

COUNTER EXTREMISM PROJECT

OK GOOGLE, SHOW ME EXTREMISM: KEY FINDINGS

On July 21, 2017, Google announced the launch of its [Redirect Method Pilot Program](#), which is intended to target individuals searching for ISIS-related content on YouTube and direct them to counter-narrative videos. To gauge the efficacy of the program, between August 2 and August 3, 2018, the Counter Extremism Project (CEP) reviewed a total of 649 YouTube videos for extremist and counter-narrative content. The 649 videos were found by conducting YouTube searches for a total of six terms related to Islamic extremism, four of which were explicitly mentioned by Google's Redirect Method Pilot Program as words targeted for "suggesting positive sentiment towards ISIS."

Extremist Content on YouTube

CEP's findings suggest that although YouTube may have made some improvements in removing ISIS videos, both ISIS and non-ISIS extremist content persists on the platform.

- Of the 649 videos sampled by CEP, **36 videos** (more than 5.5%) were determined to include extremist propaganda, glorification of extremism, or violent extremism.
- Of the 36 videos found to have included extremist content, **18 videos** (50% of the 36 extremist videos, 2.8% of the 649 videos checked) **were explicitly violent in nature and/or showed gore.**
- Official ISIS propaganda was relatively limited. Only 1 video (2.8% of the 36 extremist videos) found was what CEP characterized as an official ISIS propaganda release. However, 11 (30.5%) were official propaganda releases from non-ISIS extremist groups. The remaining 24 (66.7%) were various unofficial propaganda videos, combat footage, or photo montages.

Counter-Narrative Content on YouTube

A user searching for extremist material on YouTube was 4x as likely to encounter extremist material than counter-narratives.

- Google's efforts to promote counter-narrative content appear to be inconsistent and insufficient. CEP found only **9 videos** (1.4% of the 649 videos checked) that may include counter-narrative messaging.
- All 9 counter-narrative videos were found in the search results for two terms that Google's Redirect Method specified were targeted for counter-narrative messaging. However, **no counter-narrative material at all was found in the search results for the other two terms specified by the Redirect Method as targeted for counter-narrative messaging.**
- All of the counter-narrative videos were targeted at ISIS, despite the fact that only 1 video found was an official ISIS propaganda release.
- CEP found that users were 4 times more likely to find extremist material on YouTube than counter-narratives—an increase from the previous figure of 3.5 times more likely in its April 2018 assessment. This suggests that Google has not in any way improved its implementation of the Redirect Method in recent months.