

Biden's executive order takes aim at Big Tech mergers and restoring net neutrality

Article

The news: President Joe Biden signed a sweeping executive order last week featuring 72 initiatives, some of which target corporate mergers, user privacy and data gathering

practices, and propose wider access to affordable broadband internet, [per](#) Ars Technica. A White House [fact sheet](#) reveals the impetus for the order is the **accelerated corporate consolidation** across various industries. This, in turn, has resulted in a **lack of competition** and led to monopolies that are **driving up prices** for consumers.

What this means: The proposed order calls for the federal government to establish new rules that will all require implementation from various agencies like **the FCC and the FTC**.

- The order includes 72 initiatives by more than a dozen federal agencies encompassing health care, limiting non-compete agreements, [net neutrality](#) standards, and farmer benefits among others.
- The order calls for establishing new rules governing data collection by big tech companies, as well as rules "barring unfair methods of competition on internet marketplaces."
- President Biden will also establish a White House Competition Council to monitor progress on finalizing the order's initiatives, and to coordinate the federal government's response to the rising power of large corporations.
- The order asks the FCC to restore net neutrality rules and take steps to boost price transparency and competition in broadband, but first Biden still needs to nominate a fifth commissioner to break an existing 2-2 partisan deadlock.

What's next? If successful, Biden's executive order would make it US policy to analyze the effect of Big Tech mergers on small competitors, better protect consumer privacy, and scrutinize the ability of tech giants to amass data. It would also take into account the effects that even free products have on competition. This shows a shift in approach to antitrust policy, which has traditionally focused on anticompetitive companies pushing higher costs onto consumers.

Parts of the executive order could level the playing field and encourage competition in various industries as well as keep Big Tech companies in check. The orders will need considerable agency support and could take time to be crafted into policy.

Leading Reasons US Adults Do Not Have Home Broadband Service, 2015, 2019, & 2021

% of respondents

	2015	2019	2021
Smartphone does everything they need			
—A reason	27%	45%	45%
—The most important reason	12%	23%	19%
Monthly cost of home broadband subscription is too expensive			
—A reason	59%	50%	45%
—The most important reason	33%	21%	20%
Have other options for internet access outside of home			
—A reason	46%	43%	46%
—The most important reason	10%	11%	9%
Service is not available or speed is unacceptable			
—A reason	23%	22%	25%
—The most important reason	5%	7%	9%
Cost of computer is too expensive			
—A reason	45%	31%	37%
—The most important reason	10%	6%	7%
Some other reason			
—A reason	25%	17%	27%
—The most important reason	16%	13%	22%

Note: ages 18+ who do not have home broadband service; respondents who did not give an answer not shown

Source: Pew Research Center, "Mobile Technology and Home Broadband 2021," June 3, 2021

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