

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONKEYPOX AND ‘GROOMERS’: HOW TWITTER FACILITATED A HATE-RIDDLED PUBLIC HEALTH DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN

New research from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue lifts the lid on Twitter’s failure to tackle the onslaught of hate campaigns directed at the LGBTQ+ community

ISD Analyst Aoife Gallagher [tracked the discussion](#) of the 2022 monkeypox outbreak and its transmission in children, charting its rapid descent into an anti-LGBTQ+ disinformation campaign. Far right figures including Marjorie Taylor Greene, Jack Posobiec, Ian Miles Cheong and Errol Webber framed the virus as a sexually transmitted disease and insinuated that cases in children were linked to sexual interactions with queer men. This furthered the ongoing ‘groomer’ narrative that is targeting LGBTQ+ communities in the US.

- Until July 21, discussion around monkeypox and potential infections of children on Twitter revolved around efforts to clarify how the disease was spread, and users advocating more urgent public health action.
- Under a week later, the topic had become dominated by anti-LGBTQ+ hatred. ISD’s research charts the timeline, including key failings from Twitter.
- A tweet from ABC7 Eyewitness News reporting the first cases in children received interactions falsely linking the infections to being sexually abused by queer men, prompting ‘groomer’ comments. This led to the tweet being included in Twitter’s trending topics under the word ‘groomers’.
- On 23 July, the day the WHO designated monkeypox a public health emergency, the top tweet on the topic was from Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene who shared a clip of CDC Director Rochelle Walensky’s comments on the infected children along with the caption, “If Monkeypox is a sexually transmitted disease, why are kids getting it?” The video was viewed more than a million times.

Twitter has reaffirmed its commitment to “combating abuse motivated by hatred, prejudice, or intolerance, particularly abuse that seeks to silence the voices of those who have been historically marginalized.”

Yet Twitter has taken little action to halt either the spread of monkeypox-related misinformation designed to stir up a moral panic about queer men, nor some of the largest accounts responsible for spreading anti-LGBTQ+ narratives. ISD is urging Twitter to take action to prevent the spread of hate on its platform.

The report can be found [on ISD’s website](#).

For further information, or for an interview with a relevant expert, contact ISD at media@isdglobal.org.