

Are Facebook job ads discriminatory? Company accused of bias against women, older workers

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A female truckers association is accusing Meta Platforms of algorithmic bias, alleging its Facebook platform selectively shows job advertisements

based on users' gender and age, with older workers far less likely to see ads and women far less likely to see ads for blue-collar positions, especially in industries that historically exclude women.

"Meanwhile, [women](#) receive a disproportionate share of ads for lower-paid jobs in [social services](#), food services, education, and [health care](#), especially administrative positions that are historically considered women's jobs," Real Women in Trucking claimed in the discrimination complaint filed Thursday with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

In an emailed statement, Meta said: "Addressing fairness in ads is an industry-wide challenge and we've been collaborating with [civil rights](#) groups, academics and regulators to advance fairness in our ads system. We're actively building technology designed to make additional progress in this area."

Civil rights law prohibits steering ads based on gender or age. In 2016, ProPublica discovered that Facebook advertisers could exclude specific racial and ethnic groups when placing housing ads.

In June, Meta settled a lawsuit brought by the Justice Department that alleged Facebook's housing ad system discriminated based on protected characteristics such as race. The lawsuit claimed Meta algorithms determined which Facebook users received housing ads in part based on protected characteristics under the Fair Housing Act.

In 2019, Facebook agreed to pay out about \$5 million to settle five lawsuits and take steps to block advertising on its platforms that targeted job and housing ads based on age and gender as part of a sweeping agreement with leading civil rights and labor organizations.

But Real Women in Trucking says Facebook's algorithm that powers its

advertising system "replicated the same problem," showing ads for truckers, [construction workers](#) and firefighters mostly to men and ads for housekeepers, home care workers and child care workers mostly to women even when employers requested that the ads be shown to people of all ages and genders.

"Facebook's algorithmic bias is making it harder for millions of women and older people to learn about job opportunities and is perpetuating outdated stereotypes," said Real Women in Trucking attorney Peter Romer-Friedman, who also represented the plaintiffs in the 2019 settlement. "It's 2022, not 1952. There are no longer 'male' jobs or 'female' jobs or jobs limited to younger people. Under our civil rights laws, a person's sex or age cannot limit their ability to learn about a job or get hired."

Real Women in Trucking is also represented by Upturn, a nonprofit that advances equity and justice in the design, governance, and use of technology.

The EEOC charge is based on publicly available data in the company's advertising library, he said.

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