



Content & Controversy: The News Trends of 2020 That Will Influence Brand Safety & Suitability in 2021



THE START OF 2021 HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT FAST-EVOLVING NEWS CYCLES ARE HERE TO STAY

What trends marked 2020's biggest news cycles, and what do these trends suggest for brand safety and suitability in the year ahead?

Brands unwittingly spent at least \$235 million in advertising on sites linked to disinformation in 2019, based on **GDI estimates**. This number is likely to continue growing as fast-evolving news cycles create opportunities for bad actors to spread disinformation.

DoubleVerify analyzes billions of impressions a day to help keep brands safe from appearing alongside unsafe and unsuitable content. Publishers promoting specious and incendiary or racially biased/motivated claims are classified into DV's Inflammatory Politics and News and Hate Speech categories, respectively. These category classifications allow advertisers to protect their brand reputation and ensure their ad dollars do not inadvertently fund bad-faith actors. DV is able to track the scale of these categories through our category rates, which serve as a proxy for traffic.

Inflammatory and misleading news, for example, increased 83%, year-over-year, during this past November and the U.S. presidential election.

Websites hosting this content, therefore, stood to collect nearly double the ad revenue from unprotected advertisers than they did last year. But this spike around the election offers just one instance of a real world event driving an increase in inflammatory news and hate speech.

To better understand the relationship between controversy and disinformation, DV has examined 2020's content trends relative to the U.S. presidential election, the coronavirus pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement for racial justice. The insights that emerge from 2020 suggest how brands can protect themselves from appearing on sites and apps with suspect content in 2021 and diminish the financial incentives for misleading content — while supporting trusted news and a healthy information ecosystem.

DEFINITION

CATEGORY RATES:

The percentage of all DV monitored ad calls that were adjacent to content classified within a specific category. This serves as a proxy for overall traffic trends.

Content Categories



Inflammatory Politics & News

News or political content associated with or exhibiting inflammatory points of view; potentially fake, unreliable or unsubstantiated information; significant political intolerance, hateful or threatening rhetoric; or other significantly controversial elements.



Hate Speech

Content that is related to biased, derogatory or offensive actions towards any individuals or groups. Content that may incite violence against individuals or groups within a protected class is also within this category.



News

Mainstream reporting about current events at a local, regional, national or international level. This includes official sites for newspapers, radio stations, TV stations and magazines.



Politics

Content about elections, government affairs, political parties and movements.

How Do Ad Dollars End Up on Dubious Sites and Apps?

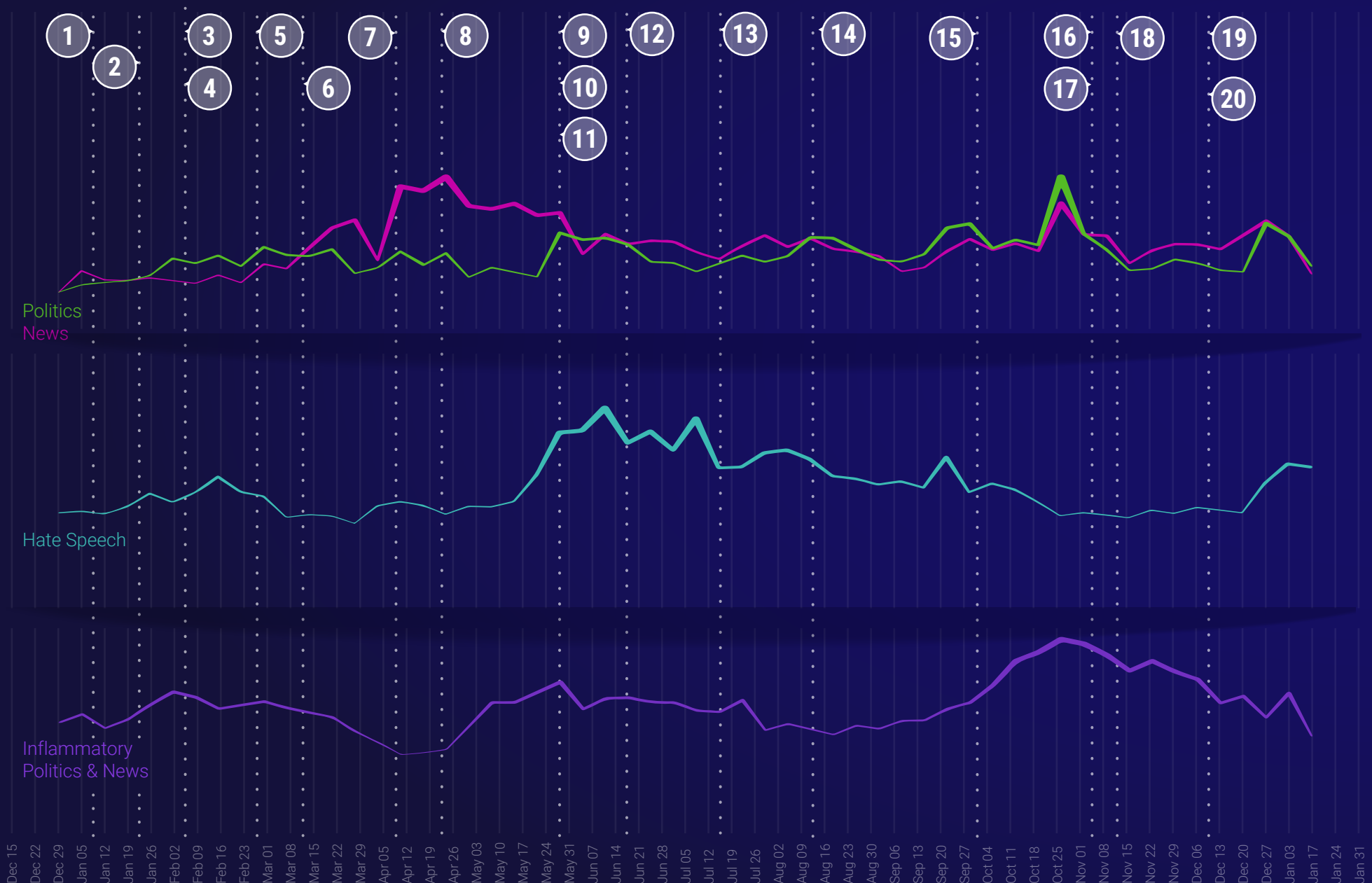
Digital advertising is bought and sold in two ways: directly and via programmatic channels. In a direct buy, an advertiser purchases inventory directly from a publisher. Programmatic buys, which cover over **80%** of all U.S. advertising transactions, work in several different ways.

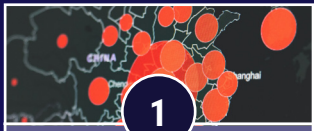
The vast majority of programmatic buys are executed either directly or through private marketplaces (PMPs), but a portion of programmatic buys take place via real-time-bidding (RTB) across the open web — where levels of transparency may vary. In some instances, a lack of transparency can lead to advertisers run on misleading, hateful or otherwise unsafe and unsuitable content.

Programmatic advertising is a critical buying modality that enables publishers to broadly monetize their inventory; allows smaller publishers and independent contributors to access advertising opportunities; and helps brands reach their audiences at scale online.

2020 Timeline Major Events & Content Spikes

This timeline depicts trendlines for DV's Politics, News, Hate Speech and Inflammatory Politics and News categories juxtaposed against various events over the previous year. It is important to note the events depicted here offer insight into the patterns DV saw during 2020, but this is not an exhaustive list of every event to happen over the course of the year.





1

JANUARY 9

WHO announces a novel virus in the Hubei province of China



2

JANUARY 21

First case of Covid-19 diagnosed in the U.S.



3

FEBRUARY 3

Iowa presidential caucus kicks off Democratic primary race



4

FEBRUARY 5

The Senate acquits Trump



5

FEBRUARY 29

The South Carolina primary is held



6

MARCH 13

Trump declares Covid-19 a national emergency



7

APRIL 8

Sanders ends his Campaign, making Biden the presumptive democratic nominee



8

APRIL 20

42 States, D.C. and PR are under stay at home orders



9

MAY 25

George Floyd is killed while in police custody



10

MAY 27

Social justice protests begin to spike across the nation



11

MAY 28

US surpasses 100,000 Covid-19 deaths



12

JUNE 19

155th celebration of Juneteenth



13

JULY 13

7th anniversary of #BlackLivesMatter



14

AUGUST 11

Biden announces Kamala Harris as his V.P. pick



15

OCTOBER 2

Trump announces he has tested positive for Covid-19 and is admitted to Walter Reed



16

NOVEMBER 3

The U.S. Election is held



17

NOVEMBER 7

The associated press declares Biden the winner of the US presidential election



18

NOVEMBER 9

Pfizer announces mRNA vaccine for Covid-19 is 90%+ effective



19

DECEMBER 7

Georgia recertifies the election results following a hand recount



20

DECEMBER 11

FDA grants emergency authorization to Pfizer for mRNA vaccine

JANUARY FEBRUARY 2020

The year began with the World Health Organization (WHO) announcing news of a novel virus in the Hubei province of China on January 9. Less than two weeks later, the first case of Covid-19 was diagnosed in the U.S. The Trump Administration's Health and Human Services Secretary, Alex Azar, declared Covid-19 a public health emergency on January 31. Through the end of February, however, Mr. Azar continued stating that the risk to Americans remained low.

News coverage was also focused on politics during this time. The Democratic Party held four debates between January 14-February 25. And the Iowa caucus kicked off primary voting on February 3.

CONTENT TRENDS

The overall category rates for News did not deviate from December 2019, but Hate Speech rates surged and Inflammatory Politics and News rose steeply in early primary states.

Inflammatory News Spike in Key Democratic Contests

In advance of the first electoral contest, inflammatory and misleading content began climbing in Iowa by mid January. On February 2, the day before the Iowa caucus, the rate of Inflammatory Politics and News across Iowa was 72% above the national average on that same day.

During the week leading up to the New Hampshire primary, Inflammatory Politics and News in the state rose to 73% above the national average. On the day of the primary, Hate Speech in New Hampshire spiked to 83% above the national average for February 11.

South Carolina reached a year-to-date statewide high for Inflammatory Politics and News in the four days leading up to and including its February 29 primary. South Carolina's Inflammatory Politics and News rate was 86% higher than that of the rest of the nation and 76% higher than South Carolina's own year-to-date average from January 1-February 25.

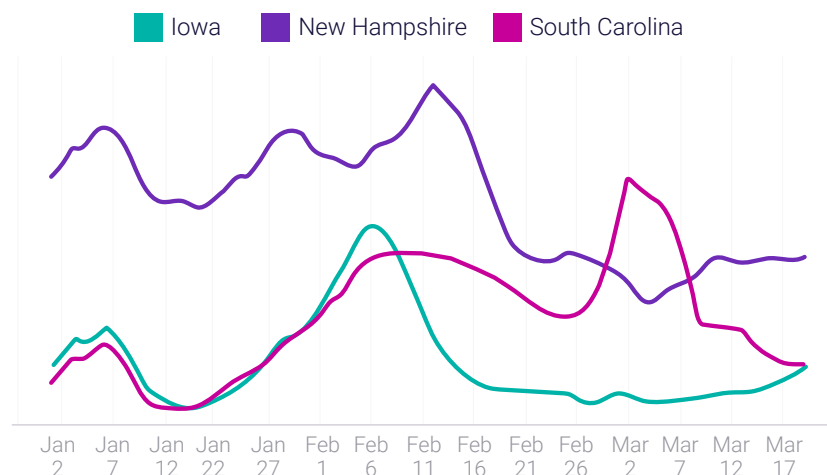
Notably, Politics and News were both below the national average for February, while Inflammatory Politics and News was slightly above the national average.

Hate Speech Also Rises as the Primaries Begin

In February, throughout the country, Hate Speech also rose by 48% compared with January. Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina all followed the national trend for Hate Speech.

Inflammatory Politics & News Category Rate by State

Jan 1-Mar 14



The Big Takeaway

Disinformation spiked in states where Democratic primary voting had begun, but once the voting ended, these rates leveled off. Although Hate Speech rates began to rise steeply as the national focus turned toward the election, this content was widespread. This suggests that hate speech reflected growing tensions across the country; actors sowing disinformation specifically targeted states where citizens were casting votes.

CONTENT TRENDS

Content classified as News surged in March and April while Inflammatory Politics and News and Hate Speech steeply declined.

News Climbs

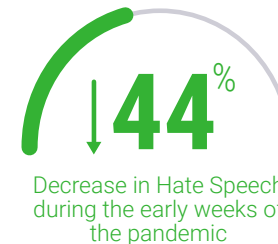
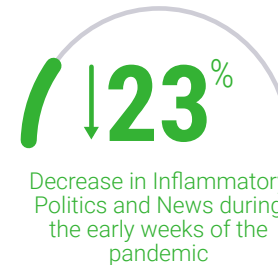
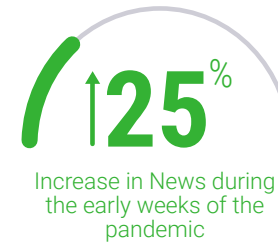
March and April saw the highest category rates of News for all of 2020. Compared with the eight weeks preceding March 13, News content increased by 25% throughout the following two months.

Inflammatory Politics and News and Hate Speech Rapidly Decline

During the same time that news content increased, the category-rate of Inflammatory Politics and News actually fell by 23%. In the early weeks of the pandemic, Hate Speech, which had risen steeply in February, dropped by 44% and returned to the national average for Q4 2019.

Advertisers Start to Think About Brand Safety and Suitability Differently

When the pandemic began, the consumption of News content increased. DV took the stance that **News Saves Lives** and immediately started working with our customers to implement brand suitability best practices in support of trusted news publishers. Within weeks, the violation rate on News content, which describes ads that are blocked or flagged as an incident, dropped by 35%. The brand suitability block rate that had increased by 32%, in the wake of the pandemic, decreased by 40% month-over-month going into April, for a net difference of -8%



MARCH APRIL 2020

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared coronavirus a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, and, two days later, on March 13, then-President Trump declared a national emergency. As the pandemic continued, California became the first state to issue a sweeping stay-at-home order on March 19, which other states then began to follow. By mid-April, over 316 million Americans across 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and various other counties and cities were under **stay-at-home guidelines**.

The Big Takeaway

The increase in News content coupled with the decline in both Hate Speech and Inflammatory Politics and News suggests the unprecedented nature of the coronavirus pandemic created a demand for trusted news that initially shifted people away from inflammatory and incendiary content.

MAY JUNE 2020

Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old, unarmed Black man from Georgia, was assaulted and killed by two white men on February 23. This story became national news in late April, following reporting from [The New York Times](#). Three weeks later, on May 25, George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, while three other police officers looked on and private citizens called for help while filming what was happening. On June 14, Rayshard Brooks was shot and killed outside a Wendy's in Atlanta by an Atlanta police officer. In response to these killings and long unaddressed racial inequities and inequalities, protests around the world were held to oppose white supremacy.

Simultaneously, states started reopening and masks mandates began going into effect. While coronavirus cases in New York and California — early hot spots — were declining, the pandemic worsened across the sunbelt. Although protests had been held throughout April over stay-at-home orders, mask wearing became controversial and [politicized during this time](#).

CONTENT TRENDS

The content trends that defined March and April — an increase in News and a decline in Inflammatory Politics and News and Hate Speech — drastically changed following the death of George Floyd and politicization of masks.

Inflammatory Politics and News Surges in May but Levels-off in June and July

Inflammatory Politics and News increased substantially in May 2020, and while that increase continued into June, it did so by just 5%. This suggests the surge in disinformation was not tied to calls for racial justice and, instead, likely was tied to the ongoing coronavirus news cycle — which by May had become established, and issues such as face masks had become politicized.

Hate Speech Surges as the Black Lives Matter Movement Grows

During the months following Mr. Floyd's death, tens of millions of Americans reported joining [BLM protests](#). DV saw the national category rate of Hate Speech nearly triple compared with May 2020. The highest and second highest spikes in Hate Speech for 2020 both occurred in June.

Notably, the highest spike in Hate Speech took place on June 17, the same day the Atlanta Police Department fired Garret Rolfe, the officer who shot Rayshard Brooks outside a Wendy's, and two days before the 155th celebration of Juneteenth.

212%

Surge in Hate Speech in June 2020
compared with Jan-May 2020

SUMMER 2020: BLACK LIVES MATTER

Notable protests from June include:

June 5 - Louisville, KY: Over 1000 protesters gathered in Breonna Taylor's [hometown](#) to honor what would have been her 27th birthday — after Ms. Taylor was shot and killed in her bed on March 13, 2020 by police officers executing a no-knock warrant.

June 7 - Philadelphia, PA: Between 50,000-80,000 protesters gathered outside the [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#).

June 14 - Brooklyn, NY: An estimated 15,000 people rallied for Black trans lives following the [deaths of Rem'mie Fells and Riah Milton](#), Black trans women who were found killed just one day apart.

In total, the BLM movement held over 7,750 demonstrations across all 50 states and Washington D.C. in the three months (May 26-August 22) following [George Floyd's death](#).

The Big Takeaway

Inflammatory Politics and News began rising as coronavirus became increasingly politicized, and Hate Speech surged as racial justice dominated the news cycle.

CONTENT TRENDS

Patterns in Hate Speech and Inflammatory Politics and News in July remained similar to those seen in June. In August, these trends began shifting, reflecting a heightened focus on the upcoming election.

Hate Speech Rises in July and then Levels Off

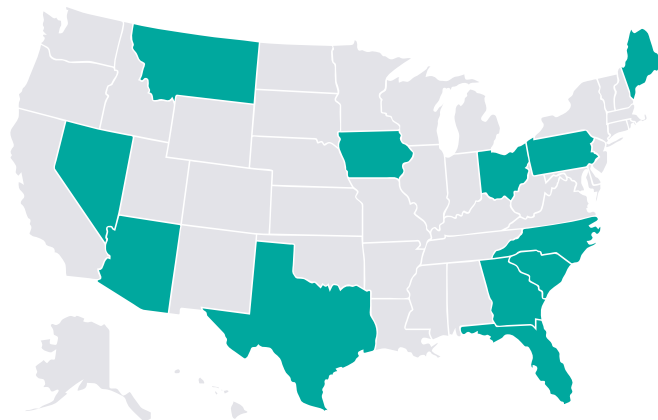
The second highest spike in Hate Speech occurred on July 13, the seven-year anniversary of Black Lives Matter. As the summer continued, Hate Speech gradually declined month-over-month, until finally returning to pre-June levels around November.

Inflammatory Politics and News Targets Swing States

Following Biden's announcement of Kamala Harris as his choice for Vice President on August 11, Inflammatory Politics and News began rising in swing states and states with close-polling senate races.

From January 1, 2020 through August 10, 2020, the **swing states** and states with close **senate races**, as defined by Five Thirty Eight, had an aggregate average Inflammatory Politics and News rate that was 3% less than the aggregate average of all other states. After August 11, Inflammatory Politics and News in these states rose by an aggregate average rate of 15%, compared with an aggregate average 4% increase across all other states.

Although this is a more modest bump in Inflammatory Politics and News than what we observed during the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary, it shows a consistent increase in inflammatory news across states that are seen as making crucial decisions.



Swing States: 15% Average Increase in Inflammatory Politics and News

The Big Takeaway

July and August — similar to June — shows a clear pattern that hate speech surged in response to calls for racial justice. And swing states, like early voting states, were targets for disinformation.

JULY
AUGUST
2020

The news cycle in July looked similar to that of June, with racial justice remaining a key focus. In August, the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old Black man, and 2019 police killing of **Elijah McClain**, a 23-year-old Black man who died on his way home from a convenience store after police placed him in a since-banned chokehold, garnered national attention — sparking further outrage and calls for racial justice.

During August, national attention also began shifting to the election, as three key events took place. On August 11, now-President Biden announced Kamala Harris as his pick for VP; the Democratic National Convention (DNC) was held on August 17-20; and the Republican National Convention (RNC) was held on August 24-27.

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

2020

In late September, then-President Trump nominated Amy Coney Barrett to fill Ruth Bader Ginsburg's seat on the Supreme Court. This occasion was marked by a celebration at the Rose Garden, which was labeled a "superspreader" event by Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases.

On October 2, three days after the first presidential debate, then-President Trump announced he had tested positive for Covid-19; shortly thereafter he was admitted to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. In the subsequent week, more than **12 members** of the former president's inner circle were diagnosed with Covid-19.

On October 7, the vice presidential debates took place with additional safety precautions, but when Mr. Trump declined a virtual debate, the second presidential debate was canceled. The third presidential debate was held in person on October 22.

CONTENT TRENDS

Politics, Hate Speech and Inflammatory Politics and News all rose during this time.

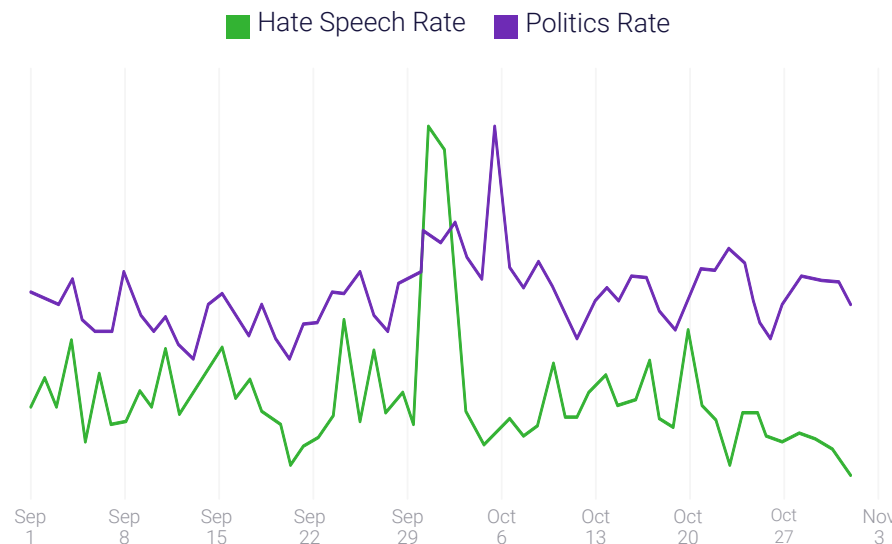
Political Content Spikes Amidst Another Unprecedented Event

Content classified as Politics increased slightly in September around the time of the first presidential debate. But Political content spiked in the wake of then-President Trump testing positive for Covid-19. DV observed the second highest rate of Political content on October 5, the day that the former president was released from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Hate Speech Spikes Following the First Debate

Hate Speech rose nationwide by 164% in the two days following the first presidential debate (September 30-October 1), where then-President Trump directed the **Proud Boys**, who are identified as a hate group by the **Southern Poverty Law Center** and have recently been labeled a **terrorist organization** in Canada, to "stand back and stand by" — as compared with the average for September 1-29. After October 1, this rate reverted back to the September average.

Hate Speech and Politics Category Rates by Day



The Big Takeaway

Political content surged during an unpredicted event — the President's illness — and only moderately increased during the debate, which was a scheduled event. The controversial content at the debate, meanwhile, fueled a massive increase in online hate speech.

CONTENT TRENDS

Inflammatory news followed election coverage and breaking stories about the Pfizer and Moderna Covid-19 vaccines, which created renewed opportunities for coronavirus disinformation.

Inflammatory Politics and News Surges Amidst the Election and News of the Covid-19 Vaccine

Inflammatory Politics and News increased by 83% in November 2020 compared with November 2019; this number was 41% higher than the 2020 year-long average, excluding November itself. And misinformation continued as then-President Trump contested the election. December saw the third highest rate of Inflammatory Politics and News. And, overall, the fourth quarter showed a 37% increase in Inflammatory Politics and News content, as compared with all earlier months in 2020. During this time, legitimate political content was below the 2020 national average.

This spike was also driven by news of the coronavirus vaccine, when Pfizer announced the results of their clinical trials on November 9.

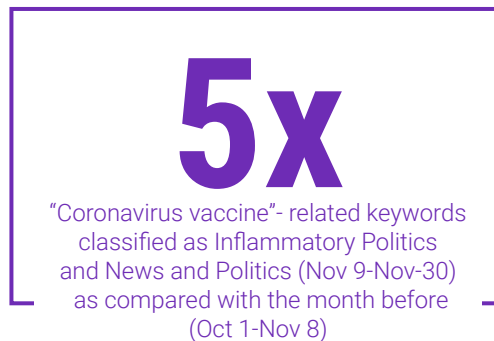
American trust in the vaccine has been politicized and divided, with

Pew Research showing that by December, **only 60%** of Americans planned to get the vaccine. Notably, this was up from just 51% in September.

DV saw a 400% increase in inflammatory news stories with “coronavirus vaccine”-related keywords in the URL over the three weeks following Pfizer-BioNTech’s Covid-19 vaccine announcement when compared with the month preceding news of the vaccine.

Hate Speech Decreases During the Election

Hate Speech decreased by 20% for November 2020 compared with November 2019. In December, Hate Speech showed a 6% increase year-over-year, but this was still modest relative to the continued surge in Inflammatory Politics and News.



The Big Takeaway

Inflammatory news follows divided sentiment over major news, such as the election and the coronavirus vaccine. Hate speech, though, does not necessarily follow this pattern and actually decreased in November and December while inflammatory and misleading content surged.

NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2020

The 2020 U.S. presidential election drew more voters than any previous election in U.S. history. Controversy surrounding the election persisted through the end of 2020 (and into 2021) as then-President Trump contested the election. The national spotlight also focused on the two senate run-offs in Georgia, which were held on January 4, 2021. And in November, amidst the political news cycle, the first coronavirus vaccines were released.

The Major Content Trends That Defined 2020



1

During the early stages of novel news cycles, such as at the outset of the pandemic, there is increased interest in legitimate coverage versus disinformation and hate speech.



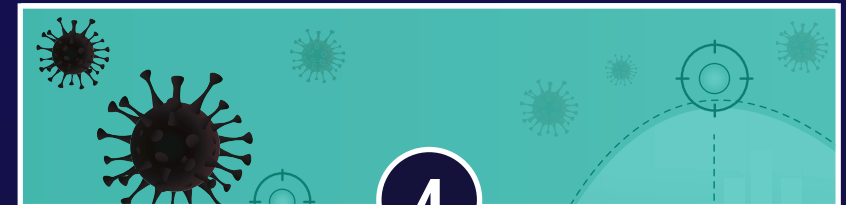
2

Bad actors seeking to spread disinformation, use polarized, controversial news cycles to disseminate inflammatory and misleading news and/or racially biased/motivated content. This trend can be seen throughout the year.



3

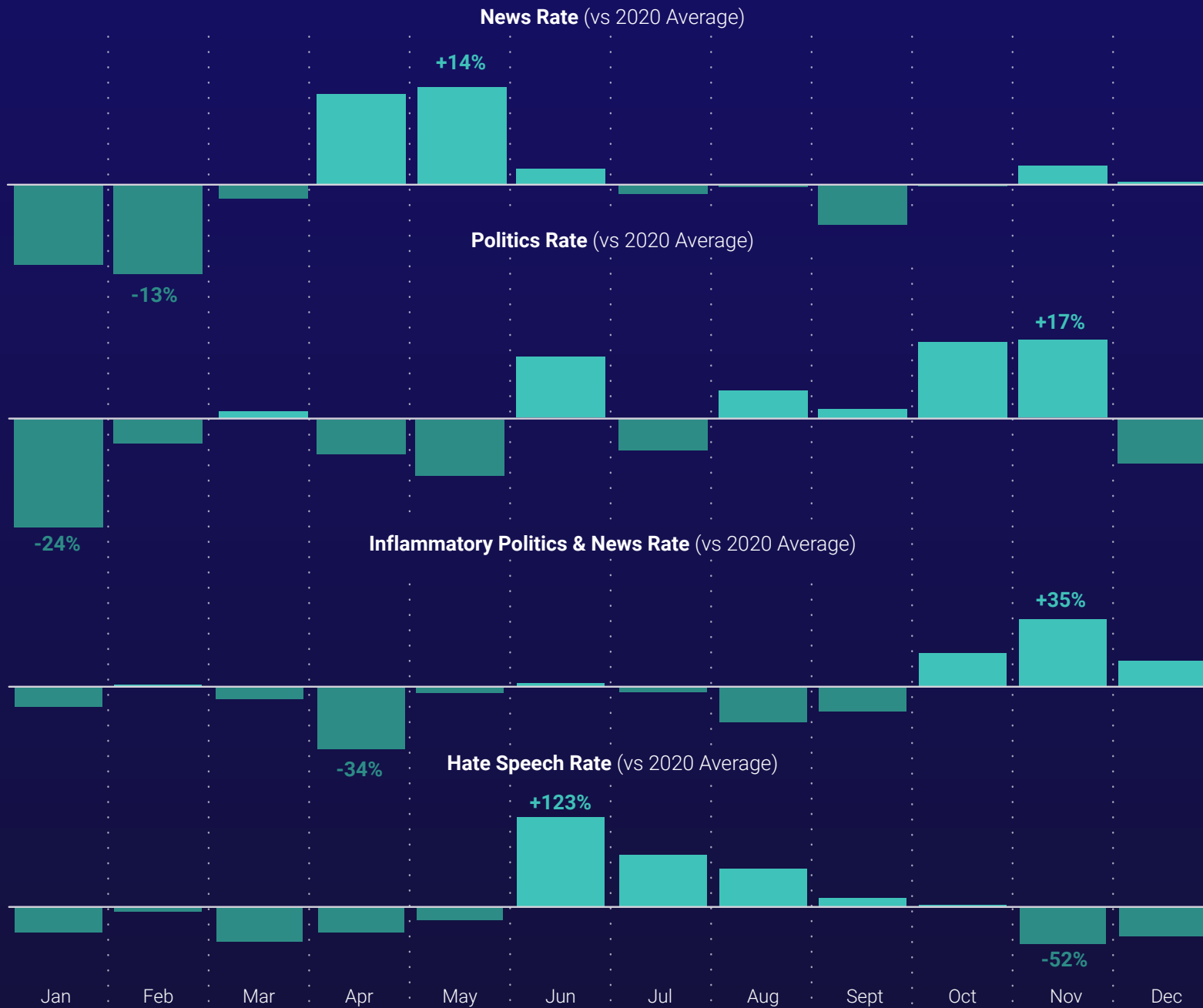
Hate Speech and Inflammatory Politics and News follow controversy, but they do not spread in lockstep. During the BLM movement for racial justice, for example, Hate Speech spiked, but Inflammatory Politics and News tapered off. The inverse of this can be observed during the election news cycle.



4

It takes a major news event to affect the consumption of News or Politics. Monthly peaks for these categories, which happened during the early pandemic and election news cycles, were within 20% of the national average for both categories. Inflammatory Politics and News and Hate Speech, however, shift rapidly and see much bigger swings.

Content Category Trends: How Key Categories Influence One Another



WHAT'S NEXT FOR 2021?

The riot in the U.S. Capitol on January 6 was an unprecedented event, and, as with the early days of the pandemic, News content surged. Prior to the riot, in early January, Inflammatory Politics and News was at a three-month low. But as the news cycle emerged and then became established, Inflammatory Politics and News also began increasing — particularly as the U.S. House of Representatives began readying the article for President Trump's second impeachment. Following the riot, Trump was also removed from Twitter and major tech companies, including Amazon, Google and Apple, began severing business ties with Parler, a social networking platform associated with alt-right content.

CONTENT TRENDS

Former-President Trump's first impeachment trial began on January 16, 2020, just one week after the WHO first announced Covid-19. News, Politics, Hate Speech and Inflammatory Politics and News rates, however, have been 16%, 45%, 3% and 92% higher in January 2021 as compared with January 2020, respectively. When compared with the year-average for 2020, News, Politics and Hate Speech numbers are up by 2%, 10% and 24%, respectively. Only Inflammatory Politics and News has shown a decrease (-9%).

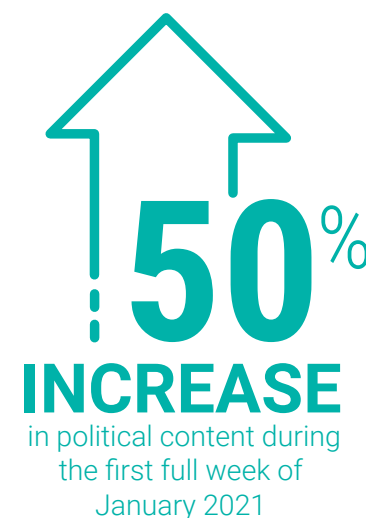
These numbers not only confirm that 2021 is displaying similar patterns to 2020, they suggest that there is an increased demand for both legitimate and incendiary content. It is particularly notable that Political content is up 10% in a post-election year when compared with the average rate for an election year. And although Inflammatory Politics and News is below the 2020 average, it is climbing steadily as the Capitol riot cycle continues, and Hate Speech is markedly higher. This is notable considering the massive spikes in Hate Speech we observed during 2020, particularly during the summer.

Rises in Hate Speech Followed the Capitol Riot

Hate Speech tripled in the 10 days following the Capitol riot as compared with the 10 days that preceded the riot.

A Rise in Political Content Initially Followed the Riot but Was Superseded by Spikes in Inflammatory Politics and News

Political content increased by 50% during the first full week of January 2021 (beginning on January 3) as compared with the previous two weeks. During the following week of January 10, in the wake of the Capitol Riot, Inflammatory Politics and News increased 21% week-over-week.



The Big Takeaway

January 2021 resembles 2020; unprecedented, controversial events that leave Americans deeply divided create environments for hate speech and inflammatory content to capture attention and, if left unchecked, divert ad dollars.

BRAND SAFETY MATTERS

Advertising on dubious content not only helps fund disinformation, it hurts brands. More than half of consumers say they would stop using a brand that appeared beside false or misleading news. Conversely, **67% of consumers** are more likely to look at an ad that runs on a trusted news site. This is supported by the fact that News content outperformed other verticals in 2020, as demonstrated by DV's Authentic Attention™ data and insights — which measure ad exposure and user engagement.

The pandemic changed the way people consume content. In the wake of the Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns and quarantines, consumers say they spend an average of 25.54 more hours online each week, and nearly half also report reading and streaming more news, according to a 2020 DV/Sapio study.

Unfortunately, bad actors follow the money — which mirrors demand patterns — and disinformation across emerging media is a concern. During the early months of the coronavirus pandemic when, in many cases, inflammatory and misleading content consumption was decreasing, a conspiracy theory-driven documentary about the pandemic, ***Plandemic***, went viral. This incident highlights that advertisers increasingly will need to consider how to keep their ad dollars safe across video platforms.

But advertisers can help protect the information ecosystem by establishing a brand safety and suitability profile that protects brand equity, withholds spend from illegitimate content and supports trusted news.



The Big Takeaway

Advertising on trusted news content is well-received by consumers and increases ad engagement. Appearing on inflammatory, unreliable or hateful content not only funds the websites promoting this content — it can have a lasting impact on consumer loyalty.

What Power Do Advertisers Have in Defunding Misinformation?

BUILDING A BRAND SAFETY & SUITABILITY TOOLKIT

The following five steps offer a general framework and suggested best practices to handle an emerging news cycle. Each brand has its own unique brand safety and suitability needs, so clients should always work with their account manager when concerns arise.

1 Review Settings for Key Categories and Adjust Accordingly

Content classification is a key component of brand safety and suitability and a pillar of DV's media measurement services. DV's semantic science engine, which leverages ontology and machine learning, powers our comprehensive classification methodology to ensure classifications represent the actual content and context of a page.

Brands and advertisers may wish to consider avoiding categories discussed in this report, which include Inflammatory Politics and News and Hate Speech. But advertisers can also choose to avoid additional categories, such as Violence.

DV allows increased nuance and flexibility with Brand Suitability Tiers, which tier categories based on risk. For example, a high risk tier for "Hate Speech and Cyberbullying" provides coverage for unmoderated content or the promotion of hate acts or hate groups. The medium risk tier provides coverage for professional news content about any hate acts or hate groups. The low risk tier provides coverage for educational content about these topics and/or content that only includes a minor mention of these subjects.

2 Update Site and App Exclusion Lists

Exclusion lists and keyword blocking are two additional brand suitability tools available to advertisers concerned with divisive content.

By using app and site exclusion lists, clients can prevent their media from appearing on specific apps, domains and subdomains that they may deem inappropriate regardless of how the individual pages/articles are classified. By using app and site inclusion lists, brands can proactively target content to only those apps and sites that they find acceptable.

3 Limit Use of Keyword Blocking

Keyword blocking gives advertisers the ability to block specific keywords or phrases that they designate within a URL. Although keyword blocking can serve as a useful brand suitability tool for emerging news events, it may result in unintended blocking and does not always provide coverage that is as comprehensive and nuanced as that which is provided by our avoidance categories.

When activating keyword blocking, advertisers should consider specific topics, rather than broad topic areas. If this approach is adopted, over-blocking through the use of keywords is generally rare, due to DV's sophisticated and precise keyword technology. For example, including a broad word like "riot" would likely result in overblocking because it would cover all instances of the word riot, including phrases such as, "it's a laugh riot!" or "riot grrrl." A more specific phrase, such as "Capitol Riot," limits the incremental rate-of-avoidance.

Due to the potential impact on campaigns, we recommend clients reach out to their DV account manager for guidance prior to activation. Read our blog [**“Demystifying DV’s Blocklist Service”**](#) for more detail.

4 Add Trusted News Homepages to Page Exception Lists

If clients elect to activate protection on broader avoidance categories like News or Politics, this may result in a high volume of trusted news content that gets blocked. DV believes in the value of trusted news content, and studies have shown consumers are more likely to view brands favorably if they advertise on trusted news sites.

With this in mind, we give advertisers the ability to add trusted news site homepages and section pages to their DV page exception lists. Page exception lists allow a brand’s ads to run irrespective of any content avoidance categories the brand may have set up in their brand safety profile. This is especially useful for programmatic buys and on high-volume entry pages where the consumer tends to associate the brand with the news publication rather than a specific headline adjacent to an ad.

While these are best practices, each brand and each brand’s own suitability and safety thresholds are unique. Brands need to make decisions for their brand safety strategy based on their own level of comfort.

Advertisers running open market and private marketplace (PMP) programmatic buys can benefit further by adding DV page exception lists to their DV Authentic Brand Safety targeting pre-bid segment. Authentic Brand Safety targeting is a unique DV capability that perfectly matches pre and post-bid settings and is integrated across most major DSPs. To learn about Authentic Brand Safety targeting, please reach out to your DV account manager or business director.

5 Protect Yourself Across Emerging Channels

Disinformation exists wherever content exists. Advertisers need to be able to ensure their ad dollars do not support unsafe content on social platforms and in emerging environments, such as CTV.

In 2020, DV introduced inclusion/exclusion lists on CTV. This gives advertisers transparency into the apps on which their programmatic CTV buys run and allows advertisers to exclude any apps that may be promoting misleading or hateful content.

And for video campaigns across CTV, desktop and mobile, DV offers Video Filtering, which provides an additional line of defense to prevent ads from appearing in non-compliant environments.

Traditionally, blocking unsafe or fraudulent impressions in video environments has been difficult because video blocking requires a technology standard called VPAID. Unfortunately, VPAID is not widely available and is not supported on CTV.

Let’s Build a Better Industry®

Brand safety and suitability affects everyone — from brands to publishers to users. Now, as inflammatory, misleading and hateful is accompanying volatile news cycles at increasing rates, advertisers must be able to differentiate between trusted and unreliable content.

DV is committed to driving innovations that help advertisers support trusted publishers while keeping their ad spend away from potentially harmful content. In the coming year, DV is excited to continue making independent, accredited, brand safety solutions accessible across every channel. Recently, we began partnering with Twitter to bring brand safety measurement to the platform’s in-feed, user generated content. Brand safety needs to be available in any environment and on all types of content.

Together, we can build a better industry that supports a healthy information ecosystem for users, publishers and advertisers alike.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Sales@DoubleVerify.com.

APPENDIX

CLASSIFICATION METHODOLOGY

Content classification is a key component of brand safety and suitability and a pillar of DV's media measurement services. Our content classification technology analyzes and catalogs millions of sites, apps, videos and pages per day. Our comprehensive classification methodology is powered by DV's semantic science engine, which leverages ontology and machine learning to make sure classifications represent the actual content and context of sites and pages.

When classifying a domain, page or app, we examine the incoming and outgoing links on the page as well as the text and context of the content, which includes the frequency and prominence of certain words and concepts. We also analyze a site, page or application's code and structure, along with registration records and articles about the site or app in prominent online reference and news sites. In addition, to ensure we are accurately reflecting the dynamic nature of online content, we frequently re-review content to ensure we have a current classification.

A NOTE ON CITATIONS

The news stories referenced in this report have been widely covered and may be considered common knowledge, or information that is widely available across many sources. Any insight specific to one source is hyperlinked and credited in the works cited below.

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