



DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

# Voters Want to Take on Big Tech Companies

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# Introduction

As part of May survey of national likely voters, Data for Progress sought to measure attitudes on a broad range of topics related to misinformation on the internet, the safety of minors, and their disposition towards increased regulation of technology companies, including breaking them up.

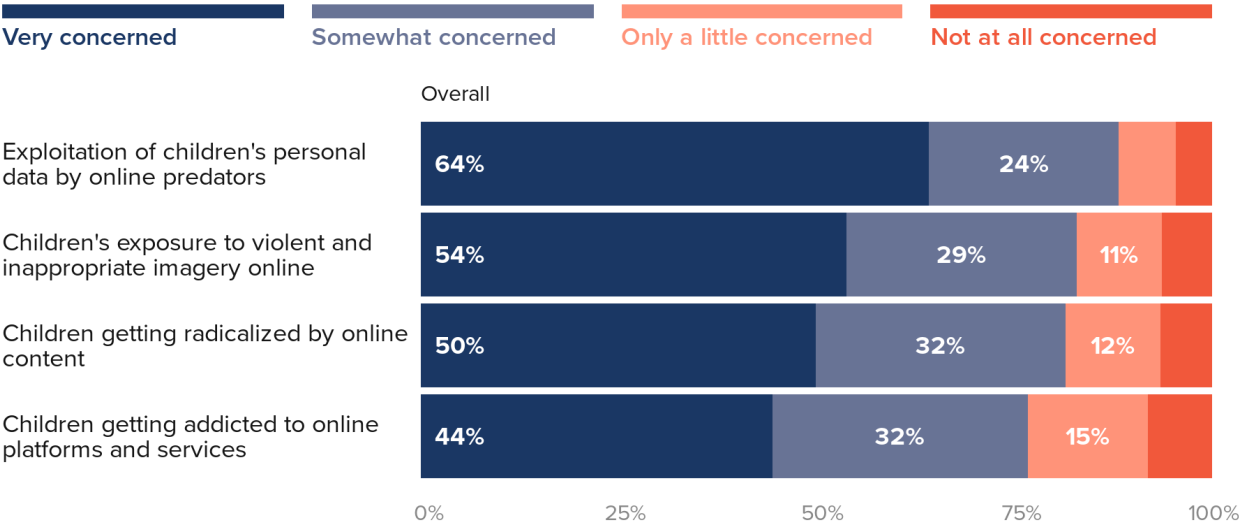
We find that concern towards the safety of children is particularly high. Likely voters are also particularly worried about foreign governments potentially breaching data infrastructure in the United States. Furthermore, likely voters, regardless of self-identified partisanship, support increased regulations of large technology companies. Together with the recent confirmation of Lisa Khan as Chairperson of the FTC, voters are now armed with the leadership needed to match this groundswell of support and to see major technology companies held accountable.

# Results

First, we asked likely voters to report their level of concern for a variety of issues related to the spread of misinformation and the safety of minors online. Across all likely voters, we see that their highest priority concern is protecting children’s personal data from being accessed and exploited by online predators, with 88 percent of voters stating that they are either somewhat or very concerned by the prospect. We see similarly high levels of concern for preventing children’s exposure to inappropriate materials (83 percent either somewhat or very concerned), children being radicalized by online content (82 percent either somewhat or very concerned), and their becoming addicted to online platforms due to their design (76 percent either somewhat or very concerned).

## Child Safety is of Paramount Importance to Voters

For each issue, say whether or not you find it concerning.



May 14–17, 2021 survey of 1,203 likely voters

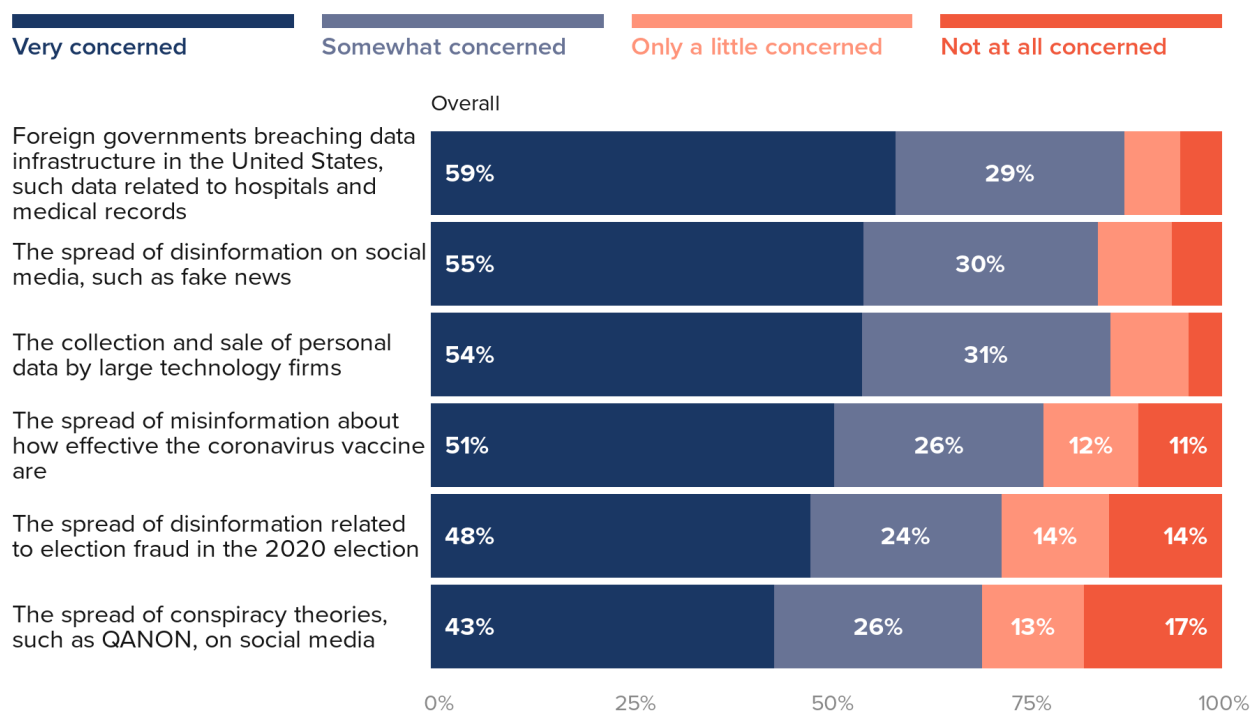
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Similarly, likely voters have voiced concerns on a broad array of issues related to data security and data privacy: almost nine in ten likely voters are either very concerned or somewhat concerned about the possibility of data breaches by foreign agents and how it might hinder critical national infrastructure like our healthcare system. Additionally, 85 percent of likely voters are either very or somewhat concerned by the amount of personal data that is being collected and sold by and among large technology firms in the US. Finally, likely voters across the nation have shown consistent concern (85 percent very or somewhat concerned) about the spread of misinformation online broadly — including majority concern specifically related to vaccine effectiveness, election integrity, and the spread of conspiracy theories (77 percent, 72 percent, and 69 percent are very or somewhat concerned, respectively).

## Data Privacy is Highly Salient with Voters

For each issue, say whether or not you find it concerning.



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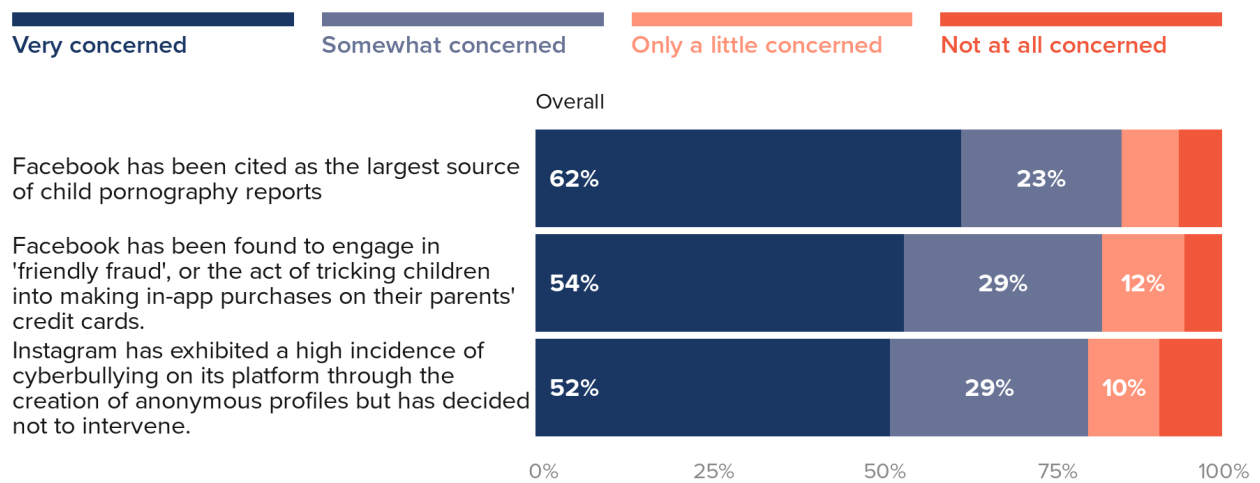
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Next, we presented likely voters with a series of events in which social media platforms made some form of security misstep or failed to act to ensure the physical safety of minors online. Across all three instances, more than 80 percent of likely voters reported themselves as being either somewhat or very concerned about the allegations lodged against these companies. Collectively, the results demonstrate a strong desire among likely voters to see these issues remedied and to see negligent platforms held accountable.

## Voters Disturbed by Security Missteps by Social Media Firms

Below is a list of complaints and allegations lodged against various social media platforms. For each statement, please rate how concerned you are.



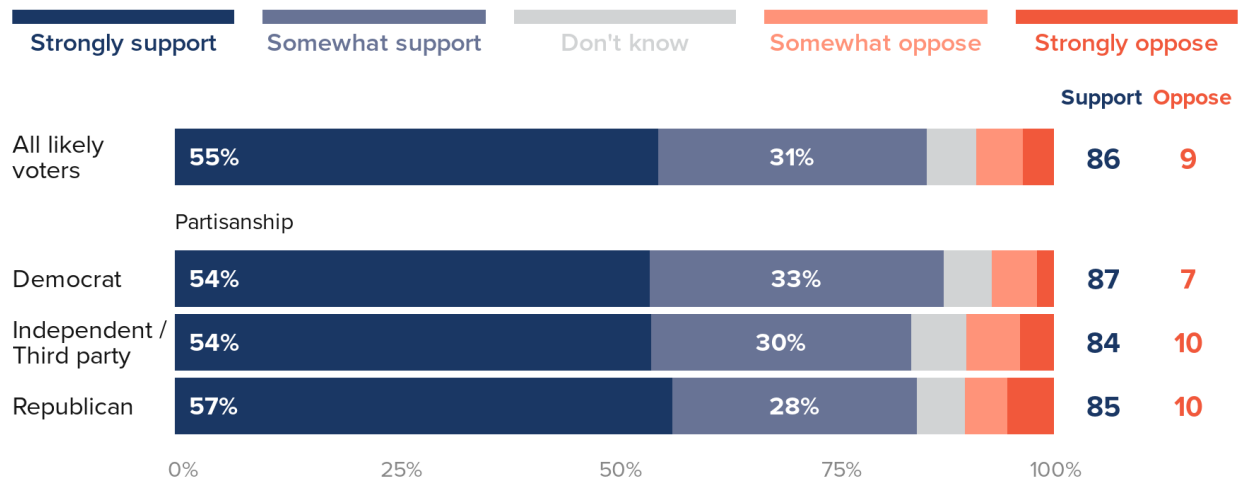
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We then asked likely voters about their willingness to see new rules and standards enacted for social media and other major technology firms, and our results once again show that protecting minors is a powerful motivator that can drive support for such measures. Among all likely voters, we observe strong majority support for enacting rules aimed generally at protecting children’s wellbeing, be it physical or mental (86 percent support, 9 percent oppose). This support is highest among Democrats, who support enacting new rules by an impressive 80-point margin (87 percent support, 7 percent oppose). They are then followed by Republicans and Independent voters, who support the measure by 85 percent and 84 percent, respectively.

## Voters Demand Stronger Protection for Minors on the Internet

Do you support or oppose creating new rules and standards for major technology companies, such as Google and Facebook, in order to protect children's physical and mental well-being?



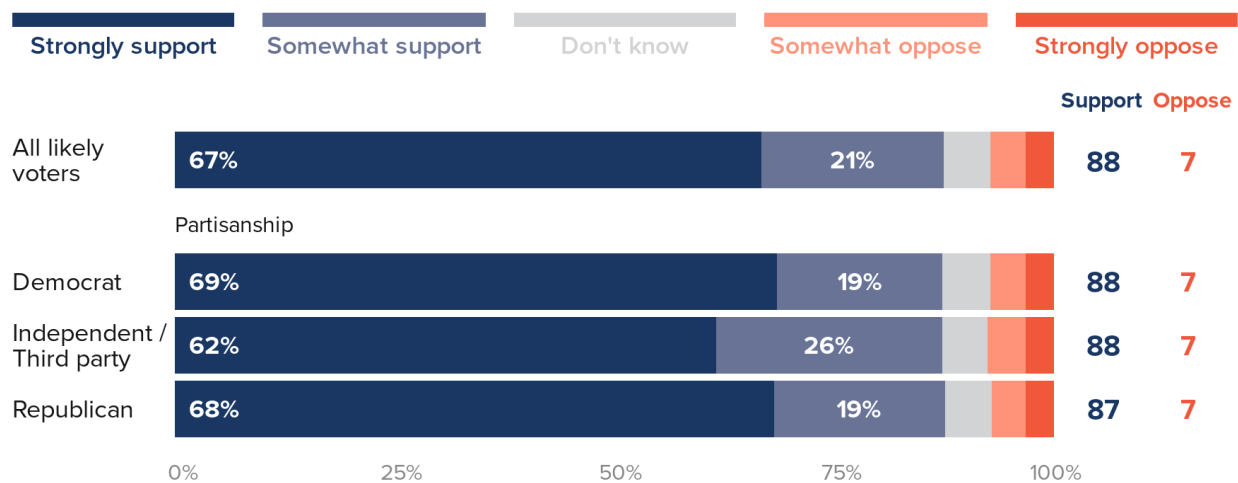
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More specifically, likely voters want to see strong, comprehensive rules passed that will effectively combat the spread of child pornography online. Across all likely voters, we observe 88 percent support in favor of enacting such rules. Along partisan lines, we see that likely voters of all parties support the measure by a near-uniform 81-point margin (88 percent support, 7 percent oppose). The American electorate has made it clear: protecting our children is not a partisan issue, it's a moral one, and they expect Congress to act decisively to resolve it.

## Voters Overwhelmingly Support Strong Standards to Combat Child Pornography

Do you support or oppose additional rules and standards on major technology companies to counter the spread of child pornography and other illicit materials on the internet?



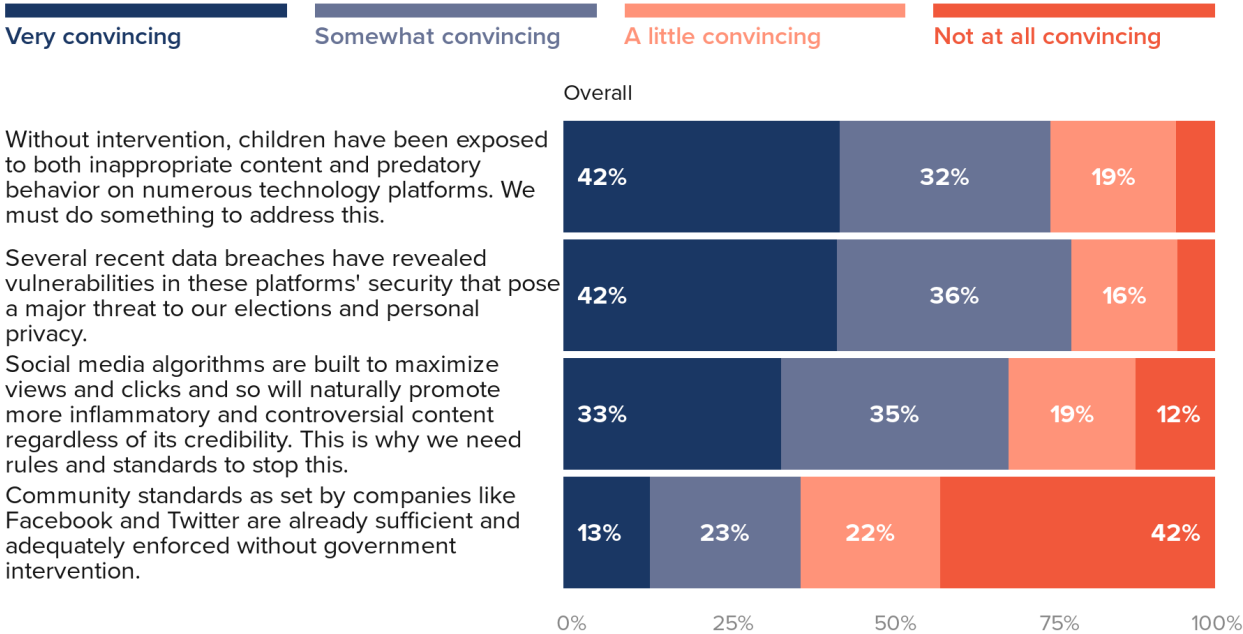
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Finally, we asked likely voters to rate how convincing they find a variety of rationales for and against creating new rules and standards to tackle all of these issues in our current technological environment. We find that the spate of recent data breaches and other security concerns prove to be most persuasive to likely voters, with 78 percent of respondents finding this argument either very convincing or somewhat convincing. This is closely followed by respondents' desire to protect children from inappropriate material and predatory behavior (74 percent very or somewhat convincing). Perhaps even more revealing are the results related to the firms' behavior: we find that a strong majority (68 percent very or somewhat convincing) of likely voters are aware that social media platforms thrive on inflammatory and controversial content and that this behavior cannot go unchecked. Furthermore, a majority of likely voters are decidedly *not* convinced (64 percent "not at all convincing" or "a little convincing") that the firms can be relied upon to manage these problems by themselves.

## Voters Broadly Support New Rules and Standards for Social Media Firms.

Below are some arguments made both for and against new rules and standards aimed at reducing the spread of misinformation online and protecting vulnerable users, such as children, on social media platforms. For each argument, say whether or not you find it convincing.



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In terms of concrete policy remedies that likely voters will support, we observe majority support across the board for breaking up these major technology firms into smaller entities (58 percent support, 27 percent oppose). By partisanship, we see highest support among Independent voters with 61 percent supporting the measure, followed by Democrats and Republicans, both of whom show 57 percent support.

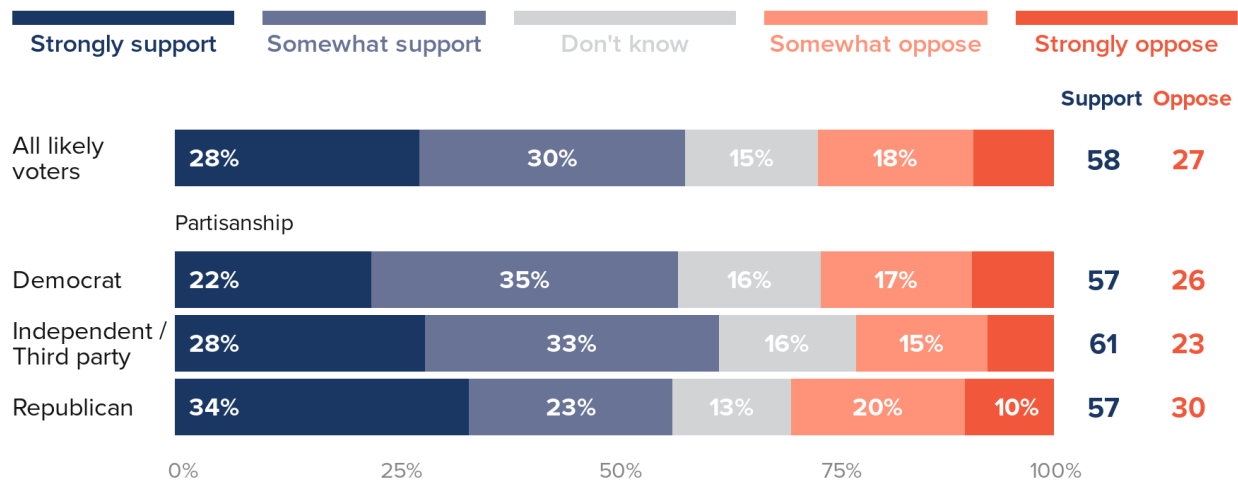
## A Majority of Voters Support Breaking Up Tech Monopolies

Some lawmakers in Congress are proposing that certain large technology companies should be broken into smaller separate companies to promote competition because these companies are acting as monopolies under current federal law.

Supporters argue that the rapid growth of these firms has allowed a major collection and consolidation of personal data, undermined small businesses and entrepreneurs, and facilitated the spread of disinformation among citizens.

Opponents argue that the government shouldn't penalize successful companies like big technology firms just because they have grown in size as a result of the popularity of their products.

Knowing what you know now, would you support or oppose the breaking up of major tech firms into smaller entities?



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### METHODOLOGY

From May 14 to 17, 2021, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,203 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is ±3 percentage points.

COVER PHOTO  
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