

Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram's global outage affected more than 3.5B people and exposed the vulnerability of a centralized internet

Article

The news: Facebook-owned platforms vanished from the internet for more than six hours on Monday, leaving **3.5 billion global users and businesses disconnected** and costing the social network **\$164,000 a minute in revenues**, per MarketWatch.

- A configuration error introduced during an update disconnected Facebook's services from the internet. Facebook engineers were unable to access the servers remotely and had to reset data center hardware physically to resolve the issue, per ComputerWeekly.
- Luke Deryckx, CTO of Ookla, whose Downtdetector.com service tracks internet outages, [said](#) Facebook's shutdown "is now one of the largest ever tracked on **Downtdetector** in terms of the total number of reports (over 14 million as of 3:30 p.m. PDT) and duration."
- Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Messenger, and Oculus were all taken down by the outage —**costing the company \$100 million in revenues** and wiping out \$6 billion from Mark Zuckerberg's personal fortune, per MarketWatch.
- The shutdown paralyzed nearly all of Facebook's internal business and employee communication systems and even locked some employees out of their offices. It also disconnected businesses from their customers, disrupted IoT services that required a Facebook sign-in, and led to failed online payments.

The problem: The Facebook outage exposes the fragility of consolidating major internet communication services under one company—especially for developing countries where Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp [are the internet](#), ostensibly replacing the web and email for critical communications.

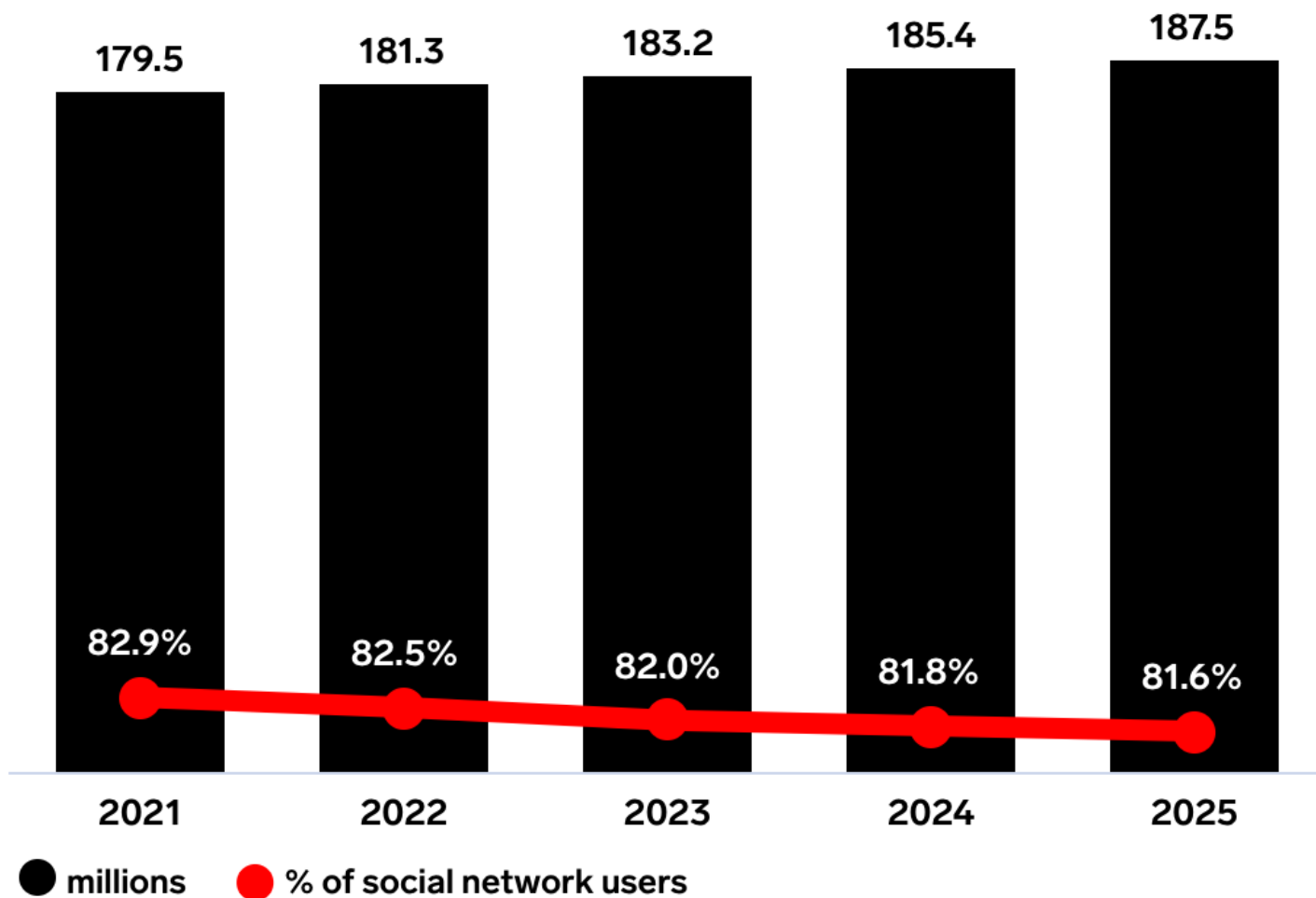
- Experiencing an internet without Facebook and its myriad properties was a sobering reminder of how much of the world relies on these services. The outage and its effects could make governments and businesses reconsider the wisdom of putting all their online eggs in Facebook's overloaded basket.
- "Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram all going down at the same time sure seems like an easily-understandable and publicly-popular example of why breaking up a certain monopoly into at least three pieces might not be a bad idea," Edward Snowden [tweeted](#).

What's next? Monday's outage revealed that everything at Facebook runs on a single system, from in-office security to its manifold service platforms—and breaking one part of the system took down everything.

- Facebook will likely restructure its systems to be more distributed and introduce redundancies so that its platforms are more resilient.
- The final cost and the broader effects of the outage are still being determined, but governments and businesses that rely on Facebook's platforms might seek to diversify their online presences by using alternative services.

Facebook Users

US, 2021-2025



Source: eMarketer, April 2021

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