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# Twitter attacks fake accounts

More than 1 million profiles a day have been suspended recently

**The Washington Post**

SOCIAL MEDIA

SAN FRANCISCO — Twitter has sharply escalated its battle against fake and suspicious accounts, suspending more than 1 million accounts a day in recent months, a major shift to lessen the flow of disinformation on the platform, according to data obtained by The Washington Post.

The rate of account suspensions, which Twitter confirmed to The Post, has more than doubled since October, when the company under congressional pressure revealed how Russia used fake accounts to manipulate the U.S. presidential election.

Twitter suspended more than 70 million accounts in May and June, and the pace has continued in July, according to the data.

The aggressive removal of unwanted accounts may result in a rare decline in the number of monthly users in the second quarter, which ended last week, according to a person familiar with the situation who was not authorized to speak.

Twitter declined to comment on a possible decline in its user base.

Twitter's growing campaign against bots and trolls is part of the ongoing fallout from Russia's disinformation offensive during the 2016 presidential campaign, when a St. Petersburg, Russia-based troll factory was able to use some of America's most prominent technology platforms to deceive voters on a mass scale to exacerbate social and political tensions.

The extent of account suspensions, which has not previously been reported, is one of several recent moves by Twitter to limit the influence of people it

says are abusing its platform.

The changes, which were the subject of internal debate, reflect a philosophical shift for Twitter. Its executives long resisted policing misbehavior more aggressively, for a time even referring to themselves as “the free speech wing of the free speech party.”

Del Harvey, Twitter’s vice president for trust and safety, said in an interview this week the company is changing the calculus between promoting public discourse and preserving safety. She added that Twitter only recently was able to dedicate the resources and develop the technical capabilities to target malicious behavior in this way.

“One of the biggest shifts is in how we think about balancing free expression versus the potential for free expression to chill someone else’s speech,”

Harvey said. “Free expression doesn’t really mean much if people don’t feel safe.”

Harvey said the crackdown has not had “a ton of impact” on the numbers of active users — which stood at 336 million at the end of the first quarter — because many of the problematic accounts were not tweeting regularly. But moving more aggressively against suspicious accounts has helped the platform better protect users from manipulation and abuse, she said.