

Prominent online MAGA accounts are making 64% fewer social media posts about human trafficking

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ABSTRACT

A joint social media study from Montclair State University faculty in the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication in the College of Communication and Media and the Global Center on Human Trafficking shows a 64% decrease in the total number of posts about human trafficking made by prominent QAnon affiliated/MAGA accounts when compared to the highpoint of such posts in 2023. Results from the study produced by the Center for Strategic Communication and the Global Center on Human Trafficking include a 64% decrease in human trafficking posts from significant MAGA accounts from 1/1/2025 to 7/20/2025 when compared to the same period in 2023 (the highest volume year of trafficking posts among online conservative voices), a 79% reduction in the total volume of human trafficking posts in the studied accounts between 2023 and 2025, no posts from the MAGA accounts studied related to proposed cuts to the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (despite such content generating 29.5M potential views from other online sources), and a greater than 50% reduction in views of human trafficking posts for 2025 from all studied MAGA accounts, indicating potential diminished interest from their respective audiences.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Human trafficking has been a consistent theme of discussion for far-right online personalities in recent years. The notion of protecting the vulnerable and combatting the horrors of human trafficking offers the appearance of moral clarity and can project an image of virtue, thus making the theme compelling to politicians and commentators. The real issues of human trafficking, which frequently involve economic inequality and marginalization, are complicated and often not a part of this narrative, however. Instead, the emergence of the QAnon conspiracy theory allowed for the projection of a range of myths about human trafficking to coalesce around narratives of shadowy trafficking organization abducting children from public spaces (Sommer, 2023). Moreover, the QAnon conspiracy also tended to identify clear political enemies and

smear opponents with baseless accusations of being connected to the trafficking and abuse of children (Bloom & Moskalenko, 2021).

The combination of defining enemies, projecting virtue, and the sharing of salacious conspiratorial content has made human trafficking mythology an attractive talking point for far-right activists in the online space. Such a use of human trafficking as a cudgel is not novel and has been present for centuries, from trafficking allegations being leveled at immigrants to the suggestion of moral impurity on the part of those who may be different (Benton & Peterka-Benton, 2021). As such, the spike of human trafficking conspiracy content in concert with the rise of Qanon is both consistent with history but also amplified with the ease and reach of sharing content in the online space. What has also been consistent among those sharing such content, however, is the claim of a steadfast commitment to “fight” human trafficking.

TIP CUTS AND EPSTEIN CASE DISCOURSE

Human trafficking remains an important topic in multiple emerging themes related to law and policy. A recent notable policy decision from the Trump Administration has been the functional elimination of the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (Houghtaling, 2025). The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) serves a crucial global role in the prevention and prosecuting of human trafficking. As former Ambassador John Yang notes, “for 25 years, the State Department has had an office tracking the scope of human trafficking and working to combat it. In 2023, more than 133,000 victims were identified globally, leading to more than 18,000 prosecutions” (Yang & Sagalyn, 2025).



Additionally, questions about the findings associated with the Jeffrey Epstein human trafficking case have served to create additional questions that have elicited popular concern. The effects of this lack of clarity have resulted in 69% of Americans believing that there was some level of deception or cover-up associated with the Epstein investigation (Lange, 2025).

Cumulatively, such a policy decision along with lingering questions about the Epstein case should forecast greater discussion of human trafficking in online outlets. Given the emphasis far right, MAGA, and QAnon affiliated commentators have placed on this theme, it would be expected that there should be an increase in posts about human trafficking in their social media feeds. As such, exploration of that relationship between the current context and the social media activities of key figures online merits research scrutiny.

Two research questions will be considered in this report:

RQ1: What is the current frequency of posts about human trafficking in the social media feeds of key conservative accounts?

RQ2: To what extent did key conservative accounts create social media posts about the reduction in funding for the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons?

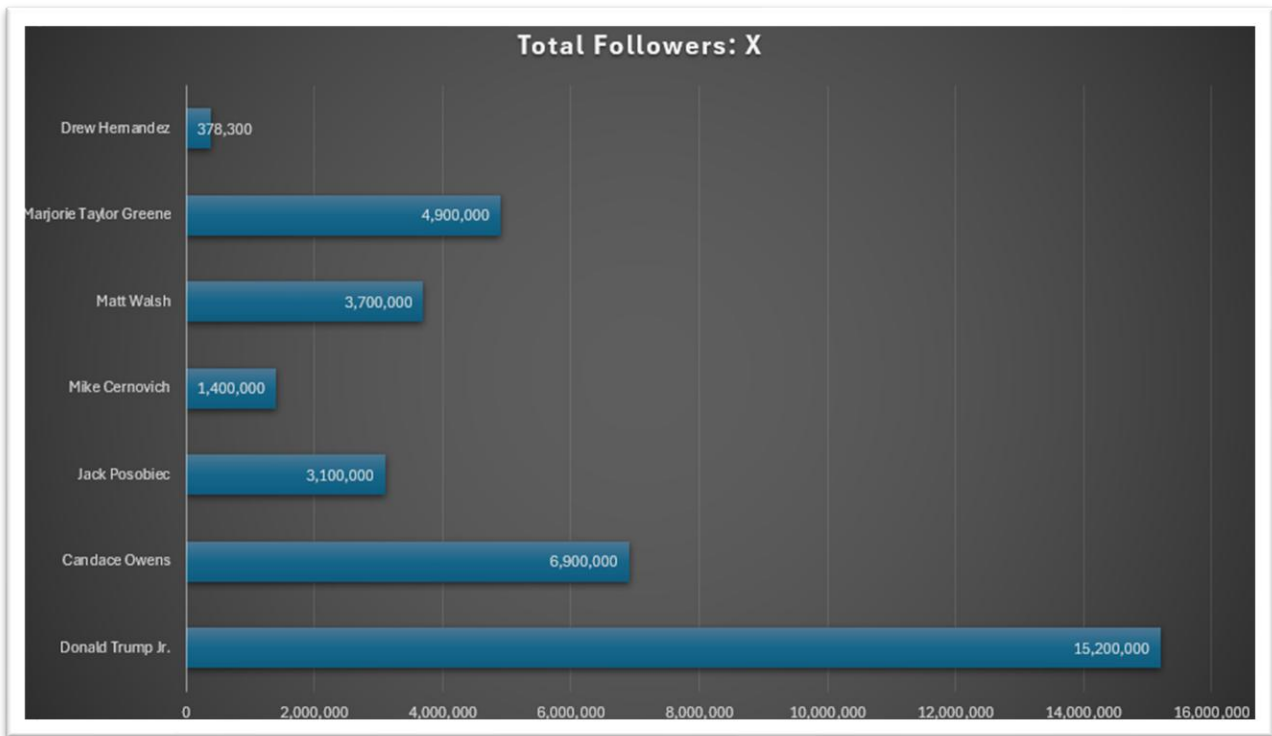
METHOD

To investigate these questions, this report utilizes the Tweet Binder analytics program. Aggregated data from 2019 to 2025 data on X (formerly Twitter) was collected. Content on X was selected for review as the platform has been identified as an attractive space for far right content sharing online with limited moderation for such content (Alfonseca, 2022). Tweet Binder is especially effective for such investigations as it can identify the total number of times and in the total number of posts a specific topic, hashtag, or keyword is used over a period of time, with the total views of the term and the most-seen posts using the term identified along with shares and likes of that content (*Metrics*, 2020; *Social Media Management with Tweet Binder*, 2019). Previous scholarship has validated this approach for assessing fluctuations in social media topic frequency and the potential implications of such changes (Kross et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2023). While causality cannot be fully ascertained with this approach, significant changes in specific term appearance can suggest broader macro changes around the term.

Identification of the relevant accounts to evaluate for this study is based on the work of Peterka-Benton et al. (2023) in a study that looked at Q affiliated/adjacent, MAGA supporting accounts that perpetuated broader human trafficking myths to a wider online audience. That study also used Tweet Binder analytics software to identify the accounts posting about “trafficking” with the largest number of followers, highest impact, and most retweets related to this content along with identification of the tweets that received the most likes using the noted terms. Cumulatively, results from that study produced a broad framework for establishing accounts that were the most influential in seeding, sharing, and amplifying the trafficking content, particularly in relation to specific human trafficking conspiracy messaging (Peterka-Benton, D., Benton, B., & Penney, J., 2023). Significant research has validated the role of these items in message visibility and influence as “audience metrics often signify quality, utility, trustworthiness, and status” (Zhang et al., 2018, p. 3165). Potential influence identified by Tweet Binder analytics can be understood through multiple measured areas:

- Follower Count - the number of followers an account has
- Impact - the total number of tweets an account produced on a topic multiplied by the total number of followers for an account
- Impressions - total potential views a tweet may have generated
- Retweets - total number of times content was shared by another account
- Likes - total number of likes a tweet received

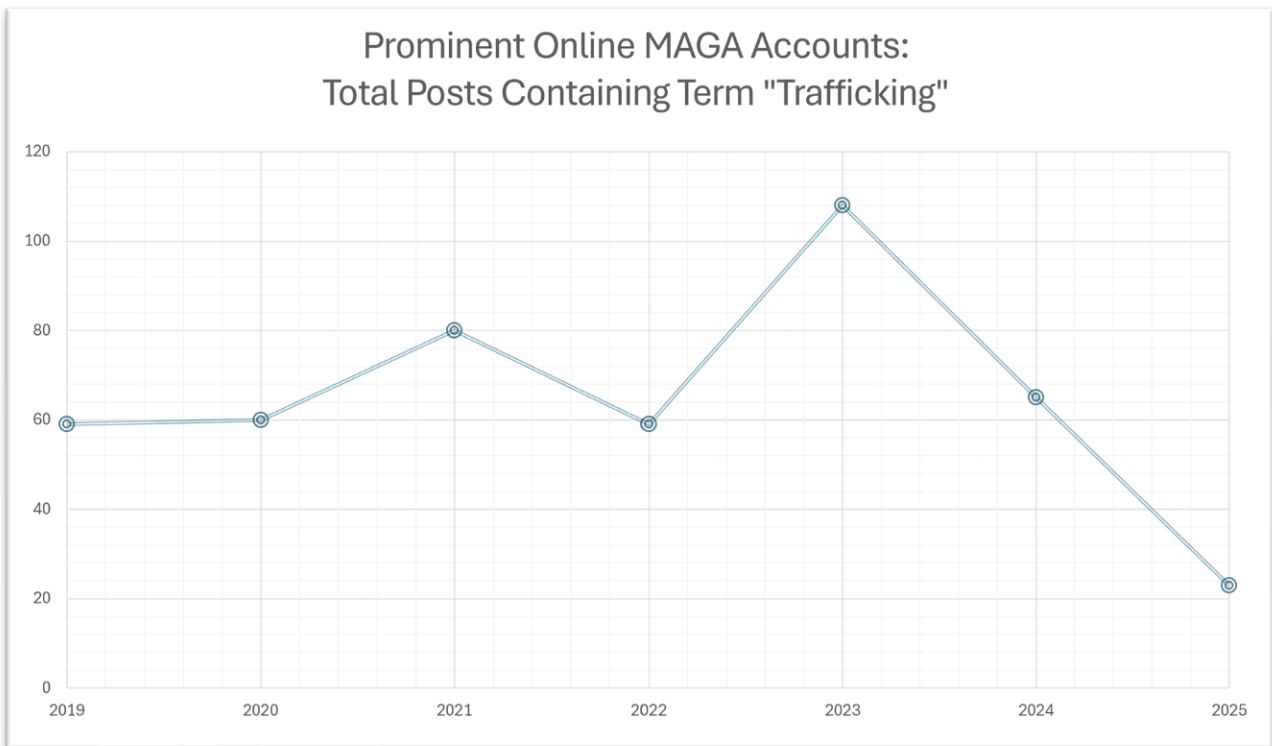
Based on the Peterka-Benton et al. analysis of online conversation driving accounts related to human trafficking conspiracies, the following accounts were used for this study based on account visibility and reach in relation to the production of content related to human trafficking:



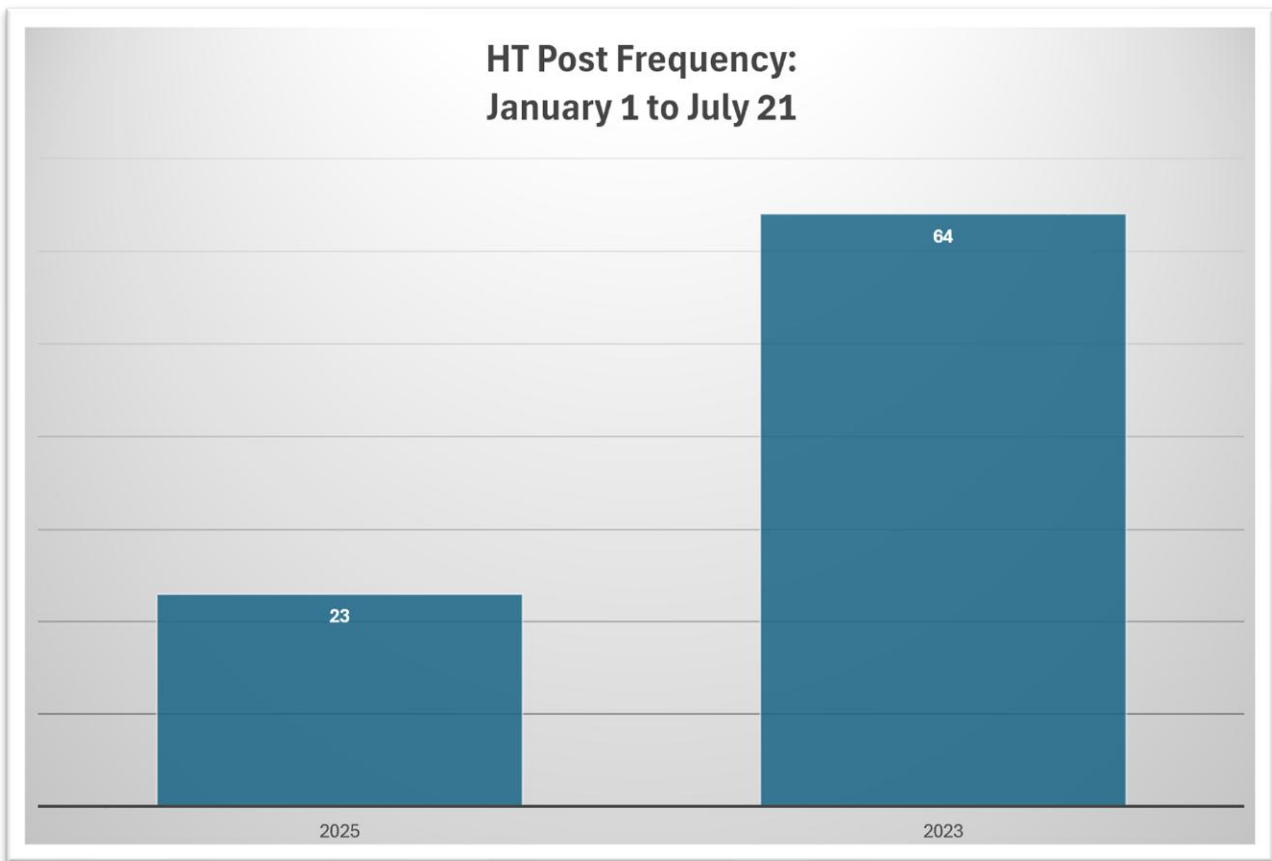
Looking at the body of posts on X from these accounts that contained the term “human trafficking” (n=454) from 2019 to 2025, fluctuation in the frequency of such posts was established. Changes in total views for human trafficking posts made by these accounts were also considered, as fluctuations may indicate reduced interest from the audiences served by these accounts. Additionally, the collected posts from these accounts were assessed to see if any commentary related to cuts to the “State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP)” was present.

RESULTS

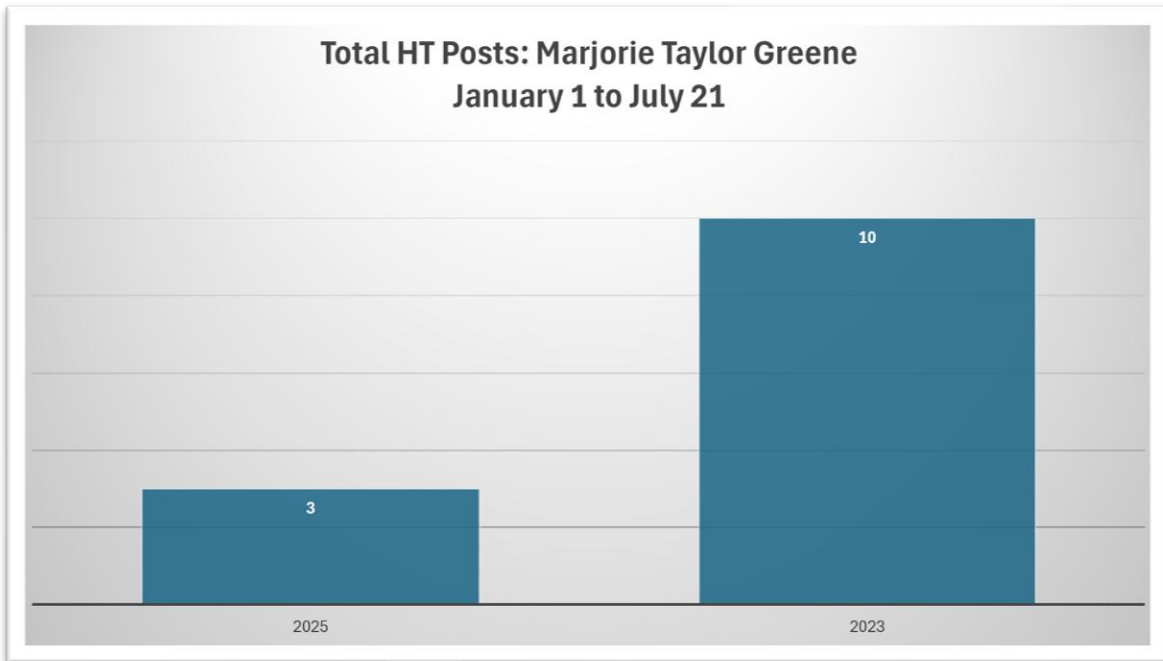
In terms of posts containing the term “human trafficking” from the studied accounts, 2025 (thus far) represents a 79% drop from the high point in total “human trafficking” posts that occurred in 2023.



Proportionate frequency comparison between 2025 and the peak in human trafficking posts in 2023 similarly shows a significant decrease. Looking at post activity from January 1, 2025 to July 20, 2025 and comparing that to a comparable range in 2023 (1/1/2023 to 7/20/2023) produces the following 64% decrease:



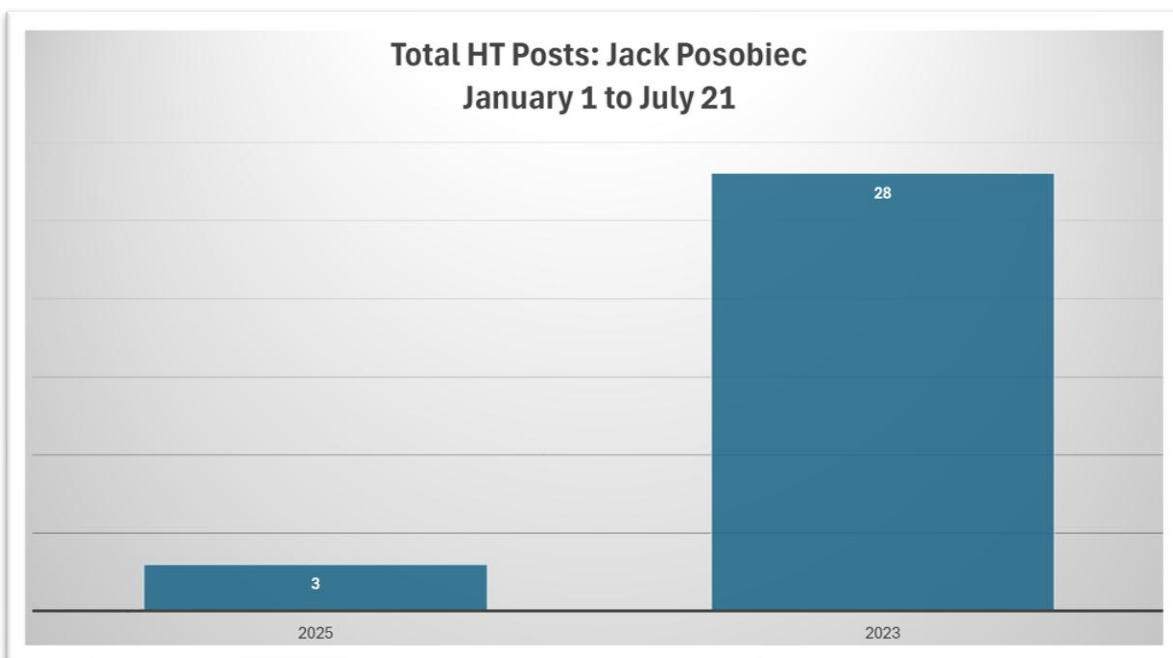
This decrease is reflected the posting activity of Majorie Taylor Greene, one of the conversation drivers of conspiratorial human trafficking discourse online noted for this study. In terms of volume, the gap between the total number of human trafficking posts from January to July in 2023 and 2025 respectively is particularly salient.



Also noteworthy is the decrease in reach/visibility for most recent “human trafficking” posts from the noted accounts. In the case of the aforementioned Marjorie Taylor Greene, her most viewed human trafficking post in 2023 and her most recent 2025 post about trafficking represents a 97% decrease in visibility:



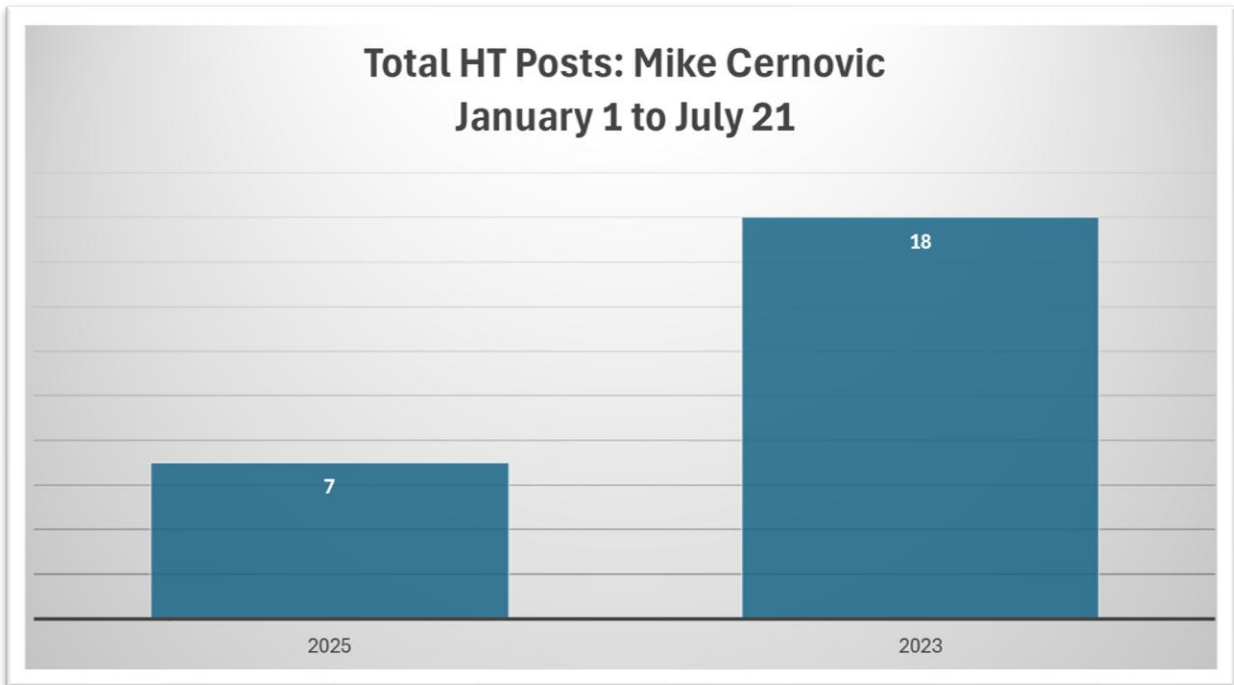
Similarly, Jack Posobiec's posting of human trafficking related content shows a similar decline from January to July in 2023 and 2025.



Reduced views were similarly notable as the account saw a height of 3.6 million views for a human trafficking post in 2023 diminish to 773,500 views in his most recent 2025 post, a decrease of 78%.



The account of Mike Cernovich declined sharply in terms of human trafficking content posted in comparison between January to July in 2023 and 2025:



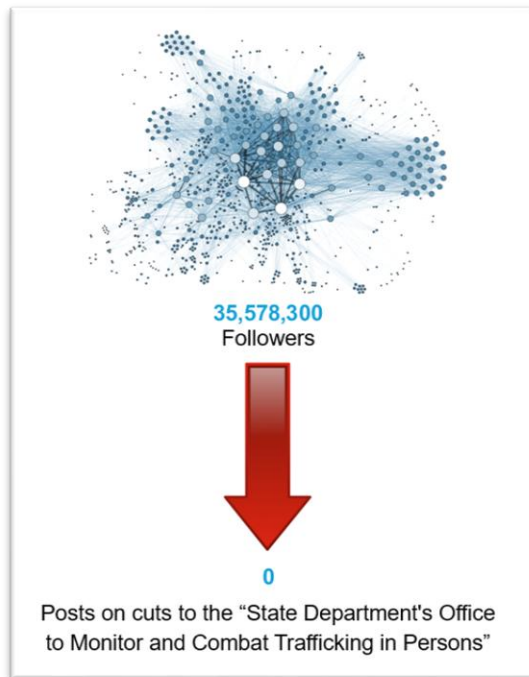
Similarly, views for such posts went from a 2023 post reaching over a million views to his most recent human trafficking post reaching only 27,000 views in 2025 (a 97.3% decrease):



Cumulatively, 2025 has represented a notable reduction in post frequency and volume related to human trafficking from the studied accounts. Additionally, the potentially likeminded

followers for these accounts have produced fewer views for more recent human trafficking posts suggesting reduced interest/engagement from their audiences on the subject.

In terms of content related to cuts to the “State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP),” the five year analysis indicates that there was never any post from any of these influential sources and no posted reaction to the recent proposed cuts to the Office’s funding that would be seen by any of their 35 million+ followers.



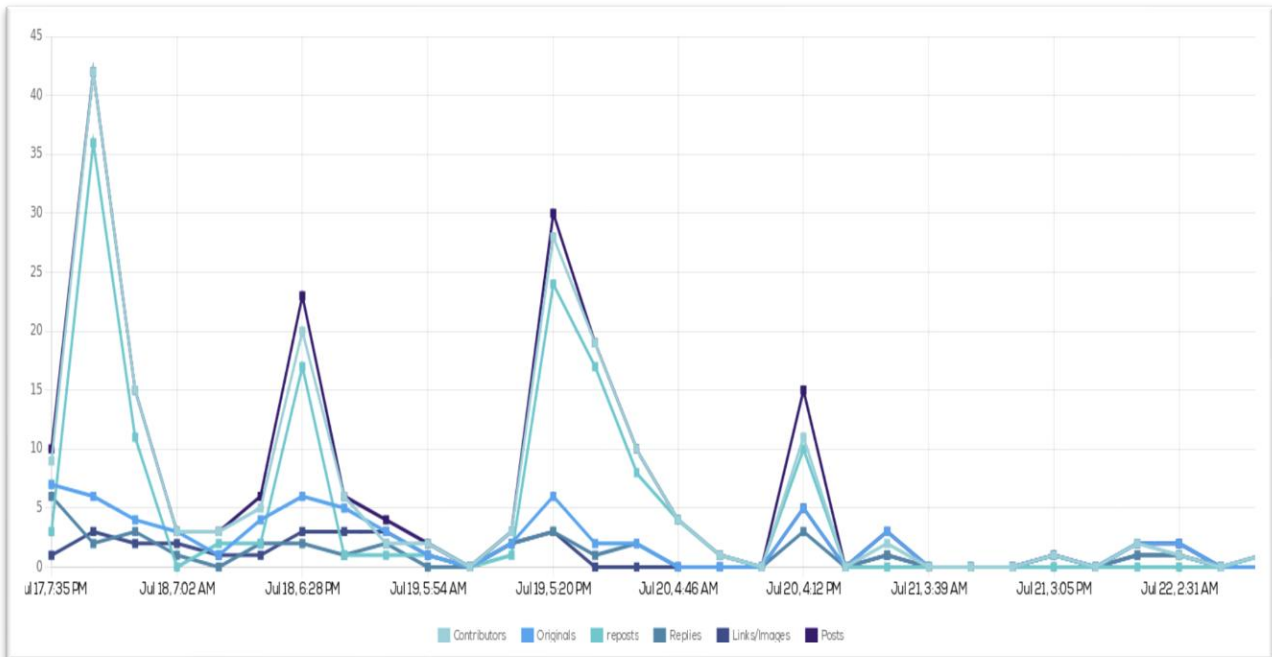
This contrasts sharply with X platform activity in relation to the proposed cuts to the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP). Data collected during the seven-day period around the announcement of program cuts (7/17/2025 - 7/22/2025) showed that widely followed accounts and major media outlets posted about the Office over 200 times in the period reviewed generating significant potential impressions (times the content was viewed) with significant reach (the total number of users who may have seen the content).

29,540,804
**potential
impressions**

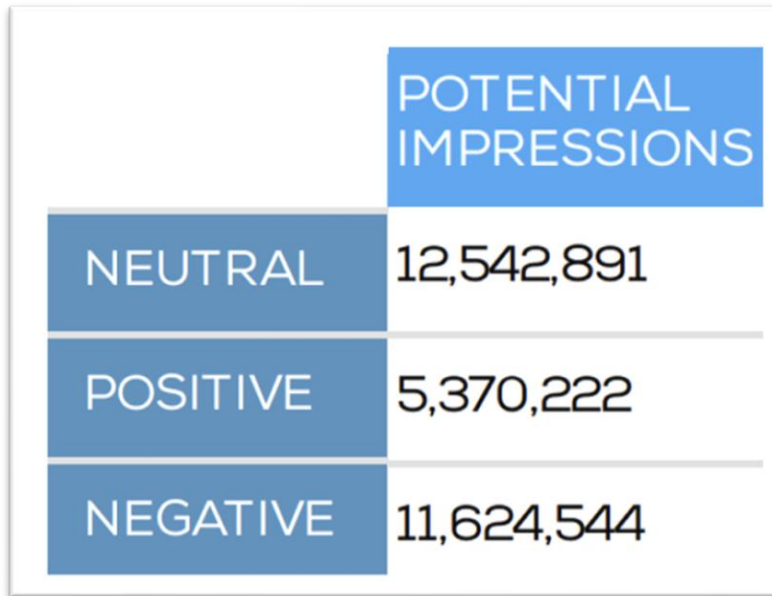
7,548,188
**potential
reach**

Source: Tweet Binder

Activity was punctuated around the announcement of cuts and was also reflected in sentiment analysis about the cuts with negative sentiment more than doubling positive sentiment, in terms of impressions.

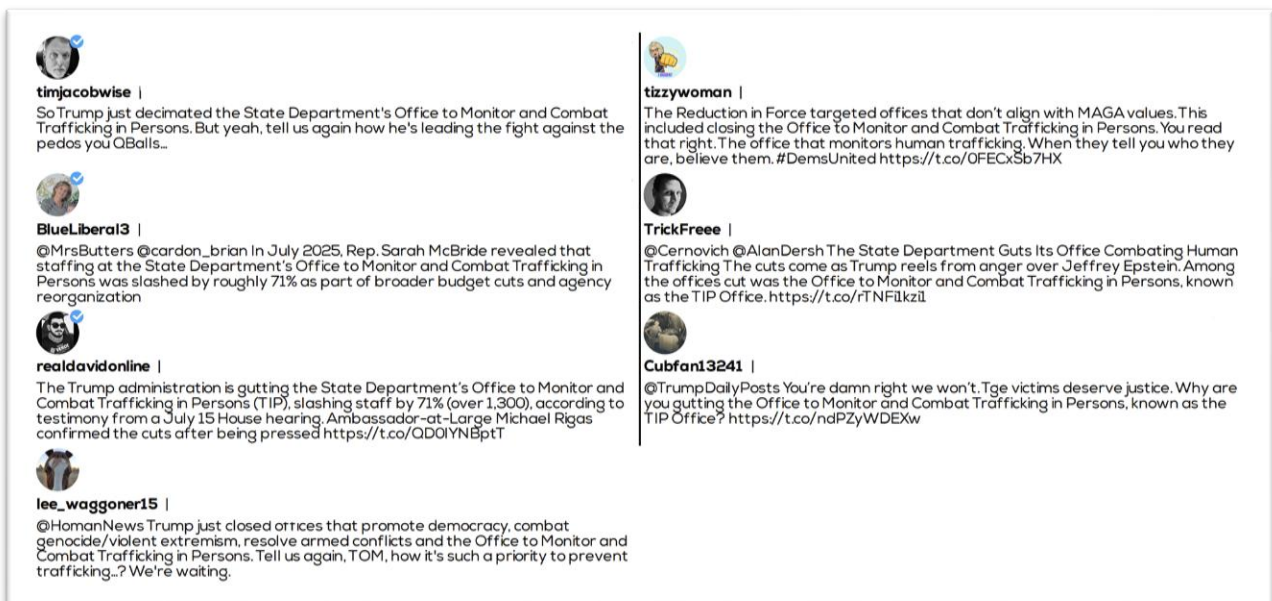


Source: Tweet Binder



Source: Tweet Binder

Posts receiving the most likes in the studied period, an indicator of social media visibility (John et al., 2017), similarly voiced objections to cutting the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons:



Source: Tweet Binder

Collectively, reaction and online discourse around the proposed cuts suggest there was energy and interest in discussing the work of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and the effects of its potential elimination. Prominent MAGA voices who previously expressed great interest in the topic of human trafficking simply elected not to discuss these items.

DISCUSSION

The implications of these results remain speculative, however potential explanations for the clear decline in posted content related to human trafficking merit consideration. The decrease could potentially relate to cultural factors and changing areas of public perceptions. Human trafficking conspiracy panics have gripped society periodically over the years only to burn out after a period of time. The Satanic Panic of the 1980's, which held that Satanic groups were sacrificing children in large numbers, was eventually discredited and discarded to a large extent (Cleary, 2022; Hughes, 2015). Antitrafficking organizations have also worked hard to counter myths about trafficking, perhaps reducing the public appetite for salacious and artificial narratives (Huynh, 2023). The combination of topical fatigue and fact-based responses may have affected the number of total posts on subject from the sample studied (along with the diminished view count). Additionally, discourse around human trafficking can invite acrimony and division around key figures that may make posting such content unattractive to the prominent MAGA voices considered in this report. Nonetheless, conclusively establishing the cause of the decline is beyond the scope of this research. It is also important to note that the accounts in the sample evaluated here cannot be fully generalized to broader population sentiment, despite previous scholarship establishing their influential role in driving online conspiracies related to human trafficking (Peterka-Benton, D., Benton, B., & Penney, J., 2023).

What is not speculative, however, is that the reduced focus on trafficking related issues in the studied accounts reflects that their previously stated commitment to the issue was potentially artificial or minimally facile. Human trafficking is an authentic problem affecting vulnerable people and communities that demands a serious and coordinated response for prevention and support for survivors. The de-emphasis of trafficking in far-right accounts that previously made it a central focus reflects the fact that there may have been little interest in real engagement with the issue. Rather, as has been repeated throughout history, it would seem that human trafficking was used as a rallying cry and as an invective. Lost in the conspiracies and vitriol are the *real* experiences of those affected by human trafficking. Unlike sensational social media posts, the implications of human trafficking cannot be as easily discarded.

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