

Twitter tries to crack down on online trolls

Details of Twitter's efforts to curb hate speech



Twitter's actions

- Twitter has released tools to stave off online abuse, which includes a feature that allows users to “**mute**” certain offensive words and phrases
- Following the release of these tools, Twitter also suspended the accounts of prominent white nationalist and alt-right users
- When asked whether important government officials or Donald Trump himself could be banned from the platform, a Twitter spokesperson stated, “The Twitter Rules apply to all accounts, including **verified accounts**”
- As Twitter is a private entity, there is no First Amendment violation from account suspensions



What are people saying about it?

- *The Atlantic*'s David Frum has stated, “It’s precisely the perception of arbitrary and one-sided speech policing that drives so many young men toward radical illiberal politics”
- Edward Snowden took to Twitter to assert, “The answer to bad speech is not censorship. The answer to bad speech is more speech”
- Alt-right leader Richard Spencer, who has recently had his account reinstated, posted a video after his initial suspension lamenting, “I am alive physically, but digitally, there have been execution squads across the alt-right”



What prompted this policy?

- The crackdown coincides with a **rise in online abuse** that has been reported since Election Day
- Twitter has been accused of not being stringent enough when it comes to dealing with online harassment
- The European Commission has also called on tech companies like Twitter and Facebook to be more aggressive about curbing online hate speech, saying **new legislation** would be introduced requiring it if they do not do so themselves

Sources: Travis M. Andrews, “‘A great purge?’: Twitter suspends Richard Spencer, other prominent alt-right accounts,” *The Washington Post*, November 16, 2016; David Frum, “Twitter’s misbegotten censorship,” *The Atlantic*, November 16, 2016; Amar Toor, “Facebook, Twitter and Google are still failing to curb hate speech, EU says,” *The Verge*, December 5, 2016; Michael J. Coren, “Twitter says it will ban Trump if he breaks hate-speech rules,” *Quartz*, November 30, 2016; Will Oremus, “Would Facebook or Twitter ever ban Trump? One might,” *Slate*, November 28, 2016; Noun Project, 2016; Twitter, 2016.