

# Facebook CEO Zuckerberg seeks meeting with conservatives (Update)

May 13 2016, by By Mae Anderson

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Facebook has around 1.6 billion users around the globe

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg says he wants to invite "leading conservatives and people from across the political spectrum" to discuss recent reports that its "Trending Topics" feature is biased against conservatives.

The social media giant on Thursday revealed details of how the

"Trending Topics" feature works after the tech blog Gizmodo reported that Facebook downplays conservative news subjects. Facebook denied the report, which relied on a single anonymous source with self-described conservative leanings.

Zuckerberg said the company is investigating the claims, but has yet to find evidence to support them.

"If we find anything against our principles, you have my commitment that we will take additional steps to address it," he wrote.

In a separate blog post, the company said a series of checks and balances—involving both software formulas and humans—ensures that stories displayed in the "trending topics" section aren't biased. The post linked to a 28-page internal document Facebook uses to determine trending topics, after the Guardian published a similar document that was leaked to it.

Justin Osofsky, vice president of global operations, said the guidelines ensure that stories in trending topics represent "the most important popular stories, regardless of where they fall on the ideological spectrum."

"The guidelines do not permit reviewers to add or suppress political perspectives," he said in a statement.



Mark Zuckerberg has invited "leading conservatives and people from across the political spectrum" to talk with him about accusations of political bias at Facebook

Zuckerberg also took to Facebook on Thursday evening, saying the social media company stands for "giving everyone a voice" and said he plans to talk with leading conservatives in coming weeks.

"I want to have a direct conversation about what Facebook stands for and how we can be sure our platform stays as open as possible," his post said.

Facebook hasn't said how many people are responsible for the trending topics team. A Guardian report on Thursday said the team was as few as 12 people, citing leaked documents.

Facebook didn't comment on that number.

The trending feature was introduced in 2014 and appears to the right of the Facebook newsfeed. According to Facebook, potential trending topics are first determined by a software formula, or algorithm, that identifies topics that have spiked in popularity on the site.

Staffers then review potential topics and confirm that they are tied to a current news event; write a topic description with information corroborated by at least three of 1,000 news outlets ; apply a category label to the topic; and check to see whether the topic is covered by most or all of ten major media outlets (including The New York Times, Fox News, BuzzFeed and others). Stories covered by those outlets gain an importance level that may make them more likely to be seen.

(Facebook's list of 1,000 news outlets contains several popular conservative sites, including Fox, the Drudge Report, Glenn Beck's site The Blaze, the Daily Caller and the Washington Times.)



Facebook denies claims it deliberately omitted articles from politically conservative outlets from its sidebar of popular stories

Each Facebook user's trending topics are then personalized via an algorithm that relies on information about the user such as "Likes" and their location.

**More information:** Zuckerberg post: [bit.ly/1Wu371Q](https://bit.ly/1Wu371Q)

Blog Post: [bit.ly/1Wtio32](https://bit.ly/1Wtio32)

Guidelines: [bit.ly/221VWOt](https://bit.ly/221VWOt)

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