DETAILED REPORT

December 2021 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report

∞ Meta

Since 2017, we've reported on over 150 influence operations with details on each network takedown so that people know about the threats we see — whether they come from nation states, commercial firms or unattributed groups. Information sharing enabled our teams, investigative journalists, government officials and industry peers to better understand and expose internet-wide security risks, including ahead of critical elections.
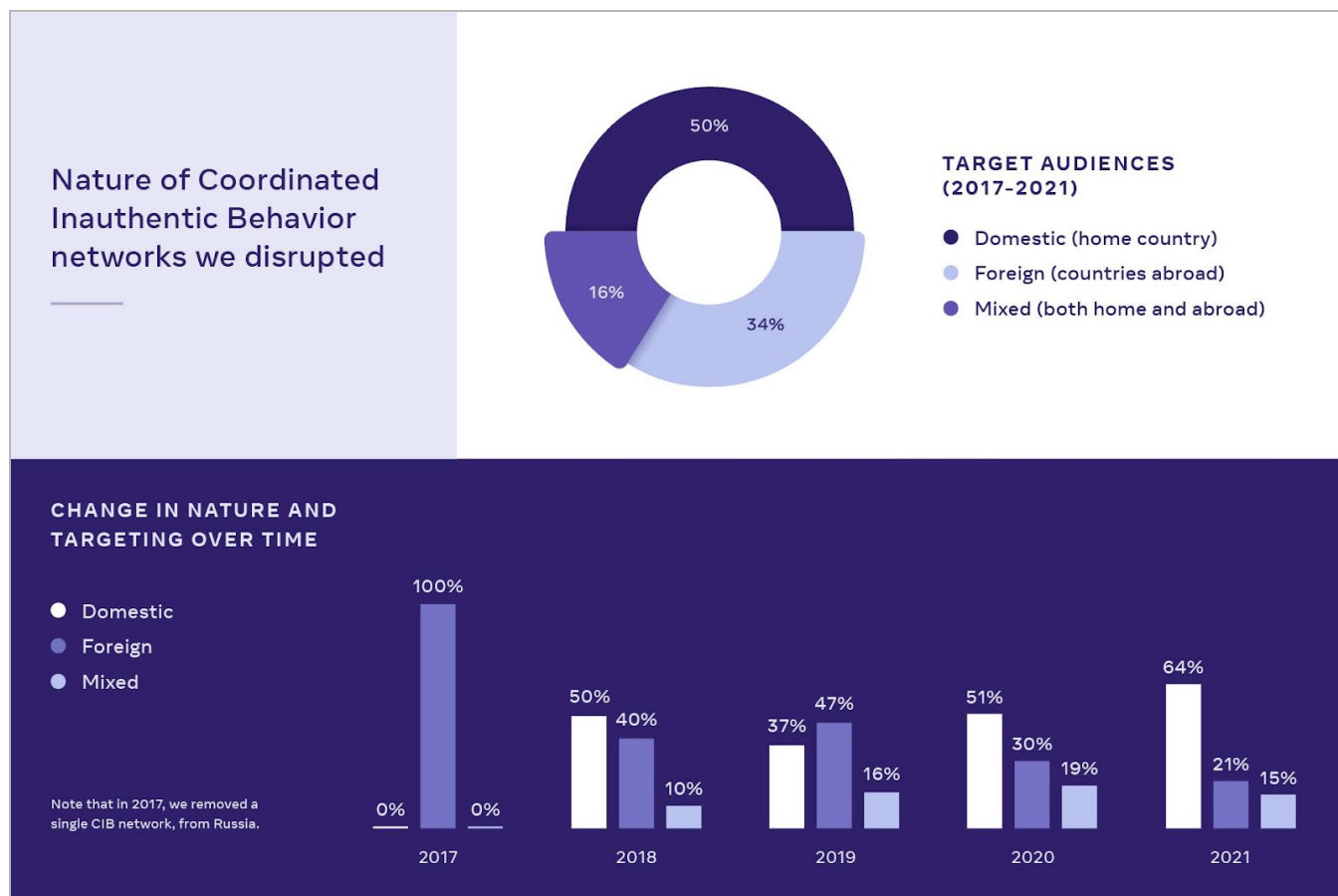
In 2021, we removed 52 networks that engaged in coordinated efforts to manipulate or corrupt public debate for a strategic goal, while relying centrally on fake accounts to mislead people about who's behind them. They came from 34 countries, including Latin America, the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, Middle East and Africa.

GLOBAL CIB DISRUPTIONS, 2017–2021
(by country of origin)

2017   2018   2019   2020   2021
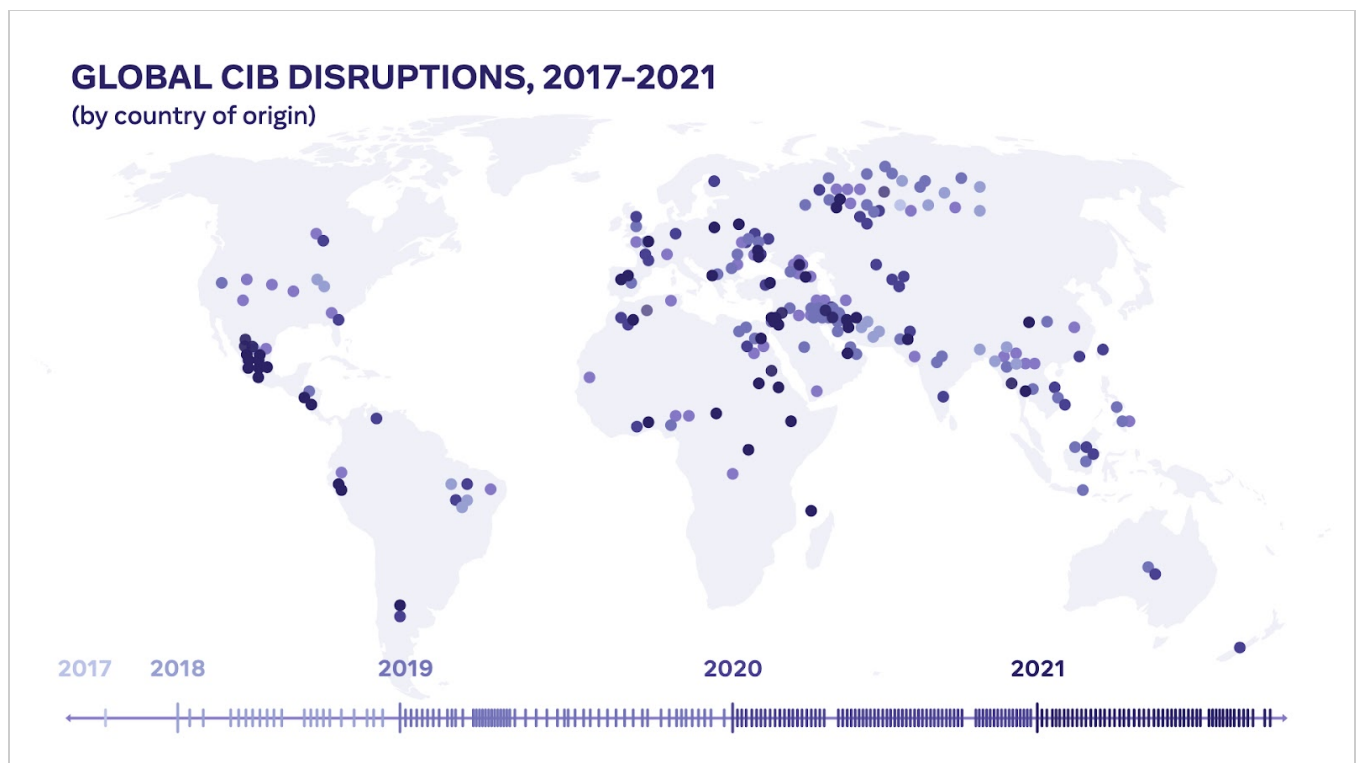
Providing researchers with analysis & data
Since 2018, we've also shared information with independent researchers because we know that no single company can tackle these challenges alone. In 2021, we started publishing deep-dive internal research into particularly notable operations we investigate and disrupt to provide

insights into new tactics and threat evolution ([March](#), [April](#), [July](#), [October](#), and [November](#)). Last month, we began expanding our [beta research platform](#) — with about 100 data sets — to more researchers worldwide studying influence operations. With this platform, we now provide access to raw data where researchers can visualize and assess these operations both quantitatively and qualitatively, in addition to sharing our own internal research and analysis.

Nature of Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior networks we disrupted

TARGET AUDIENCES (2017-2021)

- Domestic (home country)
- Foreign (countries abroad)
- Mixed (both home and abroad)

50%

16%

34%

CHANGE IN NATURE AND TARGETING OVER TIME

- Domestic
- Foreign
- Mixed

Note that in 2017, we removed a single CIB network, from Russia.

		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Domestic		0%	50%	37%	51%	64%
Foreign		100%	40%	47%	30%	21%
Mixed		0%	10%	16%	19%	15%

Expanding Threat Reporting to New Areas

Since 2020, we've [expanded](#) our threat reporting to new areas including cyber espionage, financially-motivated inauthentic behavior, and coordinated adversarial networks targeting people with brigading, mass reporting and other harmful activities. We know that people abusing communication platforms online don't strive to neatly fit our policies or only violate one at a time and are constantly changing their tactics to evade our enforcement. To help provide a more comprehensive view into how these threats evolve and how we counter them, we'll continue to adapt and expand our reporting into new areas in 2022.

Finally, like our colleagues at [Twitter](#), we've seen an evolution in the global threats that companies like ours face and a significant increase in safety risks to our employees around the world. When we believe these risks are high, we will prioritize enforcement and the safety of our teams over publishing our findings. While this change won't impact the actions we take against deceptive operations we detect, it means that — in what we hope to be rare cases — we won't be sharing all network disruptions publicly.

WHAT IS CIB?

We view CIB as coordinated efforts to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal where fake accounts are central to the operation. There are two tiers of these activities that we work to stop: 1) coordinated inauthentic behavior in the context of domestic, non-government campaigns and 2) coordinated inauthentic behavior on behalf of a foreign or government actor.

When we find campaigns that include groups of accounts and Pages seeking to mislead people about who they are and what they are doing while relying on fake accounts, we remove both inauthentic and authentic accounts, Pages and Groups directly involved in this activity.

CONTINUOUS ENFORCEMENT

We monitor for efforts to re-establish a presence on Facebook by networks we previously removed. Using both automated and manual detection, we continuously remove accounts and Pages connected to networks we took down in the past.

SUMMARY OF DECEMBER 2021 FINDINGS

Our teams continue to focus on finding and removing deceptive campaigns around the world — whether they are foreign or domestic. In December, we removed three networks: from Iran, Mexico, and Turkey. We have shared information about our findings with industry partners, researchers and policymakers.

We know that influence operations will keep evolving in response to our enforcement, and new deceptive behaviors will emerge. We will continue to refine our enforcement and share our findings publicly. We are making progress rooting out this abuse, but as we've said before — it's an ongoing effort and we're committed to continually improving to stay ahead. That means building better technology, hiring more people and working closely with law enforcement, security experts and other companies. We also continue to [call for updated internet regulations](#) against cross-platform influence operations.

- **Total number of Facebook accounts removed:** 61

- **Total number of Instagram accounts removed:** 151

- **Total number of Pages removed:** 305

- **Total number of Groups removed:** 3

NETWORKS REMOVED IN DECEMBER 2021:

1. **Iran**: We removed eight Facebook accounts and 126 Instagram accounts from Iran that primarily targeted audiences in the UK, with a focus on Scotland. We found this activity as a result of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Our investigation found links to individuals in Iran, including some with a background in teaching English as a foreign language.
2. **Mexico**: We removed 12 Facebook accounts, 172 Pages and 11 accounts on Instagram. This network originated primarily in Mexico and targeted audiences in Honduras, Ecuador, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Mexico. We found this activity as a result of reviewing public reporting about some of this activity. Our investigation found links to Wish Win, a PR firm in Mexico.
3. **Turkey**: We removed 41 Facebook accounts, 133 Pages, three Groups and 14 Instagram accounts. They originated primarily in Turkey and targeted people in Libya. We found this network as part of our internal investigation into the suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in Libya connected to prior reports of impersonation. We linked this activity to the Muslim Brotherhood's affiliated Libyan Justice and Construction Party.

01

We removed eight Facebook accounts and 126 accounts on Instagram for violating our policy against [coordinated inauthentic behavior](). This network originated in Iran and targeted primarily Scotland in the United Kingdom.
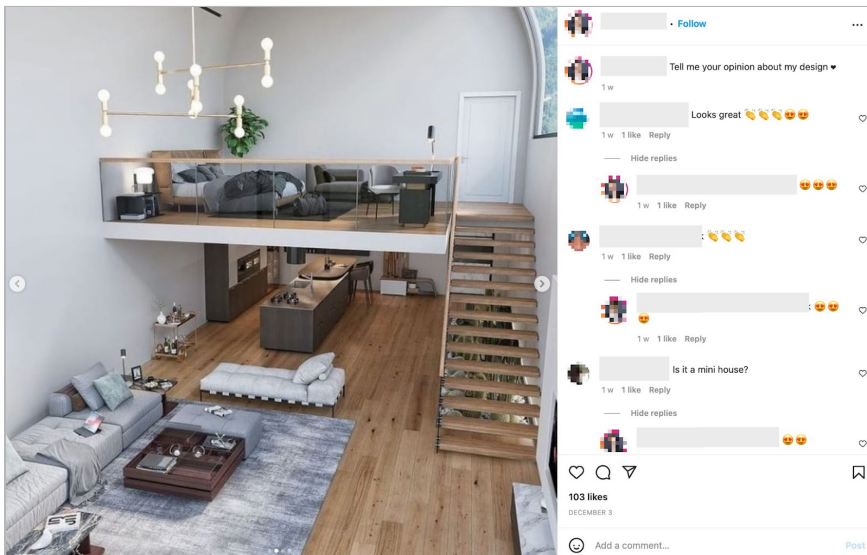
The people behind this activity relied on fake accounts — some of which were detected and disabled by our automated systems — to pose as locals in England and Scotland, like and post political content and try to contact policymakers and other people. This operation took place primarily on Instagram. Some of the accounts had profile pictures likely generated using artificial intelligence techniques like generative adversarial networks (GAN). Others used photos of celebrities and media personalities from the UK and Iraq.

This network posted photos and memes in English about current events in the UK, including supportive commentary about Scottish independence and criticism of the UK government. These accounts also posted about hobbies, football and the UK cities they claimed to be based in, likely to make these fictitious personas appear more authentic. The individuals behind this activity organized their content around common hashtags promoting Scottish independence, at times misspelling them.

We found this network as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region, with some links to the network we [removed]() in December 2020. Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals in Iran, including some with a background in teaching English as a foreign language.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* eight Facebook accounts and 126 accounts on Instagram.
- *Followers:* About 77,000 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages and accounts.

02

We removed 12 Facebook accounts, 172 Pages and 11 accounts on Instagram for violating our policy against [coordinated inauthentic behavior](). This network originated primarily in Mexico and targeted people in Honduras, Ecuador, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

The people behind this activity relied on authentic and fake accounts — some of which were detected and disabled by our automated systems — to post, comment, manage Pages and share links to off-platform domains posing as independent news sites. Some of the Pages also purported to be local news outlets in the countries they targeted. Some of these accounts went through significant name changes over time, and some appeared to be compromised.

The individuals behind this activity posted primarily in Spanish about news and current events in Latin America and particular countries they targeted, including praising some political candidates while criticizing their opponents. On one occasion, the network stated that an opposition candidate in Honduras was involved in the "Pandora Papers" corruption scandal — this claim was [fact-checked]() and debunked.

After reviewing press reporting about this particular claim, we began investigating this activity. We took interim action ahead of the elections in Honduras while we worked to uncover and understand the full scope of this network. Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to Wish Win, a PR firm in Mexico.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram: 12* Facebook accounts, 172 Pages and 11 accounts on Instagram.
- *Followers:* About 551,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages and about 1,000 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* Around $285,000 in spending for ads on Facebook and Instagram paid for primarily in US dollars and Mexican peso.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages and accounts.
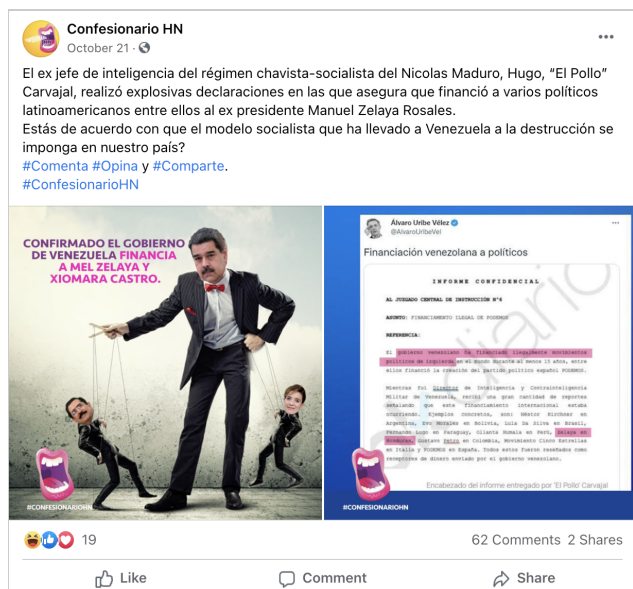
Translation:

Page Name: HN Confessional

Caption: The ex-head of intelligence of Nicolas Maduro's Chavista-Socialist regime, Hugo "El Pollo" Carvajál, made explosive statements where he claimed to have financed various Latin American politicians, including ex-president Manuel Zelaya Rosales. Do you agree to the socialist model that brought Venezuela to destruction being imposed on our country? #Comment #React and #Share #ConfesionarioHN

Image overlay: Confirmed: The Venezuelan government funded Manuel Zelava y Xiomara Castro

Page name: Dawn Facts

Headline: US is behind the protests in El Salvador: Bukele

Translation

Page name: District News

Caption: #HondurasDecides The CNE [National Electoral Council] reports errors on its website

Headline: Reports say CNE website is down

03

We removed 41 Facebook accounts, 133 Pages, three Groups and 14 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#). This network originated primarily in Turkey and mainly targeted Libya.

The people behind this activity used fake accounts — some of which were detected and disabled by our automated systems — to post and manage Groups and Pages, including those that purported to belong to public figures and organizations in Libya, including an airport, government entities, a former prime minister, politicians, journalists and activists. Some of this network's Pages were disabled for impersonation and other violations.

The individuals behind this activity posted in Arabic about news and current events in the region, including the delayed elections and criticism of the rise of women in politics, society and the media. In fact, this network created Pages, purporting to be run by female public figures to make inflammatory statements on their behalf. They then would use their other Pages to point to these fictitious comments to criticize them, likely to encourage harassment.

We found this network as part of our internal investigation into the suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in Libya connected to prior reports of impersonation. Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, we found links to the Muslim Brotherhood's affiliated Libyan Justice and Construction Party.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 41 Facebook accounts, 133 Pages, three Groups and 14 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 1.7 million accounts followed one or more of these Pages, around 600 people joined one or more of these Groups and about 4,000 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* Around $59,000 in spending for ads on Facebook and Instagram paid for primarily in US dollars and Swiss franc.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these accounts.

Translation

Caption: Clarification regarding this cheque, which was published on social media pages
This is the value of donations from a businessman that I received to buy winter clothes for the needy and those affected by the floods in the city of Al-Bayda

Translation

Page name: Brigadier General Faraj Al-Barasi

Caption: Mrs. Wafa Bugaighis, stop trading in the homeland, throughout your tenure as ambassador, which exceeded ten years, nothing has arrived from America to support the hospitals of Cyrenaica, even with one shipment, the only beneficiary you and your family.

Page name: Dr. Faiz Elsaraj

د.فائز السراج
1d ·

بعد تاريخ 24 ديسمبر يجب تسليم السلطة للمجلس الرئاسي بحكومة الوفاق الوطني وعودتنا لتسيير البلاد لموعد الانتخابات حتى لا يحدث فراغ سياسي في البلاد

After December 24, the power should be handed over to the Presidential Council of the National Alliance Government and our promise to return the country to the date of elections so that there is no political vacuum in the country

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136   99 Comments 1 Share