

Twitter squares off against Apple

Article

The news: Elon Musk fired a salvo of Tweets chastising **Apple** for pulling its ads on **Twitter** and claiming Apple threatened to “withhold” Twitter from the App Store, setting up a conflict with tech’s biggest superpower, per [The New York Times](#).

Why it’s worth watching: The speculation is that Musk wants to transition Twitter away from its ad-supported revenue model into [a subscription-based service](#). This, however, will result in Apple’s **App Store** taking up to 30% of subscription revenues on mobile devices and **Google Play** similarly taking a 15% cut.

- Apple made up 4% of Twitter revenue in Q1, spending \$48 million in the quarter — effectively making it the [biggest ad buyer on the platform](#) according to documents reviewed by The Washington Post.
- Apple has since paused Twitter advertising. This prodded Musk to go on the offensive.
- “What’s going on here @tim_cook?” [Musk tweeted](#) Monday, also tweeting, “Apple has mostly stopped advertising on Twitter. Do they hate free speech in America?”
- “Apple has also threatened to withhold Twitter from its App Store, but won’t tell us why,” Musk said, but with no proof of any warning.

Rallying regulators: Musk’s unverified accusations against Apple could provide new evidence that it’s time for Congress to rein Apple in, Republican lawmakers said.

“Apple and Google currently have a stranglehold on companies and have used their leverage to bully businesses,” said **Sen. Marsha Blackburn** (R-Tenn.), who is a co-sponsor of the [Open Markets Act](#).

Apple’s next move: In an interview on **CBS Morning** two weeks ago, Apple CEO **Tim Cook** said, “I don’t think anyone wants hate speech on their platform, so I’m counting on them to continue to (moderate abusive content).”

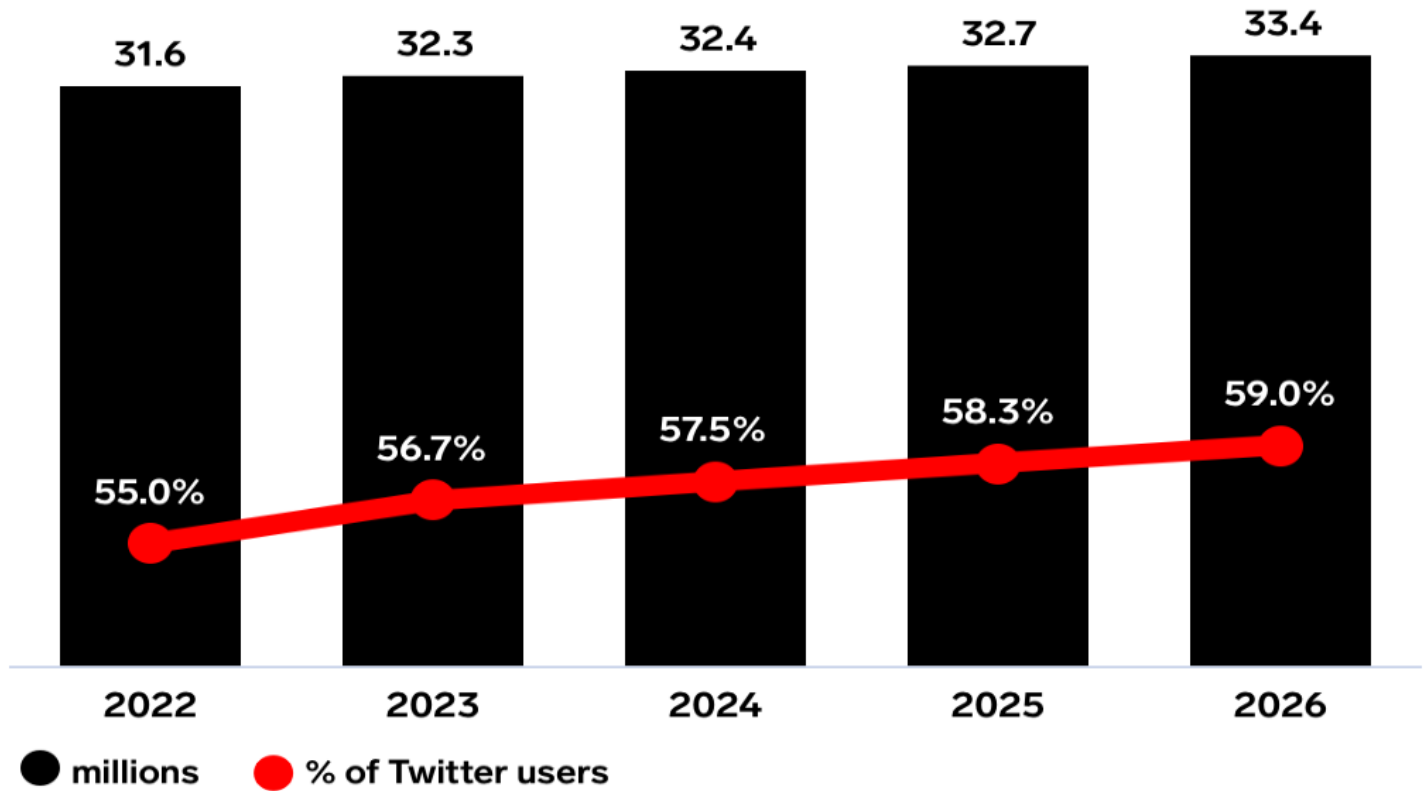
- Twitter, which plans to launch its Twitter Blue paid subscription December 2, has plans to reinstate **tens of thousands of banned accounts**, per [Insider](#).
- Since Musk’s takeover, [sexist and racist slurs exploded on the platform by 500%](#), per Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI).
- Apple has managed to regulate the content on similar services like **Discord** and **Tumblr**—it also banned “free speech” app **Parler** until the service instituted ways to prevent calls for violence.

The key takeaway: Musk is going up against a wealthy, powerful company that also has a lot of sway in the tech industry. Apple brought **Facebook** to its knees with its [AppTrackingTransparency](#) feature and could use advertising or an App Store ban to stop Twitter’s momentum.

Twitter has already [violated](#) the App Store’s terms of service by allowing spam, disinformation, and banned content, giving Apple reasons to shut them out.

Mobile-Only Twitter Users

US, 2022-2026



Note: internet users of any age who access their Twitter account exclusively via a mobile device (browser or app) at least once per month; includes feature phones, smartphones and tablets

Source: eMarketer, April 2022

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