

INSIDE YOUTUBE

## Letter from Susan: Our 2021 Priorities

By Susan Wojcicki

CEO

Jan.26.2021



CEO Susan Wojcicki addresses YouTube's priorities for 2021: growing the creator economy, living up to our responsibilities, helping people learn new skills, building for the future of YouTube, and working with governments around the world as we face increasingly complicated regulatory issues.

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## REFLECTIONS ON 2020

As we settle into 2021, many of us are still trying to process what we lived through over the past year: the heartbreaking attack on the U.S. Capitol, the pandemic, contentious election seasons, and natural disasters like the wildfires in Australia and California. We came together in a long overdue moment to advocate for racial justice, reminding us that the effects of systemic racism are still felt every day around the world.

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**bringing people  
together, even as  
we've stayed apart."**

Through difficult circumstances, YouTube has helped bring people together, even as we've stayed apart. Last year, more viewers than ever before came to our platform -- to learn new skills, find accurate information about COVID-19, and rebuild communities online. And we saw artists reach their fans by making YouTube a virtual venue. [Miley Cyrus](#), [The Roots](#), and [Sebastián Yatra](#) came together for the [Save Our Stages initiative](#), an online music festival that raised \$1.8 million to support independent venues hit hard by COVID shutdowns.

The pandemic has accelerated our digital lives. During the first quarter of last year, we saw a 25 percent increase in watchtime around the world. [2020 was YouTube Gaming's biggest year yet](#), with over 100 billion hours of gaming content watched on YouTube. In the first half of the year, total daily livestreams grew by 45 percent. And from artists performing in their living rooms to churches moving their services online, more than half a million channels live streamed for the first time in 2020. Those first time streamers accounted for more than 10 million streams on the platform. They included Brazilian artists like [Jorge & Mateus](#), who live streamed a [concert](#) from their garage that's been viewed over 40 million times.

At YouTube, we're taking the lessons of 2020 into the new year. We're focused on delivering on our key priorities: growing the creator economy, living up to our responsibilities, helping people learn new skills, and building for the future of YouTube. We're also committed to working with governments around the world as we face increasingly complicated regulatory issues.

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January 2021 Community Letter | Our 2021 Priorities

## 2021 PRIORITIES

### Growing the creator economy

The YouTube economy is incredibly healthy and strong, despite the challenges of 2020. The number of new channels that joined our [YouTube Partner Program](#) (YPP) last year more than doubled over the year before!



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Creators are building next generation media companies that impact the economy's overall success. According to an Oxford Economics [report](#), YouTube's creative ecosystem contributed approximately \$16 billion to the U.S. GDP in 2019, supporting the equivalent of 345,000 full time jobs. We're also seeing real impact in other countries around the globe. The UK in 2019 saw approximately £1.4 billion contributed to the British GDP and the equivalent of 30,000 full time jobs. And in France, there was an estimated €515 million contributed to the French GDP and the equivalent of 15,000 full time jobs.

Every creator has their own unique story to tell about what motivated them to start their channel. Six years ago, [Brandon Reed](#) was struggling to make ends meet as a single father. He wanted to go back to school to study animation and give his kids a better life, but he couldn't afford it. He learned to animate by watching YouTube videos late at night after his kids were in bed, and then launched his own full-length cartoons. He still remembers the first check he got from YouTube for \$100. Today, Brandon works full time through his YouTube [channel](#) and his animations have more than 250 million views worldwide.

Brandon is just one of many creators around the world who has benefited from finding a home on YouTube. Over the last three years, we've paid more than \$30 billion to creators, artists, and media companies.



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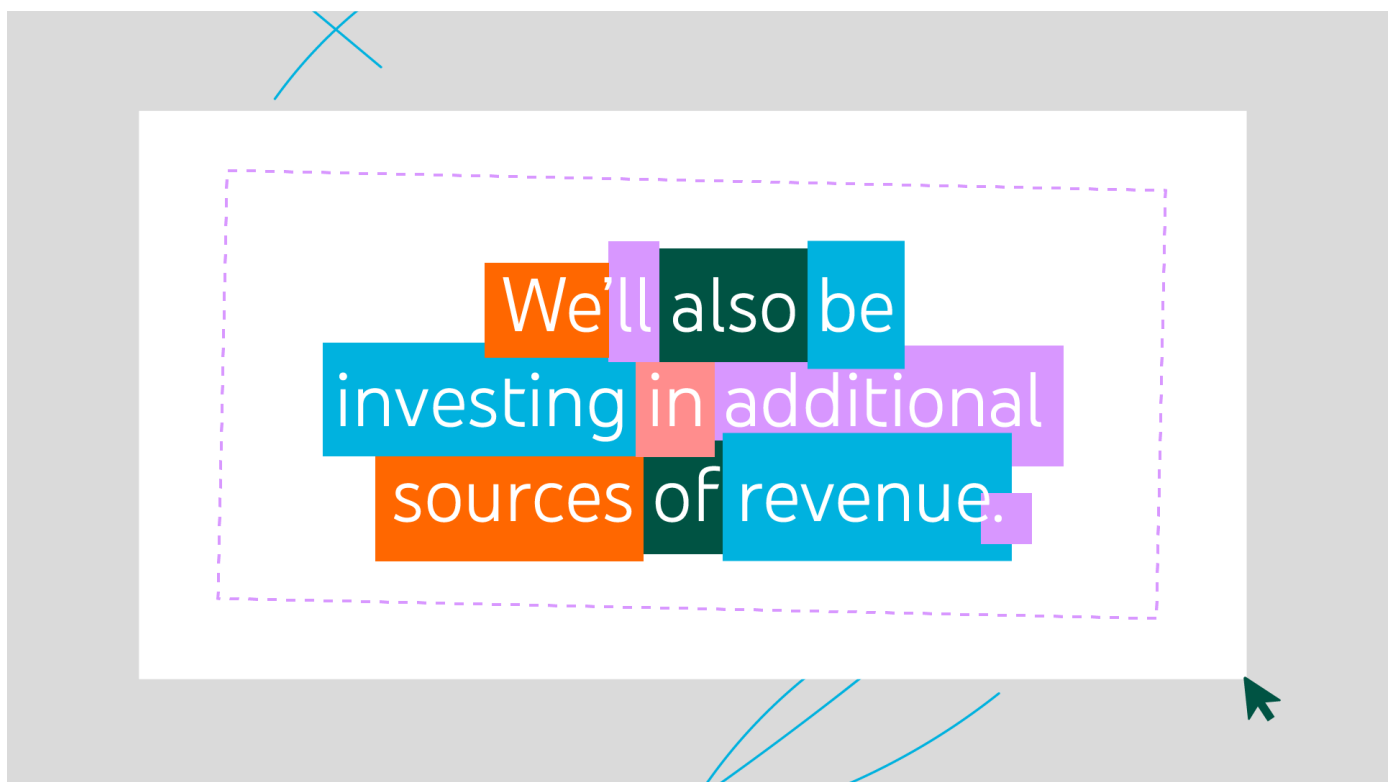
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## 1. Policy transparency

We know that creators want support from our teams and more transparency into how our policies work. We recognize we have more work to do and are committed to providing more support to creators in 2021. Our policies are designed to protect our YouTube community against abuse and bad actors and also to make sure we are able to keep advertisers coming back to YouTube to support our creator ecosystem. But we recognize that at the scale we operate, it's hard for creators to keep up with changing Community Guidelines. And we also know that we make mistakes.

In December, I spoke with creator Charlie White from the channel [penguinz0](#) after he [tweeted](#) about being given a strike for an older video due to a new policy. We know this situation is similar to frustrations shared by other creators. We had a good discussion, and Charlie made a [video](#) about our response to his concerns.

We take these issues seriously, and we're making changes this year to help creators. Some of the work we will be doing to address this area of concern for the community includes: more transparency in our policies, more support available for creators, and improvements to the appeal process for creators.



## 2. Additional sources of revenue

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learn more about financial literacy. She enabled memberships last year, and it's now the majority of her YouTube revenue - more than \$100,000.

### 3. Supporting the success of all creators

As we grow the creator economy, we also want to make sure that all creators can participate in these opportunities. We've heard concerns from creators across various communities, particularly in the Black community, about their experiences on the platform. But since we don't ask creators to identify themselves, it's difficult to understand what's happening at scale for different communities on YouTube. We've been working to address that.

This year, we'll [start](#) asking creators in the U.S. on a voluntary basis to provide us with their gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. This information will help us identify potential gaps in our systems that might impact creators. As we gather this data, we'll look closely at how content from different communities is treated in search and discovery and monetization. We think this effort will ultimately benefit the entire YouTube community, and we appreciate the partnership of the Black, LGBTQ+, and Latinx creator communities who have shared their perspectives with us to help make YouTube a better place for everyone.



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It's a priority to continue to update our approach to responsibility so people find high-quality information when they come to our platform. We're always working to strike the right balance between openness and responsibility as we meet the guidelines set by governments around the world. Our approach to responsibility is to **remove** content experts say could lead to real world harm, **raise up** authoritative and trusted content, **reduce** views of borderline content, and reward creators who meet our even higher bar for monetization.

In addition to our extensive work around the U.S. **election**, we also took an especially strong position with regard to the pandemic. Our teams have consulted with more than 85 local health authorities around the world to help connect people with trusted information. Combined with the efforts of creators to spread the word, we're making an impact - we've served over 400 billion impressions of information panels that relate to COVID-19.

We've updated our policies to remove egregious medical misinformation about COVID-19 to prohibit things like saying the virus is a hoax or promoting medically unsubstantiated cures in place of seeking treatment. We've continued to make updates to our COVID-19 policies to stay current with the science, and we've removed more than more than half a million videos under these policies since February.

**“We want to help  
people understand  
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decisions.”**

**Vaccination:** Now our focus has turned toward the possibilities ahead with vaccination. In October, we expanded our COVID-19 medical misinformation policy on YouTube to remove content about vaccines that contradicts consensus from health authorities, such as the Centers for Disease Control or the WHO. We also added an alert pointing to authoritative sources on our homepage and on videos and searches about vaccines. We want to help people understand the importance of vaccinations by **connecting** them with timely information to make informed decisions. We also want to help the scientific community engage with the public about this important issue. Our teams are working hard to use all the resources available to us, including the outreach of creators, to help people receive the most accurate and up-to-date information about vaccines. Creators have conducted more than 60 interviews with leading health officials, including **Fat Joe's** conversation with **Dr. Anthony Fauci** and **Roshni Mukherjee's** discussion about how to manage stress during COVID-19 with Dr. Manoj Sharma. Creator health interviews have received more than 65 million views worldwide, and we look forward to more of these conversations in the year ahead.

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accessible and understandable to improve the health of users around the world. We recently announced new partnerships with organizations including the American Public Health Association, the Cleveland Clinic, and the Mayo Clinic. We'll continue to create new health partnerships to help bring authoritative health information to YouTube, including in Europe and Asia. We're so glad to have [Dr. Garth Graham](#) leading this initiative!



**Racial Justice:** We remain committed to our racial justice work and ensuring all creators can thrive on our platform. One important change we've identified is better shielding creators from harmful comments. We've [begun](#) testing a new filter in YouTube Studio for potentially inappropriate comments that have been [automatically held for review](#), so creators have the option not to read them. Our creators are the heart of YouTube and supporting creator wellbeing is fundamental to everything we do. We're committed to taking the steps needed to live up to that responsibility.

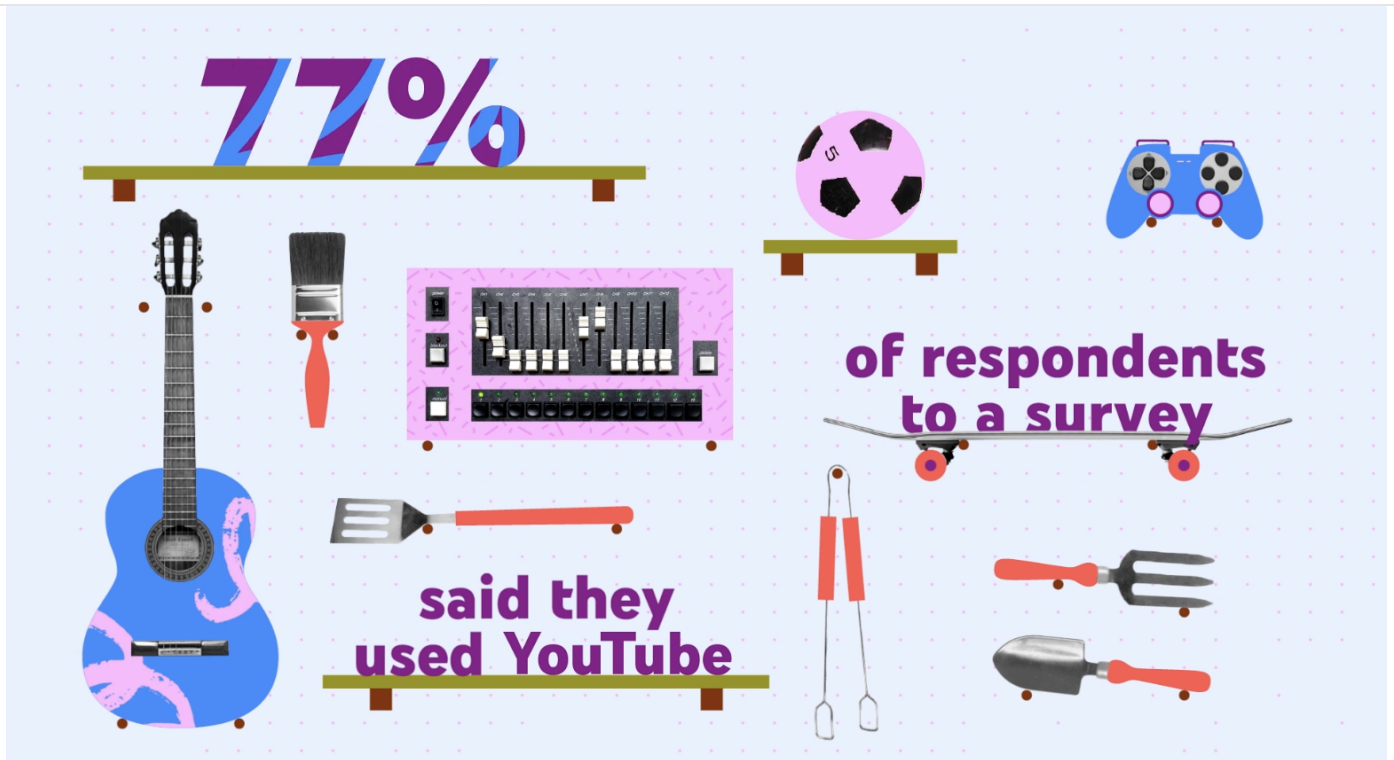
And through the [#YouTubeBlack Voices Fund](#), we're bringing important stories about Black experiences around the world to YouTube, emphasizing the intellectual power, dignity, and joy of Black voices, and educating viewers on racial justice. Earlier this month we announced the #YouTubeBlack Voices [Class of 2021](#): 132 creators and artists from the United States, Kenya, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Australia, South Africa, and Nigeria. We're excited to help amplify their stories this year.

Next month, we'll celebrate Black History Month with new YouTube Originals, including

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akTube with Black

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## Helping people learn new skills

One of the things about YouTube that makes me proudest is the role we play in enabling people to learn new skills. I hear so many stories about people who learned something new on our platform, so it's no surprise that 77 percent of respondents to an Ipsos study say they used YouTube during 2020 to learn a new skill.<sup>1</sup>

This trend has grown during the pandemic as we've worked at home, schooled at home and adapted our lives to quarantine. In fact, videos with the word "beginner" in the title have been viewed more than a billion times since mid-March. Last year, I used YouTube to learn how to cut hair, fix my fridge, do more yoga, research bitcoin, and help with physics homework.

Creators are finding ways to help us meet the challenges of quarantine. [Crash Course](#) and Arizona State University (ASU) created a series called [Study Hall](#) that focuses on critical academic subjects like [writing composition](#), [algebra and more](#), breaking them down into easy-to-follow formats. [Eddie Woo](#) developed videos to help teachers learn how to get started on YouTube. And [Mayuko](#), a Software Engineer who traded a Silicon Valley job for a YouTube channel, helped people with technology and career advice.

This year, we want to help even more people learn new skills on YouTube. When I think about how YouTube can change people's lives, the story of [Josh Carroll](#) stands out to me. Josh is an Army veteran who [OK](#) janitor when he

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## **engage with educational content on YouTube.”**

And we’re supporting creators who enable economic opportunities by teaching skills of the 21st century like coding, business and language. Creators like [The Futur](#), who are helping to teach 1 billion people how to make a living doing what they love.

Learning in-demand professional skills can be life-changing, and I believe we need to aim high in our efforts. We’re setting a new goal: to double the number of users who engage with educational content on YouTube. We want to help more people like Brandon and Josh connect with videos that will set them on a path of personal fulfillment and economic opportunity.



Joshua Carroll's Story: Reaching for the stars

**“So far, videos in our**

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**receiving an  
impressive 3.5 billion  
daily views!"**

## Building for the YouTube of the future

As we focus on the coming year, here are a few areas where we are excited about new YouTube capabilities:

### 1. Mobile creation

More people are creating content on their phones, which is why we're investing to give creators more video editing tools. We're now beta testing [YouTube Shorts](#) in India and we're excited to help the next generation of mobile creators tell their stories by lowering the barriers to entry. So far, videos in our new Shorts [player](#) - which helps people around the world watch short videos on YouTube - are receiving an impressive 3.5 billion daily views! We're looking forward to expanding Shorts to more markets this year.

### 2. Commerce

We also know many users and consumers research products on YouTube before they buy. According to a recent Talk Shoppe study, 70 percent of people surveyed say they bought from a brand as a result of seeing it on YouTube. We're excited to integrate shopping into the YouTube experience. We're currently testing a new beta program with a group of beauty and electronics creators to help people discover and buy the products they see in videos. We'll have new features coming out this year, so stay tuned for updates.

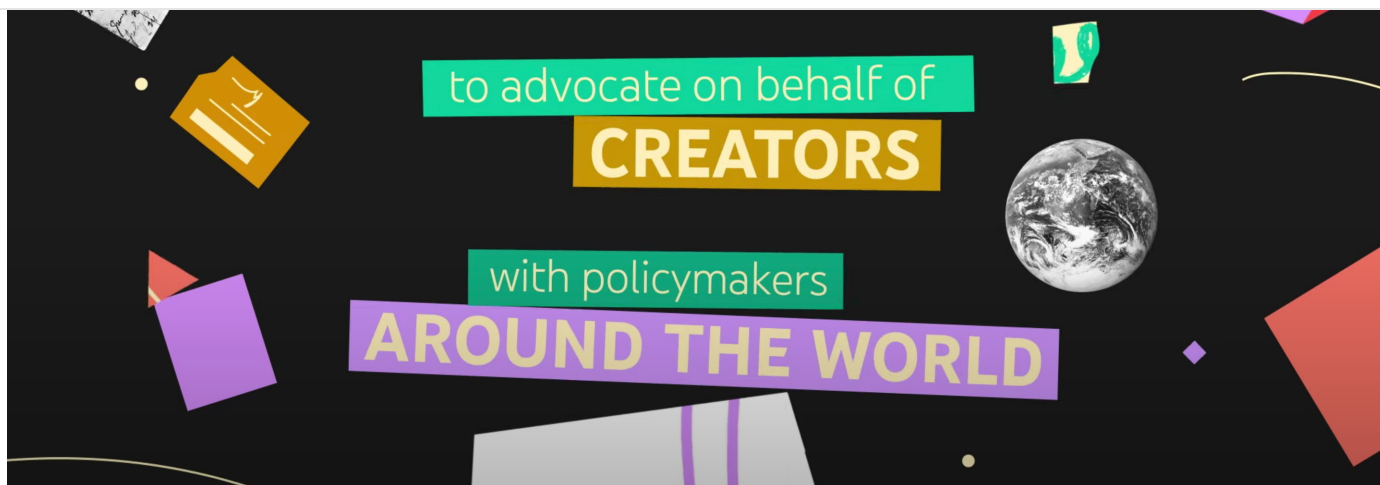
### 3. Living Room

And we're also seeing that viewers want to watch their favorite creators and content on the biggest and best screen. In fact, TV was our fastest growing screen in 2020. That's why we've worked to improve the look, feel, and performance of the Living Room app. And we're making it easier for advertisers to reach more consumers where they are watching. We'll continue to bring YouTube to more living room devices and make voice navigation even better. There's a lot more opportunity for us to keep improving the product for creators, advertisers, and users, and you'll continue to see a healthy investment in this experience.

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## The regulatory landscape

There's another area that will be a significant focus in 2021 - regulation. We've benefited from partnerships with governments on critical issues, like preventing violent extremism and coordinated influence operations on our platform. Last year, these partnerships were incredibly helpful as we worked together to provide people with accurate information during the pandemic. We'll continue to partner with policymakers on issues that impact our business and workforce, like immigration, education, infrastructure, and healthcare.

As we continue these efforts, tech companies are also facing increased scrutiny and regulatory action. In [past letters](#), I raised issues about Article 17 (previously 13), the EU copyright directive. Creators speaking out made a significant difference in making the language more workable for creators. Thank you for your help! There are still areas of concern, and we're working closely with policymakers as European countries turn the legislation into national laws.

There has recently been significant debate on Section 230, which enables us to both keep YouTube open and allow a large amount of content on the internet as well as take the actions necessary to protect our platform. Both sides of the political spectrum are interested in modifying it, but there are diametrically opposed views on the problem and a lack of consensus on what should be done.

The European Union recently introduced the Digital Services Act (DSA) that could have major implications for online speech. We'll update you as this progresses, and we're also working with governments like the United Kingdom as they consider legislation to take on harmful content.

This year, we'll continue to advocate on behalf of creators and work closely with governments to make sure policymakers understand the potential impact their decisions could have on all of you.

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We’re all hoping for better days ahead. No matter what 2021 brings, the work of creators and artists on YouTube will help build communities and give all of us a reason to look forward. Thank you for everything that you do.

1. Ipsos MORI conducted an online survey of individuals aged 18 - 44 in the U.S., UK, FR, DE, JP, IN, BR, SA, EG, Nov 2020.

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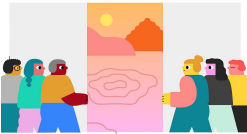
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