

Researchers find that social media account suspensions reduce reach of extremist rhetoric

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Getting suspended on Twitter may have real-world consequences for extremists, according to a new white paper from the Program on

Extremism at the George Washington University's Center for Cyber and Homeland Security.

According to the paper, ["The Islamic State's Diminishing Returns on Twitter."](#) the [social media](#) platform's consistent [suspensions](#) of ISIS-affiliated accounts have reduced the number of repeat offenders. Individuals who repeatedly created accounts after being suspended suffered massive reductions in follower counts.

Authors J.M. Berger, a fellow at the Program on Extremism, and Heather Perez, a law enforcement analyst, also found that Twitter account suspensions diminished overall activity from these accounts and from the broader network.

"Suspensions have a measurable effect in suppressing the activity of ISIS networks on Twitter," Mr. Berger said. "Occasional large-scale suspensions, such as we saw after the Paris attacks, have dramatically reduced the size of ISIS' presence on social media, and a lower level of routine suspensions hold the network flat in between these events."

The paper examines English-speaking ISIS supporters' accounts for 30 days in August and September 2015, with additional samples measured at various times from June to October.

ISIS supporters are exploring other social media platforms to communicate with one another, Mr. Berger and Ms. Perez found, but ISIS supporters continue to emphasize the need to maintain a presence on Twitter since they are less effective recruiting on smaller or more restrictive platforms.

ISIS supporters also have implemented other measures to combat suspensions, but many of these are rapidly rendered obsolete as companies take increasingly aggressive action.

The white [paper](#) follows [a December report from the Program on Extremism](#) that offered the most extensive examination to date of Americans arrested for sympathizing with ISIS.

More information: "The Islamic State's Diminishing Returns on Twitter," [cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.ed...ds/Berger_Occasional%20Paper.pdf](#)

Provided by George Washington University

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