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Meta loses ground to Bluesky as users abandon Elon Musk's X

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4–5 minutes

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Meta's Threads is losing ground to social media start-up Bluesky in capitalising on the exodus of users from Elon Musk's X following Donald Trump's election.

Since election day, app usage of Bluesky in the US and UK skyrocketed by almost 300 per cent to 3.5mn daily users, according to data from research group Similarweb. The site was boosted as academics, journalists and left-leaning politicians abandoned X, whose billionaire owner is a prominent supporter of the president-elect.

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Source and methodology: [SimilarWeb](#)
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Prior to November 5, Threads had five times more daily active users in the US than Bluesky, which has just 20 full-time staff and was initially funded by Twitter when Jack Dorsey was its chief executive. Now, Threads is only 1.5 times larger than its rival, Similarweb said.

Bluesky's growth in the US and UK comes after Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg chose to deliberately reduce the prominence of political content across its apps, including Facebook and Instagram.

That move was widely interpreted as an attempt to rise about the partisan fray and avoid being dragged into debates over free speech. Trump, who has long castigated social media platforms for allegedly censoring conservative voices, previously labelled Meta "an enemy of the people" and threatened Zuckerberg with jail were he to return to office. Last month, Trump said he liked Zuckerberg "much better now" because he was "staying out of the election".

This contrasts with X, which under Musk's ownership, has cut back content moderation to allow more freewheeling content to proliferate.

Since its launch in July last year, Threads has prioritised engaging content from accounts that users did not follow, a model closer to that of its photo app Instagram. However, Meta on Thursday backtracked on that choice.

This week, it also swiftly rolled out the ability for users to curate "custom feeds" around topics or people they want to follow, mimicking existing Bluesky capabilities, after testing the feature for only five days.

The moves sparked speculation that Meta was trying to curb Bluesky's rise.

Meta said: "We regularly roll out new Threads features and updates — dozens in the last few months alone — to serve the now over 275 million Threads users. And we'll continue to share more as we work to serve this growing community."

Experts have noted the Threads timeline was not effective for people seeking content on real-time events.

"There is this moment here where they are going to have to make this decision, whether to bring back political content and real-time [conversation]," said Katie Harbath, a former policy director who worked on Meta's elections strategy for a decade. "Particularly if these Bluesky numbers stay up."

Adam Tinworth, a lecturer in journalism at City St George's, University of London described Bluesky as "essentially a Twitter spin-off" and so a "natural replacement" to those disillusioned with X.

"Threads is a very different proposition [and] fluffed it completely during the US election because it pushed news and politics out of the feed," he said.

Bluesky was unveiled by Dorsey in 2019 with the aim of developing a single standard, or protocol, upon which social platforms and other developers could build more tailored offerings.

Now led by digital rights activist and software engineer Jay Graber, users can post short messages and images in an interface much like that of X. Growth has been helped by a new feature called "starter packs", which allow users to follow groups of accounts curated by users with the click of a button.

However, the platform has also suffered from increased outages and glitches as it grows quickly, with questions about how it will create a working business model in the future. Initially funded by Twitter, it raised \$15mn in venture funding last year, and \$8mn the prior year.

Adam Mosseri, the head of Threads, said last week that the app had gained “more than 15mn sign-ups in November alone, and [was] going on three months with more than a million sign-ups a day”. But he added: “Now we have a lot more work to do.”