

# Facebook reportedly ignored its own research showing algorithms divided users | The Verge

By Nick Statt

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An internal Facebook report presented to executives in 2018 found that the company was well aware that its product, specifically its recommendation engine, stoked divisiveness and polarization, according to a [new report from The Wall Street Journal](#).

Yet, despite warnings about the effect this could have on society, Facebook leadership ignored the findings and has largely tried to absolve itself of responsibility with regard to partisan divides and other forms of polarization it directly contributed to, the report states. The reason? Changes might disproportionately affect conservatives and might hurt engagement, the report says.

“Our algorithms exploit the human brain’s attraction to divisiveness,” one slide from the presentation read. The group found that if this core element of its recommendation engine were left unchecked, it would continue to serve Facebook users “more and more divisive content in an effort to gain user attention & increase time on the platform.” A separate internal report, crafted in 2016, said 64 percent of people who joined an extremist group on Facebook only did so because the company’s algorithm recommended it to them, the *WSJ* reports.

[...]

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