


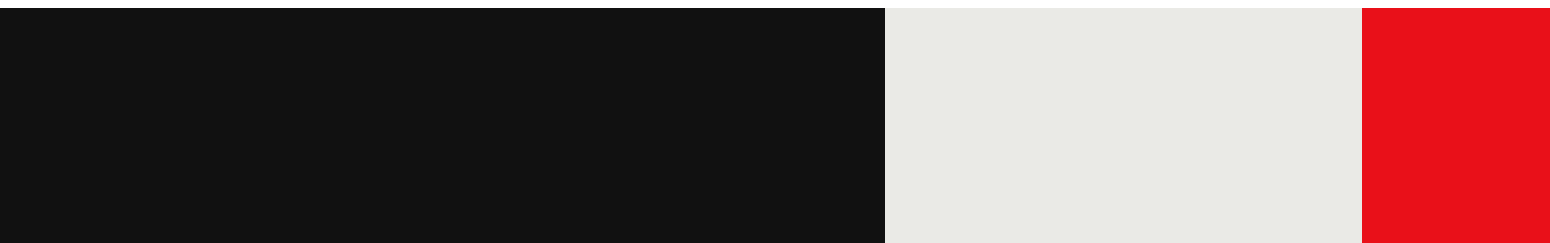
Clearview AI aims to put every face in its facial recognition database

Article



The news: Clearview AI, the controversial facial recognition company catering to law enforcement services, reportedly told investors it needs to raise **\$50 million** to collect 100 billion photos—or “images of every single human” in its database.

More on this: Clearview AI announced its strategy in a pitch meeting in December 2021, [per](#) The Washington Post. To date, the facial recognition company has up to 10 billion images and



is adding 1.5 billion images a month.

- “Clearview is telling investors it is on track to have 100 billion facial photos in its database within a year, enough to ensure ‘almost everyone in the world will be identifiable,’” per the Post. In context, there are **7.9 billion** people on the planet.
- Clearview builds its database by downloading images from social networks and websites without user consent. The practice has resulted in **lawsuits** from privacy groups in **Austria, France, Greece, Italy, and the UK**.
- The company pulled out of **Canada** in 2020 after an **investigation** into its methods.
- **California** and the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** have both sued the company. The lawsuits resulted in Clearview AI **ceasing sales** of its database to private US companies.

The problem: Clearview AI doesn't seem to be investing in improving facial recognition algorithms, which are notorious for **racial bias and inaccuracy** leading to false arrests.

Multiple **studies** have uncovered racial bias.

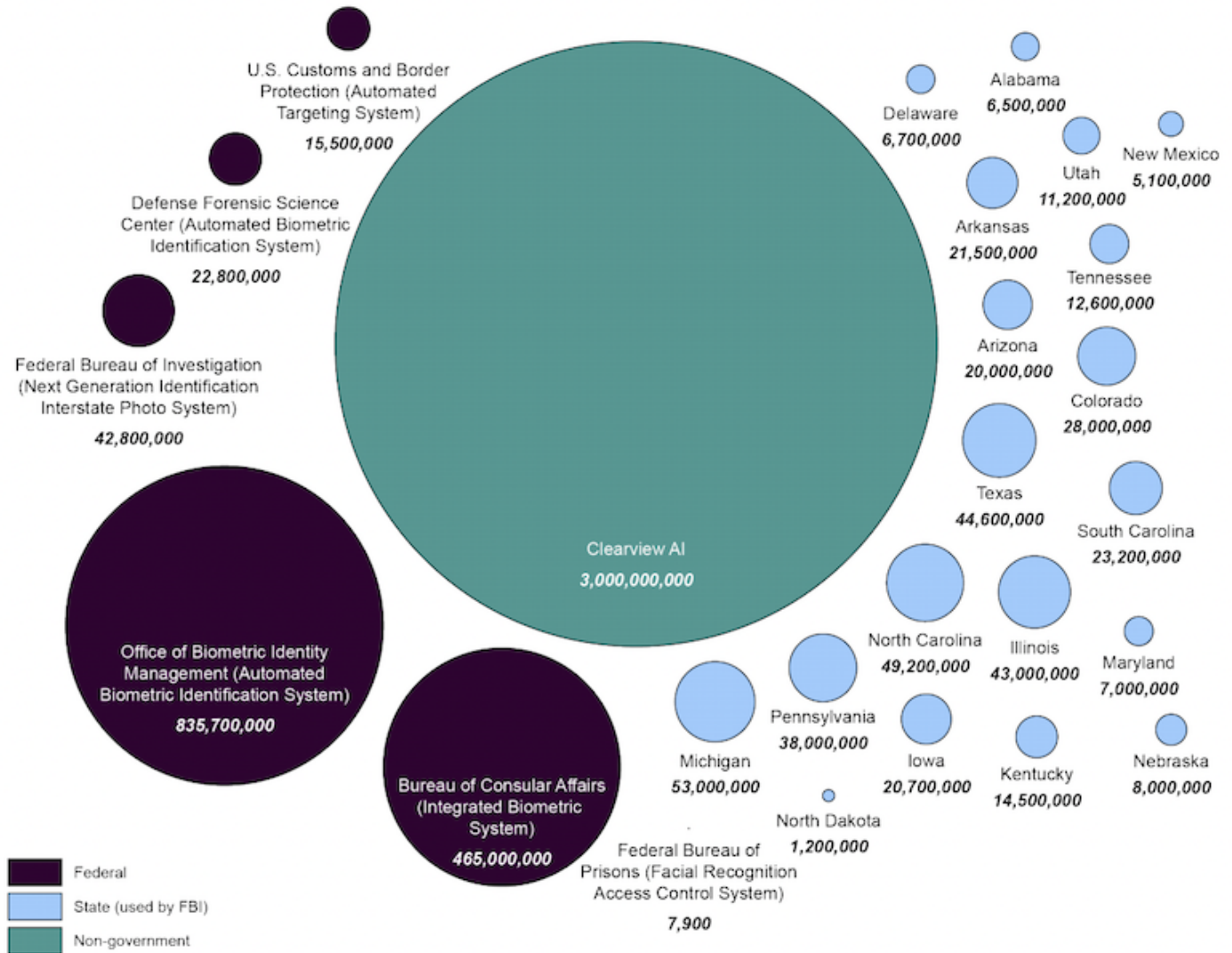
- For dark-skinned women, the technology had an error rate of **34.7%**, compared to 0.8% for fair-skinned men, according to a 2018 **study** by the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology**.
- Legislation and regulation are starting to **catch up** with the use of facial recognition technology, which could determine that using databases without users' consent is a privacy violation.
- **Thirteen US cities have banned the use of facial recognition or biometrics**. This increasing attention and legislative backlash can hinder facial recognition technology providers.

The takeaway: Surveillance tech companies are racing to build bigger facial recognition data sets to sell to law enforcement before more aggressive legislation clamps down on their use.

Clearview AI's focus on collecting photos of every human should be balanced by refining facial recognition technology to be more accurate.

(Source: GAO.gov)

Figure 3: Selected Federal, State, and Non-government Systems with Facial Recognition Technology Used by Federal Agencies that Employ Law Enforcement Officers, and the Number of Photos in Them



Source: GAO analysis of information provided by system users or owners. | GAO-21-518