

Instagram boss tells US lawmakers app 'can help' teens

December 8 2021, by Joshua Melvin



Instagram CEO Adam Mosseri testifies at a US Senate hearing.

Instagram's boss on Wednesday pushed a rosy view of the photo-sharing app's impact on teens in testimony to US lawmakers that was at odds with damning news reports based on the firm's own research.

Adam Mosseri argued the service could help struggling [young people](#), after documents leaked by a company insider raised worries of harms, including a 2019 study saying Instagram makes body image issues worse for one in three teenage girls.

"Sometimes young people come to Instagram dealing with hard things in their lives. I believe Instagram can help many of them in those moments," Mosseri wrote.

"This is something that our research has suggested as well," he added in written testimony prepared for his appearance before a Senate commerce subcommittee.

His statement comes as the [social media networks](#) run by Facebook parent Meta battle a crisis fueled by the company's own research, and which has rekindled a years-old US push for regulation.

The documents leaked by Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen also include a 2020 report stating that 32 percent of teenage girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made it worse.

Facebook has pushed back fiercely against a string of Wall Street Journal reports based on the findings, and a subsequent series for a US media consortium, arguing its research was mischaracterized.

Senators Richard Blumenthal and Marsha Blackburn are leading the hearing, the latest in a series probing how social media could be making teens feel worse about themselves.

"These half-measures are not enough. Instagram must create tangible solutions to improve safety and [data security](#)," Blackburn tweeted ahead of the hearing.



Instagram head Adam Mosseri is expected to face a grilling from US lawmakers about the app's impact on kids.

'Never fully safe'

Facebook has bounced back from other scandals like the one involving Cambridge Analytica, a British consulting firm that used the personal data of millions of Facebook users to target political ads.

In that case, CEO Mark Zuckerberg went to Washington to apologize, and the company agreed to a \$5 billion settlement with US regulators.

However, the leading social media network faces at least one

investigation spurred by the latest crisis: a consortium of US states announced in November a probe of Meta's techniques for enticing young users and the potential resulting harms.

Facing pressure, the company announced in September a "pause" in developing a version of Instagram for kids under 13 as criticism built over the platform's impact on young people's [mental health](#).

On the eve of Wednesday's hearing, Instagram announced new protections for young users like suggesting a break if they have been spending a lot of time on the platform.

The timing of the announcement drew a wary reception from lawmakers, who questioned whether it was an effort at distraction ahead of the hearing.

Stephen Balkam, founder and CEO of advocacy group Family Online Safety Institute, said pre-hearing announcements are a Washington tradition but noted they won't make the app's problems go away.

"Instagram is safer than it was. I think Instagram is less toxic for teens than it was. But it will never be perfect, it will never be fully safe. But then that's true of all [social media](#)," he told AFP.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: Instagram boss tells US lawmakers app 'can help' teens (2021, December 8) retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://techxplore.com/news/2021-12-instagram-boss-lawmakers-app-teens.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--