



FONDATION
DES FEMMES

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and disinformation

Networks of Dissuasion

Mapping online attacks on reproductive rights in France

Content warning: This report contains mentions of abortion and miscarriage, distorted and graphic depictions of the abortion process, sexual assault and murder.

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About ISD

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) is an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to safeguarding human rights and reversing the rising tide of polarisation, extremism and disinformation worldwide.

Since 2006, ISD has been at the forefront of analysing and responding to extremism in all its forms. Our global team of researchers, digital analysts, policy experts, frontline practitioners, technologists and activists have kept ISD's work systematically ahead of the curve on this fast-evolving set of threats. We have innovated and scaled sector-leading policy and operational programmes – on- and offline – to push back the forces threatening democracy and cohesion around the world today.

About La Fondation des Femmes

La Fondation des Femmes, under the aegis of La Fondation de France, is a key organization in France fighting for women's rights and fighting against violence against women. With the donation it receives, it provides financial, legal and material support to high-impact community initiatives throughout the country of France. The legal branch of La Fondation des Femmes is a network composed of over 350 lawyers, legal professionals and volunteer experts committed to organizations defending women's rights. To find out more: <https://fondationdesfemmes.org>

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Executive summary

The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by the US Supreme Court in June 2022 was a seismic moment, marking a regression in women's access to abortion and reproductive choices in the country. Around the world, recent years have similarly been marked by restrictions in abortion rights, with Poland introducing a near-total ban on abortion in October 2021 and Hungary putting forward a law forcing women to listen to the heartbeat of their foetus before receiving an abortion.

There has been anti-abortion activism in France since the implementation of the *Loi Veil*, which legalised abortion in 1974, and there are signs that anti-abortion groups have been emboldened by the US Supreme Court's decision. There has been an uptick in attacks against the offices of prominent reproductive health organisations such as *Planning Familial* and widely publicised stunt campaigns by anti-abortion organisations, including a coordinated sticker campaign on rental bikes in Paris in recent months.

Access to abortion is considered a fundamental right under French law; 'obstruction to abortion' is a crime punishable by up to two years in prison and a fine of up to €30,000. In 2017, a new law extended this punishment to any online actor that misleads their intentions in order to obstruct access to abortion – for instance, by presenting themselves as neutral informational pages that discuss abortion in an unbiased fashion while presenting only anti-abortion narratives. Explicitly anti-abortion profiles and pages remain legal. However, the law targets anti-abortion pages which parade as governmental or official information pages about the procedures involved. Efforts to restrict abortion rights in other countries have prompted the French Parliament to debate entrenching abortion rights in the constitution.

While recent months have shown multiple examples of offline anti-abortion mobilisation, a deeper understanding of the online activities of anti-abortion networks and the spread, amplification and monetisation of anti-abortion views, abortion misinformation and harmful content related to reproductive rights is lacking.

Previous research by ISD investigating anti-abortion activity in the US following the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* found that anti-abortion narratives and tactics took many forms, from health disinformation to ideologically-motivated comparisons with murder and genocide. The same research highlighted how social media platforms

have failed to create a trustworthy and safe environment for users wanting to access accurate information needed to make critical reproductive healthcare decisions.

The systems underpinning social media platforms' curation, amplification, monetisation and moderation of content shape what users see online and remain opaque to researchers despite consistent calls for meaningful transparency and greater access to data. These platforms are ultimately responsible for managing and reducing the risk of the spread of harmful content on their sites, including the amplification of false and misleading claims about abortion or dangerous content related to reproductive rights.

Based on quantitative and qualitative analysis, this report examines anti-abortion activity in France across multiple social media platforms, to better understand the actors, narratives and tactics used to spread, amplify and monetise anti-abortion opinions, abortion misinformation, and harmful content which undermines abortion rights. The report examines how social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and X (formerly known as Twitter) – and their recommendation algorithms and other features can contribute to the circulation of such content. In doing so, the report aims to shed light on potential gaps in the enforcement of platforms' terms of service and whether these terms are fit for purpose when it comes to French users accessing reliable and fact-based information about abortion.¹

Key findings

- **Across the social media platforms analysed, ISD found that while explicitly anti-abortion narratives were present, anti-abortion mobilisation primarily took the form of misinformation, misleading claims about the procedure, and graphic and dissuasive content (see [Glossary](#)).** Much of this content appears aimed at discouraging users from seeking abortion care and spreading doubt about the safety of abortion procedures. This included misleading claims about the suffering of the aborted foetus; misleading information about side effects experienced by women following an abortion; and misrepresentations of the process of having an abortion.
- **Analysis of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and X's policies on abortion-related content revealed that only YouTube has a clear policy for combatting certain kinds of abortion misinformation.** However, analysts identified content that potentially violates existing misinformation policies on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Additionally, analysts found instances where existing policies were not consistently or properly enforced, especially when it came to French-language content.
- **ISD analysts found Meta (Facebook and Instagram's parent company) made an estimated €43,750 from 199 anti-abortion Facebook ads between May 2022 and June 2023 – in total, these ads amassed 9.4 million impressions.** These ads contained dissuasive content about abortions; fundraising or awareness campaigns for anti-abortion initiatives and organisations; anti-abortion activism; or graphic and emotionally distressing content. Several were found to be in violation of Meta's ad policies, which prohibit [harmful health misinformation](#).
- **According to the Meta Ad Library, 50 of the 135 Facebook ads containing dissuasive content relating to abortion care reached 13- to 17-year-old users on the platform.** Of those 50, 24 were graphic or emotionally distressing (see [Glossary](#)), including discussion of topics such as sexual assault.
- **While anti-abortion activist pages were identified as active promoters of anti-abortion content, members of many other online communities contributed to anti-abortion discourse.** This included pages and groups and accounts linked to disability advocacy organisations, anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-surrogacy advocacy organisations, and Christian, royalist and far-right actors.
- **Posts which were most widely shared by anti-abortion actors on Facebook and Instagram included dissuasive content produced by anti-abortion pages which were presented as official information pages or pro-abortion pages.** This dissuasive content included personal testimonials and stories (in text or video format) from women who had undergone an abortion and highlighted its side effects, or women who chose to not terminate a pregnancy. These testimonials are impossible to verify and included graphic and emotionally disturbing accounts of abortion care and alleged claims of medical personnel neglect and cruelty. This content demonstrates that anti-abortion narratives take on complex forms, including claims which cannot be debunked in a straightforward manner.
- **YouTube's algorithms recommended misinformative, graphic and dissuasive content related to abortion multiple times to social media users who had not watched any anti-abortion content, including to minors.** This content included videos mischaracterising abortion and using graphic terminology. Analysts also found that the platform's abortion-related policies were not always in effect. Some anti-abortion videos did not feature an 'informational panel' (a feature which provides fact checks when users search for certain words) as stated in YouTube's policies, and videos promoting harmful misinformation (e.g. 'abortion pill reversal') remained on the platform. YouTube's abortion informational panel links to information about abortion from trusted health organisations in the country the video is being viewed in.
- **ISD found that Instagram's algorithms recommended Reels containing abortion misinformation to users who had not viewed any anti-abortion content.** One-fifth of the abortion-related recommended Reels analysed contained misleading information about the procedure. Top accounts recommended in Reels included several

promoting 'tradwife' (a portmanteau of 'traditional wife' used by some online communities)² lifestyles and alternative health content. The abortion-related content recommended also included broader misinformation about reproductive health, and contraception in particular.

As a result of these findings, ISD makes the following recommendations:

- Platforms including Meta and YouTube should strengthen their policy against graphic imagery, specifically addressing language and exaggerated, inaccurate depictions of abortion that may unnecessarily create fear amongst users and potentially encourage harm against abortion providers.
 - Platforms need to add policies specifically addressing the harms of the 'abortion pill reversal' (a treatment which involves giving the hormone progesterone to reverse the effects of abortion medication)³ and ban ads that promote it to users as a safe and verified procedure.
 - Platforms need to ensure that ads containing potentially harmful health misinformation are properly flagged and removed, especially if ads target users that are minors. Platforms should also ensure that abortion-related policies are properly enforced and applied to newer features such as Reels and to non-English language content.
-

Glossary

Abortion care: Abortion care refers to the health care people receive from medical professionals during and after an abortion procedure.⁴

Anti-abortion content: ISD considers anti-abortion content to encompass content explicitly opposing abortion procedures, as well as content seeking to misrepresent abortion by spreading false or misleading information about the procedure and promoting unsafe methods of 'reversing' an abortion (e.g. 'abortion pill reversal'). It also includes content from pages, individuals or organisations that self-describe as anti-abortion or 'pro-life.'

Dis/misinformation: Disinformation is false, misleading or manipulated content presented as fact when it is intended to deceive or harm. Misinformation is false, misleading or manipulated content that is presented as fact regardless of the intent to deceive. Due to the difficulties in determining intent, this report refers to 'abortion misinformation' throughout as opposed to abortion disinformation.

Dissuasive content: Dissuasive content is defined as content that aims to deter people from having an abortion. Dissuasive content can be explicitly anti-abortion or use misinformation or graphic language, but can also deploy a wider range of narrative and communication tactics including presenting negative and unverified testimonials of people who claim to have undergone an abortion; selectively highlighting or overstating the risks and side effects of having an abortion; or exclusively promoting parenthood alongside a discussion of abortion.

Far right: In line with the conceptualisations established by Dutch political scientist and right-wing-extremism expert Cas Mudde and UK-based academic Dr Elisabeth Carter, ISD defines far right as a system of beliefs typically marked by several of the following characteristics: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy, strong-state advocacy and authoritarianism.

Graphic content: Graphic content includes text, images, video or audio that describes emotionally distressing topics or experiences in detail, including but not limited to: sexual assault, sexual harassment, suicidal ideation, self-injury, murder. In this report, we refer to graphic content as content that features discussion of these topics as a result of having an abortion. Graphic content also includes content describing abortion in highly emotional terms which can cause distress. This includes content using terms which equate abortion with murder (e.g. 'dismemberment' and 'starvation').

Monetisation: Monetisation describes the process of earning revenue from content. This can take a variety of forms, including advertising revenue, merchandising, donations, subscriptions, affiliate marketing, paid promotions and sponsorship.

Methodology

ISD conducted an analysis of anti-abortion narratives, actors and tactics in France across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and X from May 2022 (when the draft decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in the US was leaked by Politico) to June 2023. The study uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, with the aim of answering the following questions:

- What is the nature of anti-abortion online mobilisation in France? What are the key narratives and tactics used?
- To what extent is abortion misinformation relevant to the spread anti-abortion views?
- Who are the key actors involved in the spread, amplification and monetisation of anti-abortion content?
- How do platform functionalities and features contribute to the circulation and monetisation of anti-abortion content?

To answer these questions, ISD used the methodology outlined below. A more detailed methodology is presented at the beginning of each relevant section in the report.

ISD produced a list of anti-abortion Facebook pages/groups and Instagram accounts. Using ISD and CASM Technology's bespoke social media analytics tool, Beam, analysts identified accounts sharing the same links (URLs) about abortion during the period of study, thereby creating an extended network of anti-abortion actors. Analysts then produced a list of keywords and identified posts and links about abortion, qualitatively analysing the most widely shared content and patterns of content sharing within the anti-abortion network.

Similarly, ISD produced a list of seed accounts on X and carried out a network expansion to identify further accounts which shared the same links as seed accounts during the period of study, using the social media analytics tools Brandwatch. Analysts then qualitatively analysed the most-shared tweets and links and produced a network map by clustering accounts based on the links shared.

ISD carried out qualitative research on Instagram Reels by creating a new Instagram account curated to signal an

interest in abortion-related content. The account liked neutral abortion-related hashtags and followed the page of Planning Familial and bloggers who spoke about having an abortion. Over the period of a week, analysts manually scrolled through Instagram Reels for a duration of 30 minutes twice per day, recording recommendations of Reels and accounts served to the account.

To investigate the role of social media platforms' recommendation algorithms, ISD created three fresh YouTube accounts – two belonging to adults and one to a minor – and trained them to signal an interest in abortion-related content. Two accounts were trained to watch fact-based information about abortion or news segments, while one account watched a mix of fact-based information and abortion-critical content.

In collaboration with Dewey Square Group, algorithmic recommendations to each account on YouTube's homepage were recorded every 15 minutes for two weeks. Researchers then analysed the videos most often recommended to each account during that period, qualitatively analysing each video about abortion recommended more than five times by each account. In each video, analysts recorded whether it contained anti-abortion content, abortion misinformation or abortion-related graphic or dissuasive content.

Using the Meta Ad Library, ISD analysts identified French-language ads discussing abortions from all the Facebook pages identified in the original list of Facebook and Instagram actors compiled via Beam between May 2022 and June 2023. Analysts also searched the Meta Ad Library for political ads targeting French users during the period of study, using the keyword searches 'IVG', 'avortement', 'pro-vie', and 'foetus'. Analysts identified 199 relevant ads for this report and coded them into three categories: (1) dissuasive content (including personal stories); (2) fundraising or awareness campaigns for anti-abortion initiatives and organisations; (3) anti-abortion activism (events or marches). Analysts also noted whether they found misinformation or graphic content in the ads.

Overview of existing abortion-related platform policies

In the months following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the US, mainstream social media platforms made few changes to their policies to address the spread of harmful abortion misinformation. In fact, YouTube was the only platform that took specific steps to address it. Research by ISD and other organisations in the months after the US Supreme Court decision found that mainstream social media platforms had insufficient policy responses to address abortion misinformation. ISD also found the proliferation of such misinformation was worse when it came to non-English-language content.

Almost a year and a half later, the lack of clear policy and rigid enforcement of existing policies by platforms

continues to affect not only English-speaking users but also French-speaking users seeking out information about abortions. An overview of platform policies (Table 1) summarises the current rules put in place by the platforms examined in this report to combat abortion misinformation. Despite these policies, analysts identified content that appeared to violate the few existing policies aimed at combatting abortion misinformation; observed instances where platforms were not properly enforcing those policies (by failing to remove content, improperly labelling content, or profiting from violative content); and found ways in which platform algorithms recommended misleading abortion content to their users.

Table 1: Overview of platform policies relevant for abortion and reproductive health.

| Policies | Facebook | Instagram | YouTube | X |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Platform has a clear policy on abortion misinformation | No: Facebook has a <u>policy</u> addressing harmful health misinformation that would 'directly contribute to imminent harm to public health and safety,' but it does not specify reproductive health. | No | Yes: Under its <u>medical misinformation policy</u> , YouTube bans content that 'contradicts local health authorities' or the World Health Organization's guidance on the safety of chemical and surgical abortion.' YouTube considers claims that 'abortion causes breast cancer' or 'abortion commonly results in or carries a high risk of infertility or future miscarriage' as misinformation. | No: X <u>defines</u> misinformation as claims 'that have been confirmed to be false by external, subject-matter experts' or 'include information that is shared in a deceptive or confusing manner', which could cover certain types of abortion misinformation. |
| Platform has a clear policy banning the monetisation of abortion misinformation | No: Meta <u>claims</u> to prohibit ads that violate Community Standards, but Meta does not specify reproductive health misinformation in its Community Standards. | No: However, Instagram <u>prohibits</u> the monetisation of content that contains medical claims 'that have been disproven by an expert organization.' | Yes: While not specifically mentioned in the ads policies, YouTube claims that all ads must adhere to the Community Guidelines, under which the medical misinformation policy is stated. | No: However, X <u>states</u> that all ads must comply with the X Rules. |
| Platform has a set list of actions taken against violating content | Yes: Meta <u>removes</u> content promoting or advocating for 'harmful miracle cures for health issues.' The platform also <u>labels</u> certain content with warning screens if the content is deemed to contain false information or graphic imagery. Meta also has a <u>strike system</u> for Instagram and Facebook. | Yes: Instagram adds informational labels to fact-checked content and <u>removes</u> entire posts if the imagery or caption violates guidelines. | Yes: YouTube will <u>add</u> informational panels to videos about abortion; has a strike policy for violating Community Guidelines; and <u>bans</u> 'harmful alternative' health methods such as 'alternative abortion methods'. | Yes: Depending on the 'potential for offline harm', X will <u>limit</u> amplification of content or remove it entirely. Otherwise, X labels content that requires additional context (nowadays, mostly through Community Notes) and prompts users when they engage with a misleading post. |
| ISD analysts found content apparently violating existing platform policies | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

Analysis

Anti-abortion networks on Facebook and Instagram: Key communities

Methodology

ISD built a network of actors involved in spreading anti-abortion and polarising content related to abortion on Facebook and Instagram. To do so, ISD produced a list through open-source research (seed list) of 78 actors promoting such content on Facebook and Instagram. Using ISD–CASM’s in-house social media analytics tool Beam, analysts identified accounts sharing the same links (URLs) during the period of study, identifying a further 500 pages/groups and accounts. These accounts were qualitatively analysed for relevance and selected for inclusion in the network. A total of 169 new accounts were added to the network.

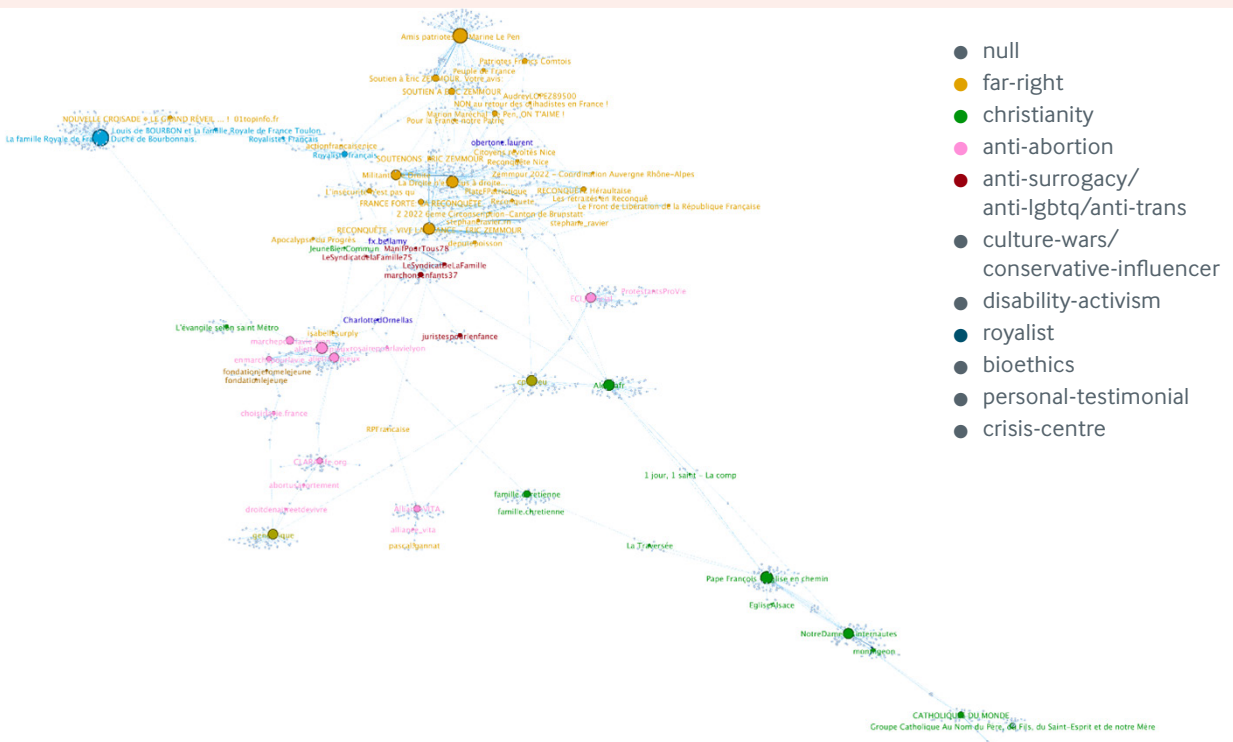
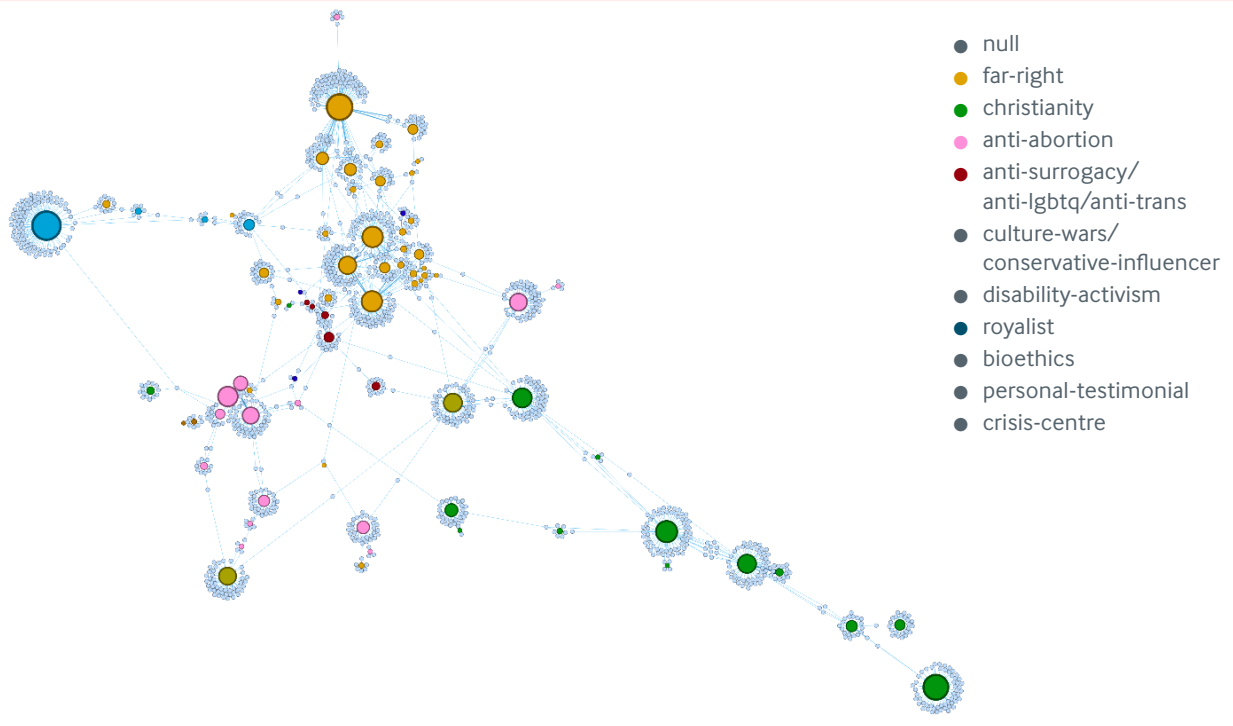
All posts by these pages/groups and accounts between May 2022 and July 2023 were collected and filtered through a list of keywords related to abortion (see [Appendix B](#)) to identify conversation relevant to abortion, resulting in a total of 2,210 posts. Researchers qualitatively analysed the 100 posts that received the most shares during the period of study.

Findings

ISD analysts produced a map showing interactions between accounts which produced anti-abortion posts during the period of study. Analysts qualitatively coded accounts by primary area of focus in the content they produced. To do so, analysts reviewed the account’s name, self-description (bio) and a sample of 20 most recent posts. Accounts were coded in the following categories (each community of interest corresponding to a specific colour coding).

- Far right: accounts grouped in these categories included self-reported supporters or members of far-right groups and political parties or accounts producing and sharing content which matches the definition of far-right ideology (see [Glossary](#)).
- Christianity: accounts labelled as such were primarily focused on producing content discussing the Catholic Church or issues related to broader Christian denominations.
- Anti-abortion: defined as accounts primarily focused on anti-abortion activism and communicating anti-abortion views.
- Anti-surrogacy/Anti-LGBTQ+/Anti-trans: defined as accounts primarily opposed to surrogacy and same sex-parenthood and promoting a range of anti-LGBTQ+ views. This included accounts focused on denouncing ‘gender ideology’ in French schools.
- Culture wars/conservative influencers: defined as public figures promoting a range of conservative views on societal issues. Accounts of prominent journalists and commentators were labelled under this category.
- Disability activism: accounts primarily supporting the rights of disabled individuals.
- Royalism: accounts primarily focusing on supporting the re-establishment of a monarchy in France.
- Bioethics: accounts posting about a range of issues related to gestation and medicine. In addition to opposing abortion, these accounts frequently communicate their opposition to assisted suicide, surrogacy, birth control and embryo manipulation.
- Personal testimonials: accounts dedicated to sharing testimonials of women who purportedly underwent abortions, with the stated objective of providing unfiltered views on the topic. These accounts, while not explicitly anti-abortion, publish a range of content highlighting the potentially negative impacts of abortions.
- Crisis centres: accounts belonging to organisations providing support to pregnant women and mothers with the aim of reducing the number of abortions.

The network maps overleaf were produced using messages about abortion, with accounts clustered based on the type of anti-abortion content (URLs or links) they shared during the period of study. Each node (dot) in the graph corresponds to an account (Facebook page/group or Instagram account) or a URL link which contained anti-abortion content. Nodes are sized according to the number of posts about abortion that they produced during the period of study. Accounts are clustered together based on the type of links containing anti-abortion content that they shared. Accounts clustered together shared the highest number of common links.



Figures 1 and 2: Maps showing the network of anti-abortion actors on Facebook and Instagram. In the first map, accounts (nodes) are labelled with the name of the account/page, while the second map shows accounts without names. Nodes are sized according to how many links produced by this actor are shared by others in the network.

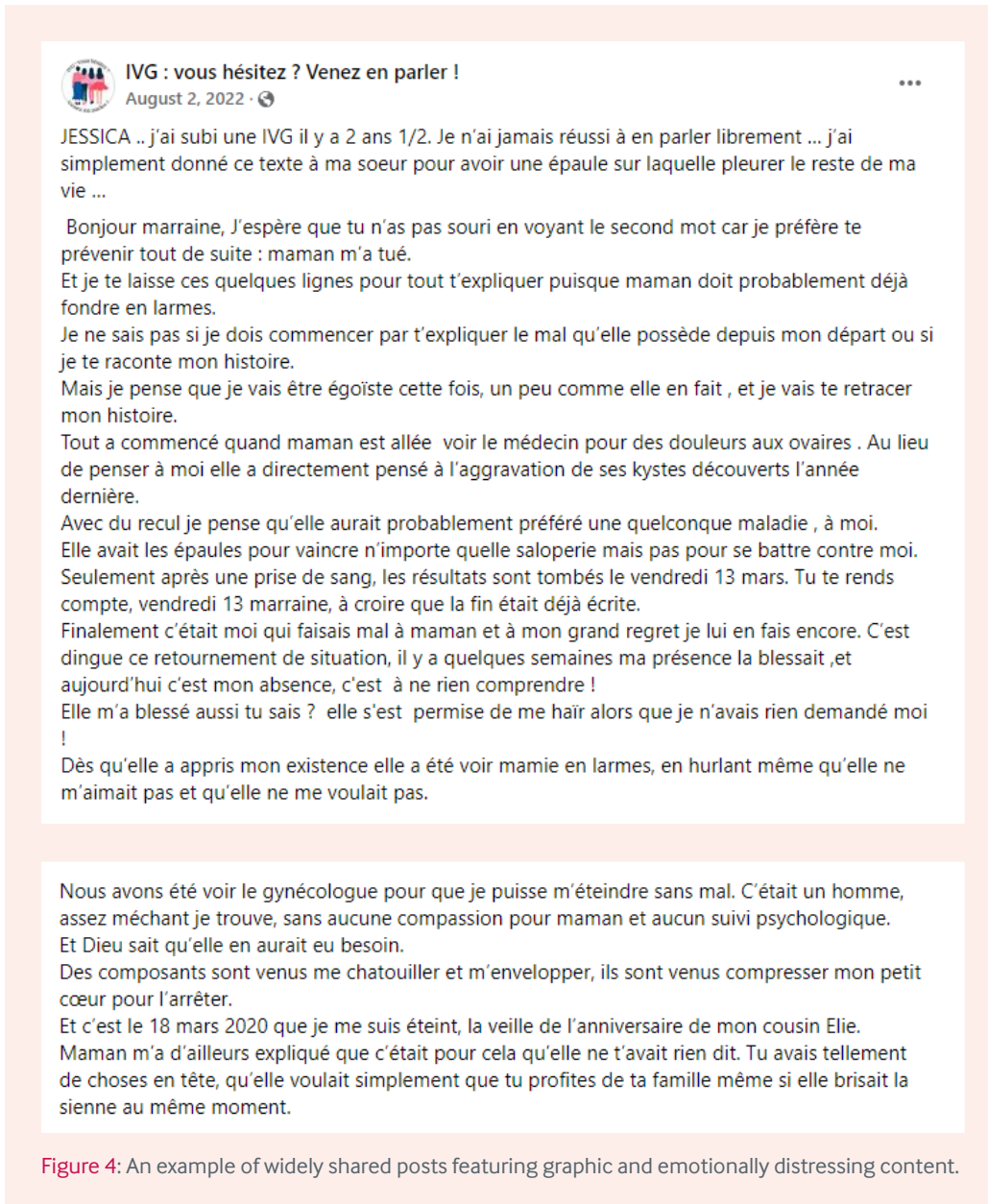


Figure 4: An example of widely shared posts featuring graphic and emotionally distressing content.

these users have some overlap in content with the core communities but are also involved in other conversations online.

Anti-abortion accounts were divided into two main clusters, one centred around anti-abortion street activism and the Marche Pour La Vie movement and another tied to the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), an advocacy organisation with links to Ordo Iuris, a transnational network dedicated to curbing reproductive rights. This organisation is part of a connected transnational network of anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ+ organisations. Other

actors in the network with a legal focus included Juristes pour l'Enfance.

To gain insight into the type of content produced by the network, ISD looked at posts from these actors that contained keywords related to abortion and reproductive rights. The 100 most shared posts about abortion produced by the network during the period of study were manually analysed; these posts were produced by a total of 19 pages and groups, showing that a small number of active pages and groups are actively communicating about the issue, achieving high traction in the network.

IVG : vous hésitez ? Venez en parler !
 October 28, 2022 · 🌐

Sabine : Le jour de mes 18 ans, je tombe enceinte sous pilule.
 Le papa (qui avait 21 ans) était super content et voulait absolument que je le garde.
 Pour ma part je ne savais pas trop.
 Nos deux familles l'ont appris, et nous ont clairement dit qu'il fallait que j'avorte sinon on pouvait les oublier.
 J'étais complètement perdu, entre mon père qui me disait "tu avortes ou m'oublie", le mari de ma mère qui me disait "tu le gardes ou tu m'oublies", et ma maman entre les deux qui me disaient qu'elle serait présente quoi que je décide.
 J'ai pris rdv pour avorter, étant complètement perdue.
 Le dimanche je prends le médicament pour aider le foetus a se décrocher en vue d'avorter le mardi matin.
 Le lundi matin je pars à l'internat où je faisais mes études (j'avais pris rdv à l'hôpital dans la ville où j'étudiais).
 Le lundi soir j'appelle ma mère en catastrophe, je lui dis que je ne peux pas avorter, elle vient me chercher et m'emmène chez elle.
 De là, appel de mon père et de la famille du futur papa, où ils hurlent sur ma mère en l'accusant de m'avoir retourné le cerveau.
 Mais je tiens bon.
 Aujourd'hui ce fameux foetus va bien, il a bientôt 13 ans ! Il se porte à merveille malgré le médicament reçu pour l'éjecter.
 Nos deux familles l'adorent malgré le passé.
 Je suis mariée, nous avons acheté une maison, et mon grand a maintenant un petit frère de 4 mois (qui a mis du temps à arriver).
 Écoutez toujours votre instinct, et non ce que l'entourage vous dit, vous êtes maître de votre corps et vos pensées.
 Faites vous confiance.

Marche Pour La Vie
 October 9, 2022 · 🌐

Combien de femmes disent avorter "par amour" ? ❤️
 Aimer ne peut consister à priver son enfant de voir la lumière du jour, de vivre et d'être aimé en acte. Aimer c'est accueillir, aimer c'est tout donner...
 Elles imaginent que leur enfant sera forcément malheureux, qu'elles ne seront pas une bonne mère... Mais qui peut prévoir l'avenir ?
 La qualité d'une vie ne se mesure-t-elle pas à l'amour que l'on donne et que l'on reçoit ?
 Toutes ces mamans voudraient tant aimer !
 Battons-nous pour elles ! Pour qu'elles puissent vivre la plénitude et l'authenticité du verbe aimer.

#paramour #aimernestpastuer #maternite #ouialavie #aimercesttoutdonner #accueillirlavie #enceinte #grossesse #avortement #ivg #img



Alliette Espieux
 May 4, 2022 · 🌐

🔴 En France, encourager une femme à ne pas avorter est condamné à 2 ans de prison et à 30 000 euros d'amende. Donc si tu aides une femme en détresse, tu es plus coupable qu'un violeur, et cette fois-ci, tu peux être sûr que toi, au moins tu ne seras pas loupé par la police !
 🗣️ Eh oui, c'est si grave et dangereux d'aider une femme, de la prendre sous ton toit, que le gouvernement préfère écrouer un médecin de 70 ans, comme le docteur Dor, plutôt que le violeur qui a détruit plus de 40 femmes.
 🙌 Ne restons pas silencieux ! Cette pression que nous subissons pour laisser ces enfants mourir ne doit pas nous arrêter, elle doit nous encourager !
 🗣️ Rejoins le camp du courage, rejoins la Génération Pro-Vie !

#noustoutes #plannedparenthood #abortion #onlutteratantquillefaudra #abortionismurder #enmarchepourlavie #babyivesmatter #ONLR #liveaction #generationonlr #avortement #planningfamilial #médecine #generationprovie #feminisme #moncorpsmeschoix #MPLV2022 #feminism #police



Figures 5, 6 and 7: Examples of content identified as being cross-posted (167, 53 and 40 times respectively). The second post uses pro-choice hashtags alongside an anti-abortion message and describes abortion as 'letting children die'. The third post states that 'loving means not killing', thereby describing abortion as a form of murder.



posted a video to [Follow](#)

playlist Radio.
June 27, 2022 ·

[Overview](#) [Comments](#)

"Contrairement à la France, le sujet de l'avortement est un débat aux États-Unis. Tous les responsables politiques se positionnent sur ce sujet lors des élections. Les juges de la Cour suprême disent que ce n'est pas à eux de régler cette question qui est un débat politique dans le pays." [See less](#)

Most relevant ▾

Le fait même qu'on en discute me paraît choquant, parce que cela signifie qu'à partir du moment où

Figure 8: A post lamenting the fact that abortion is considered a 'right' in France and allegedly cannot be challenged.

[Aleteia FR](#) · October 14, 2022 ·

La Cour européenne des droits de l'homme a condamné mardi 11 octobre la France à verser des dommages et intérêts à une ex-Femen qui s'était affichée seins nus dans l'église de la Madeleine à Paris en 2013, avant de mimer l'avortement de Jésus et d'uriner sur les marches de l'autel.



[FRALETEIA.ORG](#)
La CEDH estime que simuler l'avortement de Jésus dans une église relève de la liberté d'expression

Figure 9: Post concerning ECHR ruling about Femen pro-abortion demonstration.

[Famille Chrétienne](#)
June 24, 2022 ·

URGENT - La cour suprême américaine annule l'arrêt Roe vs Wade qui avait légalisé l'avortement en 1973



[FAMILLECHRETIENNE.FR](#)
La Cour suprême américaine annule le droit constitutionnel à l'avortement
Chaque Etat américain est désormais libre ou non d'interdire l'avortement. La décision, très att...
594 · 241 commentaires · 45 shares

[Aleteia FR](#) · June 26, 2022 ·

"En choisissant la vie, c'est notre responsabilité pour l'avenir de l'humanité qui est en jeu", assure le 24 juin 2022 Mgr Vincenzo Paglia, président de l'Académie pontificale pour la Vie, quelques heures après la décision de la Cour suprême américaine d'annuler l'arrêt Roe vs Wade qui avait légalisé en 1973 l'avortement sur l'ensemble du territoire des États-Unis.



[FRALETEIA.ORG](#)
L'Académie pontificale pour la Vie salue la décision
"En choisissant la vie, c'est notre responsabilité pour l'avenir de l'humanité qui est en jeu", ass...
538 · 217 commentaires · 55 shares

Figures 10 and 11: Posts reporting favourably on the overturning of Roe v. Wade.

Close to one-third of posts came from the Facebook page 'IVG: vous hésitez? Venez en parler!', an anti-abortion page with ties to⁵ the anti-abortion website IVG.net and specialised in publishing video testimonials of women who had bad abortion experiences or who chose not to end their pregnancies.⁶

Posts on this page consist of a series of personal testimonials using various narrative tactics to dissuade people from accessing abortion. These include depicting abortions as physically and emotionally painful, depicting abortions with graphic details (describing 'dead foetuses in bowls') and highlighting cases of alleged cruelty and lack of compassion from doctors and healthcare professionals carrying out abortions. Some of the posts explicitly compare abortion to murder, as evidenced by the post in Figure 4. written in the first-person voice of the imagined baby.

ISD identified multiple posts by anti-abortion actors whose identical text was copy–pasted a large number of times (a phenomenon known as cross-posting, a potential violation of Meta's [spam policy](#) and often used as a signal of automated or coordinated activity). Among the top 100 most shared posts, this included 24 posts by anti-abortion spokesperson Alette Espieux, 7 posts by IVG Vous Hésitez, and multiple posts by pages affiliated with the 'pro-life' movement Marche Pour La Vie. The high proportion of cross-posting among anti-abortion pages could suggest there is automated amplification of anti-abortion messaging taking place across the platform.

Other key pages/groups involved in producing the most shared posts included accounts of conservative influencers and elected figures involved in 'culture wars' issues. Posts about abortion produced by these actors rarely focused solely on abortion, instead linking abortion to

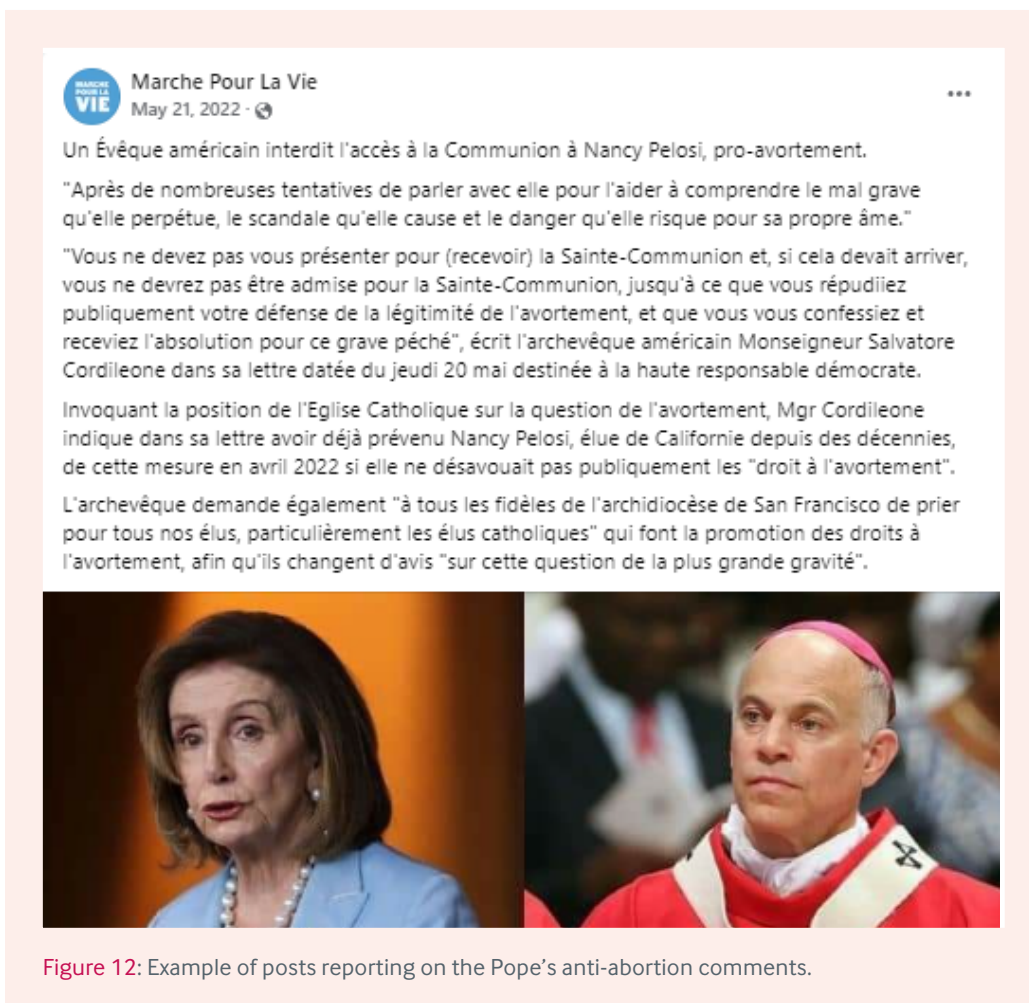


Figure 12: Example of posts reporting on the Pope's anti-abortion comments.

other perceived societal issues such as surrogacy, LGBTQ+ rights and the alleged spread of 'gender ideology' in French schools. Posts expressed their opposition to abortion as a 'right' and lamented the alleged trivialisation of abortion, deploying culture wars' rhetoric that frames abortion as part of an alleged assault on family values and traditional gender roles.

Several key events were referenced in top posts, including the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the US, and a European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) [ruling](#) about a demonstration by the Femen group in which a member interrupted a Catholic service and simulated the abortion of Jesus on the church altar to protest the Catholic Church's views on abortion. The ECHR ruled that the woman's rights were violated when she was given a suspended prison sentence.

The posts most often shared about the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* either reported favourably on the decision, presenting it as a 'historic moment', or lamented the alleged risk of a backlash against pro-life activists.

Posts by religious and pro-life pages reported on various comments by the Pope and the Catholic leadership opposing abortion on religious grounds, using specific declarations tied to the news cycle to convey anti-abortion sentiment. For example, the post below by the anti-abortion page *Marche Pour La Vie* highlights high-level members of the Catholic church condemning then-Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi allegedly taking communion despite her support for abortion rights.

Anti-abortion discussion on X: Key trends and narratives

Methodology

ISD produced a list of seed accounts on X and, using Brandwatch, conducted a round of network expansion based on the links shared. ISD then filtered posts about abortion produced by the network using a list of abortion-related keywords. This resulted in a total of 7,306 posts produced by the network during the period of study. Analysts then qualitatively analysed the 100 most shared posts (excluding retweets) to identify key topics of conversation.

Findings

ISD analysts identified two main spikes in discussion about abortion on X during the period of study: on 25 June 2022, the day following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, and on 24 November 2022, when France's lower chamber of Parliament voted in favour of entrenching abortion rights in the constitution.

These two events featured prominently in the most popular content during the whole period of study. Following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, several widely shared posts by anti-abortion organisations and influencers celebrated the decision and stated that France should follow a similar path of denying abortion as a fundamental and irreversible right. Throughout the period of study, popular content included several posts opposing the entrenchment of abortion rights in the constitution, a legislative proposal initially put forward by a coalition of over 100 senators in September 2022.

While posts most often shared about abortion featured explicit anti-abortion rhetoric that called for an end to abortion and described abortion as a 'tragedy', analysts found that the constitutionalising of abortion rights provided a major talking point for anti-abortion actors.⁷ The move was described as unnecessary, absurd, and not suited to France's political context.

The posts most often shared featured multiple examples of misinformative narratives. These included claims contradicting data provided by international health bodies including the World Health Organization (WHO). For instance, a post by self-described bioethics organisation *Généthique* claimed that new abortion-related guidelines released by the WHO in 2022 support

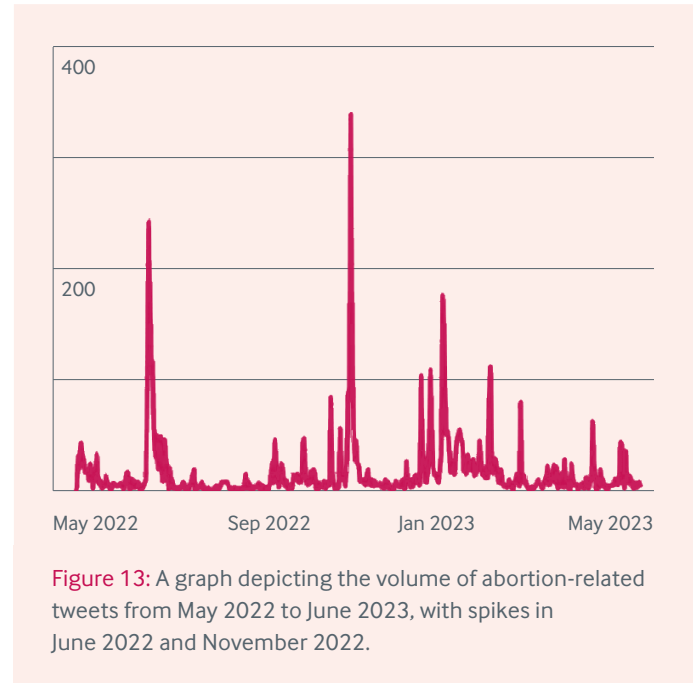




Figure 15: Tweet opposing entrenching abortion rights in the constitution and describing abortion as a 'tragedy'.



Figures 16 and 17: A tweet from Généthique misleading its followers about what the WHO recommendations are, and one by Alliance Vita claiming to debunk WHO data that shows reducing abortion access around the world does not lead to fewer abortions being carried out.

unrestricted 'on demand' access to abortion up until birth, a mischaracterisation of the recommendations. The recommendations focus on quality abortion care to save the lives of women and girls who may die due to complications (caused by lack of access, restrictive policies, unsafe conditions, etc.)⁸. Similarly, another post by an anti-abortion organisation Alliance VITA claimed that WHO data, which showed that reducing abortion rights does not lead to decreased numbers of abortions, was in fact inaccurate.⁹

The top ten links about abortion shared by the network included an op-ed by far-right politician Marion Maréchal in *Le Figaro* (dated 23 November 2022) arguing against the proposal¹⁰; and a piece by anti-abortion activist Grégor Puppincq in the far-right weekly magazine *Valeurs Actuelles*.¹¹ While these widely shared articles in established publications represent valid and expected political debate, they also reflect the way in which abortion rights in the constitution have been weaponised, with the impact of the issue gaining traction in public debate and galvanising opposition to the proposal. A poll by IFOP in July 2022

found that over 80% of French citizens are in favour of entrenching abortion rights in the constitution.

Finally, analysts found that anti-abortion narratives focused heavily on highlighting non-official or decontextualised figures about the number of abortions being carried out each year in France and internationally to suggest that abortions are on the rise or that the procedure is allegedly trivialised.

The page nombre-avortement.fr was the most shared URL across the period of study, with over 200 mentions. The page, which claims to document the number of abortions being carried out each year in France, presents itself as a fact-based resource for statistics about abortion figures. While claiming these are from official government sources, the website focuses on showing selective figures about the rise of abortion among certain categories of women (e.g. women who have already had an abortion) and solely focuses on highlighting statistics which show an increase in abortion. While not overtly sharing false information, the page posts explicit anti-abortion content on its social media channels and ultimately frames the rise in access to abortion as a societal problem.¹²

ECLJ - European Centre for Law & Justice
@ECLJ_Official

Le #RoyaumeUni a passé le cap des 10 millions d'avortements depuis la légalisation de l' #IVG en 1967. Une grossesse sur quatre se termine par un avortement. Soit un bébé avorté toute les deux minutes et trente secondes...

[Translate post](#)



nombre-avortement.fr
@nombreavg

Quand il s'agit de Pierre Palmade, on parle – à la une des journaux – de « bébé ».

Mais quand il s'agit d'un avortement toutes les 142 secondes en France, on parle d'amas de cellules, d'embryon.

C'est un peu comme ça les arrange, en fait...

[Translate post](#)



Figures 18 and 19: Tweet mentioning an article from a Christian publication that presents the alleged number of abortions being carried out in the UK in a decontextualised and sensationalised manner, and a tweet stating that an abortion is carried out every 142 seconds in France.

Algorithmic recommendations and anti-abortion activity on YouTube

Methodology

According to YouTube, recommendation algorithms on the platform drive 70% of all video views, meaning that a substantial proportion of content viewed on the platform is consumed without users necessarily searching for it. ISD sought to gain insight into the type of content that YouTube's algorithms might recommend to users located in France who are searching for abortion-related content. Specifically, the aim of this research was to understand what type of content YouTube's algorithms recommend in relation to abortion to women of reproductive age based in France, who are the prime target of anti-abortion actors in the country.

Three YouTube personas were created for the analysis to answer specific questions. All YouTube personas were women of reproductive age based in France, with variations in political interests and age. All three accounts were trained to display an interest in abortion-related content.

- Profile 1: Woman (aged 26), based in France, with no marked political affiliation and an interest in the topic of abortion. The account subscribed to five channels of centre-left and centre-right newspapers and media organisations. The account watched 50 YouTube videos about abortion (including news segments about the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*) by mainstream media outlets, fact-checkers and medical channels.
- Profile 2: Teenager (aged 16), based in France, with no marked political affiliation and an interest in the topic of abortion. The account subscribed to five entertainment YouTube channels targeting a teenage demographic. The account watched the same 50 videos as Profile 1.
- Profile 3: Woman (aged 25), based in France, with conservative politics and an interest in the topic of abortion, including anti-abortion views. The accounts watched 25 of the same videos as the accounts above and 25 videos which featured anti-abortion content or content that could be classified as dissuasive. This included videos featuring testimonials of people who got abortions as well as their loved ones.

As YouTube accounts are connected to Google accounts, new Google accounts were created for this project, geolocating the profiles to France via a VPN. Google/YouTube accounts created for the teenager profile did not need any parental/guardian approval before being set up. As outlined above, the accounts watched 50 videos about abortion in full over the period of one week. The following week, analysts collected recommendations to these accounts from YouTube's homepage for a duration of two weeks. This provided analysts with:

- The number of videos recommended to each user during the period of study
- The number of times each video was recommended to the profile

Analysts reviewed all videos recommended and created a dataset of videos about abortion. All videos within this dataset that were recommended more than five times were qualitatively analysed. Analysts coded each video according to the following criteria:

- Does it feature anti-abortion content?
- Does it feature abortion misinformation?
- Does it feature graphic content?
- Does it feature dissuasive content?

Videos coded as anti-abortion contained clearly voiced narratives opposing abortion, but researchers identified a broad spectrum of harmful content which misrepresented abortion or included graphic and misleading descriptions of the procedures as well as dissuasive narratives. This included personal testimonials and talk show programs where individuals detailed negative physical and psychological side-effects of having an abortion. These testimonials, without contextualisation, can have a dissuasive effect.

Table 2: Overview of content recommended to each YouTube profile.

| Policies | Profile 1 | Profile 2 | Profile 3 |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Anti-abortion videos | 6 (10.3%) | 5 (10.6%) | 9 (17.6%) |
| Abortion misinformation | 3 (5.2%) | 4 (8.5%) | 3 (5.9%) |
| Graphic content | 3 (5.2%) | 3 (6.4%) | 4 (7.8%) |
| Dissuasive content | 12 (20.7%) | 13 (27.7%) | 16 (31.4%) |
| Total videos about abortion | 58 | 47 | 51 |

Findings

YouTube’s algorithm recommended anti-abortion content, abortion misinformation, graphic content and dissuasive content to all three accounts created for the purposes of this research.

Both adult users and the minor user were recommended two of the same videos, one of which was by the channel *reinformation.tv*¹³, featuring personal testimonials of women who described abortion as trauma and murder. Both adult accounts were recommended the first video 15 times despite the second account not having watched any anti-abortion content at the training stage.

Both accounts belonging to adult users were recommended videos by anti-abortion organisations, media outlets and advocacy groups, as well as Christian organisations known for promoting anti-abortion views. A video by KTO TV, ostensibly about how the church can help couples decide about having an abortion and featuring the testimonial of a couple who chose not to have an abortion, was recommended to the anti-abortion and neutral user 13 and 10 times respectively. Another video by Alliance VITA featuring street interviews with men, all of whom described abortion as traumatic or depicted it in a negative light, was recommended 27 and 9 times to each account respectively.

Both videos have seemingly neutral titles and do not immediately appear as anti-abortion videos. The videos by Alliance VITA adopt the format of street interviews and present themselves as an unfiltered discussion about abortion even though no speakers featured in the videos are in favour of abortion.

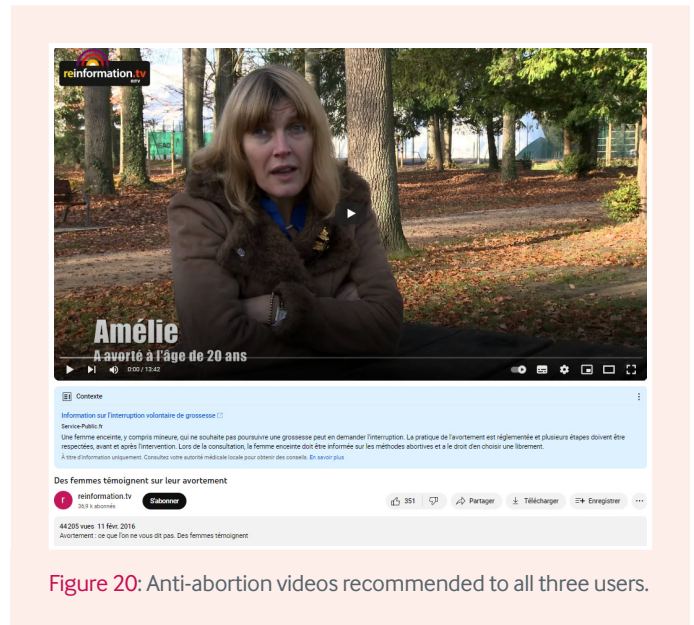


Figure 20: Anti-abortion videos recommended to all three users.



Figures 21 and 22: Anti-abortion videos by Alliance VITA and KTO TV recommended to both adult users.

The account which had signalled an interest in anti-abortion content was recommended anti-abortion videos by Academia Christiana, Alliance VITA, a Catholic channel producing prayer videos (the videos recommended were prayers for life and prayers against abortion) and a channel specialised in providing updates about the Vatican. In addition to the videos by KTO TV and Alliance VITA, the user with no expressed interest in anti-abortion content was also recommended a video by a Christian channel, one in which a church minister details her experience of encountering religion after having three abortions.

The video by Academia Christiana that was recommended to the account which had watched anti-abortion videos featured a talk by Aliette Espieux, the spokesperson for pro-life organisation Marche pour La Vie, describing abortion procedures in graphic and misinformative terms. In the video, Espieux also states that women undergoing medical abortion can choose to take a progesterone pill to reverse the effects of an abortion – a scientifically unproven and harmful method. The video also mischaracterises abortion by describing surgical abortion as the process of ‘vacuuming a child limb by limb’. The video came without a public health information panel, which YouTube claims to add to all videos discussing abortion.

Both users were recommended a broader range of dissuasive content, notably in the form of talk show programs where guests are invited to talk about their experiences of abortion, with testimonials highlighting exclusively their negative psychological and physical effects. While not necessarily anti-abortion (and therefore not coded as such by ISD analysts), the YouTube videos featuring extracts of these TV programs highlight negative experiences of abortion, which can have a dissuasive effect when recommended to users.

Notably, over a third of videos recommended to the minor user who had not watched any anti-abortion videos featured dissuasive content and personal testimonials outlining the negative consequences of having an abortion, which was reflected in the titles of videos.

The minor user was recommended two anti-abortion videos by KTO TV (including the one recommended to adult users), the video by reinformation.tv, two anti-abortion videos by Christian channel EMCI TV, and a video featuring prayers ‘for life’ by another Christian channel. The video by EMCI TV takes the format of a discussion panel/talk show

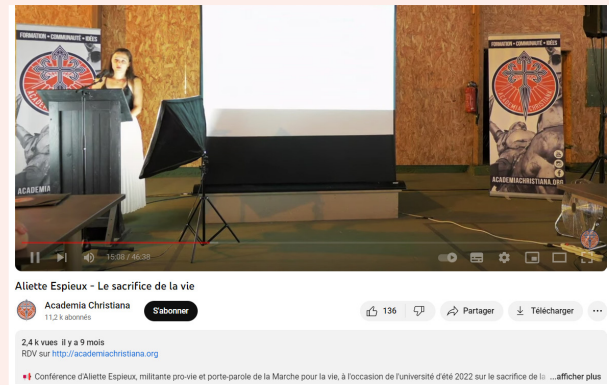
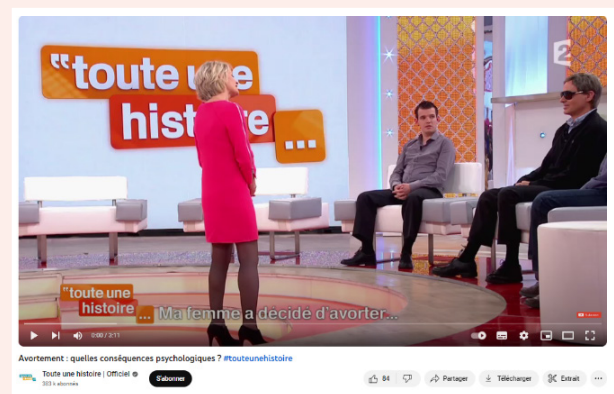


Figure 23: Video featuring Aliette Espieux.



Figures 24 and 25: Examples of videos with dissuasive testimonials.

aiming to have a compassionate and unfiltered discussion on the issue but promoting an anti-abortion message.

One of the videos titled 'are there alternatives to abortion?' features a speaker advocating for keeping a foetus, including in cases of rape or incest, while the second video titled 'how an abortion is carried out and its consequences' features the same speaker making misinformative claims using graphic language. It portrays abortion as cruel and harmful to the foetus (describing the process of suction aspiration as using an 'aspirator ten times more powerful than a domestic Hoover' and describing the crushing of a 'baby's brain').

In addition, YouTube's algorithm recommended a video five times which did not contain anti-abortion content but recommended homeopathic remedies to manage abortion-related pain, a non-medically vetted treatment.¹⁴

As highlighted previously in this report, following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the US and the proliferation of abortion misinformation, YouTube promised to crack down on videos promoting unsafe abortion methods or spreading false claims about the safety of abortion procedures. In the same announcement, YouTube said it would add an information panel directing users to credible local health authorities on any video discussing abortion. While coding the recommended videos, analysts found the panel was rarely applied to videos that met this criterion.

Analysts found that none of the 15 videos containing anti-abortion rhetoric, graphic content and/or abortion misinformation recommended to the minor user had information panels. Notably, these numbers were lower for the adult users: 10 for the neutral adult user and 7 for the conservative user. YouTube's threshold for requiring an information panel is unclear but, given the graphic and often misleading content featured in all these videos, they arguably should have been properly labelled.

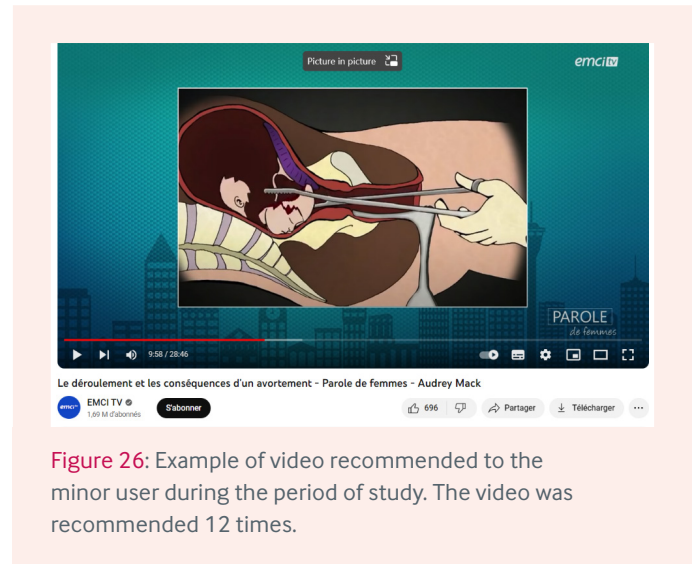


Figure 26: Example of video recommended to the minor user during the period of study. The video was recommended 12 times.

Platform features and anti-abortion content: The case of Instagram Reels

Methodology

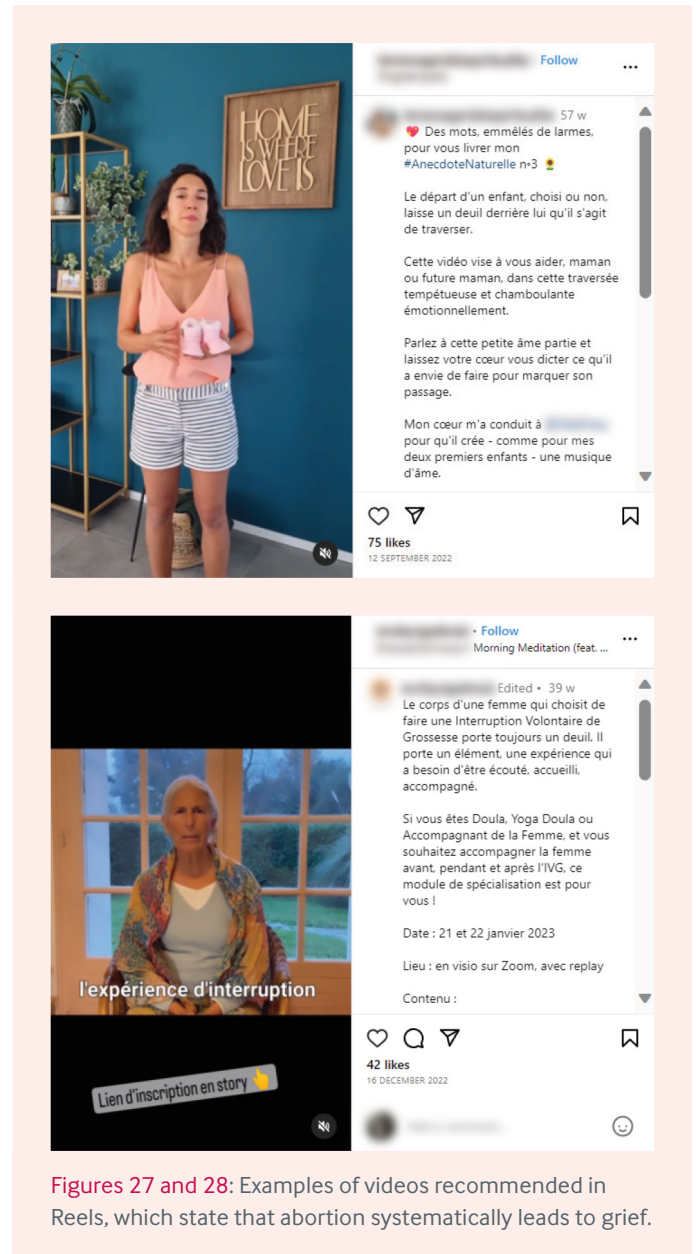
Analysts sought to gain insight into how specific platform features, including recently introduced ones, can contribute to shaping the conversation about abortion. Launched in 2020, Instagram Reels are short video clips. In July 2021, Instagram announced it would invest US\$1 billion in Reels creators. However, the type of content recommended by these features and how they can influence users' feeds remains poorly understood.

To analyse how abortion-related content might be recommended to users in France, ISD analysts conducted qualitative analysis on Instagram. To do so, analysts created a fresh Instagram account geolocated in France (with settings indicating it belongs to an 18- to 25-year-old woman), which was curated to signal an interest in abortion-related content. The account followed the Instagram page of Planning Familial, two abortion-related hashtags (#avortement and #IVG,) and five accounts of influencers who have spoken online about their experiences of having an abortion. The accounts did not follow any anti-abortion accounts.

Over a period of a week, analysts scrolled through Instagram Reels for a duration of 30 minutes twice per day. The process was conducted using a VPN, maintaining consistent geolocation. Analysts liked Reels featuring discussion about abortion, pregnancy and parenthood. After a two-day break the following week, analysts selected the first 50 posts mentioning abortion that featured in the user's main Instagram feed. Searching for abortion-related keywords (#IVG and #avortement), analysts also selected the first 50 Reels about abortion appearing in the platform's search bar. To gain broader insight into the types of content recommended by Reels, researchers scrolled through Reels for a duration of an hour and identified the top Instagram accounts in the feed (by number of appearances in the feed).

Findings

Analysts found that the Reels recommended when searching for abortion key terms were mostly news segments from large media platforms or pro-abortion videos by individuals describing themselves as nurses or medical specialists. Out of 50 Reels about abortion recommended to users on the home feed, one-fifth contained dissuasive or misleading content.



Figures 27 and 28: Examples of videos recommended in Reels, which state that abortion systematically leads to grief.



Figure 29: Examples of content produced by the page 'et si on parlait avortement?'. The caption reads: "Today we live in a world where one is no longer allowed to be different. Ideologies rise, 'norms' are being created and we are all expected to think the same. And if you dare saying that you don't subscribe to them, you are stigmatised, singled out and made to feel like an outsider. In this day and age where a certain type of 'feminism' is spreading, abortion is no longer a choice but is presented as the norm and the only option in the face of unwanted pregnancy. SO WHERE IS THE CHOICE? How can we talk about choice when we're abandoned and rejected if we want to keep our baby despite the hardships or because we cling to the hope that we'll manage? Today, to promote abortion, some go as far as painting a dark and frightening picture to women who choose to pursue their pregnancy. They will tell you that you will become homeless and will be poor, that you won't have a career or a future anymore, or that you will lose your boyfriend or partner."

Recommended Reels also included dissuasive content produced by anti-abortion pages and online media platforms presenting themselves as neutral spaces of discussion, yet have a clear bias, featuring known anti-abortion figures and only promoting anti-abortion views. This included a Reel featuring 'et si on parlait avortement?', a page and podcast presenting itself as a 'non-judgmental' platform to discuss abortion and promote women's right to choose.

A closer examination of the page showed that it used a range of techniques to disguise its anti-abortion messages, including using pro-choice hashtags and producing anti-abortion visuals alongside seemingly pro-abortion visuals (to provide an impression of balance). However, the text or video accompanying the pro-abortion title often stated that having an abortion is not a solution to women's unwanted pregnancies.

Additional recommended Reels included a debate on the online channel Le Crayon aimed at under-25s, which ostensibly presents itself as a media source featuring diverse voices around polarising topics. The video by Le Crayon featured a debate between a lawyer and Aliette Espieux, who has promoted 'abortion pill reversal' (see [YouTube section above](#)) and claimed that abortion involves

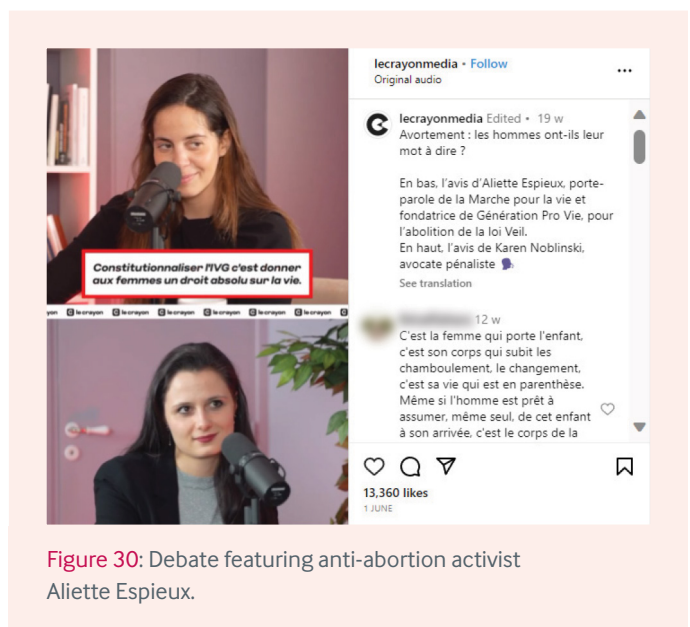


Figure 30: Debate featuring anti-abortion activist Aliette Espieux.

dismembering a baby¹⁵.

During the period of research, ISD also recorded the Instagram accounts recommended to the user in Reels, noting the number of times the accounts had been recommended. ISD found that nine out of the ten accounts recommended in Reels focused on motherhood, and eight were accounts self-described as ‘tradwives’, an online sub-community which promotes traditional gender roles, women’s submission to men and a focus on domesticity and motherhood, and has links to far-right ideology.¹⁶

Several of the accounts recommended to researchers described motherhood as a woman’s ‘duty’ and one of the accounts used Instagram’s ‘stories’ function to promote an event organised by the US-based anti-abortion organisation Live Action. ISD found that several accounts promoted misinformation about reproductive health and contraception, describing hormone-based contraception as harmful and poisonous. Previous research has shown that anti-abortion movements promote a range of false claims about abortion, pregnancy and contraception as part of their efforts to roll back abortion rights and prevent women from accessing reliable information about reproductive choices and contraception.¹⁷



Figure 31: Example of content produced by top recommended Instagram accounts

Monetisation of anti-abortion content: An analysis of Meta ads

Methodology

Using the Meta Ad Library, ISD analysts sorted French-language ads discussing abortions from all the Facebook pages identified in the original seed list running from May 2022 to June 2023 (see [Methodology](#)). In total, six Facebook pages from the original seed list had run abortion-related ads in this time frame: Choisir la Vie, ECLJ, CLARA Life, Fondation Jérôme Lejeune, Alliance VITA, and IVG Vous Hésitez (174,200 cumulative followers). To ensure that no other ads were missed, analysts searched Meta's Ad Library for political ads targeting French users during the period of study using the keyword searches 'IVG', 'avortement', 'pro-vie' and 'foetus'.

Analysts identified 199 relevant ads for this report (from 532 ads total) and coded them into three categories: (1) dissuasive content (including personal stories); (2) fundraising or awareness campaigns for anti-abortion initiatives and organisations; and (3) anti-abortion activism (events or marches). Analysts also noted whether they found graphic or emotionally distressing content in the ad (see [Glossary](#)).

To ensure each ad was thoroughly checked, analysts clicked through the ads, scrolled through each website it may have led to and fact-checked any claims made in the ad or on the website linking to it. Third-party fact-check sites, official government health agencies and news articles with reputable sources from the healthcare industry were used to fact-check claims made by the ads or by the content linked to the ads.

Because the Meta Ad Library gives a range of money spent on an ads and impressions, the average was calculated for each total. Without more accurate data being provided by Meta, it is impossible to know the exact amount spent by each actor. As a result, the figures for spend and reach in this section have been estimated; the full range of numbers is included in [Appendix A](#).

The three ads below serve as examples of ads that would fall into the first, second and third categories respectively. All three ads fell under the 'social issues, elections or politics' category established by Meta. The first ad was also coded for graphic or emotionally distressing content due to how it discusses sexual assault. After analysts coded the second and third ads, they were removed by Meta for lacking a required 'Paid for by' disclaimer.

Library ID: 661557698471850
 Inactive
 Apr 13, 2022 - May 3, 2022
 Platforms: Facebook
 Categories: Social Issues, Elections or Politics
 Estimated audience size: >1M
 Amount spent (EUR): €500 - €599
 Impressions: 175K - 200K

See ad details

IVG : vous hésitez ? Venez en parler !
 Sponsored - Paid for by IVG : vous hésitez ? Venez en parler !

Maëva. Il y a 1 an, j'ai été abusée sexuellement, j'avais 16 ans. Quelques semaines après j'ai su que j'étais enceinte de 6 sa+5j. Dans les tous premiers instants où je l'ai su, je savais que j'allais le garder mais évidemment ma famille était contre, d'ailleurs ma sœur avait déjà planifié un RDV pour une IVG pour moi. Parfois, je me disais que j'étais trop jeune pour être maman et que si je le gardais, il m'aurait trop rappelé son géniteur et je l'aurais pas accepté... Du coup je suis allée au rdv avec ma mère, la sf me fait une échographie pour voir ...

Library ID: 3178378682415453
 Inactive
 Sep 30, 2022 - Oct 1, 2022
 Platforms: Facebook, Instagram
 Categories: Social Issues, Elections or Politics
 Estimated audience size: >1M
 Amount spent (EUR): <€100
 Impressions: 2K - 3K
 This ad ran without a required disclaimer.

See ad details

Choisir la Vie
 Sponsored

#campagnechoisirlavie #ToujoursMoi #IVG #avortement

Droit à l'avortement ou pas: la réalité reste la même: avant comme après la naissance, il s'agit toujours d'un enfant.

Partagez le Tag #ToujoursMoi pour promouvoir la défense de la vie, avant et après la naissance...

Library ID: 759013032514915
 Inactive
 Apr 13, 2023 - Apr 14, 2023
 Platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
 Categories: Social Issues, Elections or Politics
 Estimated audience size: >1M
 Amount spent (EUR): <€100
 Impressions: 1K - 2K
 This ad ran without a required disclaimer.

See ad details

CLARA Life
 Sponsored

Aftermovie March for Life 2023. Thank you for the huge mobilisation. You were more than 800 people to march in the street of Brussels this Sunday. And seeing the opposition, we were right. Big thanks to all the speakers. See you even more numerous on the 21st of April 2024

BENL De Mars is niet onopgemerkt voorbij gegaan; bedankt voor jullie...

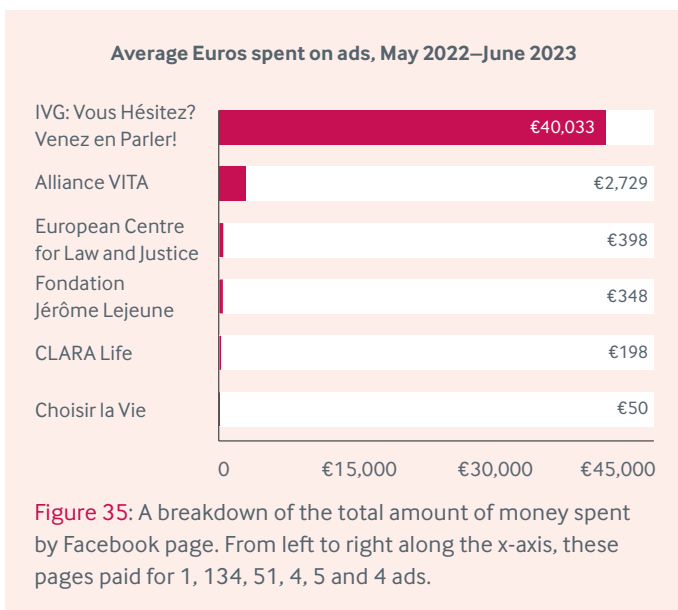
Figures 32, 33 and 34: From left to right, ads that were coded as category one (personal stories containing dissuasive content), two (fundraising or awareness campaigns for anti-abortion initiatives and organisations), and three (anti-abortion activism).

Findings

Across 199 ads identified as relevant for this study, ISD found that 134 ads fell into category one (personal stories containing dissuasive content), 57 fell into category two (fundraising or awareness campaigns for anti-abortion initiatives and organisations), 7 fell into category three (anti-abortion activism) and 1 was removed by Meta before analysts were able to code it. The six pages paying for these ads spent an estimated total of €43,750 on these ads and received an estimated 9.4 million impressions.

The page with the most ads was IVG Vous Hésitez, which spent an average total of €40,033 on 134 ads that all fell into category one. As mentioned previously, IVG Vous Hésitez is [linked to IVG.net](#), a [website aimed](#) at dissuading women from getting an abortion. The website features a ‘guide’ for abortion and lists risks and complications juxtaposed with alleged testimonies from women who regret their abortion or suffer ‘trauma’ from them.

IVG Vous Hésitez was also the only page to advertise to users below 18 years old on Facebook. Analysts identified 49 ads that the Meta Ad Library stated reached the 13- to 17-year-old demographic, and of those, 24 were graphic or emotionally distressing. In one ad with an average of 27,500 impressions, an anonymous teenage girl described how she was sexually assaulted and felt forced into an abortion, which she still regrets to this day. As noted throughout, it is impossible to verify this content where individuals give personal testimony.



IVG : vous hésitez ? Venez en parler !
Sponsored · Paid for by IVG : vous hésitez ? Venez en parler !

MARGOT J'ai fait une terrible erreur ! Vous allez certainement me juger mais je le mérite et j'ai besoin de le partager.. Je n'en peux plus de garder ça pour moi.. J'ai fait une IVG à 13sa + 3j d'un bébé voulu (j'avais mis 1 an avant d'être enceinte). Tout le contexte faisait que j'étais persuadée que l'IVG était finalement la meilleure option. Mais aujourd'hui je suis dévastée. Je n'en parle à personne car j'ai l'impression que comme il s'agissait de ma décision , je n'ai pas le droit d'être triste.. En plus l'intervention ne s'est pas bien passée , et j'ai tout senti.. J'ai la sensation qu'on m'a arraché mon bébé. Et le pire c'est que j'ai entendu les infirmières et le médecin parler en disant « c'était une petite fille ».

Au jour d'aujourd'hui je refuse de penser que je ne suis plus enceinte. Dès que j'y pense j'ai envie d'aller en enfer. J'ai assassiné ma fille. C'est ce que je ressens. Comment dois-je faire avec ça ? Je n'ose même pas dire que j'ai fait une IVG. Je dis que je l'ai perdu.

Figure 36: An ad featuring a personal story where a woman says she made a ‘terrible mistake’, ‘assassinated her daughter’ and wants to ‘go to hell’.

62.8% of the ads analysed for this study also targeted 18- to 24-year-old women. Of those, 19% primarily targeted 18- to 24-year-old women. Most of them were from IVG Vous Hésitez, with testimonials allegedly from women in that age range sharing their negative experiences with abortion. One ad from IVG Vous Hésitez almost exclusively targeted 18- to 24-year-old women (99.5%) and promoted the ‘abortion pill reversal’ (see Figure 37). The ad received an average of 47,500 impressions, potentially exposing younger Facebook users to a [harmful](#) procedure and misinformation about the abortion pill procedure.

The page, which [investigations](#) have linked to anti-abortion activists, only posts written or video testimonials of women who claim to have had an abortion and regretted it; experienced significant side effects; or chose not to terminate a pregnancy without any regrets. The page makes no effort to remind its audiences that these stories are unique and personal stories. By not clearly disclosing its goals and by presenting itself as a neutral discussion space about abortion, the page appears to be violating French law related to ‘obstruction to abortion’.

Nine of the ads from IVG Vous Hésitez feature personal stories that compare abortion to murder or those seeking abortions to murderers. The use of the word ‘murder’ or ‘kill’ when describing an abortion is [unscientific](#) and can proliferate fear and harmful information about abortions, especially if such content is shown to younger users on Facebook and Instagram.

LA PRISE D'UN ANTIDOTE :

Ainsi, en intervenant très vite après la prise de MIFEGYNE, on peut essayer de contrer l'effet anti-progestatif, par la prise d'un antidote, en l'occurrence de la progestérone. La prise d'UTROGESTAN peut permettre de maintenir en place le placenta et permettre la poursuite normale de la grossesse. « Plus vite il est administré, plus les chances de maintenir la grossesse sont élevées », dit le Dr Paul qui aide souvent les femmes au téléphone.
En cas de doute ou de questions, n'hésitez pas vous aussi à nous questionner.

Figure 37: Part of the 'abortion pill reversal' ad referring to the procedure as an antidote and not warning audiences of its potentially harmful effects.

Analysts also identified two ads from IVG Vous Hésitez promoting the 'abortion pill reversal' procedure, a scientifically unproven and harmful method that claims to reverse the abortion pill's effects. This content also appears to be in violation of French criminal law, which prohibits the promotion of medication which is not approved by medical authorities. ISD has previously identified ads on Meta platforms in English promoting the 'abortion pill reversal network', and Meta has been slow in removing such ads for medical misinformation. In this case, Meta did not remove the ads while they were active, and the page spent €600 to run them for a total time of about seven weeks, receiving 70,000 impressions. The ads referred to the procedure as an 'antidote' to the abortion pill and did not include any medical warnings, instead framing the procedure as normal.

The top 20 ads with the most impressions were also all from IVG Vous Hésitez, with the top ad reaching 550,000 impressions. Eight of those ads were marked as containing graphic content, including descriptions of extreme psychological distress, sexual assault and miscarriage (this ad also alleged the hospital caused the miscarriage).

The content of ads by other advertisers varied, mostly staying in categories two (fundraising or campaigns promoting anti-abortion initiatives and organisations) and three (anti-abortion activism). One of the ads from the ECLJ page, which frames its anti-abortion activism under the guise of human rights, shared a video of two people reacting to a different video of women talking about their abortions. The two people spread misinformation about reproductive health, abortion and contraceptives – for example, describing an oral emergency contraceptive pill as a 'mini' abortion. The ad received 27,500 impressions.

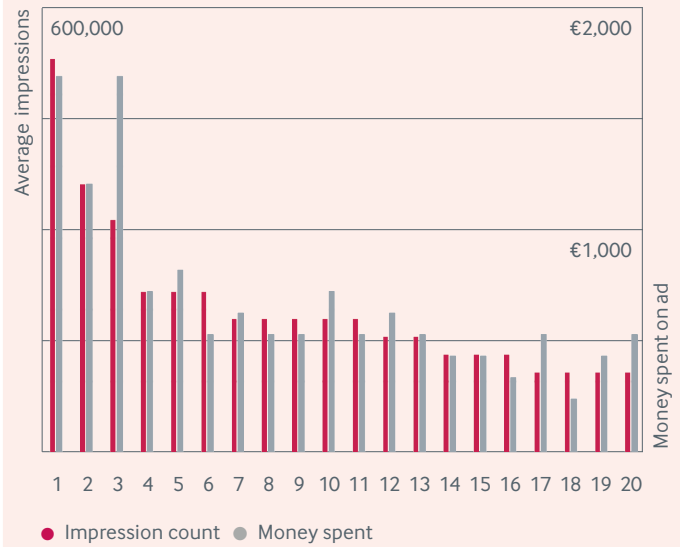


Figure 38: From left to right, the top 20 ads by highest impression count in the dataset (all from IVG Vous Hésitez). On the right axis, the amount of money spent on them.

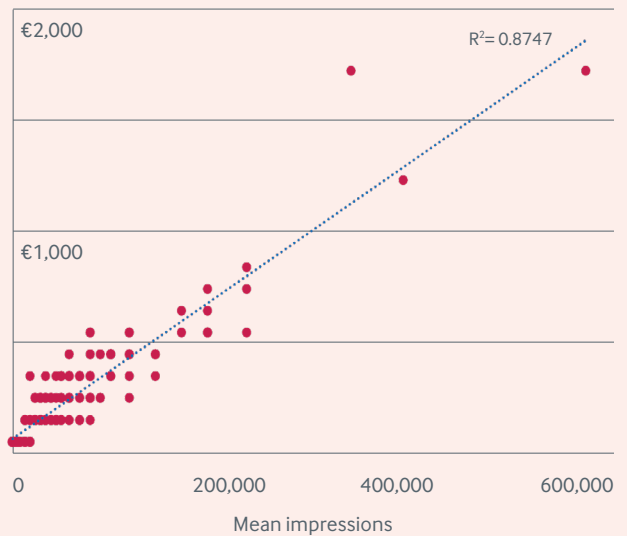


Figure 39: A scatterplot graph showing the positive correlation between ad spend and impression count of the ads collected for this study.

Conclusions and recommendations

The report found that platform algorithms widely recommend misinformative, graphic and dissuasive content to social media users, including under-age users, and that such content is inconsistently labelled by platforms despite commitments to curbing misinformation related to reproductive health. Relatively new platform features such as Instagram Reels are recommending dissuasive and misinformative content to users. While analysts identified multiple examples of overt anti-abortion messaging, dissuasive content produced by online actors presenting themselves as unbiased channels to discuss abortion but with documented ties to anti-abortion activists emerged as a key feature of anti-abortion messaging. Dissuasive content took many forms, from misinformation about abortion procedures and potential side effects to mischaracterisations of abortion which could cause distress for readers.

This research also found that anti-abortion actors are using a range of misinformation tactics to reach audiences, with their content circulating widely across social media platforms as a result. The study has also shed light on the various communities involved in producing and sharing anti-abortion content on French social media, finding that accounts primarily focused on 'pro-life' messaging relate to a wide range of online communities, including far-right actors, religious communities and advocacy groups spanning disability, gender issues and broader reproductive health, highlighting the interconnectedness of this network.

Such actors produced a high number of posts on Facebook and Instagram, with examples of widely copy-pasted messages, and invested heavily in Facebook advertising, including by producing posts advocating for harmful procedures such as 'abortion pill reversal' or targeting minor users with graphic and distressing content. The page IVG Vous Hésitez has produced a wide range of dissuasive messages across Facebook and Instagram and bought 50 ads targeting 13- to 17-year-olds, half of which (24) were emotionally distressing. Finally, ISD found that anti-abortion pages deployed a range of misleading communication tactics to amplify their message, including using pro-choice hashtags and misleading titles to suggest that they were in favour of abortion.

Such misleading tactics, when paired with algorithmic amplification, stand in the way of social media users accessing reliable and safe reproductive health information. Investigations have shown that [access](#) to abortion remains

unequal across France due to socio-economic factors. Amid a global rollback of reproductive rights and lingering inequalities around access in France, organised anti-abortion networks and online information manipulation efforts contribute to eroding reproductive rights. Considering these findings, ISD makes the following recommendations for platforms, regulatory authorities and policymakers.

Recommendations for social media platforms

Recommendations for ensuring platform policies are fit for purpose

- Meta should add a specific clause in the health misinformation policy to include statements misleading users about what abortion is. Lack of proper information can lead to harm for people seeking abortion care.
- Meta and YouTube should strengthen their policy against graphic imagery, specifically addressing language and exaggerated, inaccurate depictions of abortion that may unnecessarily create fear amongst users and potentially encourage harm against abortion providers. Language comparing abortion to 'murder' was found in numerous ads in this study and should be considered as a flag for further review.
- Platforms need to add policies specifically addressing the harms of the 'abortion pill reversal procedure' and ban ads promoting it to users as a safe and verified procedure.

Recommendations for enforcement of policies

- Meta should ensure that Facebook and Instagram ads containing potentially harmful health misinformation are properly flagged and removed, especially if ad targeting includes users in the 13-17-year-old age range.
- Platforms should ensure that the enforcement of policies is applied consistently and proportionately to non-English language content, as abortion misinformation affects users globally. The first transparency reports submitted by social media platforms in November 2023 as part of the requirements of the [Digital Services Act](#) showed that the number of French-speaking moderators

remains low, and some platforms did not disclose country-specific headcounts of French and European moderators. Platforms with large international userbases should hire global moderation teams with socio-cultural context and sufficient language capabilities to understand and curb emerging health misinformation narratives; regularly offer trainings to staff across languages on issues related to health misinformation; and offer detailed reports to regulatory authorities about their financial and human investment in content moderation across all languages covered, including French.

- Platforms should ensure that abortion-related policies are applied to newer platform features such as YouTube Shorts and Instagram Reels, which currently do not have any information labels despite the presence of videos discussing abortion (in different capacities). Platforms need to better coordinate when addressing these issues to slow the spread of cross-platform misinformation.

Recommendations for regulators and for policymakers

Platform regulation & co-regulatory commitments

- The European Commission must ensure that platforms adhere to their existing Commitments related to the labelling of political or issue related ads (No.6) and the use of fact-checkers (No.31) in the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation (2022). ISD found that several actors can circumvent these rules by posting dissuasive content related to abortion that does not strictly contain misinformation but promotes graphic and emotionally upsetting narratives related to abortion. If platforms choose to allow such content, then regulators should request greater transparency from platforms about content which was not labelled, and any related justifications for a lack of labelling. Commitment 31 also requires social media platforms and other signatories to the Code to create a repository to keep detailed records of content labelled as false or misleading, which could also include content that was assessed but then not deemed to require a label or fact-check.
- ISD found 49 Meta Ads targeting minors (13-17 year-olds), of which almost half (24) were

graphic or emotionally distressing. European regulators must ensure platforms are adhering to the requirements for advertising in the DSA, in particular Articles 26 and 28. These include several transparency requirements for platforms related to ads, including related to ad targeting, and a ban on the use of personal data for targeting ads where a platform is “aware with reasonable certainty that the recipient of the service is a minor”. As the [EU](#) is also debating a new regime of transparency related to political ads, regulation needs to ensure that ads related to abortion which fall under the category of political ads are submitted to stricter enforcement and that targeting of individuals is subject to citizens’ consent.

Legislation & policies

- Introduce stricter sanctions for health-related websites that deceive the public about their mission, services or products (i.e., websites that claim to provide medical information about abortions but are anti-abortion). Websites which deceive the public about their views on abortion by presenting themselves as fact-based discussion platforms about abortion may violate French law related to ‘obstruction to abortion’. As ISD found in this report, these pages continue to invest heavily in Meta Ads and continue to operate without major sanctions despite likely violating French law.
 - Counteract efforts to obstruct access to abortion by implementing new policies which enhance the visibility of reliable information about abortion, including by increasing public funding for organisations dedicated to sharing accurate and reliable information related to reproductive rights.
-

Appendices

Appendix A: Full Meta ad library numbers

| | Choisir la Vie | IVG Vous Hésitez | Alliance VITA | ECLJ | Fondation Jérôme Lejeune | CLARA Life |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------|--------|-----------------------------|------------|
| Total Ads | 1 | 134 | 51 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Category 1 Ads | 0 | 134 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Category 2 Ads | 1 | 0 | 51 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Category 3 Ads | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Total Graphic Ads | 0 | 69 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| € Spend High | €99 | €47,266 | €5,249 | €596 | €595 | €396 |
| € Spend Low | €– | €32,800 | €200 | €200 | €100 | €– |
| Impressions High | 2,999 | 9,823,866 | 237,949 | 65,996 | 66,995 | 9,996 |
| Impressions Low | 2,000 | 8,344,000 | 151,000 | 54,000 | 50,000 | 6,000 |

Appendix B: List of abortion-related keywords

List of keywords:

avortement
 avorter
 interruption volontaire de grossesse
 IVG
 foetus
 provie
 fausse couche
 accouchement
 infanticide
 enceinte
 malformation
 placenta
 loi Veil
 abortif
 avorteur
 gestation
 embryon
 Roe v. Wade
 Simone Veil
 utérus

Endnotes

- 1 ISD contacted all organisations and individuals referenced in this report to provide detail on how they would be referenced and invite responses ahead of publication. At the time of publication, only Ms. Aliette Espieux and the media organisation Gèneéthique had replied. ISD reviewed their responses and amended the text where necessary. If responses from other organisations or individuals are received in the future, this will be outlined on ISD's website.
 - 2 [Mapping-the-Ideological-Landscape-of-Misogyny \(2\).pdf \(icct.nl\)](#)
 - 3 The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) describes the treatment as 'not supported by science': [Medication Abortion "Reversal" Is Not Supported by Science | ACOG](#)
 - 4 This definition is based on the report [on abortion care by the](#) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist's abortion [language guide](#).
 - 5 [ivg.net, le site très orienté d'un couple de militants catholiques \(lemonde.fr\)](#)
 - 6 The full name of this page is shortened to IVG Vous Hésitez throughout this report for the sake of clarity.
 - 7 On 8th March 2023 (International Woman's Day), French president Emmanuel Macron stated that "women's freedom to access abortion" would be enshrined in the constitution: [Avis « La constitutionnalisation de l'interruption volontaire de grossesse : protéger un droit humain de portée universelle » \(A - 2023 - 1\) - Légifrance \(legifrance.gouv.fr\)](#) A legislative proposal to do so was first submitted to Parliament in October 2022: [Proposition de loi constitutionnelle n°340 - 16e législature - Assemblée nationale \(assemblee-nationale.fr\)](#)
 - 8 After being contacted by ISD, the organisation Gèneéthique responded via written email that the article asserting this statement was written by Christophe Foltzenlogel and was initially published on the ECLJ website. ECLJ subsequently allowed Gèneéthique to reshare the article on their website.
 - 9 [Abortion rates go down when countries make it legal: report \(nbcnews.com\)](#) [Abortion \(who.int\)](#)
 - 10 Marion Marechal is a member of Eric Zemmour's Reconquete party and has promoted the far-right 'great replacement' conspiracy theory: [Marion Maréchal appelle ses partisans à lutter contre le "grand remplacement" \(europe1.fr\)](#)
 - 11 Experts and academics have described Valeurs Actuelles as ultra-conservative or far-right: [Changement de direction à « Valeurs actuelles » \(la-croix.com\)](#)
 - 12 The website states that there is 'one abortion is taking place every 142 minutes'; a sensationalised statistic compiled using abortion numbers since 1976 and not necessarily reflective of current trends. A review of the last 50 posts on X published by the page's social media account found that all posts relating to abortion were openly anti-abortion. For example, on 28 September 2023, the account [posted](#) in French: "On 'International Safe Abortion Day' let's remember that every year in France abortion wipes out 220,000 children. At a time when birthrates are low, this figure is concerning #abortion #ivg."
 - 13 'Reinformation' is a coined by France's Identitarian far-right movement: [Réinformation - La revue européenne des médias et du numérique \(la-rem.eu\)](#)
 - 14 [A Not-So-Gentle Refutation of the Defence of Homeopathy - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
 - 15 Various investigations have highlighted the deceptive nature of such language to describe abortion: [The gruesome language anti-abortion activists are using to win support - The Washington Post](#)
 - 16 [Tradwives: The Housewives Commodifying Right-Wing Ideology – GNET \(gnet-research.org\)](#)
 - 17 [People seeking abortions encounter flood of online misinformation - The Washington Post](#)
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