

POLICY FORUM

∞ Meta

June 27, 2023

Recommendation: Functional Identification

Core Policy Team

Functional Identification

Issue Statement:

We want people to be able to talk about their experiences, such as being a victim of violence, or to raise awareness about such issues. However, we also don't want to allow bullying or infringe on privacy, so in some cases we limit speech that explicitly identifies others. Is there a point at which describing an interaction makes the identity of the other person so obvious that it should be considered as identifying, and how can content reviewers make that decision where context is limited?

Status Quo Examples

Remove



I can't believe it. Another child was sexually assaulted yesterday. [Person's Name] was on her way home from school when this guy just grabbed her.

Identifying a child victim of sexual assault by name

Allow



[Posted in Nigeria]
The owner of [Cafe Name] in Lagos is gay.

Outing a member of an outing-risk group (LGBTQ+ in Nigeria) without naming or visually depicting them

Functional Identification

Policies in Scope

Child Sexual Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying children as survivors of sexual exploitation
Coordinating Harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outing people in outing-risk groups, such as LGBTQ+ people, blasphemers, or sex workers
Adult Sexual Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying adults as survivors of sexual assault
Bullying & Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attacking people by name

Functional Identification

Research and External Engagement

Research

Key Points:

- **Functional identification is context-dependent:** there is no academic or industry-accepted equation of factors that definitively produces an identification.
- Across the 12 countries surveyed, **there is no consensus among the public** on whether to allow a Facebook post with a risk of functional identification or not.
- In the same survey, **people most often chose Meta and Facebook users**—ahead of the government or a third party—as the group(s) that should decide whether to allow these posts.

External Engagement

Key Points:

- Stakeholders identified **multiple factors that could contribute to functional identification** but found it to be **context-dependent**
- Existing legal and journalistic guidelines on functional identification are **outcome-oriented**
- Stakeholders agreed that our policies should **prioritize safety for minors, outing-risk group members, and other vulnerable populations**

Functional Identification

Proposed Functional Identification Signals

Target, Trusted Partner,
Authorized Representative,
indicates risk of harm

Non-facial imagery

Mention of relationship
to individual

School, Workplace,
Occupation,
Location of Residence

Physical Description

Ethnicity,
Religious Affiliation

Membership in civil
society organization

Social Media Handle

Age

<p>Option 1:</p> <p>Status Quo</p>	<p>Prohibit <u>explicit identification</u></p>
<p>Option 2:</p> <p>Remove Functional ID when shared with additional context</p> <p><i>Outcome-Oriented</i></p> <p>[Recommended]</p>	<p>Add prohibition of <u>functional identification</u> when shared with additional context</p>
<p>Option 3:</p> <p>Remove Functional ID</p> <p><i>Input-Based</i></p> <p>(2 signals required)</p>	<p>Add prohibition of <u>functional identification</u> for Child Sexual Exploitation and Coordinating Harm, and when shared with additional context for Adult Sexual Exploitation</p>

Functional Identification

Examples

Example 1

Coordinating Harm and Promoting Crime

[Posted in Nigeria]

The owner of [Cafe Name] in Lagos is gay.

[Additional Hypothetical Context: There is only one cafe with this name in Lagos]

Identifying a member of an outing-risk group (LGBTQ+ in Nigeria) through mentioning of workplace

Signals Present	Status Quo: Allow	✓
	Option 2 (With Additional Context): Remove	✗
	Option 3: Allow	✓
1. Workplace		

Example 2

Coordinating Harm and Promoting Crime

[Posted in Liberia]

I have a friend in Monrovia who is gay.

Identifying a member of an outing-risk group (LGBTQ+ in Liberia) through relationship to target and location of residence

Signals Present	Status Quo: Allow	✓
	Option 2 (With Additional Context): Allow	✓
	Option 3: Remove	✗
1. Relationship to target 2. Location of residence		

Functional Identification

Examples Continued

Example 3

*Child Sexual Exploitation,
Abuse and Nudity*

The New York Post reported that a 12-year old girl was sexually assaulted blocks away from her home in Manhattan.

Identifying a child victim of sexual assault through mentioning of age and location of residence

Signals Present	Status Quo: Allow	✓
1. Age 2. Location of Residence	Option 2 (With Additional Context): Allow	✓
	Option 3: Remove	✗

Example 4

*Child Sexual Exploitation,
Abuse and Nudity*

I just found out that these twin sisters I teach were sexually abused by a relative. How terrible!

[Additional Context: The poster's profile mentions the school they work at]

Identifying a child victim of sexual assault through mention of relationship to individual

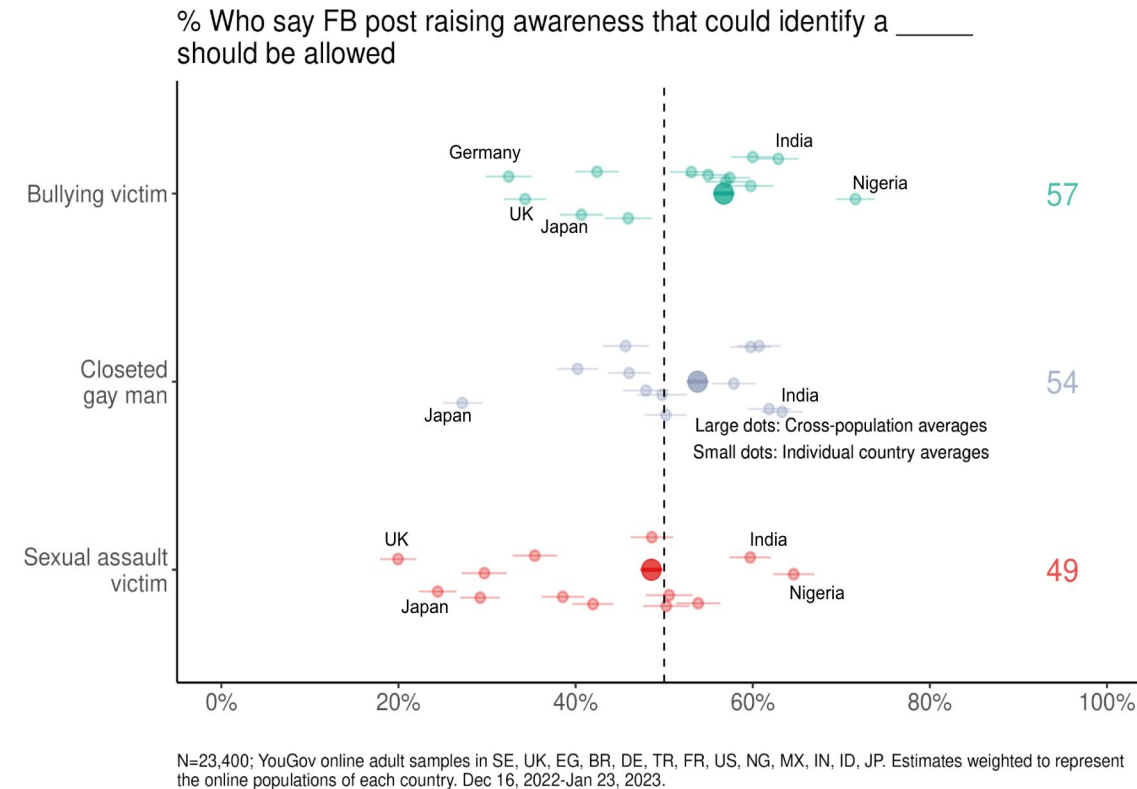
Signal Present	Status Quo: Allow	✓
1. Mention of relationship to individual	Option 2 (With Additional Context): Remove	✗
	Option 3: Allow	✓

Appendix

Functional Identification

Research Findings

- Functional identification is context-dependent, so there is no definitive equation of factors that produces an ID. However, it is important to note that, in addition to PII, factors like the relationship between the victim and offender or the precise dates of the offense may be used.
- A 12-country survey fielded for this development finds:
 - Attitudes on allowing a post with a risk of functional identification vary widely across countries and targets, see figure to the right.
 - People in India, Turkey, and Nigeria mostly supported allowing these posts and were concerned that removing these posts would inhibit free expression on Facebook.
 - People in Japan, the UK, Sweden, and Germany mostly opposed allowing these posts, and expressed little concern about free expression tradeoffs.
 - Most people choose Meta (51%) and Facebook users (37%)—ahead of the government (27%) or an independent body of observers (29%)—when asked which organization(s) should get to decide if a potential functional identification post should be allowed on FB.



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