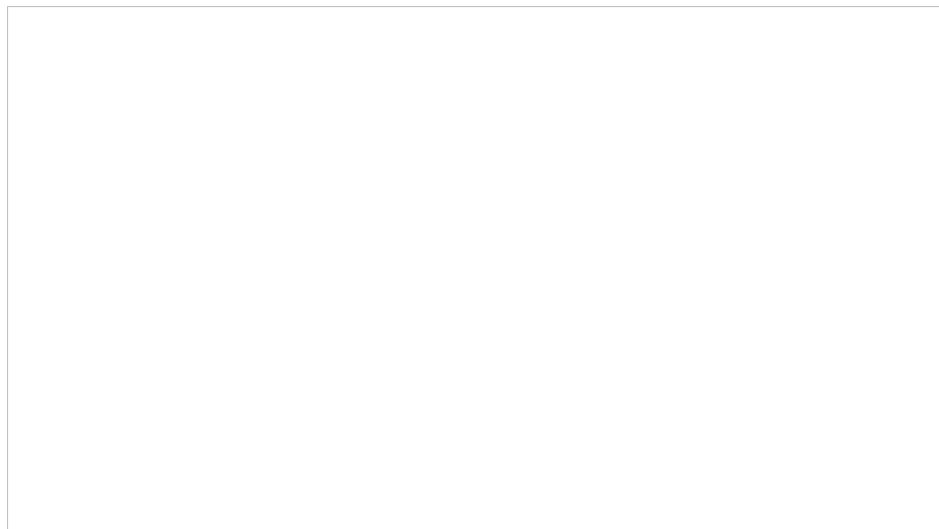


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Jacob Knutson  
39 mins ago - Politics & Policy

# Pittsburgh synagogue gunman found guilty in worst antisemitic attack in U.S. history



A memorial for the victims of the mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in October 2018. Photo: Jeff Swensen/Getty Images

The gunman who killed 11 people and injured 6 others during a mass shooting at a [Pittsburgh synagogue in 2018](#) was found guilty of 63 criminal counts, including hate crimes resulting in death, by a Pennsylvania jury on Friday, [AP](#) reports.

**The big picture:** The shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue marked the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history, and Friday's verdict brings the harrowing case closer to a close.

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April Rubin  
3 hours ago - Health

# BMI metric has caused "historical harm," American Medical Association says

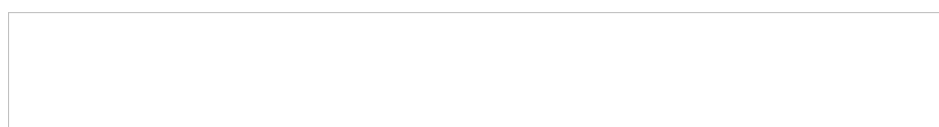




Illustration: Gabriella Turrisi/Axios

The body mass index (BMI) metric has caused "historical harm," including racist exclusion, according to a [new report](#) by the American Medical Association (AMA) Council on Science and Public Health.

**Why it matters:** Doctors have long relied on BMI to [measure obesity](#), but it is an imperfect measurement that does not directly assess body fat, the nation's largest medical association said this week.

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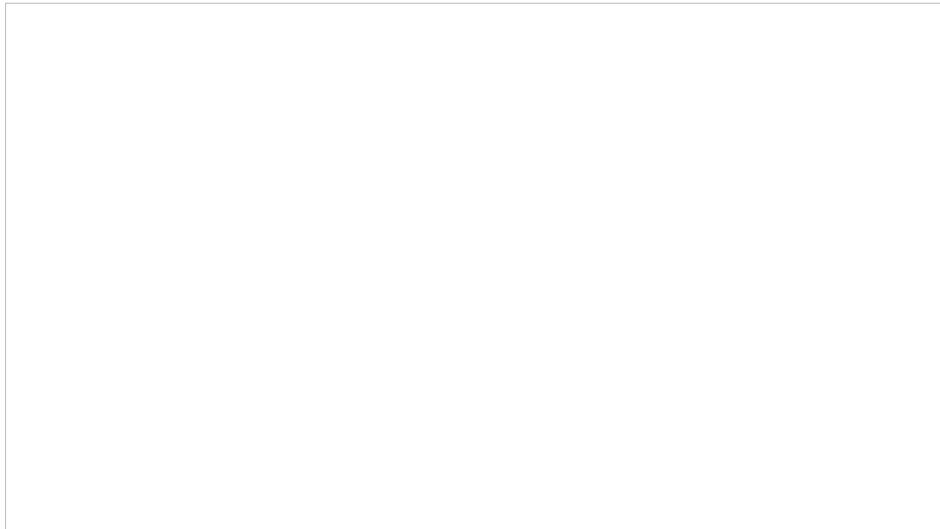


Andrew Solender

4 hours ago - Politics & Policy

## Trump ally plans renewed push to censure Adam Schiff





Rep. Anna Paulina Luna. Photo: Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post via Getty Images.

[Trump](#)-aligned Rep. [Anna Paulina Luna](#) (R-Fla.), fresh off a [failed effort to censure](#) former House Intelligence Committee Chair [Adam Schiff](#) (D-Calif.), is already planning another run at it.

**Why it matters:** Luna’s effort is part of a [sprawling GOP mobilization](#) to defend former President Trump after he was indicted for alleged [mishandling of classified documents](#).

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