2023 Yelp Trust & Safety Report

Contents

How Yelp maintains content integrity

Yelp's mission is to connect consumers with great local businesses by giving them access to reliable and useful information. Consumer trust is one of our top priorities, which is why Yelp has extensive Trust & Safety measures that use advanced technology and human moderation to protect the integrity and quality of content on our platform. This approach is driven by our **automated recommendation software**, reporting by Yelp's community of users and business owners, **content moderation** focused on investigating content and platform activity, and our commitment to encouraging authentic content from the start of the user experience. In fact, **economists**, **industry experts**, **the media**, and **regulators** have shown that Yelp is one of the most aggressive and successful online review platforms when it comes to identifying and weeding out unhelpful and unreliable reviews.

What's new from 2023

At Yelp, fighting fake reviews and other deceptive behaviors are things we invested in early on, built our platform around, and established systems and processes to address these issues that were designed to scale over time. Even today, we continuously adapt and improve the ways we mitigate attempts to mislead consumers, including efforts that were orchestrated off of Yelp.

In 2023, we introduced a variety of new measures to help maintain the integrity and quality of Yelp's content. To curb compensated and incentivized reviews, which are prohibited on Yelp, we issued **688** Compensated and Suspicious Review Activity Alerts on business pages.* We also made it easier to learn about these attempts to mislead consumers by **indexing the recipients of these alerts** on our **Trust & Safety site**. Additionally, Yelp's User Operations team routinely investigates deceptive review practices that originate through other platforms, and in 2023, they reported **900+** suspicious groups, posts, or individuals on other platforms attempting to trade or pay for reviews.* Despite the **1,300+** reports made by our team, these platforms only took action on **54%** of incidents.*

With the rise of generative AI, we **clarified our policies** regarding reviews created using AI tools, which are not allowed on our platform, and invested in ways to better detect and mitigate that content. We also enhanced the way we leverage large language models and **neural networks** to help our systems identify inappropriate content that doesn't belong on Yelp.

In 2023, new proposed regulations at the federal and state levels placed a heightened focus on online reviews and the way platforms can effectively moderate content. Amid these developments, Yelp continued to prioritize consumer trust and protection by **providing comments** to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) with suggestions to further strengthen their **proposed rule** addressing fake and compensated reviews, filing court briefs that explain how **laws in Texas and Florida** could inhibit Yelp's ability to protect businesses and consumers from unreliable reviews, advocating for **stronger anti-SLAPP protections** in U.S. states, and more.

> *"Our research indicated Yelp as a leader in building consumer trust through adoption of trust building practices. Those findings were confirmed further as we showed the results to Yelp staff and saw their commitment to improving trust on their platform and in their industry at large."*
>
> — **Ben B. Beck**, *PhD MBA, Brigham Young University, 2023*
> Co-author of **Guardians of Trust: How Review Platforms Can Fight Fakery and Build Consumer Trust**

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* *Data is sourced globally.*

Deep dive: Yelp speaks out against restrictive content moderation laws

This year, the Supreme Court will weigh in on **laws in Texas and Florida** that threaten Yelp's ability to effectively moderate content, including removing reviews that are not based on a firsthand customer experience, recommending the most reliable and helpful reviews, and warning consumers about deceptive reviews. For example, when businesses gain public attention, people may come to Yelp to express their views — from political ideologies to celebrity news, and more. This decision could require Yelp to give the same weight to these less relevant reviews as we do genuine, firsthand business reviews. In fact, **53,000+** reported reviews were removed by Yelp's moderators in 2023 for not reflecting firsthand customer experiences, as well as an additional **49,100+** reviews that were removed by Yelp's moderators for the same reason after a business page received a Media Attention Alert.*

In December 2023, Yelp filed a **"friend of the court" brief** explaining that these laws could inhibit Yelp's ability to protect business pages and consumers from unreliable reviews, such as in the **Masterpiece Cakeshop case in 2018** when consumers left an influx of reviews expressing both support of and opposition to a Colorado bakery refusing to provide service for a same-sex couple, but reflecting no firsthand experience with the bakery. Without our ability to moderate content, consumers would have to wade through irrelevant reviews to find information based on authentic experiences with the business. Yelp's annual Trust & Safety Reports demonstrate the important work that goes into how we prioritize access to reliable content, helping consumers to avoid being misled by biased or fraudulent content.

Prioritizing Trust & Safety: 2023 by the numbers

All metrics reflect activity from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, unless otherwise noted

Reviews

Millions of people come to Yelp because they trust the content, and because the online reviews and ratings are consistently good predictors of their own offline experiences with local businesses.

On Yelp, a star rating must always accompany review text — since it provides a more comprehensive view for consumers to make purchasing decisions, or help businesses improve the customer experience. In fact, the average length of recommended reviews contributed to Yelp was approximately **460** characters as of December 31, 2023.†

287M+
cumulative reviews contributed
to the Yelp platform as of December 31, 2023 since our inception in 2004†[1]

Consumers have also expressed wariness over reviews with a star rating, but no written text. According to a survey conducted by Material, **83%** of respondents who read reviews say they're more likely to trust reviews with written text over those with only a star rating.[2] However, other review platforms, like Google, allow users to leave a star rating with no review text. An FTC Economist found in a **recent study** that **50%** of Google's reviews contain less than 100 characters, compared to only **2%** of Yelp's reviews. Most notably, **32%** of these so-called "reviews" on Google contained no text at all.[3]

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*   *Data is sourced from the U.S. only.*

†   *Data is sourced globally.*

1   *This includes reviews that are currently recommended, not recommended, or that have been removed.*

2   *Material Survey 2023. This survey was fielded by Material among 2,000 people aged 18+ in the U.S. The survey was conducted online during August 2023 and has a margin of error of +/- 2%. Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results.*

3   *Raval, Devesh, "Do Gatekeepers Develop Worse Products? Evidence from Online Review Platforms," 2023. See pages 15-19 for study methodology.*

In 2023, to provide consumers with even more transparency when comparing businesses, Yelp began displaying numerical ratings rounded to one decimal place alongside businesses' star ratings. Both Yelp's star ratings and numerical ratings continue to be based on the total average of all recommended reviews for a business. By bringing more granular business information to the marketplace, we're helping consumers make better informed spending decisions.

## Distribution of average star ratings submitted by Yelp users in 2023

as of December 31, 2023*[1]

The average star rating submitted by users is approximately **3.8** stars

- 1 star **19%**
- 2 stars **5%**
- 3 stars **6%**
- 4 stars **12%**
- 5 stars **57%**
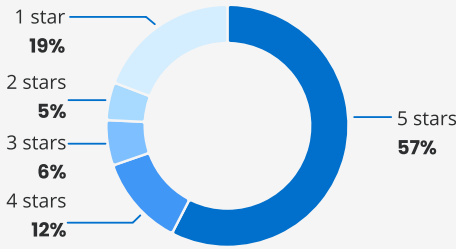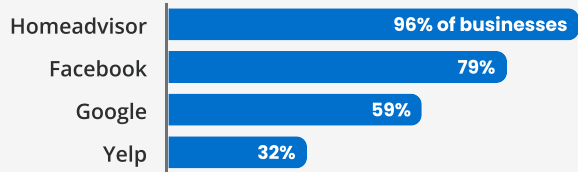
Distribution of average business ratings

as of December 31, 2023 for U.S. businesses across all categories on Yelp with five or more reviews.* Yelp only uses recommended reviews to calculate the average star rating of a business rounded to the nearest half star. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1 and 1.5 stars	2 and 2.5 stars	3 and 3.5 stars	4 and 4.5 stars	5 stars
5%	16%	24%	38%	16%
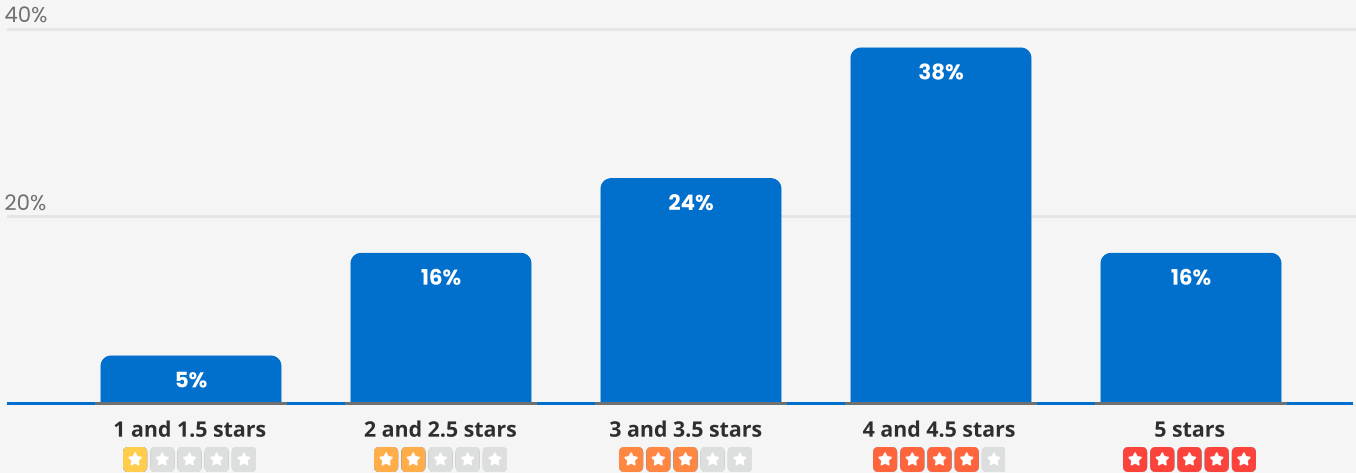
The **aforementioned study** from an FTC Economist examined whether "gatekeeper platforms," such as Google and Facebook, "develop worse products" compared to platforms dedicated to business reviews. The **analysis found** that average business ratings on Yelp have a more uniform distribution than other platforms (32% of businesses sampled had at least a four star rating), whereas Homeadvisor (96% of businesses), Facebook (79% of businesses), and Google (59% of businesses) have skewed rating distributions that disproportionately favor higher star ratings.[2]

Study finds skewed rating distribution for highly-rated businesses on other review platforms[2]

Number of businesses that have a 4+ star rating

- Homeadvisor **96% of businesses**
- Facebook **79%**
- Google **59%**
- Yelp **32%**

Yelp's automated recommendation software

To help surface the most helpful and reliable content to consumers, Yelp's **automated recommendation software** evaluates all reviews on our platform based on hundreds of signals of quality, reliability, and user activity on Yelp.

The software is designed to recommend the reviews it determines to be the most reliable. Those it doesn't recommend include reviews that may be unfairly biased — such as those written by people likely affiliated with the business or potential competitors — or reviews that may have been solicited. In 2023, Yelp expanded the algorithm's use of artificial intelligence by leveraging large language models to even better detect and not recommend less helpful and less reliable reviews.

The recommendation software is entirely automated and applies the same objective rules to every business. No employee at Yelp or anyone else has the ability to influence or override the decisions that the software makes about reviews for any business. This approach is deliberate to avoid conflicts of interest. The reviews that are recommended for any business can change over time as the software learns more about the reviewers and the business. Learn more **here**.
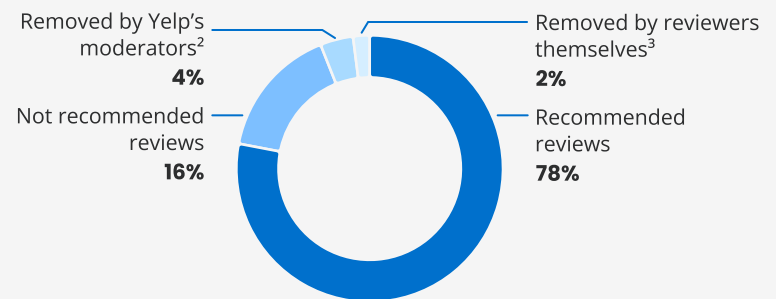
22M
reviews
were contributed to Yelp in 2023*[1]

Breakdown of reviews contributed in 2023*
as of December 31, 2023

Removed by Yelp's moderators[2]
4%

Not recommended reviews
16%

Removed by reviewers themselves[3]
2%

Recommended reviews
78%

Content moderation at Yelp

Yelp's User Operations team is on the frontlines of protecting data quality and integrity, investigating potential fraud, and moderating content. They continuously identify, investigate, and stop deceptive activity through a variety of measures, including removing bad actors from the Yelp platform.

The team conducts proactive investigations, as well as relies on consumers and business owners to report reviews or suspicious behaviors that violate our **Terms of Service** and **Content Guidelines**. Flagged content is reviewed by our moderators and, if determined to be in violation of our policies, will be removed from our platform. Learn more **here**.

Reviews reported on Yelp in 2023[†]
551.9K+ reviews reported by Yelp's community of users and business owners
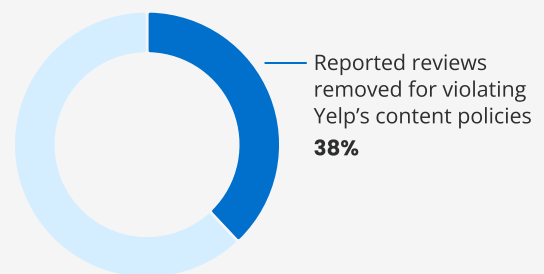
Reported reviews removed for violating Yelp's content policies
38%

207,300+
reported reviews removed
by Yelp's content moderation team in 2023*

278,600+
user accounts closed
due to Terms of Service violations, including suspected deceptive or abusive behaviors[†1]
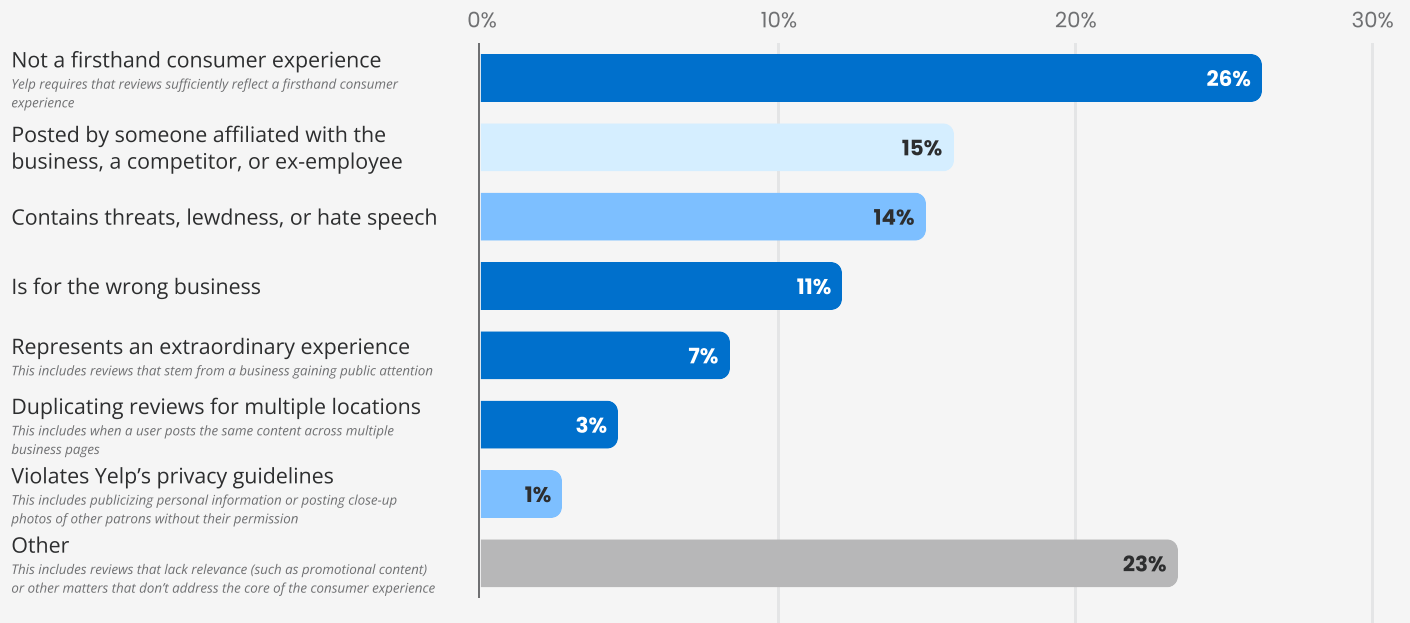
Distribution of reported reviews removed by reason in 2023*

207.3K+ reviews that were reported by by our community of users and business owners were removed by Yelp's moderators

■ Not reliable or helpful   ■ Inappropriate content   □ Conflicts of interest

Reason	Percentage
Not a firsthand consumer experience — *Yelp requires that reviews sufficiently reflect a firsthand consumer experience*	26%
Posted by someone affiliated with the business, a competitor, or ex-employee	15%
Contains threats, lewdness, or hate speech	14%
Is for the wrong business	11%
Represents an extraordinary experience — *This includes reviews that stem from a business gaining public attention*	7%
Duplicating reviews for multiple locations — *This includes when a user posts the same content across multiple business pages*	3%
Violates Yelp's privacy guidelines — *This includes publicizing personal information or posting close-up photos of other patrons without their permission*	1%
Other — *This includes reviews that lack relevance (such as promotional content) or other matters that don't address the core of the consumer experience*	23%

Scale: 0% — 10% — 20% — 30%

Yelp reinforces policy against AI-generated reviews

AI-generated reviews are not allowed on our platform as all reviews must be based on genuine firsthand consumer experiences, and reviewers must write their own copy. This policy has been clarified in our **Content Guidelines**. We're also continuing to invest in ways to better detect and mitigate Yelp reviews that may have been created by AI tools.

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*   *Data is sourced from the U.S. only.*
†   *Data is sourced globally.*
1   *These account closures stem from both user reports and proactive investigations. When an account is closed due to suspected deceptive or abusive behaviors, the associated reviews are removed as well.*
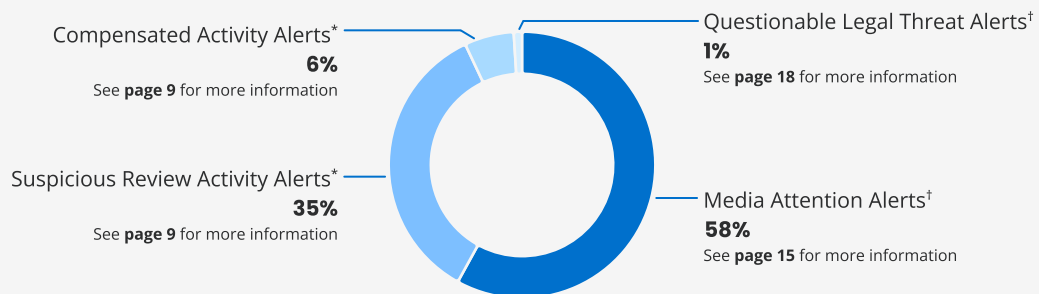
Yelp's Consumer Alerts program

A decade ago, we introduced our **Consumer Alerts program** to warn people when we find evidence of extreme attempts to manipulate a business's ratings and reviews. We've since expanded the program to include other egregious tactics that may harm consumers and unfairly put other businesses at a disadvantage.

Before issuing a Consumer Alert, we conduct a thorough investigation to confirm that it is warranted. When we do issue an alert, a warning message is displayed over the reviews of that business's Yelp page informing consumers about the violation of our policies with a link to view evidence we collected when available. Learn more **here.**

1,680+
total Consumer Alerts placed
on Yelp business pages in 2023*

Distribution of Consumer Alerts on Yelp
between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023

Compensated Activity Alerts*
6%
See **page 9** for more information

Suspicious Review Activity Alerts*
35%
See **page 9** for more information

Questionable Legal Threat Alerts†
1%
See **page 18** for more information

Media Attention Alerts†
58%
See **page 15** for more information

Yelp Elite badges distinguish our most active and helpful users

The **Yelp Elite Squad** was founded in 2005 to recognize users who consistently contribute quality content. Elites are locals who are eager to discover new businesses in their area and are passionate about sharing their discoveries with others.

Yelp users can nominate themselves or others to become an Elite. Nominees are manually vetted by our Community and User Operations teams, and evaluated by our automated systems to determine if they are a good fit for the Yelp Elite Squad. We also determine their continued eligibility on an ongoing basis, including by leveraging manual investigations, as well as our recommendation software, to help identify and address any potential deceptive review activity (with repercussions including termination of Elite statuses and/or closure of Yelp accounts entirely). This robust process allows us to limit Elite Squad memberships to upstanding users, and revoke eligibility for anyone found to engage in suspicious activity on our platform. This is why there are only tens of thousands of Elites in the U.S. out of tens of millions of Yelp users.

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*   *Data is sourced globally.*
†   *Data is sourced from the U.S. only.*

As model users, Elites must strictly abide by Yelp's policies and use real names and profile photos. We recently updated our Elite onboarding and renewal process, which highlights Yelp's policy against incentivized content and requires Elites to agree to our Elite Squad Terms (these terms reiterate that Yelp users cannot accept incentives for reviews). While Yelp Elites participating in incentivized or compensated review activity is rare overall, our teams regularly investigate and audit Elite accounts to find and mitigate this behavior, including through the use of our recommendation software. When Yelp learns about Elites that have violated our policies, we may terminate their Elite status and/or close their Yelp accounts entirely, depending on the severity of the issue. Our policies state that former users cannot create new accounts if Yelp has closed their previous account(s) for violating Yelp's rules against compensated reviews.

Combating compensated and incentivized reviews

Yelp strictly prohibits compensated and incentivized reviews as they can mislead consumers. Since 2012, Yelp's Consumer Alerts program helps us maintain content integrity and mitigate misinformation. We investigate egregious attempts — even attempts that originate off Yelp — to manipulate a business's ratings and reviews, and warn consumers with a pop-up notice on the business page.

In September 2023, we began indexing and publishing recipients of Compensated Activity Alerts and Suspicious Review Activity Alerts to make it easier for people to identify suspicious review behaviors.
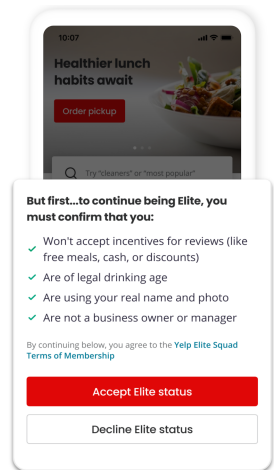
Compensated Activity Alerts

Compensated Activity Alerts indicate that we've caught someone offering payment in the form of cash, discounts, gift certificates, or other incentives in exchange for writing, changing, preventing, or removing reviews.

Yelp's User Operations team also issued **450+** warnings to businesses after discovering someone may have engaged in a one-time compensated or incentivized review behavior, with the goals of educating them about Yelp's policies against such conduct and preventing it from happening again.*

Suspicious Review Activity Alerts

Suspicious Review Activity Alerts warn that we've detected a large number of suspicious positive reviews coming from a single IP address, or reviews from users who may be connected to a group that coordinates the buying or selling of online reviews — otherwise known as a review exchange ring.

5,200+
Compensated Activity and Suspicious Review Activity Alerts
have been placed on Yelp pages since 2012*

99
Compensated Activity Alerts
placed on business pages in 2023*

589
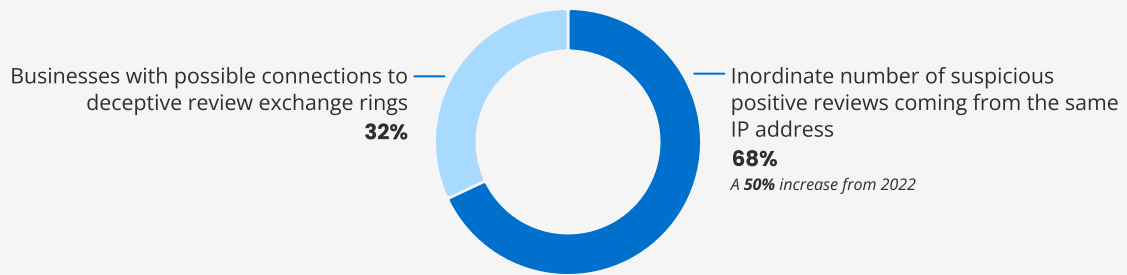**Suspicious Review Activity Alerts**
placed on business pages in 2023*

940+
user accounts closed
for being associated with review rings or as part of our Suspicious Review Activity Alert investigations in 2023†

2023 Yelp Trust & Safety Report

Suspicious Review Activity Alerts in 2023*

Businesses with possible connections to deceptive review exchange rings
32%

Inordinate number of suspicious positive reviews coming from the same IP address
68%
*A **50%** increase from 2022*

"According to [Brigham Young University Assistant Professor] Beck, Yelp has implemented the exposure practice by placing a consumer alert on any business that has been incentivizing customers to write positive reviews or are buying fake reviews. This informs consumers, which may lessen business for the company, but it will bring more traffic to Yelp and make it more trustworthy, he explained."

— ***Daily Herald*** *(Oct 2023)*

Reining in reputation management companies

Yelp routinely investigates reputation management companies that market glowing, yet deceptive, reviews to local businesses. When warranted, we take action against such companies, including sending them cease and desist letters, reporting them to consumer protection authorities (like the FTC), and in some cases, taking them to court.

For example, in December 2023, Yelp **filed a lawsuit against Reviewvio**, a reputation management company that offers "review gating" services to local businesses, through which consumers with positive feedback are invited to write a public review of their experience with a particular business, while criticisms are diverted to non-public communications. Review gating misleads consumers, who are often unaware when viewing a profile of a particular business that review gating has been employed to suppress critical reviews. Reviewvio also falsely claims to be able, for a fee, to remove "bad reviews" from Yelp and other online review platforms.

However, not all online review platforms operate with the same standards. Many continue to allow and even profit from these deceptive practices — for example, a Google search for "**get more 5 star reviews**" surfaces several ads for review gating or reputation management companies.

Screenshot taken on February 22, 2024

*   *Data is sourced globally.*

Deep dive: Yelp supports the FTC's fight against deceptive review practices

In June 2023, the FTC **announced** a new proposed rule to combat deceptive review practices, which would create new civil penalties against businesses and individuals who author, arrange for, or pay for deceptive reviews and help level the playing field for honest businesses. Yelp fully supports the FTC's efforts and we provided public comments in **January** of 2023 when the FTC first gave advance notice of its proposed rulemaking, and gave further comments in **September** to offer suggestions that would further strengthen the proposed rule. In addition to providing the FTC and other regulators with leads on deceptive review conduct, our policies extend even further than the current proposed rule with Yelp long banning compensated reviews, and taking action to mitigate compensated review activity. This includes proactively posting **Compensated Activity Alerts** on business pages to warn consumers about deceptive review practices, and creating an **index of recipients of Consumer Alerts**, helping consumers, regulators, and other parties easily identify impacted businesses.

> *"Review platform Yelp is urging the Federal Trade Commission to consider fining anyone involved in creating or posting phony endorsements... Yelp characterizes the practices flagged by the FTC as 'deceptive,' and is urging the agency to focus on establishing penalties."*
>
> — **MediaPost** *(Jan 2023)*

Uncovering and reporting deceptive review groups on other sites

Yelp regularly coordinates investigations to uncover deceptive review practices, including monitoring and infiltrating online groups on other platforms where people may attempt to trade or pay for reviews — practices that mislead consumers and hurt businesses. Our investigators routinely report groups, posts, or individuals participating in online review exchanges on other sites, or when we detect other review selling or removal services originating from third-party sites.

In 2023, the number of reports made by Yelp to other online platforms increased **23%** from the previous year, but action was taken on only **54%** of incidents — a decrease of nearly **30%** from 2022. Some of the largest online platforms had a significant drop in removing content reported by Yelp compared to previous years. We have had success working with some sites to address deceptive review practices we find on their platforms, and in some cases even improved their ability to block this behavior in the future. However, it is ultimately up to these third-party sites to decide how to handle our reports, as well as control what's being posted and moderated on their sites. Partnership with these online platforms is important **to better protect consumers** from being misled.

1,300+
reports made by Yelp to other online platforms
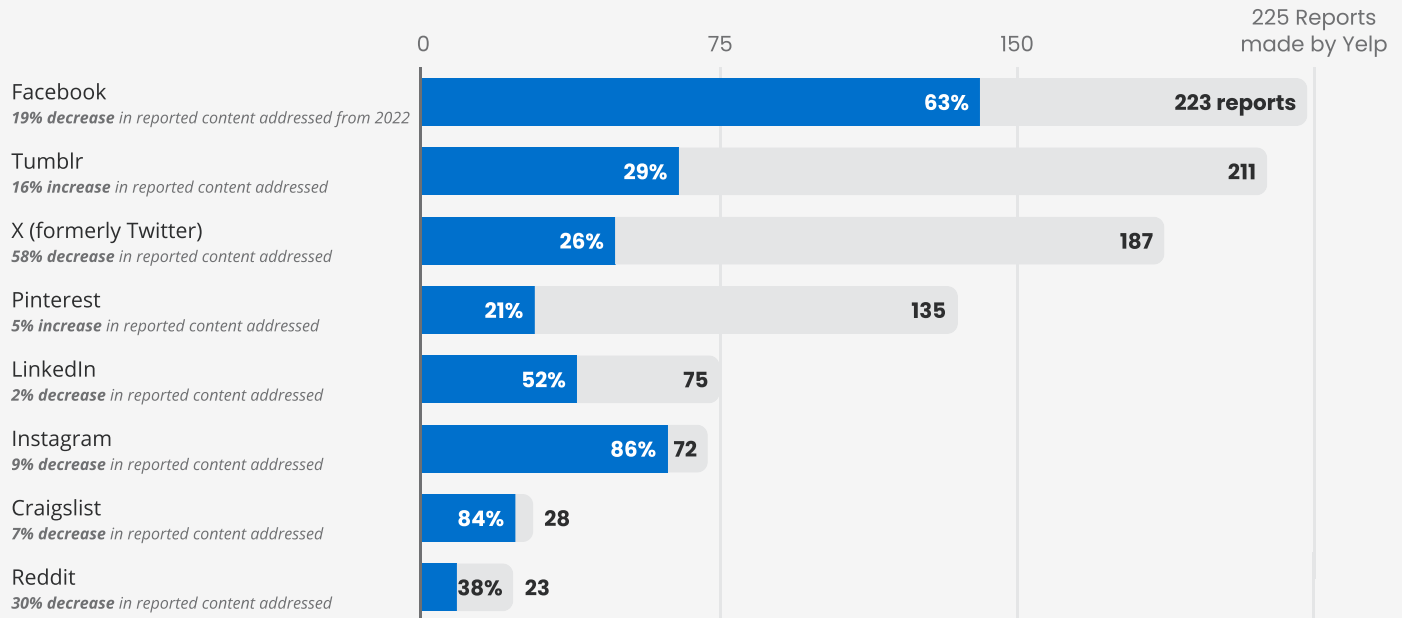to warn them of content from **900+ suspicious groups, posts, or individuals** we found on their sites*

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*   *Data is sourced globally.*

Yelp's reporting of deceptive review practices to other platforms
as of December 31, 2023*

☐ Reports made by Yelp ■ % of reported content addressed by other platforms*

	0	75	150	225 Reports made by Yelp

Facebook
19% decrease in reported content addressed from 2022
63% — 223 reports

Tumblr
16% increase in reported content addressed
29% — 211

X (formerly Twitter)
58% decrease in reported content addressed
26% — 187

Pinterest
5% increase in reported content addressed
21% — 135

LinkedIn
2% decrease in reported content addressed
52% — 75

Instagram
9% decrease in reported content addressed
86% — 72

Craigslist
7% decrease in reported content addressed
84% — 28

Reddit
30% decrease in reported content addressed
38% — 23

Surfacing helpful information and removing potentially inappropriate content on Yelp

Yelp's User Operations team prioritizes trust and focuses on combating the spread of misinformation. By taking a research-driven approach, the team moderates content, fights against fraudulent content and user activity, and maintains data quality on Yelp. They implement a variety of measures that help protect our users and their safety, whether it's mitigating hate speech, misleading information, or other forms of inappropriate and unhelpful content.

28,800+
reported reviews removed
for threats, lewdness, hate speech, or other potentially inappropriate content in 2023[†]

1M+
photos were proactively removed
by Yelp's User Operations team for violating our content policies in 2023*

Using AI to moderate inappropriate content at scale

At Yelp, our User Operations team marries technology and human moderation to help mitigate inappropriate or unhelpful content. While technology can help our team moderate content at scale, it's also critical to create checks and balances with human judgment – which has always been a priority at Yelp. In 2023, Yelp used AI in new ways to better identify and flag content to our moderators that potentially violates Yelp's policies.

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*   Data is sourced globally.
[†]   Data is sourced from the U.S. only.

Leveraging AI to proactively moderate hate speech in reviews

Last year, Yelp began using large language models (LLMs) as part of our protective measures to better detect reviews that may contain the most egregious instances of hate speech, vulgar language, or threats before they are ever published to our platform. This new system flags potentially inappropriate reviews to our moderators who evaluate the content, which helps make a determination to further inform the LLM. Since determining whether content is inappropriate can be context specific, we also continue to rely on reports from our community of users. Incorporating LLMs to detect inappropriate content has enabled our moderators to prevent **23,600+** reviews from ever publishing to Yelp.*

Leveraging AI to proactively moderate inappropriate photos and videos

Every year, tens of millions of photos and videos are uploaded to our platform, which provide rich visual details that help people make informed spending decisions. As part of our aim to make Yelp useful, relevant, and safe for users, we've implemented automated systems over the years to support our human moderation efforts in identifying potentially inappropriate photos and videos.

In 2023, we enhanced our **neural network-based systems** to better detect photos that may violate our Content Guidelines, and introduced a new system that proactively removes suspected inappropriate video content. These systems flag visual content for our moderators to review before they are published on Yelp.

Protecting business pages with identity attributes

Business owners who want to express their diverse identities can add a range of attributes to their Yelp page, making it easier for consumers to find and support them. To protect these businesses from hateful, racist, or other inappropriate content that violates our policies, we have automated safeguards in place, programmed to catch such potentially inappropriate reviews before they are published on business pages.

As of December 31, 2023:

- › **37,200+** business pages indicated they are Asian-owned, up **58%** from 2022

- › **64,600+** business pages indicated they are Latinx-owned, up **50%** from 2022

- › **72,500+** business pages indicated they are Black-owned, up **42%** from 2022

- › **19,100+** business pages indicated they are LGBTQ-owned, up **74%** from 2022

2,200+
reviews proactively removed
from business pages with an identity attribute(s) for containing potentially inappropriate content in 2023.* These reviews were removed before appearing on a business page.

*   *Data is sourced from the U.S. only.*

Maintaining accurate information on Yelp business pages

Blocking spammy businesses from Yelp

Our User Operations team goes to great lengths to verify new business page submissions and **thwart spammy or deceptive businesses** from appearing. The team's verification efforts help prevent potentially misleading businesses from succeeding at spammy behavior, like creating fake, duplicate, or multiple listings with an intent to mislead consumers, generate leads, dilute search results, and/or gain SEO advantages.

In 2023, there was a **24%** year-over-year increase in the number of Yelp pages that were rejected by our User Operations team for violating our policies.*

Removing lead generators from Yelp

Lead generators attempt to create fake business pages with the goal of generating leads and auctioning them to other contractors. Typical behaviors include undisclosed charges, providing inaccurate or incomplete information about their services, and impersonating reputable companies. They often target vulnerable consumers who need emergency services, which may require access to their home (locksmiths, movers, garage door repair companies, etc.). Our User Operations team regularly detects and blocks these bad actors.

Recategorizing crisis pregnancy centers on Yelp

Yelp's moderators manually evaluate business pages and recategorize them as Crisis Pregnancy Centers when we find evidence that the business offers reproductive health services, but does not perform abortion services or referrals to such services. Our moderators verify many data points, including information found on a business's social media pages, website, and Yelp reviews, among other reliable sources, to determine if a business should be recategorized as a Crisis Pregnancy Center.

In 2022, <u>**Yelp's moderators audited**</u> **55,600+** reproductive health service business pages, which resulted in **1,300+** being recategorized as Crisis Pregnancy Centers.‡ This improved the consumer search experience by better matching Yelp users searching for abortion services with business pages that actually offer them, making it less likely they will see crisis pregnancy centers that don't. The audit also revealed that there were **1,740+** attempts by crisis pregnancy centers to change their business's categories across more than **380** Yelp business pages in 2022.‡ Consequently, we blocked users and business owners from changing a Crisis Pregnancy Center's category after being recategorized by our moderators. As a result, in 2023, our moderators needed to recategorize only **38** additional business pages as Crisis Pregnancy Centers.‡

> *"Users looking for pregnancy-related services on Yelp can still find CPCs… but the company won't surface those listings to people searching for facilities that provide abortions. That might seem like the minimum a platform can do to ensure that it isn't used to purposefully mislead its customers, but other companies' abject failures to address the same problem make Yelp's efforts look positively heroic."*
>
> — <u>**Rolling Stone**</u> *(Oct 2023)*

40,700+
potential new business pages rejected
by Yelp's User Operations team for being associated with spammy behaviors, violating Yelp's policies*

1,500+
business pages removed
for being associated with lead generators, violating Yelp's policies†

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*   *Data is sourced from the U.S. and Canada*
†   *Data is sourced globally.*
‡   *Data is sourced from the U.S., Canada, and Puerto Rico.*

Publishing restaurant inspection data on Yelp

Since 2013, Yelp has been committed to making local restaurant inspection data easily accessible to help consumers make more informed decisions about where to dine. In partnership with local health departments across the U.S. and Ecolab's Health Department Intelligence, Yelp surfaces more than **4.4 million** total health inspections across the U.S. and Canada. In 2023 alone, more than **155,500** new inspections were added.*

952,000+
business pages display health inspection information
on Yelp as of December 31, 2023*

Moderating business pages that gain public attention through Media Attention Alerts

Yelp's **Content Guidelines** require that all reviews must be based on genuine, firsthand consumer experiences. Yet when a business gains public attention, consumers often come to Yelp to express their opinions through reviews in an attempt to artificially inflate or deflate a business's star rating. To thwart these attempts, which can mislead consumers and hurt businesses, as part of our **Consumer Alerts program** we may place one of our Media Attention Alerts on a business page and temporarily disable the ability to post reviews.

986
total alerts placed
on business pages related to a business gaining public attention, resulting in the removal of 49,100+ reviews[†]

After this publicity-fueled activity has dramatically decreased or stopped, our moderators will remove the alert and clean up the page so that only firsthand consumer experiences are reflected.

Unusual Activity Alerts are placed when a business, after gaining public attention, receives an influx of Yelp reviews that do not reflect firsthand experiences, even if we may agree with the points of view expressed in them.

Public Attention Alerts are placed to inform consumers when a business receives an influx of Yelp reviews related to the business gaining public attention for either being accused of, or the target of, racist behavior. When there's resounding evidence of egregious, racist actions from a business owner or employee, and after a thorough investigation that includes providing a link to media reports about the alleged incident, we may escalate a Public Attention Alert to a Business Accused of Racist Behavior Alert. Fortunately, no Public Attention Alerts were escalated to a Business Accused of Racist Behavior Alert in 2023.

Breakdown of Media Attention Alerts on Yelp in 2023[†]

Unusual Activity Alerts
33,700+ associated reviews removed
799 placed on business pages
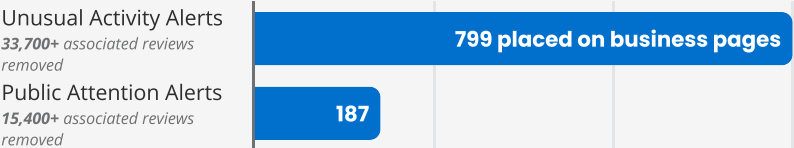
Public Attention Alerts
15,400+ associated reviews removed
187

Media-fueled incidents in 2023

Media Attention Alerts increasingly stem from social media posts

When we first began publishing Media Attention Alerts on Yelp business pages, they were a response to review activity often originating from a business being featured in news stories. As social media has become even more prevalent and effective in connecting communities, we've seen a shift to review activity in response to posts from these platforms. In 2023, **592** business pages had either an Unusual Activity Alert or Public Attention Alert placed for incidents stemming from a post associated with a business that went viral on TikTok, X, Facebook, or other social media.* In other words, about **60%** of all Media Attention Alerts last year were started by social media posts, resulting in the removal of **35,800+** reviews.*

301
business pages
received an Unusual Activity Alert or Public Attention Alert in 2023, resulting in the removal of **17,900+** reviews, for incidents related to alleged discrimination (including racism, anti-Semitism, anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment, ableism, etc.)*

177
business pages
received an Unusual Activity Alert in 2023, resulting in the removal of **10,000+** reviews, for incidents related to alleged criminal implications or activity (including claims of animal cruelty, homicide, assault, child neglect, etc.)*

112
business pages
received an Unusual Activity Alert in 2023, resulting in the removal of **5,000+** reviews, for incidents related to politics or political figures*

Deep dive: Influx of reviews related to the Israel-Hamas war

To help protect businesses from reputational harm, Yelp's User Operations team proactively monitors content related to the Israel-Hamas War that may run afoul of our policies — including reviews that describe matters irrelevant to a consumer experience or contain hate speech. Between October and December 2023, **88** business pages received an Unusual Activity Alert for incidents related to the Israel-Hamas war, resulting in the removal of **4,800+** reviews.* Generally, the activity we saw on the Yelp platform was in response to business owners or someone associated with the business taking a public stance related to the war, or was a result of a business being featured in the media.

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*   *Data is sourced from the U.S. only.*

Protecting consumers from abuse of the legal system

Reviewers have a First Amendment right to share their opinions, whether positive or critical, that's why we defend our users by often objecting to demands that seek personal information about their accounts.

We evaluate each individual request in the legal demands we receive to determine whether we are satisfied that the request is legitimate and legally sound. We have even gone to court in certain circumstances to protect users' personal information from litigious business owners. When we are required by law to disclose user account information, we notify users of the legal demands beforehand, unless Yelp is prohibited by law from doing so or in other exceptional situations.

97%
of all user accounts
that were the subject of legal demands did not have their personal information produced in 2023*

## Yelp avoided producing information related to 96% of user accounts

that were the subject of legal demands from **law enforcement and government agencies** in 2023*

Personal information produced **4%**

No personal information produced **96%**
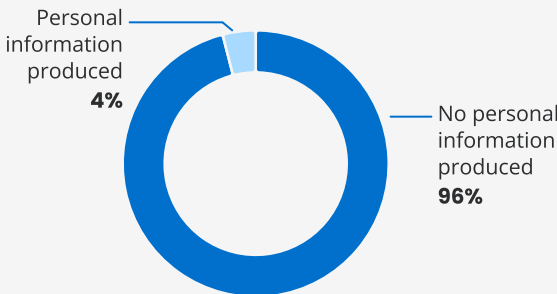
1,550 user accounts did not have personal information produced

Yelp avoided producing information related to 98% of user accounts

that were the subject of legal demands from **private parties** in 2023*

Personal information produced **2%**

No personal information produced **98%**
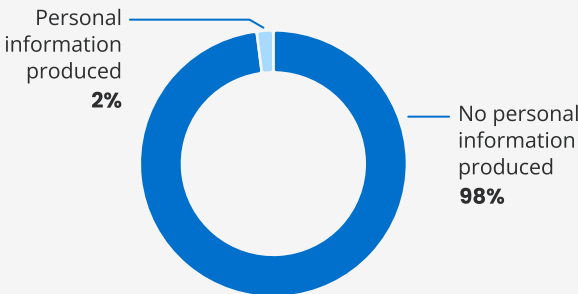
2,181 user accounts did not have personal information produced

Deep dive: Yelp's continued commitment to protecting free speech

For over a decade, Yelp has advocated for strong laws against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (or anti-SLAPP laws) at the state and federal level. Reviewers who share their experiences help provide others with valuable and helpful information, and Yelp is committed to fighting to protect their First Amendment rights.

In November 2023, Yelp filed an amicus brief before the Supreme Court of Nevada in *Mendoza v. Reyes* to advocate that the court reverse its decision and order the dismissal of the case. In the case, an administrator of a public Facebook news page was denied their anti-SLAPP motion after being sued for libel and other claims by a Las Vegas tour service business over other people's comments about the business posted to the Facebook page. Even though the case does not involve Yelp or our users, we stand firmly against the court's decision as it runs counter to Section 230 of the federal Communications Decency Act and creates a precedent that could open up drawn out legal battles attempting to silence consumers. You can learn more about the case and Yelp's amicus efforts here.
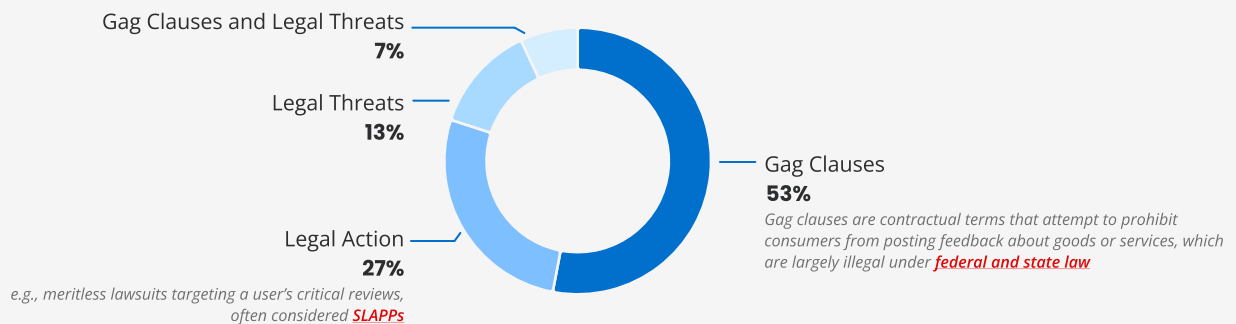
Questionable Legal Threat Alerts

When we have evidence that a business may be abusing the legal system to intimidate or silence a reviewer, we may display a Questionable Legal Threat Alert on a business page as part of our **Consumer Alerts program**. For example, we typically place these alerts when we learn a business is making dubious legal threats or using contractual gag clauses.

15

Questionable Legal Threat Alerts
placed on business pages in 2023*

Where Legal Threat Alerts stemmed from in 2023*

Gag Clauses and Legal Threats
7%

Legal Threats
13%

Legal Action
27%
e.g., meritless lawsuits targeting a user's critical reviews, often considered SLAPPs

Gag Clauses
53%
*Gag clauses are contractual terms that attempt to prohibit consumers from posting feedback about goods or services, which are largely illegal under **federal and state law***

Conclusion

Yelp's community is built on trust. Both consumers or business owners put their trust in us to access reliable and useful information that better informs their spending or business decisions. Over the last twenty years, we've worked hard to maintain that trust. We also continue to find new ways to thwart misinformation and deceptive behaviors as the strategies implemented by bad actors evolve over time.

To learn more about the ways Yelp maintains the integrity and quality of our content, visit **trust.yelp.com**.

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*   *Data is sourced from the U.S. only.*

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2023 Trust & Safety Report

For media inquiries, email **press@yelp.com.**