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# IS FACEBOOK CRACKING DOWN ON RIGHT WING PAGES?

EzyInsights Research Report  
May 2018



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## Introduction

### **PREFACE**

In this report we have examined several hundreds of pages that fall outside of the mainstream media, yet generate a significant amount of engagement on the platform.

Using Facebook engagement data gathered over the past 5 years, we present a neutral look at both the historical and current situation regarding Controversial pages on the Far Right and Far Left.



**VARPU RANTALA**

**Data Scientist**

### **BACKGROUND**

Since 2016 and the US Presidential election, there has been an increasing media focus on the performance and behaviour of Controversial pages on Facebook.

More recently, Facebook has been accused of specifically targeting Controversial Right Wing pages and attempting to lessen their visibility within the newsfeed.



**STEVE EL-SHARAWY**

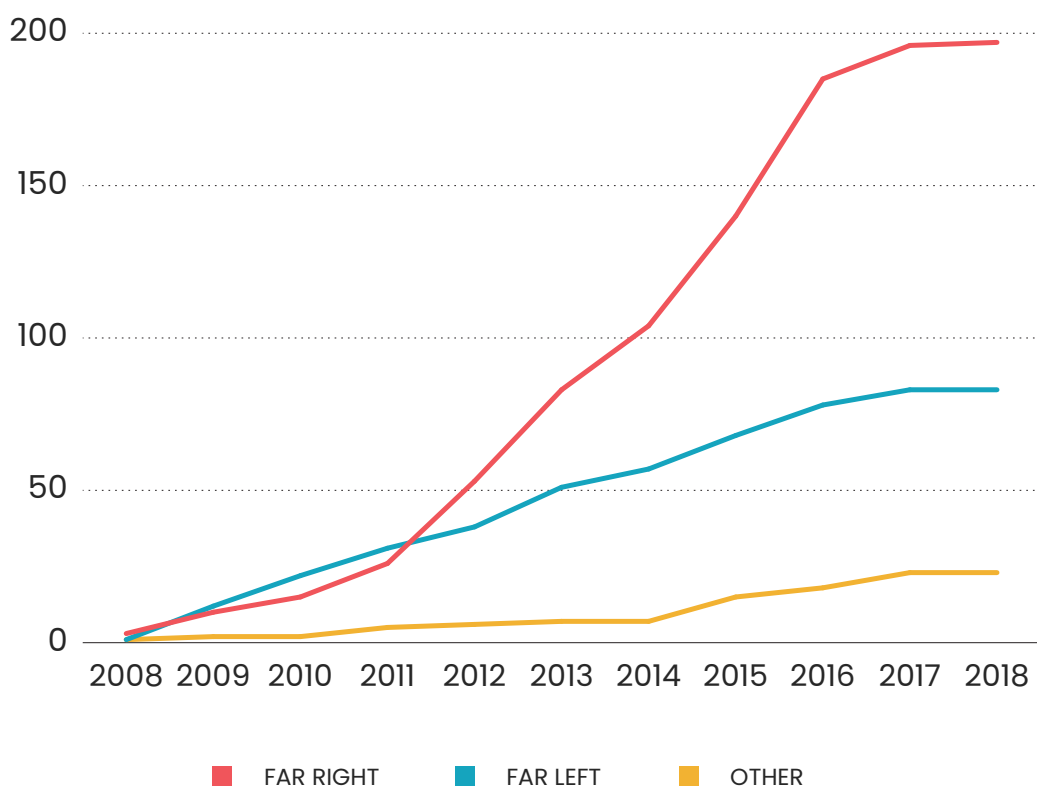
**Head of Innovation**

## Analysis

## Far Right pages were created at higher rate between 2012–2017

### NUMBER OF CONTROVERSIAL FACEBOOK PAGES CREATED

UNITED STATES AND UNITED KINGDOM



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The number of Far Right pages on Facebook significantly exceeds the number of Far Left or politically ambiguous controversial pages. Our sample covers 340 Controversial\* pages from US and UK, created between 2008 and 2018.

Controversial pages were created every week in US and UK during 2015 and 2016. Far Right page creation has slowed since the start of 2017.

The rate of new page creation on the Far Right, Far Left and politically ambiguous Controversial pages was much more evenly distributed during 2017.

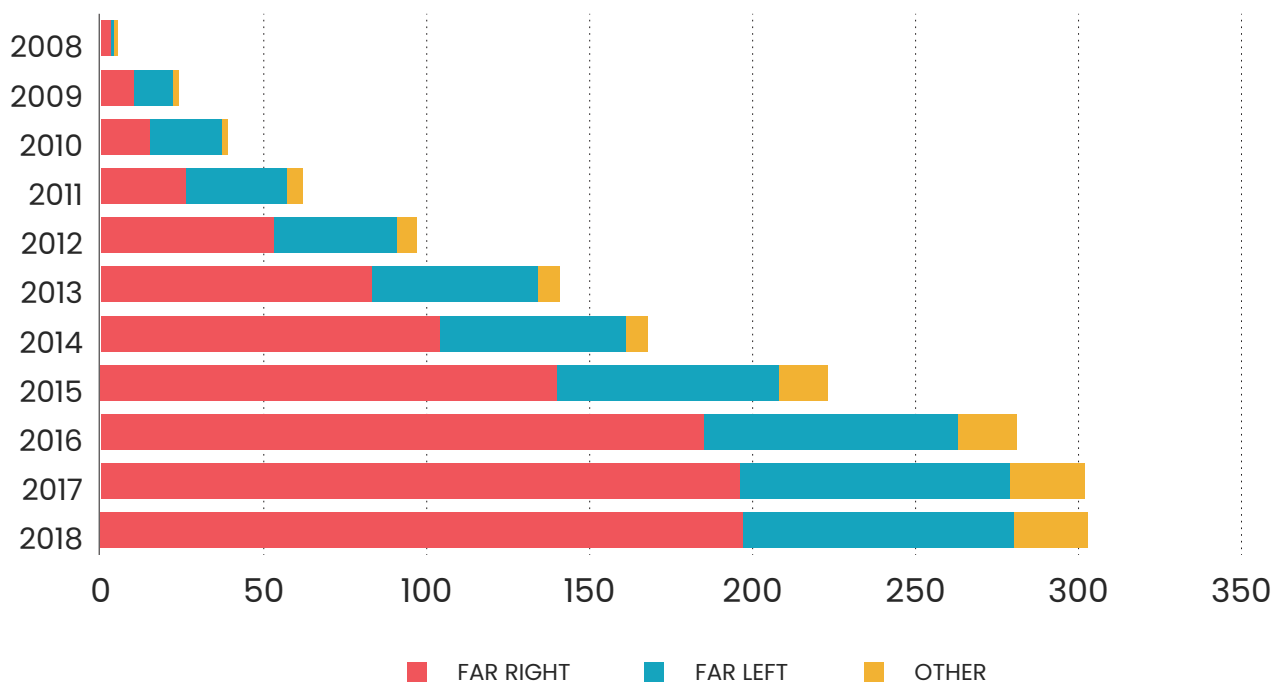
Total number of pages tracked was: Far Right - 234, Far Left - 83, Other - 23.

\*see definition on the following page.

## There are over twice as many pages on the Far Right in the UK and US

### NUMBER OF CONTROVERSIAL FACEBOOK PAGES \*

UNITED STATES AND UNITED KINGDOM



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\* Based on starting year. Starting year is unavailable for 37 right wing pages that have since been deleted or abandoned as of April 15, 2018. These pages are not included in the figure.



## WHAT IS A CONTROVERSIAL PAGE?

Controversial pages are defined in this case as those that heavily feature hyper partisan content and fall outside of established mainstream media. Two outside sources were used to help identify and categorise these pages.

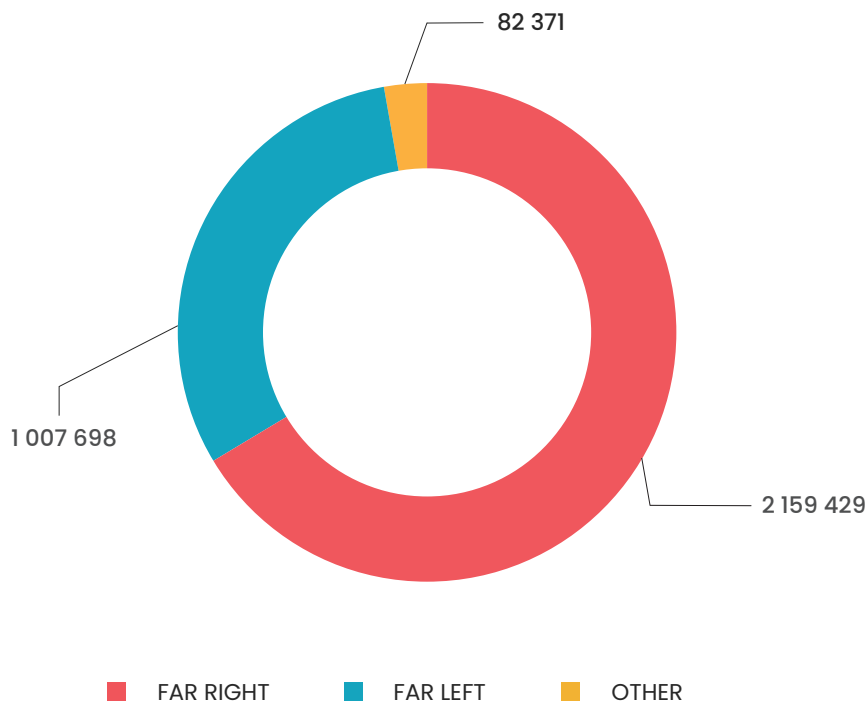
- » <http://www.allgeneralizationsarefalse.com/the-chart-version-3-0-what-exactly-are-we-reading>
- » [http://www.pewresearch.org/pj\\_14-10-21\\_mediapolarization-08-2](http://www.pewresearch.org/pj_14-10-21_mediapolarization-08-2)

See also:

- » <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mapping-out-entire-countrys-political-media-spectrum-steve-el-sharawy-1>

# Controversial pages generate 3.2M engagements per day

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT PER DAY 15 APR 2017 - 15 APR 2018



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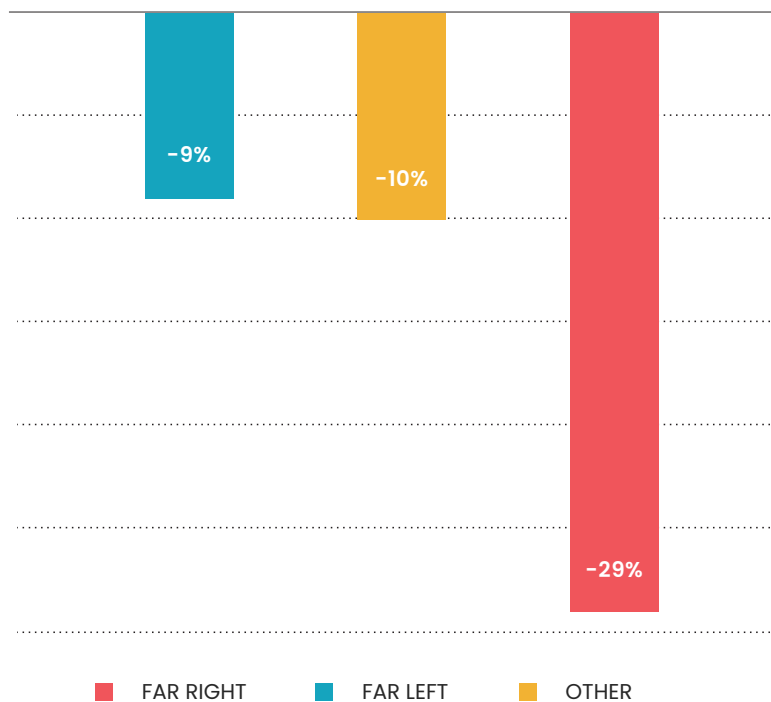
CONTROVERSIAL PAGES GENERATED OVER THREE MILLION LIKES, REACTIONS, COMMENTS AND SHARES PER DAY ON AVERAGE OVER ONE YEAR.



CONTROVERSIAL PAGES ON THE FAR RIGHT GENERATE FAR MORE ENGAGEMENT THAN THOSE ON THE FAR LEFT.

# Engagement on Controversial pages dropped by 749K engagements per day over one year

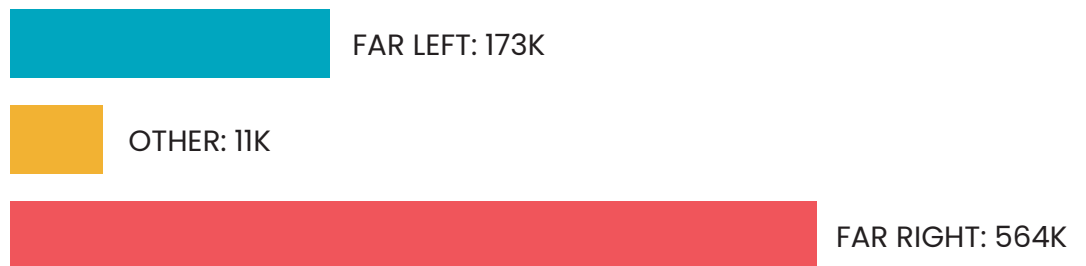
ENGAGEMENT DROP OF CONTROVERSIAL PAGES AS PERCENTAGES  
APRIL 2017 VS. APRIL 2018



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TOTAL  
DROP IN  
ENGAGEMENT:

**749K**

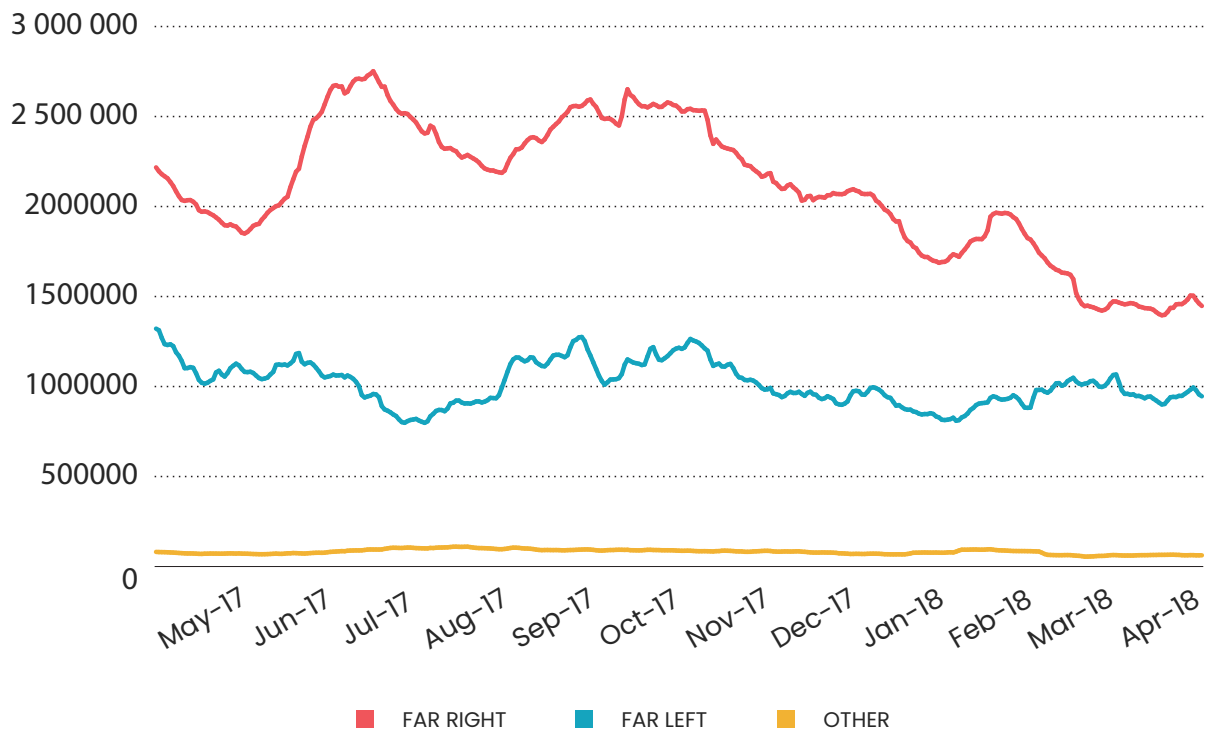


Comparing daily engagement averages from April 2017 and 2018, we can see that engagement has fallen considerably across all Controversial pages.

Far Right pages have dropped significantly more than Far Left pages in terms of total numbers and as a percentage of daily engagement.

# Despite adjustments, Far Right pages generate the most engagement per day

AVERAGE DAILY FACEBOOK ENGAGEMENT  
CONTROVERSIAL PAGES, UNITED STATES AND UNITED KINGDOM



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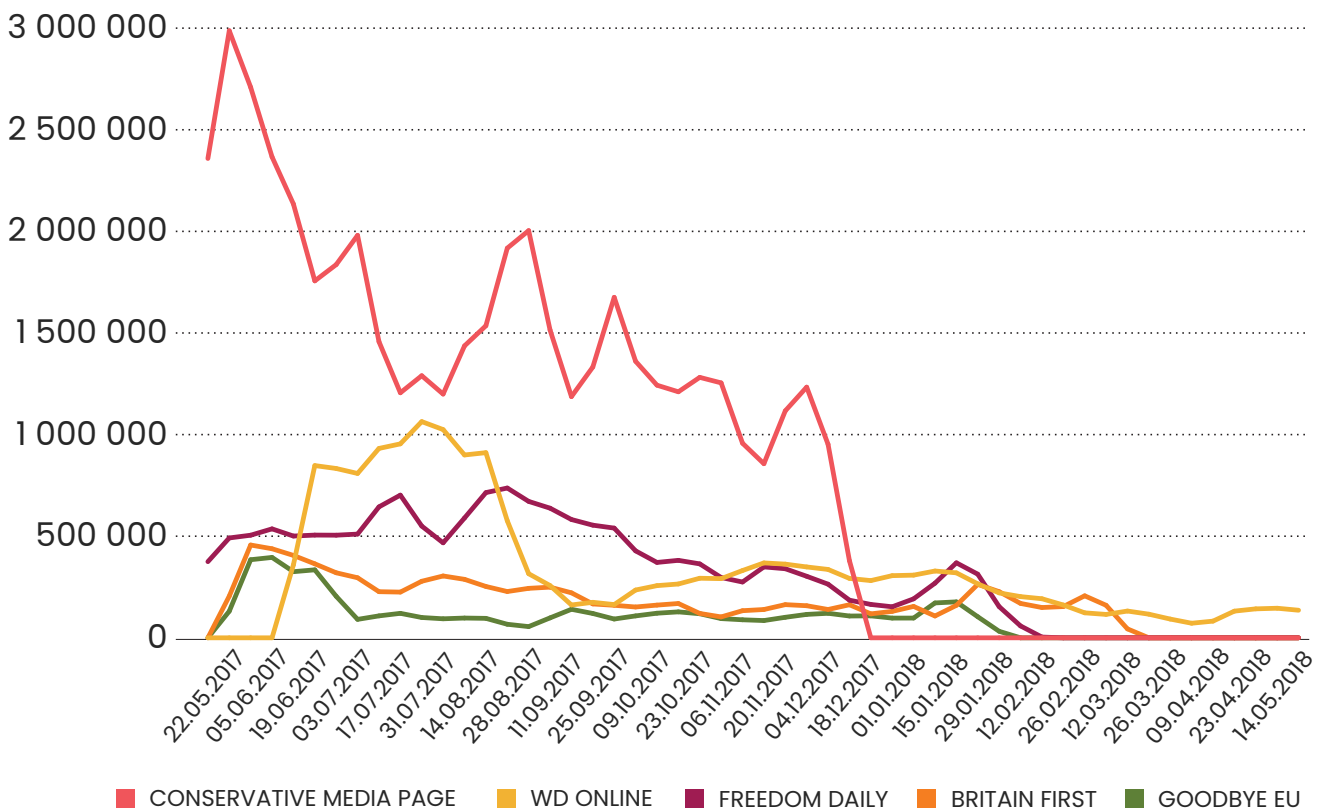


This graph shows the downward trend for controversial pages between April 2017 and April 2018.

While significant, the drop in daily engagement across Far Right pages does reflect the general trend across all media publishing pages (including mainstream news publishers) on Facebook.



## 16% of Far Right pages were either deleted or abandoned



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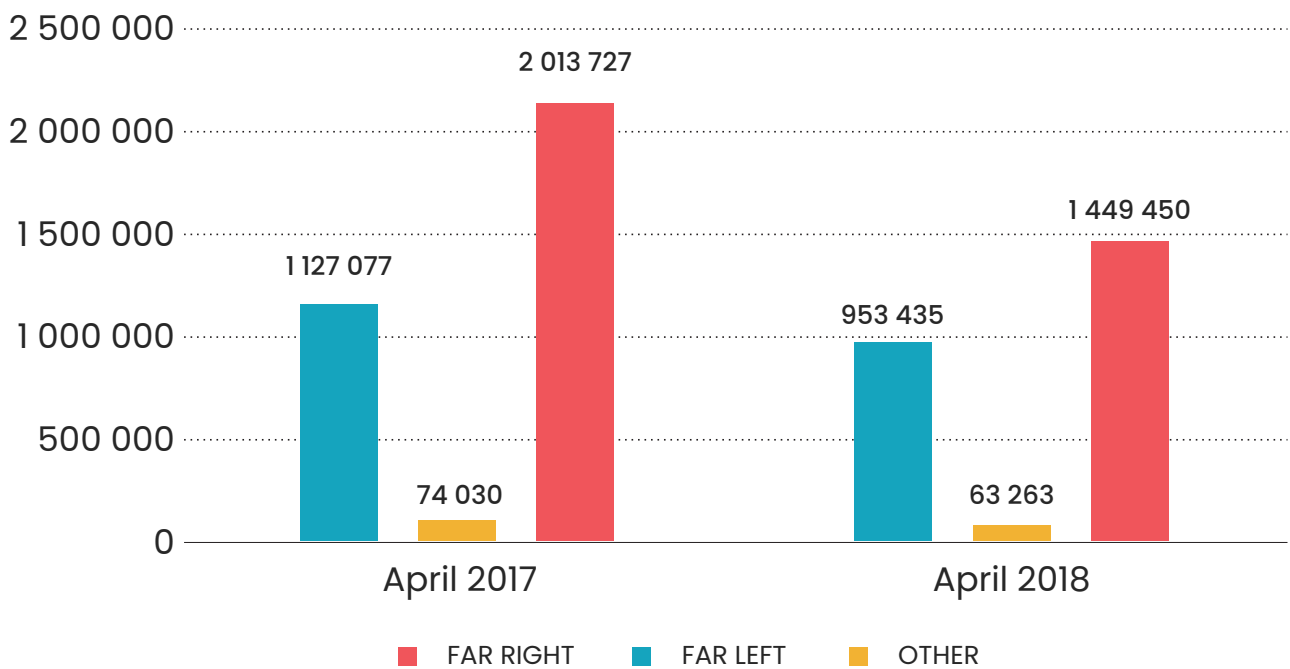
The total number of page fans lost due to pages being deleted or abandoned was 15.1 million

16% of Controversial right-wing Facebook pages in our sample have disappeared since January 2017 due to inactivity or being closed down by Facebook.

# Loss in Engagement and Fanbase Size

## Far Right Pages Not Found Anymore On Facebook, April 2018

AVERAGE DAILY ENGAGEMENT  
APRIL 2017 VS APRIL 2018



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15.1 million page fans lost to deletion



Deleted or Abandoned pages accounted for 300K Daily Engagement loss on Far Right pages

## SUMMARY

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- » Page creation was dominated by Far Right pages between 2012-2016. Almost the same number of Far Right and Far Left pages were created in 2017.
- » Far Right pages account for 66% of all engagement on Controversial pages. Engagement on Far Left pages accounts for 31% and Other Controversial pages for 2.5%.
- » Engagement on all types of Controversial pages dropped by 30% on average between April 2017 and April 2018. This is on-par with other types of media publishers.
- » Facebook engagement for news publishers has dropped everywhere 5%-39% between April 2017 and April 2018.
- » In total, average daily engagement on Far Right pages dropped by 749K and on Far Left pages by 173K.
- » 16% of Far Right pages were abandoned or deleted by April 2018.
- » Pages abandoned or deleted from Facebook account for 14% of the total engagement drop on Far Right pages.
- » On Far Right Controversial pages, 44% of engagement loss was due to manual page deletion.



For more information about controversial pages, contact us at [info@ezyinsights.com](mailto:info@ezyinsights.com)

## DATA

EzyInsights collects publishers' social media engagement data from various platforms including Facebook.

This study is based on historical aggregated engagement data on publishers' Facebook pages, i.e. daily fan count and daily sum of reactions, shares and comments on Facebook posts.

The data covers 340 pages classified as Controversial. 234 pages were classified as Far Right, 83 as Far Left and 23 as Other (no obvious political alignment).

In addition to engagement, data includes the starting date of the page and its political leaning (Left, Right, or Other). In unclear cases, political bias classification was based on Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC News). Pages that do not exist anymore will not have a starting date.

Two additional sources were used to help identify and categorise these pages.

- » <http://www.allgeneralizationsarefalse.com/the-chart-version-3-0-what-exactly-are-we-reading>
- » [http://www.pewresearch.org/pj\\_14-10-21\\_mediapolarization-08-2](http://www.pewresearch.org/pj_14-10-21_mediapolarization-08-2)

See more about pages tracked in the appendix.

## Appendix 1

## NUMBER OF PAGES CREATED PER YEAR

YEAR	FAR RIGHT	FAR LEFT	OTHER	ALL
2008	3	1	1	5
2009	7	11	1	19
2010	5	10	0	15
2011	11	9	3	23
2012	27	7	1	35
2013	30	13	1	44
2014	21	6	0	27
2015	36	11	8	55
2016	45	10	3	58
2017	11	5	5	21
2018	1	0	0	1
<i>Unknown *</i>	37	0	0	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>340</b>

\* removed pages whose starting date is no more available

## Appendix 2

# FANBASE SIZES OF ABANDONED OR DELETED FAR RIGHT PAGES

CONTROVERSIAL PAGES NO LONGER AVAILABLE ON FACEBOOK AS OF APRIL 2018

PAGE	FANBASE
WD Online	4 300 632
Conservative Media Page	3 035 689
Freedom Daily	2 670 084
Britain First	2 017 214
The American Patriot	376 922
End the Fed	367 773
USA 24	301 931
Jayda Fransen	296 654
Paul Golding	242 938
Newslo	231 382
Europia.buzz	201 566
Goodbye EU	195 679
OnlineConservativePress.com	164 308
British Patriots Society II	77 477
True British Patriots	76 756
US Politics Live	62 383
The New Daily Patriot	58 817
Fresh News	53 420
BVA News	52 077
Read Conservatives	46 438
New Daily Patriot Media Centre	41 995
EDL – English Defence League	31 373
Rodney Lee Conover	27 145
Immediate Safety	26 916
USA News Politics	22 863
Pegida UK Official	19 074
Round Table UK	15 570
EDL Bournemouth English Defence League	12 845
English Brotherhood 2	7 959
American Renaissance	7 182
EDL / English Defence League / City of Liverpool	2 152

The total number of pages abandoned or deleted was 37. It is likely that 30 of these were deleted directly by Facebook due to continued breaches of community standards.

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