TikTok and Anti-Migrant & Anti-Refugee Content

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Introduction

ISD analyzed a sample of 104 videos to determine what hateful narratives about migrants and refugees to the United States are present on TikTok, and how these videos measure up against TikTok's community guidelines. ISD collected data between October 17, 2023, and November 9, 2023. Data analysis continued until November 15, 2023.

The United States has the world's largest immigrant population, attracts over a million immigrants every year, and its US-Mexico border is the world's largest migration corridor. Top countries of origin for migrants and refugees to the US southern border include Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Venezuela and China. India is the country of origin for the second largest population of immigrants not taking into account the southern border. Many factors including conflict and political instability affect migration trends, which, in turn, lead to heated political discourse about migrants. In recent years, for example, Americans' perceptions on immigration to the US have been influenced by events such as the Russia-Ukraine war, continuing instability in Haiti, the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, and the Israel-Hamas war, among others.

Following the end of COVID-era border policies, including Title 42, cities across the US have experienced increases in migrant populations that have led to political and social discord. Cities like New York, where the law requires that the city provide shelter to all who need it, have received buses of migrants from southern states, overwhelming an already strained system. Online discourse about migration is very complex, with anti-migrant actors exploiting this instability to blame migrants for taking resources from citizens, often using xenophobic and racist stereotypes to paint the migrants as dangerous or selfish. When it comes to TikTok specifically, it has become clear in recent studies, such as one conducted in South Africa, that the company is failing to moderate anti-migrant hate speech effectively. For this investigation, ISD explored whether the same is true of TikTok content focused on migrants in the US.

Key Findings

- **Anti-migrant and -refugee content is not being moderated effectively by TikTok**. Out of the 104 videos in our sample, only four (3.8%) were removed between our collection period and the time of writing, a period of 29 days, even though they appear to violate TikTok community guidelines on hate speech and hateful behaviors, harassment and bullying, and misinformation. The majority of the comments in our comment sample also violated the same policies, in addition to policies on violent behaviors and criminal activities.

- **ISD observed the promotion of violence via comments on TikTok videos in 32 instances**. Though none of the videos in our dataset explicitly called for specific violence against migrants or refugees, many of the comments on these videos expressed a desire to kill, shoot, and harm migrants and refugees. Many of these comments explicitly violate TikTok community guidelines about hate speech and promotion of violence and have been hosted by the platform for weeks, sometimes months.

- **ISD found that TikTok actively recommended search terms that appeared to be evading moderation**. While the phrase "white genocide" is blocked for being in violation of community guidelines, ISD found that TikTok recommended deliberate misspellings of the term to autocomplete searches for the term immigration in the search bar (i.e., "immigration white gejocyde" and "immigation white genosyde"). TikTok also recommended searches for terms such as "sleeper cells" within comments through the "blue search comments" feature, which suggests searches based on comments. This demonstrates that TikTok not only allows content that is in clear violation of community guidelines, but that this content is also recommended to users.

- **ISD observed a difference in how content about migrants and refugees is handled by TikTok**. ISD found that TikTok suggested hostile search terms when searching with the word "migrants," while search terms recommended alongside

"refugees" were more benign. This shows that TikTok is potentially able to moderate hateful content about migrants but has not addressed it comprehensively to date.

- **Much of the content in our dataset claimed that migrants and refugees are "military-aged men" entering the United States as an "invading army of sleeper cells."** According to conflicting narratives, these "sleeper cells" are either soldiers for the US, China, Russia, Hamas, the Taliban, or the United Nations. Regardless, the narratives all claim that these "sleeper cells" will attack US citizens.

- **Many videos and comments used degrading language to refer to migrants and refugees to the US**. Some of these degrading terms include labeling the individuals featured as killers, rapists, thieves, and savages. Content using degrading language to refer to migrants and refugees did not appear to be being moderated by the platform, even though this type of language would be categorized as hate speech under TikTok's own guidelines.

- **ISD encountered videos in which personally identifiable information (PII) about migrants was publicized, seemingly without their consent**. ISD observed several videos in which TikTok creators asked migrants, who often could not speak English, provocative questions about migration to the United States. Their answers were usually obfuscated, with the TikTok creator producing an answer with no proof it came from the individual being interviewed. Some of these videos included personal information about migrants, including their names, country of origin, and their physical location. This could put migrants in danger of hostile anti-migrant actors.

Methods
As the methodology for this TikTok series was replicated across numerous reports, ISD has published a separate note detailing the methods used, the categories analyzed in each report and criteria applied for judging whether content met the platform's community guidelines. This note can be accessed here.

Data Analysis

By the numbers

ISD identified and collected a sample of 104 TikTok videos about migrants and refugees that contained content that potentially violates TikTok's Community Guidelines, namely policies on violent behaviors and criminal activity, hate speech and hateful behaviors, harassment and bullying, and misinformation.

In terms of engagement and platform popularity, this dataset of 104 videos has a significant range. As always with TikTok, the lack of transparency about recommender algorithms and amplification of content by its own systems means we have little understanding of why some videos "go viral" and others do not. Some of the videos in ISD's sample reached millions of views, indicating that content featuring anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiment clearly has an audience. ISD found that videos about migrants sometimes received millions of views, despite the poster having far fewer followers.

The lack of transparency from TikTok about their recommender algorithms makes it difficult to discern how these videos find an audience. The most viewed video in our sample, with 11.2M views, was posted by an account with just 6.2K followers. The number of views is significantly larger than the number of followers, indicating that TikTok may have amplified the video to millions of users who did not follow the account. This vast discrepancy between following and view count shows how migrant-related videos can be beneficial to content creators. If TikTok promotes these videos on the platform, it could incentivize users to post provocative content about migrants to boost their engagement and following.

The average number of views was 438.6K and the median number of views was 40.8K. The most liked TikTok video in our sample received 278.4K likes, while the least liked video had eight likes. The most liked video came from an account with 178.6K followers and received 4.9M views; other videos posted by this account around the same time received fewer than 5K likes and 100K views. The caption of the video called migrants "demons" and the video itself featured the creator asking who migrants are loyal to. This is another example of migrant-related content receiving unusually high engagement, potentially encouraging other users to continue to make videos amplifying negative narratives about migrants. The TikTok videos in the dataset received an average of 19.2K likes and a median of 915 likes. The most comments received on a video in the sample was 21.6K, the fewest number of comments was 0. The average number of comments in the dataset was 1.6K and the median amount was 176. The sample had a total of 168K comments.

Of the 104 videos in ISD's sample, four (3.8%) became unavailable in the time between data collection and analysis. Two of the videos made unavailable included language about an "invasion" of migrants and refugees. Another one stated that migrants and refugees would commit attacks on the US "any day now" as it showed a montage of footage of migrants and refugees. The fourth removed video depicted a violent mob allegedly attacking a migrant hostel (it was unclear if the video creator's description of this video was accurate) with text that read "it's starting." Three of the accounts that made these videos were taken down between data collection and analysis. The fourth channel, which had posted a video including "invasion" rhetoric and primarily posted videos about true crime, was still present. The video link did not provide a Community Guidelines violation message and may have been deleted by the user. At the time of writing, 100 videos (96.2%) remain available.

ISD's sample included TikTok videos containing hate towards migrants and refugees, as well as anti-Muslim and anti-Asian hatred. All the videos included hate towards migrants, nine videos (8.6%) also included anti-Muslim hate, and three videos (2.8%) also included anti-Asian hate. Examples of anti-Muslim hate content in ISD's sample included accusations that all Muslim migrants are potential terrorists or Hamas supporters. Examples of anti-Asian hate in the sample included conflation of Chinese migrants with communism and threats of China "invading" the United States.

This resulted in the following counts:

Category of hate	No. of videos
Anti-Migrant or Anti-Refugee	104
Anti-Muslim	9
Anti-Asian	3

Table 1: Table shows supplementary categories of hate and extremist support present in this sample

ISD also assessed the sample to determine which of TikTok's Community Guidelines and/or rules that related

to the promotion of hatred and extremism may have been violated. ISD determined that all 104 videos included content that violated TikTok's policies against Hate Speech and Hateful Behavior; Harassment and Bullying; and Misinformation.

85 (81.7%) of the videos in ISD's sample included content determined to violate hate speech and hateful behavior policies, 35 (33.6%) videos violated the misinformation policies, and 18 (17.3%) violated harassment and bullying policies. Some of the videos in ISD's sample which were determined to include Harassment and Bullying content included footage of migrants and refugees outside or in shelters with commentary, captions, or commenters insulting or humiliating them. A few of these videos prominently featured footage of migrants sleeping on the sidewalk outside of shelters. In other videos, creators included the names of migrants, sometimes accusing them of criminal activity, violating their privacy. This could risk the safety of these individuals by disclosing their locations and identities alongside anti-migrant messaging to anti-migrant actors who could do them harm.

The final counts were as follows:

TikTok Community Guidelines	No. of videos
Hate Speech and Hateful Behavior	85
Misinformation	35
Harassment and Bullying	18

Table 2: Table showing how what community guidelines ISD assessed to be violated regarding content in this sample

TikTok creators used hashtags to promote their videos with anti-migrant and –refugee content. The most common hashtag was #fyp, with three variations (i.e., #fyp⬛ and #foryoupage) in the top 18 hashtags, indicating that creators were attempting to promote their videos to a broad audience rather than attracting attention from a particular niche community. In the 104 videos in our sample, #biden and #trump were each used 14 times. Several videos also included hashtags for specific locations in the United States, such as #texas and #nyc. These two locations have been the focus of anti-migrant and -refugee narratives in recent years as migrants have been relocated from the southern border to New York City by southern state governors. Other hashtags referenced common anti-migrant and -refugee rhetoric

such as #invasion and #closetheborder. The table below lists 18 of the most popular hashtags in the sample:

Hashtag	No of times
#fyp	42
#foryou	20
#border	19
#migrants	19
#viral	18
#nyc	15
#usa	15
#biden	14
#fyp⬛	14
#trump	14
#bordercrisis	13
#invasion	12
#texas	12
#trump2024	11
#closetheborder	10
#foryoupage	9
#america	8
#illegalimmigrants	8

Table 3: Most popular hashtags on posts within this sample

The presence of the hashtag #closetheborder demonstrates the prevalence of a common disinformation narrative about United States borders being open, despite restrictive laws being in place and enforced. A poll conducted by America's Voice found that right-wing figures amplifying rhetoric about the US border being open encouraged individuals in Central America to consider traveling to the US. This makes prospective migrants more vulnerable to exploitation by smugglers and bad actors. The poll also found that 71% of individuals aged 16-24 reported hearing that the US border was open via social media. The frequency of videos referencing this rhetoric with the #closetheborder hashtag shows TikTok's potential role in amplifying false narratives about "open borders."

In their analysis, ISD researchers examined accounts that had uploaded anti-migrant and -refugee content in their sampling to determine whether those profiles contained potentially violative material related to hateful or extremist
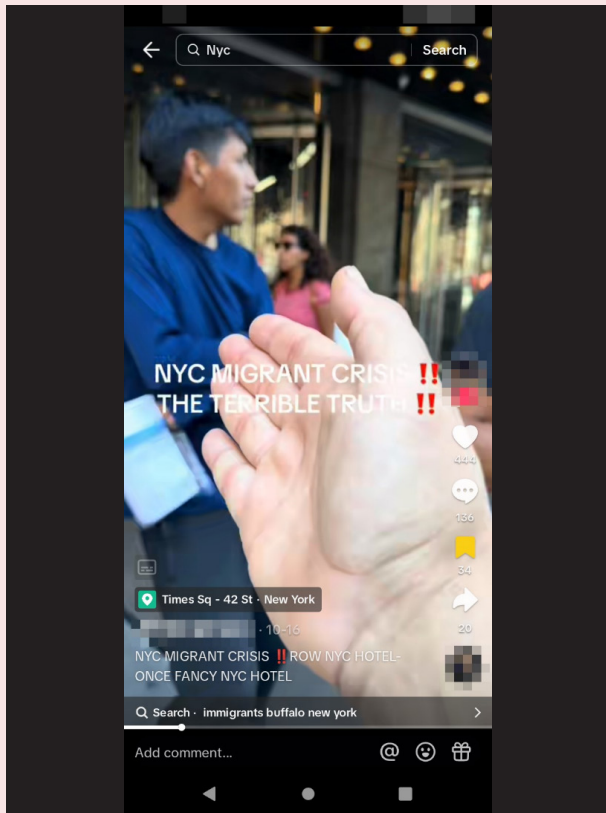
Image 1: TikTok user appearing to harass migrants and refugees outside a hotel in New York.

ideologies, persons, or groups. Profile attributes examined include the users' account usernames, account nicknames, profile images, profile biographies, and any featured links on the profiles. While some users had references to politically divisive, but not conspiratorial, topics, there were no significant references to extremist persons or groups.

Researchers also reviewed the comments on all 104 videos in our dataset and surfaced 155 comments (of 168K total comments) which appeared to violate platform policies on violent behaviors and criminal activities; hate speech and hateful behaviors; harassment and bullying; and misinformation. These comments provided researchers with insights on anti-migrant and –refugee content on TikTok, regardless of the intent of videos about migrant-related issues.

Content Observed and Narrative Analysis
A majority of videos in ISD's dataset of TikTok videos containing migrant-related content were concerned with the United States' southern border with Mexico. This included videos with offensive stereotypes about Mexican, Central American, and South American migrants. For example, many videos claimed all Venezuelan migrants are gang members or criminals.

However, narratives about the southern border were often also accompanied by other hate narratives and conspiracy theories. Following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks in Israel, TikTok creators amplified prevailing anti-Muslim rhetoric by accusing all Muslim or Arab migrants of being terrorists or members of Hamas. Some users also exploited conspiracy theories about communism and Chinese citizens, alleging that Chinese migrants would facilitate the spread of communism in the United States. Videos included conspiracy theories about the United Nations (UN) and the creation of an army that would attack United States citizens. Language about an "invasion" of migrants was used in the captions of 16 (15.4%) of the videos in this dataset, positioning all migrants as a hostile group posing a danger to the United States and its residents.

Migrants and Refugees as "Military-Aged Men," Sleeper Cells, or Invading Army
Researchers observed numerous videos and comments labeling migrants and refugees as "military-aged males" entering the United States as an "invading army of sleeper cells." While the hashtags for #militarymen and #militaryagedmen were used in five videos (4.8%) of the total sample, variations of the term "military-aged men" were used in at least 36 instances of video content and captions.

The most liked video from our sample (278.4K likes), for example, included footage of migrants and the US-Mexico border with audio of the user saying the following:

"Who are these people? Who are they loyal to? Why are they all military-age males? Look at this footage. I don't see a lot of females. I don't see a lot of Mexicans. I don't see a lot of Central Americans. If they're at the Mexican border, why is it that there's no Mexicans there?"

This video's caption also includes "#demons invade #newyork" and "Migrants sleep on the floors of #Newyorkcity streets all military-aged males. Wonder Why?" The video was posted on August 11, 2023, and – at the time of data collection – had been viewed 4.9M times, liked 278.4K times, received 21.6K comments, and shared 22.8K

times. At the time of writing, the post has been viewed 4.9M times, liked 409K times (48.3% increase), received 23.7K comments (9.7% increase), and shared 84.3K times (269.7% increase).

At least 61 comments (39.3%) of those reviewed included language labeling migrants and refugees as "military-aged men"; an "invasion"; and/or "sleeper cell" soldiers for the various armed forces (e.g., US, Russia, China, Hamas, the Taliban, the UN). One comment, for example, stated that "they are joining the army now to go to war with us!" while another stated that "China [is] sending soldiers to the United States ahead of time so they can be ready when everything happens." Still, another user commented, "Those are all UN recruits that will be trained and armed to control American citizens when Martial Law is declared." Claims that the UN is planning to invade the US are false and fall squarely in the overarching 'New World Order' conspiracy theory, which argues that "a shadowy elite force is trying to implement a totalitarian world government," often through institutions like the UN. This conspiracy theory "has gained notable traction amongst right-wing extremist and militia movements," and "is often integrated with antisemitic tropes."

One video in our sample, with 6,344 views, showed an interview in Spanish with a refugee who spoke about receiving funds via a UN debit card for refugees. The video also had text that the "UN is paying them to cross our border. Biden is paying them to cross our border. These are paid soldiers. MERCENARIES!" The video has recently been debunked by Politifact, which describes the debit card as part of the UN refugee agency's "cash assistance program" for the "most vulnerable asylum seekers" in Mexico. According to PolitiFact, the same false video was originally posted on X (formerly Twitter) in January 2022 and circulated on Instagram. The video, which was posted in October 2023, remained on TikTok despite the debunking.

Promotion of Violence Against Migrants via Comments
While none of the videos in our sample contained outright incitement to violence, there were 32 comments on these videos determined to be promoting violence against migrants and refugees. Some comments were explicit about killing migrants and refugees ("start killing them"), shooting them ("deport? shoot them"), or using explosives on them ("drop a bomb now we know where they are at!!!"). One user commented, "Am I allowed to go down there to kill them[?]"
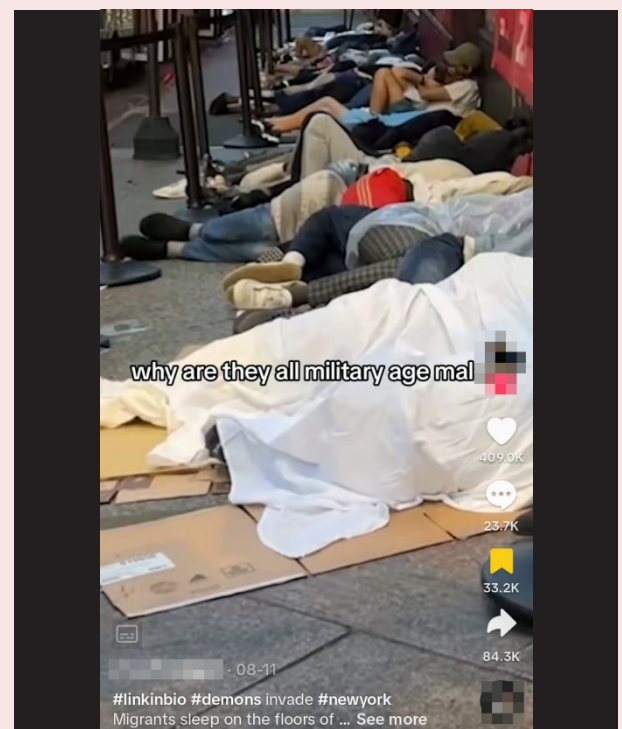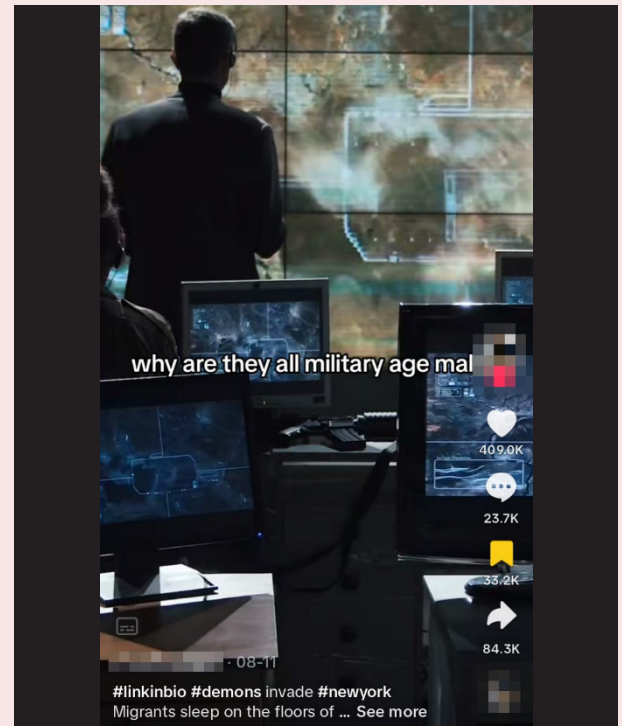
Images 2 and 3: The most liked video in the sample features footage of migrants sleeping on a city sidewalk, followed by text reading, "Why are they all military age males?". The video then cuts to stock footage of military operations.
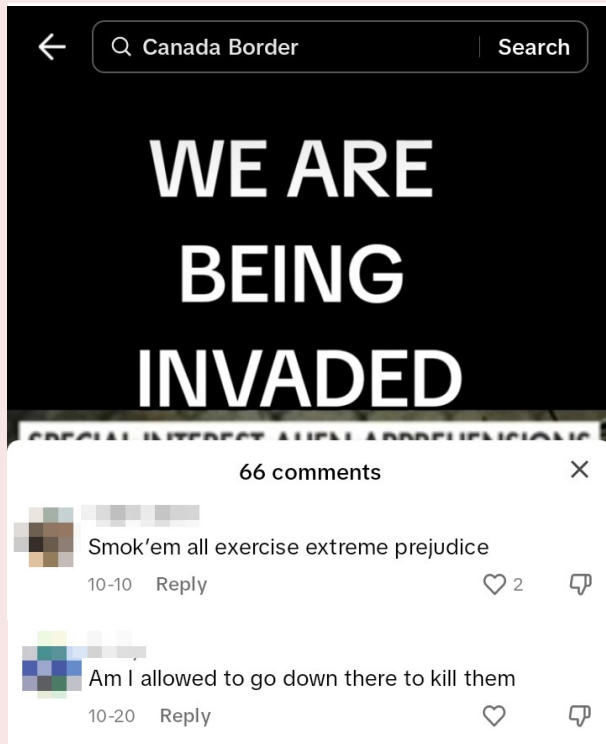
Image 4: Comments on the same video promoting violence against migrants and refugees.

Image 5: Comment portraying migrants and refugees as being in the US to "rape, steal and kill."

In addition to explicit calls for violence, some users commented about the need for Americans to prepare for "invading soldiers" by stocking up on supplies and weaponry ("time to break out our "Winchester's!"). Still, eight other comments went so far as to say that the US needs another civil war and that the government needs to be overthrown. One user specifically commented, "Civil War is needed enough is enough Americans have got to fight and stick together and get rid of this bullshit."

Degrading Portrayal of Migrants and Refugees
Eighteen of the comments in the sample were found to have used degrading language to portray migrants and refugees. Terms such as "gang members," "kidnappers," "rapists," "savages," "thieves," "terrorists," and "very dangerous" are used by some commenters to describe migrants and refugees in general, and in some cases to describe migrants and refugees from specific countries or regions.

Comments on one video, shown below in Image 5, said "they're [migrants] here to do what they do best rape, steal
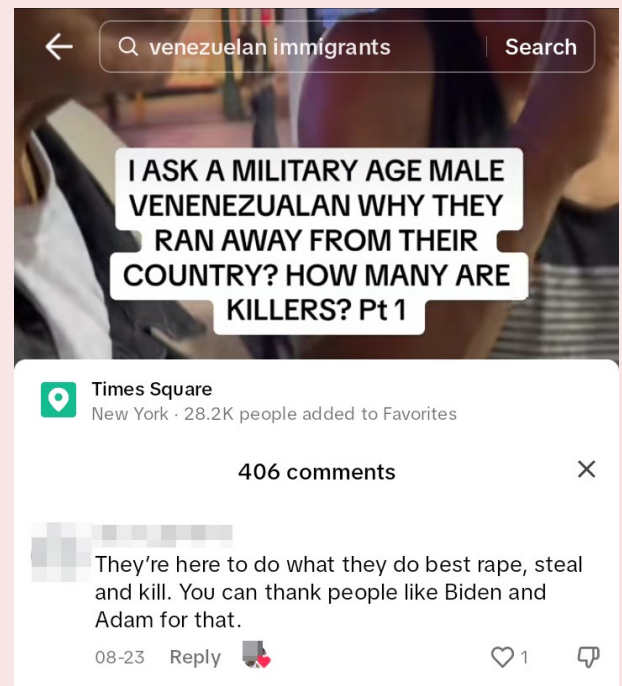
and kill." This is just one example of the extremely hateful comments users made to dehumanize and fearmonger about migrants. This rhetoric was often used specifically in reference to Venezuelan migrants.

As described above in Images 2 and 3, the most liked video in our sample also called migrants and refugees "#demons" in addition to referring to them as "military-aged men".
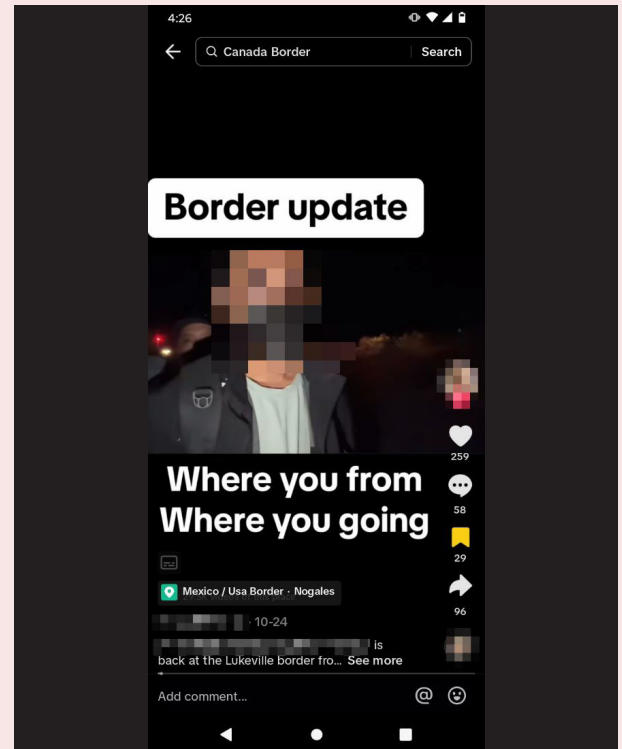
Misleading Questions
A common video format observed in ISD's dataset involved TikTok creators asking migrants provocative and insulting questions, sometimes alongside "interpreters." For example, in one video they asked if the individuals are grateful for the benefits they received in the US or if there are gang members coming to the US from their home country. Often, the beginning of the conversation between the creator and migrant was omitted from the video, so it was not clear what question, if any, was actually asked. The migrants' answers were usually in inaudible Spanish and the "interpreter" did not provide a translation on video. The creators then claim that the men gave offensive or incriminating answers, with no verification or evidence provided. The misleading or outright false claims made

by these creators have the potential to spur on hostile feelings towards migrants. These videos could also incite harassment of the migrants involved and endanger their physical safety, given that in many videos, the locations of the migrants were very clear. These videos were at times filmed directly in front of their shelters, always with their faces unobstructed, however in a few videos, the creator named the migrant.

Many of the TikTok videos that ISD observed prominently featured footage of migrant children. It is unlikely that these individuals were asked permission before they were filmed. In one video, a man being recorded at a migrant shelter in a Chicago Police Department precinct can be heard saying "no" turning away from the camera in response to the TikTok's creator announcing himself as a "journalist." TikTok creators also filmed migrants sleeping or congregating outside shelters in cities. These individuals, particularly migrants who were asleep on camera, could not consent to the video or having their location broadcast online.

In another video, some men were asked where they were from and where they were headed to. The men were from various parts of India and wanted to go to California. This was presented as proof that large numbers of migrants were coming to the southern border from Asia and the Middle East. These kinds of videos differ from news footage of migrants crossing the border, in which individuals have likely consented to being filmed or interviewed in good faith.

Image 6: Migrant being 'interviewed' and asked misleading question. Face blurred by ISD.

Platform Features and TikTok Failures

Evading content moderation with minimal effort

Of all videos in our sample, only four (3.8%) were removed by the time of writing for violating platform guidelines, while the other 100 (96.2%) remained available. Discussions about migration and refugee policy are not inherently extremist, hateful, or reliant on misinformation, allowing users to disguise prejudice within thinly-veiled expressions of concern about safety. Users also used euphemisms and hypotheticals to express hostile feeling towards migrants. This gray area may explain why moderation of content about migrants and refugees was not observed beyond the four removed videos, despite the presence of content ISD determined to be in violation of Community Guidelines. Ultimately, ISD did not observe many tactics employed by users who posted videos or comments expressing anti-migrant or -refugee sentiment.

Comments that explicitly violate guidelines on (a) violent behaviors and criminal activities, (b) hate speech and hateful behaviors, (c) harassment and bullying, and (d) misinformation remain available weeks and even months, after they were first posted. One comment from March 16, 2023, on a video showing migrants and refugees at a border says, "Too bad that dot isn't red," potentially a reference to the red dot of a firearm sight. Another comment from October 28, 2023, states, "deport ? shoot them." On a video posted on May 10, 2023, several comments promote violence against individuals, such as "start killing them" and "stand now and kill them before it's too late." These comments remain available over five months later. This suggests that users may not feel that they must employ evasion tactics, as TikTok has allowed explicit calls for violence against migrants to remain online.

Algorithmic amplification and suggested search terms

At times, the platform itself suggested provocative search terms when words or phrases related to migrants and refugees were entered in the search bar. For example, when ISD researchers entered "immigration" in the search bar, some of the first suggested terms were "immigration replacement" and "immigration white gejosyde" (see Image 8). Another suggested term was "immigration white genosyde." The term "white genocide" is blocked on TikTok for being associated with hateful behavior, however "gejo-syde" and "genosyde" are clear attempts at evading this moderation. The fact that these search terms are not only still available but that TikTok is actively suggesting them to users indicates a failure to moderate content TikTok itself deems hateful and in violation of Community Guidelines.
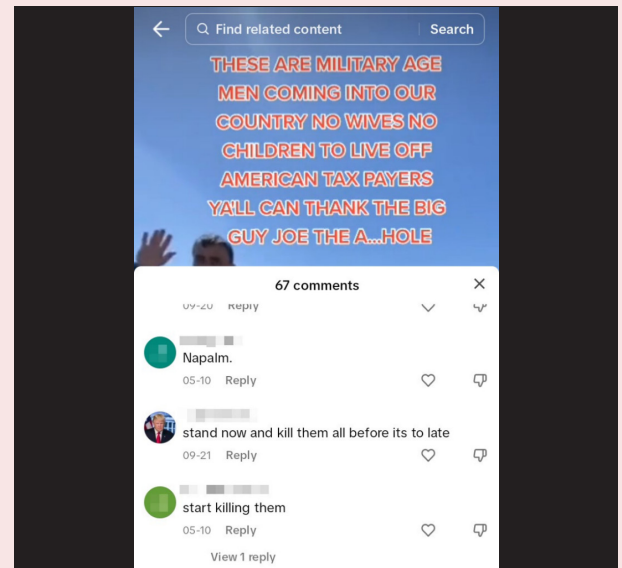

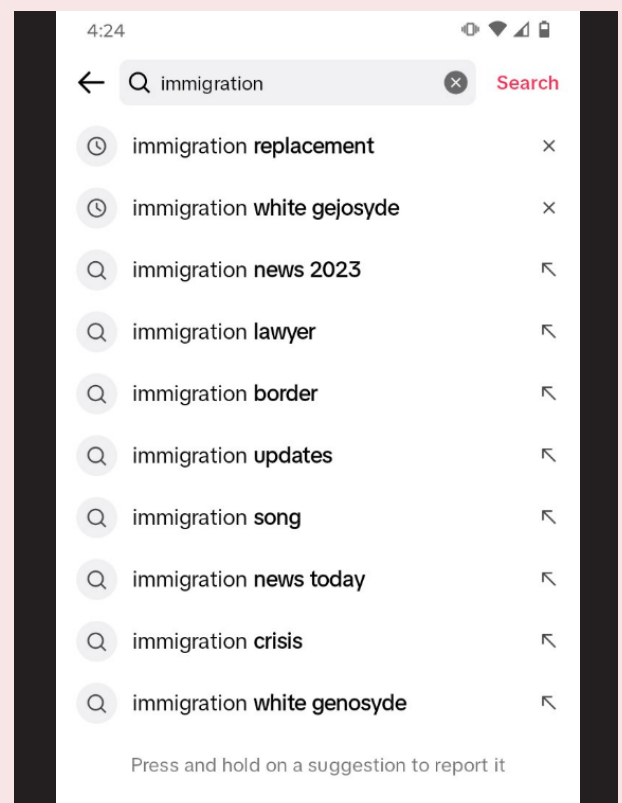Image 7: Video from May 2023 featuring comments promoting violence, which are still available.

Image 8: Search terms suggested to ISD by TikTok when "immigration" was entered in the search bar.

Table 4 below presents suggested search terms for immigrant(s), immigration, migrant(s), and refugee(s). ISD observed a difference between the suggested searches for "migrant" and "refugee"; the suggested searches associated with "refugee" were more innocuous, with phrases such as "refugees in the us." This suggests that TikTok may have taken a more comprehensive approach to tackling refugee-related content on its platform, potentially by downranking or otherwise controlling search results. If TikTok already has the capabilities to do, it could be worthwhile to replicate these efforts in migrant-related searches.

Immigrant / immigrants	Immigration	Migrant / migrants	Refugee / refugees
immigrants crossing 2023 [x2]	immigration replacement	migrantcaravan	refugee security
immigration crisis	immigration white gejocyde	migrant invasion 2023	refugee camp
immigrant invasions	immigration news 2023	migrant crisis	refugee chicago 2023
immigrants new york [x2]	immigration lawyer	migrants invasion [x2]	refugees coming to america [x2]
immigrant song	immigration border	migrants in nyc [x2]	refugee rescue 2023
illigalimmigrants	immigration updates	migrants chicago [x2]	refugees [x2]
immigrants here for war [x2]	immigration song	migrants join military	refuge666
immigrant crisis 2023	immigration news today	migrants in usa 2023 [x2]	refugee in america
immigrant	immigration crisis	migrant	refugee lauryn hill
immigrant today	immigration white genosyde	migrant worker	refugee girl
immigrants coming to america		migrants 2023	refugees syria
immigrants conspiracy		migrants coming to usa	refugees in new york
immigrants in chicago		migrants join military	refugees 2023
immigrants getting paid		migrants leaving	refugees shameless
immigrants protesting		migrants complaining	refugee greece
immigrant gangs		migrants texas border	refugees children
immigrants in america			refugees on boat 2023

Table 4: Search terms suggested to ISD by TikTok when key terms were entered in the search bar. "[x2]" denotes that the term was suggested in both searches.

When the phrase "military aged men" was entered in the search bar, suggestions included "military aged men crossing the border" and "military aged men nyc." These suggestions could direct users towards more hateful or conspiratorial content, as described in this report.

ISD also observed concerning secondary search terms suggested. When ISD followed the suggested phrase "military aged men crossing the border," TikTok suggested

further search terms beside the resulting videos. These included "un soldiers invade us 2023," which is related to the narrative floated by anti-migrant video creators about the recruitment of migrants into the US or UN military. The landing page for this search term then further suggested "joe biden arrested by military." This demonstrates a relatively quick path from anti-migrant content to conspiratorial content.
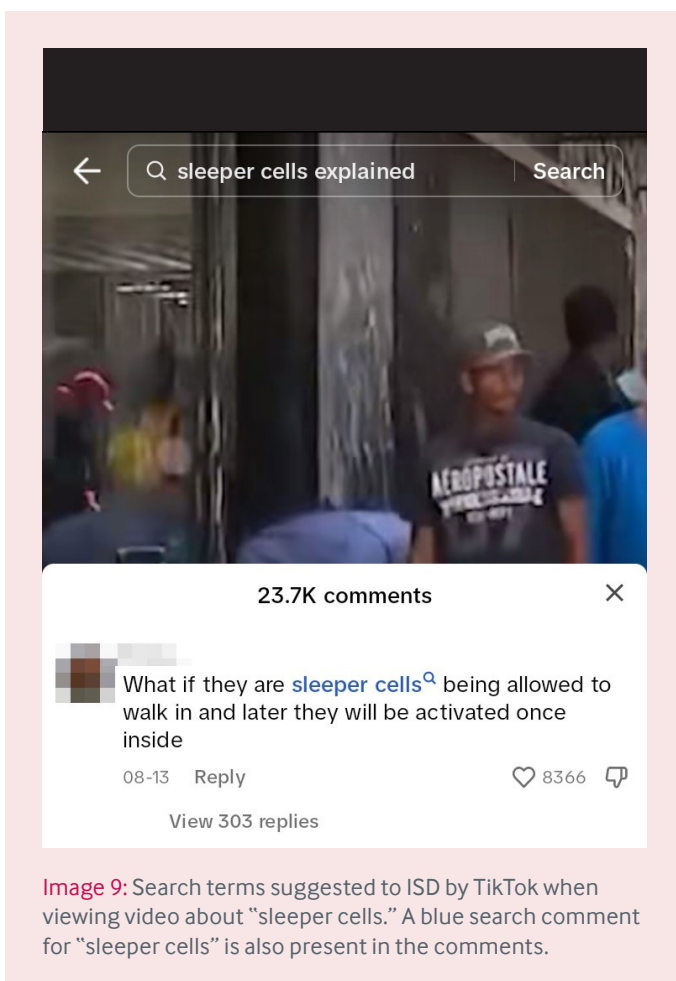
TikTok also suggested search terms within individual videos. Videos featuring hateful content sometimes directed viewers towards potentially hateful content. One video, for example, prompted the suggested search terms "sleeper cells explained" in the search bar at the top of the screen. Another video, which has since been removed, claiming that migrants will commit violence in the US suggested the phrase "migrants in Houston." This could influence hostility towards migrants in that area by viewers who believe they are a threat.

Image 9: Search terms suggested to ISD by TikTok when viewing video about "sleeper cells." A blue search comment for "sleeper cells" is also present in the comments.

Additionally, a feature on TikTok "links certain comments to search results" via what are often referred to as "blue search comments." Blue search comments are selected by platform algorithms when certain comments are determined as being relevant to the video. Users are taken directly to search results when they select blue search comments, which are highlighted in blue with a search icon.

TikTok Sounds

TikTok creators posting videos about migrants used a variety of sounds. Most videos utilized an "original sound", which often included audio from news broadcasts about migrants at the southern border or in US cities such as New York and Chicago. Some creators also simply filmed themselves talking about migrants or used voiceovers on videos or images of migrants. Much of this commentary was hateful or conspiratorial.

Where existing sounds were used, they seemed to be used to create a sense of unease. TikTok creators put menacing or suspenseful sounds over videos of migrants, which could have been attempts to evoke fear or dread in viewers. For example, videos used ominous sounds from recordings such as "The Purge," "Hoist the Colors," and "I Got 5 On It" to associate footage of migrants with danger. This could further influence hostile feelings towards these communities.

Conclusion

ISD observed very little moderation of hateful content towards migrants on TikTok. Almost all the videos in ISD's dataset remained on the platform for multiple weeks after collection, despite vitriolic content in the videos themselves and the comments. With few examples of deliberate moderation evasion, videos that included hateful, conspiratorial, and threatening rhetoric remained easily accessible. TikTok videos about migrants promoted conspiracy theories about "military age men" who pose a threat to the safety of American citizens. Users also employed hostile and dehumanizing language about migrants, accusing them of being criminals. ISD observed many comments that included explicit calls for violence against migrant individuals. Some TikTok creators also shared personal information, including names and locations, of migrants in videos with tens of thousands of views, potentially risking their safety.

Ultimately, ISD found that TikTok did not apply available moderation measures to migrant-related content, including removing hostile search terms associated with the phrase "migrant." Our investigation also found that TikTok recommended deliberate misspellings of phrases that were otherwise blocked from searches, demonstrating that content in explicitly violation of Community Guidelines was allowed to remain on the platform and was being promoted to users.

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