

2025 Ranking Digital Rights Index shows stagnation from Big Tech on user rights despite seismic shifts within industry

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS, April 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Despite growing threats to users' rights online and the explosion of generative AI, the world's largest tech giants are still failing to create the guardrails needed

to protect the rights of billions of online users, according to the results of the 2025 Ranking Digital Rights (RDR) Index: Big Tech Edition, now part of the World Benchmarking Alliance.



RDR's first evaluation of the world's most powerful Big Tech platforms in three years reveals that companies are stagnating in fulfilling their key human rights commitments - and in some cases retreating from transparency entirely. The RDR Index evaluates, scores, and ranks companies on more than 300 aspects of company policies that affect people's human rights, focusing on corporate governance, freedom of expression and information, and privacy.

With X (formerly Twitter) falling from its long-held top spot to seventh place, Microsoft took over as the company with the leading score in this assessment. However, Microsoft maintained the same overall score of 50% that it held in 2022. This is also the first year in which TikTok (and its parent company ByteDance) was included in the RDR assessment. Despite controversy surrounding U.S. government privacy concerns, the company scored near the middle of the pile.

"The collective power of supersized tech giants has never been greater," said Dr. Jan Rydzak, Digital Transformation Lead at the World Benchmarking Alliance.

"The world's largest digital platforms dominate entire industries and the infrastructure they rely on. Three of them control a staggering two-thirds of the online ad market - the deeply flawed engine that powers much of the internet today. Their algorithmic feeds have long influenced what we see, hear, and think. Now they are also awash in synthetic content that is causing social trust to unravel further.

The 2025 RDR Index: Big Tech Edition shows that power and accountability do not always go hand in hand, and human rights protections can easily crumble away. It serves as an anchor of

truth in a time of widespread information chaos.”

For the third time in a row, no company scored above 50 percent. Most companies showed some improvement, particularly the Chinese tech giants, while two companies’ overall scores declined. Notably, U.S.-based Big Tech giants, representing five of the 10 companies with the highest market cap worldwide, have accrued enormous political power while skirting much-needed scrutiny. The incremental changes we’ve seen are insufficient given the urgent challenges to user rights online emanating from global conflict, worldwide democratic decline, and the unbridled growth of generative AI.

Other highlights include:

Driven by a regulatory crackdown on the tech sector by President Xi Jinping and pressure from international investors, Chinese companies are the most improved in key areas of transparency. These companies, including Alibaba, Baidu, and Tencent, made the greatest progress overall, driven mostly by strong improvements in key areas of governance. Still, how they translate into practice remained unclear, as all three companies kept their long-held silence on government demands for content and account restrictions as well as user data.

Tech companies are training AI models on billions of users' data, with no way for users to opt out. There have been overall improvements in algorithmic transparency since RDR first expanded its focus on it in the 2020 RDR Index. But the rapid proliferation of large language models calls for much more urgent action.

Companies are failing to protect users from key risks emanating from the surveillance advertising industry. Most companies are failing to conduct regular human rights impact assessments to identify how their processes for policy enforcement and targeted advertising policies impact users’ rights. Two have ceased to publish data on advertising policy enforcement altogether.

X’s precipitous transparency drop is the largest in RDR’s history. X (formerly Twitter) recorded the most dramatic drop in performance of any company in the history of the RDR Index. Last assessed by RDR just before its acquisition by Elon Musk, the company has retreated from transparency, particularly on governance. This reversal is exceptionally relevant as X’s U.S.-based competitors adopt some of its practices, such as the use by Meta of Community Notes.

TikTok performed comparably to other U.S.-based platforms, though its strong performance on freedom of expression was tempered by exceptionally poor governance disclosures. TikTok’s results contrast with recent rhetoric in the U.S. that led to the suspension of its operations and a possible forced divestiture. TikTok outperformed all other companies in the freedom of expression category, buoyed by strong transparency reporting.

Every company we rank has its own scorecard that offers a detailed look at highlights from the past year, key takeaways, recommendations, and changes. [Full scorecards](#), as well as [exec](#)

[summary](#) available available on the [2025 RDR Index Big Tech edition website](#).

Also new in the RDR Index: Big Tech Edition, our key findings, which will be released on Thursday, May 1. You'll be able to take a deep dive into year-over-year progress and decline, emerging risks and trends, and areas for concerns within the sector. Key findings include:

“Three years on, U.S. tech giants are moving slow and not fixing things”: The trillion-dollar U.S. tech titans have dwarfed their competitors in size and power. But their quest for market dominance has paralyzed progress and widened the rift between commitment and practice.

“Why Chinese companies are racing to improve on transparency”: Chinese companies' scores experienced a notable jump this year, driven by a regulatory crackdown and ESG concerns. But gaps remain in freedom of expression, and they still lag behind U.S. counterparts.

“Private platforms are falling short on transparent governance”: This year, RDR evaluated two private tech companies for the first time: X and and TikTok (ByteDance). While both performed comparably to others on privacy and freedom of expression, they lagged on governance transparency.

“User data fuels Big Tech's algorithms, and there's no opting out”: Big Tech giants are increasingly integrating AI into their algorithms to better target individual users of platforms and services. But improvements to algorithmic

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