

Elon Musk

Elon Reeve Musk FRS (/ˈiːlɒn/ *EE-lon*; born June 28, 1971) is a business magnate, industrial designer, and engineer.^[3] He is the founder, CEO, CTO, and chief designer of SpaceX; early investor,^[b] CEO, and product architect of Tesla, Inc.; founder of The Boring Company; co-founder of Neuralink; and co-founder and initial co-chairman of OpenAI. A centibillionaire, Musk is one of the richest people in the world.^[c]

Musk was born to a Canadian mother and South African father and raised in Pretoria, South Africa. He briefly attended the University of Pretoria before moving to Canada aged 17 to attend Queen's University. He transferred to the University of Pennsylvania two years later, where he received dual bachelor's degrees in economics and physics. He moved to California in 1995 to attend Stanford University but decided instead to pursue a business career, co-founding the web software company Zip2 with his brother Kimbal. The startup was acquired by Compaq for \$307 million in 1999. Musk co-founded online bank X.com that same year, which merged with Confinity in 2000 to form the company PayPal and was subsequently bought by eBay in 2002 for \$1.5 billion.

In 2002, Musk founded SpaceX, an aerospace manufacturer and space transport services company, of which he is CEO, CTO, and lead designer. In 2004, he joined electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla Motors, Inc. (now Tesla, Inc.) as chairman and product architect, becoming its CEO in 2008. In 2006, he helped create SolarCity, a solar energy services company and current Tesla subsidiary. In 2015, he co-founded OpenAI, a nonprofit research company that promotes friendly artificial intelligence. In 2016, he co-founded Neuralink, a neurotechnology company focused on developing brain–computer interfaces, and founded The Boring Company, a tunnel construction company. Musk has also proposed the Hyperloop, a high-speed vacetrain transportation system.

Musk has been the subject of criticism due to unorthodox or unscientific stances and highly publicized controversies. In 2018, he was sued for defamation by a diver who advised in the Tham Luang cave rescue; a California jury ruled in favor of Musk. Also, in 2018, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) sued him for falsely tweeting that he had secured funding for a private takeover of Tesla. He settled with the SEC, temporarily stepping down from his chairmanship and accepting limitations on his Twitter usage. Musk has spread misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and has received criticism from experts for his other views on such matters as artificial intelligence and public transport.

Elon Musk <div>FRS</div>	
 <div>Musk at the Royal Society admissions day in London, July 2018</div>	
Born	<div>Elon Reeve Musk</div> <div>June 28, 1971</div> <div>Pretoria, South Africa</div>
Citizenship	<div>South Africa (1971–present)</div> <div>Canada (1971–present)</div> <div>United States (2002–present)</div>
Alma mater	University of Pennsylvania (BS & BA; 1997)
Occupation	Entrepreneur · industrial designer · engineer
Net worth	▲ US\$ 172.8 billion (As of 1 April 2021) ^[1]
Title	Founder, CEO, lead

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designer of [SpaceX](#)

CEO, product

architect of [Tesla, Inc.](#)

Founder of [The](#)

[Boring Company](#) and

[X.com](#)

Co-founder of

[Neuralink](#), [OpenAI](#),

and [Zip2](#)

Chairman of

[SolarCity](#)

Spouse(s) [Justine Wilson](#)
(m. 2000; div. 2008)
[Talulah Riley](#)
(m. 2010; div. 2012)
(m. 2013; div. 2016)


Partner(s) [Grimes](#) (2018–
present)

Children 7^[a]

Parents [Errol Musk](#) (father)
[Maye Musk](#) (mother)

Relatives [Tosca Musk](#) (sister)
[Kimbal Musk](#)
(brother)
[Lyndon Rive](#) (cousin)

Signature



Early life

Childhood and family

Elon Reeve Musk was born on June 28, 1971, in [Pretoria](#), Transvaal, South Africa.^{[7][8]} His mother is [Maye Musk](#) (née [Haldeman](#)), a model and dietitian born in [Saskatchewan](#), Canada,^{[9][10][11]} but raised in South Africa. His father is [Errol Musk](#), a South African electromechanical engineer, pilot, sailor, consultant, and

property developer.^[12] Musk has a younger brother, Kimbal (born 1972), and a younger sister, Tosca (born 1974).^{[11][13]} His maternal grandfather, Joshua Haldeman, was an American-born Canadian.^[14] His paternal grandmother had British and Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry.^{[15][16]}

After his parents divorced in 1980, Musk lived mostly with his father in Pretoria and elsewhere,^[15] a choice he made two years after the divorce and subsequently regretted.^[17] Musk has become estranged from his father, whom he has described as "a terrible human being... Almost every evil thing you could possibly think of, he has done."^[17] He has a half-sister and a half-brother on his father's side.^{[18][19]}

At the age of 10, he developed an interest in computing while using the Commodore VIC-20.^[20] He learned computer programming using a manual and, by age 12, sold the code of a BASIC-based video game he created called *Blaster* to *PC and Office Technology* magazine for approximately \$500.^{[21][22]} An awkward and introverted child,^[23] Musk was bullied throughout his childhood and was once hospitalized after a group of boys threw him down a flight of stairs.^{[17][24]} He attended Waterkloof House Preparatory School and Bryanston High School before graduating from Pretoria Boys High School.^[25]

Education

Aware it would be easier to enter the United States from Canada,^[26] Musk applied for a Canadian passport through his Canadian-born mother.^{[27][28]} While awaiting the documentation, he attended the University of Pretoria for five months; this allowed Musk to avoid mandatory service in the South African military.^[29] Arriving in Canada in June 1989, Musk failed to locate his great-uncle in Montreal and instead stayed at a youth hostel. He then traveled west to live with a second-cousin in Saskatchewan.^[30] He stayed there for a year, working odd jobs at a farm and lumber-mill.^[31] In 1990, Musk entered Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.^{[32][33]} Two years later, he transferred to the University of Pennsylvania; he graduated in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in economics from the Wharton School and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in physics.^{[34][35][36]}



Musk graduated from Pretoria Boys High School in South Africa.


In 1994, Musk held two internships in Silicon Valley during the summer: at an energy storage startup called Pinnacle Research Institute, which researched electrolytic ultracapacitors for energy storage, and at the Palo Alto-based startup Rocket Science Games.^[37] In 1995, Musk was accepted to a Ph.D. program in energy physics/materials science at Stanford University in California.^[38] Musk attempted to get a job at Netscape but never received a response to his inquiries.^[27] He dropped out of Stanford after two days, deciding instead to join the Internet boom and launch an Internet startup.^[39]

Business career

Zip2

In 1995, Musk, his brother Kimbal, and Greg Kouri founded web software company Zip2 with funds from angel investors.^[17] They housed the venture at a small rented office in Palo Alto.^[40] The company developed and marketed an Internet city guide for the newspaper publishing industry, with maps, directions, and yellow pages.^[41] Musk says that before the company became successful, he

External video

 Musk speaks of his early business experience during a 2014 commencement speech at USC (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7Qh-vwpYH8>) on YouTube

could not afford an apartment and instead slept on the office couch and showered at the YMCA. They could only afford one computer, and, according to Musk, "The website was up during the day and I was coding it at night, seven days a week, all the time."^[40] Musk brothers obtained contracts with The New York Times and the Chicago Tribune,^[42] and persuaded the board of directors to abandon plans for a merger with CitySearch.^[43] Musk's attempts to become CEO, a position held by its Chairman Rich Sorkin,^[44] were thwarted by the board.^[45] Compaq acquired Zip2 for \$307 million in cash in February 1999.^{[46][47]} Musk received \$22 million for his 7 percent share from the sale.^{[42][48]}

X.com and PayPal

In 1999, Musk co-founded X.com, an online financial services and e-mail payment company.^[49] The startup was one of the first online banks to be federally insured, and, within its initial months, over 200,000 customers joined the service.^[50] The company's investors saw Musk as inexperienced and had him replaced with Intuit CEO Bill Harris by the end of the year.^[51] The following year, X.com merged with online bank Confinity to prevent unnecessary competition.^{[40][52][53]} Founded by Max Levchin and Peter Thiel,^[54] Confinity had its own money-transfer service, PayPal, which was more popular than X.com's service.^{[42][55]} Within the merged company, Musk returned as CEO. Musk's preference for Microsoft software over Linux created a rift in the company and caused Thiel to resign.^[56] Due to resulting technological issues and lack of a cohesive business model, the board ousted Musk and replaced him with Thiel in September 2000.^{[57][note 1]} Under Thiel, the company focused on the PayPal service and was renamed PayPal in 2001.^{[59][60]} In 2002, PayPal was acquired by eBay for \$1.5 billion in stock, of which Musk received over \$100 million.^[61] Before its sale, Musk, who was the company's largest shareholder, owned 11.7% of PayPal's shares.^{[62][63]}

In 2017, Musk purchased the domain X.com from PayPal for an undisclosed amount, explaining it has sentimental value.^{[64][65]}

SpaceX



Musk explains the planned capabilities of SpaceX Starship to NORAD and Air Force Space Command, 2019

In 2001, Musk conceived Mars Oasis: a concept to build a miniature greenhouse on Mars that would try to grow food crops and reawaken public interest in space exploration.^{[66][67]} In October 2001, Musk traveled with a group to Moscow to buy refurbished Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that could send the greenhouse payloads into space. He met with companies such as NPO Lavochkin and Kosmotras; however, Musk was seen as a novice and was even spat on by one of the Russian chief designers. The group returned to the United States empty-handed. In February 2002, the group returned to Russia to look for three ICBMs. They had another meeting with Kosmotras and were offered one rocket for \$8 million, which Musk rejected. Musk instead decided to start a company that could build affordable rockets.^[68] With \$100 million of his early fortune,^[69] Musk founded Space Exploration Technologies Corp., traded as SpaceX, in May 2002.^[70]

After three failed launches, SpaceX succeeded in launching the Falcon 1 in 2008. It was the first private liquid-fuel rocket to reach Earth orbit.^[71] Later that year, SpaceX received a \$1.6 billion Commercial Resupply Services program contract for 12 flights of its Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon spacecraft to the International Space Station, replacing the Space Shuttle after its 2011 retirement.^[72] In 2012, the Dragon vehicle berthed with the ISS, a first for a

private enterprise.^[73] Working towards its goal of reusable rockets, in 2015, SpaceX successfully landed the first stage of a Falcon 9.^[74] Landings were later achieved on an autonomous spaceport drone ship, an ocean-

based recovery platform.^[75] In 2018, SpaceX launched the Falcon Heavy; the inaugural mission carried a Tesla Roadster as a dummy payload.^{[76][77]} In 2017, SpaceX unveiled its next-generation launch vehicle and spacecraft system, Big Falcon Rocket (BFR), which would support all SpaceX launch service provider capabilities.^[78] In 2018, SpaceX announced a planned 2023 lunar circumnavigation mission, a private flight called dearMoon project.^[79] In 2020, SpaceX launched its first manned flight, the Demo-2, becoming the first private company to place a person into orbit and dock a crewed space-craft with the ISS.^[80]

SpaceX began development of the Starlink constellation of low Earth orbit satellites in 2015 to provide satellite Internet access.^[81] with the first two prototype satellites launched in February 2018. A second set of test satellites and the first large deployment of a piece of the constellation occurred in May 2019, when the first 60 operational satellites were launched.^[82] The total cost of the decade-long project to design, build, and deploy the constellation is estimated by SpaceX to be about \$10 billion.^{[83][note 2]}

Tesla

Tesla, Inc. (originally Tesla Motors) was incorporated in July 2003 by Martin Eberhard and Marc Tarpenning, who financed the company until the Series A round of funding.^[86] Both men played active roles in the company's early development prior to Musk's involvement.^[87] Musk led the Series A round of investment in 2004, joining Tesla's board of directors as its chairman.^{[88][89][90]} Musk took an active role within the company and oversaw Roadster product design but was not deeply involved in day-to-day business operations.^[91] Following a series of escalating conflicts in 2007 and the 2008 financial crisis, Eberhard was ousted from the firm.^{[92][93]} Musk assumed leadership of the company as CEO and product architect in 2008, positions he still holds today. A 2009 lawsuit settlement with Eberhard designated Musk as a Tesla co-founder, along with Tarpenning and two others.^{[4][5]} As of 2019, Musk is the longest tenured CEO of any automotive manufacturer globally.^[94]



Musk next to a Tesla Model S in 2011 at the Tesla Fremont Factory

Tesla first built an electric sports car, the Roadster, in 2008. With sales of about 2,500 vehicles, it was the first serial production all-electric car to use lithium-ion battery cells.^[95] Tesla began delivery of its four-door Model S sedan in 2012;^[96] a cross-over, the Model X was launched in 2015.^{[97][98]} A mass market sedan, the Model 3 was released in 2017.^{[99][100]} As of March 2020, it is the world's best-selling electric car, with more than 500,000 units delivered.^[101] A fifth vehicle, the Model Y crossover, was launched in 2020.^[102] The Cybertruck, an all-electric pickup truck, was unveiled in 2019.^{[103][104]} Under Musk, Tesla has also constructed multiple lithium-ion battery and electric vehicle subassembly factories, such as Gigafactory 1 in Nevada and Gigafactory 3 in China.^{[105][106][107]}

Since its initial public offering in 2010,^[108] Tesla stock has risen significantly; it became the most valuable carmaker in summer 2020.^{[109][110]} It entered the S&P 500 later that year.^{[111][112]}

SEC lawsuit

In September 2018, Musk was sued by the US Securities and Exchange Commission for a tweet claiming funding had been secured for potentially taking Tesla private.^{[113][note 3]} The lawsuit claimed verbal discussions Musk held with foreign investors in July 2018 did not confirm key deal terms^[115] and thus characterized the tweet as false, misleading, and damaging to investors, and sought to bar Musk from serving as CEO of publicly traded companies.^{[113][116]} Musk called the allegations unjustified and claimed he had

never compromised his integrity.^[117] Two days later, Musk settled with the SEC, without admitting or denying the SEC's allegations. As a result, Musk and Tesla were fined \$20 million each, and Musk was forced to step down for three years as Tesla chairman but was able to remain as CEO.^[118]

Musk has stated in interviews he does not regret the tweet that triggered the SEC investigation.^{[119][120][121]} On February 19, 2019, Musk stated in a tweet that Tesla would build half a million cars in 2019.^[122] The SEC reacted to Musk's tweet by filing in court, initially asking the court to hold him in contempt for violating the terms of a settlement agreement with such a tweet, which was disputed by Musk. This was eventually settled by a joint agreement between Musk and the SEC clarifying the previous agreement details.^[123] The agreement included a list of topics that Musk would need preclearance before tweeting about.^[124] In May 2020, a judge prevented a lawsuit from proceeding that claimed a tweet by Musk regarding Tesla stock price ("too high imo") violated the agreement.^{[125][126]}

SolarCity

Musk provided the initial concept and financial capital for SolarCity, which his cousins Lyndon and Peter Rive co-founded in 2006.^[127] By 2013, SolarCity was the second largest provider of solar power systems in the United States.^[128] In 2014, Musk committed to building a SolarCity advanced production facility in Buffalo, New York, triple the size of the largest solar plant in the United States.^[129] Construction on the factory started in 2014 and was completed in 2017. It was operated as a joint venture with Panasonic until early 2020.^[130]



SolarCity solar-panel installation vans in 2009

Tesla acquired SolarCity for over \$2 billion in 2016 and converted it into its solar division; the announcement of the deal resulted in a more than 10% drop in Tesla's stock price. At the time, SolarCity was facing liquidity issues; however, Tesla shareholders were not informed.^[131] Consequently, multiple shareholder groups have filed a lawsuit against Musk and Tesla's directors, claiming that the purchase of SolarCity was done solely to benefit Musk and came at the expense of Tesla and its shareholders.^{[132][133]} During a June 2019 court deposition, Musk acknowledged that the company reallocated every possible employee from the solar division to work on the Model 3, and, according to Musk, "as a result, solar suffered." This had not previously been disclosed to shareholders. Court documents unsealed in 2019 have confirmed that Musk was also aware of the company's liquidity issues.^[131] Tesla directors settled the lawsuit in January 2020, leaving Musk the sole remaining defendant.^{[134][135]}

Neuralink

In 2016, Musk co-founded Neuralink, a neurotechnology startup company to integrate the human brain with AI. Neuralink's purpose is to create devices that are embedded in the human brain to facilitate the merging of the brain with machines. The devices will also reconcile with the latest improvements in artificial intelligence to stay updated. Such improvements could enhance memory or allow the devices to communicate with software more effectively.^{[136][137]}



Musk discussing a Neuralink device during a live demonstration in 2020

At a live demonstration in August 2020, Musk described one of their early devices as "a Fitbit in your skull" which could soon cure paralysis, deafness, blindness, and other disabilities. Many

neuroscientists and publications criticized these claims;^{[138][139][140]} MIT Technology Review described them as "highly speculative" and "neuroscience theater".^[138]

The Boring Company

In 2016, Musk founded The Boring Company (TBC) to construct tunnels.^[141] In early 2017, they began discussions with regulatory bodies and initiated construction of a 30-foot (9.1 m) wide, 50-foot (15 m) long, and 15-foot (4.6 m) deep "test trench" on the premises of SpaceX's offices as it required no permits.^[142] A tunnel beneath the Las Vegas Convention Center was completed in early 2020. Local officials have approved further expansions of the tunnel system.^[143]

As a merchandising and publicity stunt, The Boring Company sold 2,000 novelty flamethrowers in 2018.^{[144][145]} The idea was allegedly inspired by the Mel Brooks-directed film *Spaceballs* (1987), a favorite of Musk's.^{[146][147]}



Musk during the 2018 inauguration of the Boring Test Tunnel in Hawthorne, California

Other efforts

Hyperloop

Musk first thought of a version of a vactrain, a high-speed transportation system incorporating reduced-pressure tubes to move pressurized capsules on an air cushion driven by linear induction motors and air compressors in around 2011 and then assigned a dozen engineers from Tesla and SpaceX to establish the conceptual foundations and create initial designs.^[148] On August 12, 2013, Musk unveiled the concept which he dubbed the Hyperloop.^[149] The alpha design for the system was published in a whitepaper posted to the Tesla and SpaceX blogs.^{[150][151][152]} The document scoped out the technology and outlined a notional route where such a transport system could be built between the Greater Los Angeles Area and the San Francisco Bay Area^[153] at an estimated total cost of \$6 billion.^[154] The proposal, if technologically feasible at the costs he has cited, would make Hyperloop travel cheaper than any other mode of transport for such long distances.^[155]

In June 2015, Musk announced a design competition for students and others to build Hyperloop pods to operate on a SpaceX-sponsored mile-long track in a 2015–2017 Hyperloop pod competition. The track was used in January 2017, and Musk also announced that the company started a tunnel project with Hawthorne airport as its destination.^[156] In July 2017, Musk claimed that he had received "verbal government approval" to build a hyperloop from New York City to Washington, D.C., stopping in both Philadelphia and Baltimore.^[157]

OpenAI

In December 2015, Musk announced the creation of OpenAI, a not-for-profit AI research company aiming to develop artificial general intelligence intended to be safe and beneficial to humanity.^[158] A particular focus of the company is to "counteract large corporations [and governments] who may gain too much power by owning super-intelligence systems."^{[159][17]} In 2018, Musk left the OpenAI board to avoid possible future conflicts with his role as CEO of Tesla as Tesla increasingly became involved in AI through Tesla Autopilot.^[160]

Tham Luang cave rescue and defamation case

In July 2018, Musk arranged for his employees to build a small rescue pod to assist the rescue of children stuck in a flooded cavern in Thailand.^[161] Named "Wild Boar" after the children's soccer team,^[162] its design was a five-foot (1.5 m)-long, 12-inch (30 cm)-wide sealed tube weighing about 90 pounds (41 kg) propelled manually by divers in the front and back with segmented compartments to place diver weights to adjust buoyancy,^{[163][164]} intended to solve the problem of safely extracting the children. Engineers at SpaceX and TBC built the mini-submarine out of a Falcon 9 liquid oxygen transfer tube^[165] in eight hours and personally delivered it to Thailand.^[163] However, by this time, eight of the 12 children had already been rescued using full face masks and oxygen under anesthesia and Thai authorities declined to use the submarine.^[166]

Vernon Unsworth, a recreational caver who had been exploring the cave for the previous six years and played a key advisory role in the rescue, criticized the submarine on CNN as amounting to nothing more than a public relations effort with no chance of success, and that Musk "had no conception of what the cave passage was like" and "can stick his submarine where it hurts". Musk asserted on Twitter that the device would have worked and referred to Unsworth as "pedo guy".^{[167][168]} He subsequently deleted the tweets, along with an earlier tweet in which he told another critic of the device, "Stay tuned jackass."^[168] On July 16, Unsworth stated that he was considering legal action.^{[169][170]}

Two days later, Musk issued an apology for his remarks.^{[171][172]} Then, on August 28, 2018, in response to criticism from a writer on Twitter, Musk tweeted, "You don't think it's strange he hasn't sued me?"^[173] The following day, a letter dated August 6 from L. Lin Wood, the rescuer's attorney, emerged, showing that he had been making preparations for a libel lawsuit.^{[174][175]}

Around this time, James Howard-Higgins emailed Musk claiming to be a private investigator and with an offer to "dig deep" into Unsworth's past, which Musk accepted; Higgins was later revealed to be a convicted felon with multiple counts of fraud.^{[176][177]} On August 30, using details produced during the alleged investigation,^[178] Musk sent a BuzzFeed News reporter who had written about the controversy an email prefaced with "off the record", telling the reporter to "stop defending child rapists, you fucking asshole" and claiming that Unsworth is a "single white guy from England who's been traveling to or living in Thailand for 30 to 40 years... until moving to Chiang Rai for a child bride who was about 12 years old at the time." On September 5, the reporter tweeted a screenshot of the email, saying that "Off the record is a two-party agreement," which he "did not agree to."^{[179][180][181]}

In September, Unsworth filed a defamation suit in Los Angeles federal court.^{[182][183]} In his defense, Musk argued that in slang usage "'pedo guy' was a common insult used in South Africa when I was growing up... synonymous with 'creepy old man' and is used to insult a person's appearance and demeanor."^[184] The defamation case began in December 2019, with Unsworth seeking \$190 million in damages.^[185] During the trial Musk apologized to Unsworth again for the tweet. On December 6, the jury found in favor of Musk and ruled he was not liable.^{[186][187]}

2018 Joe Rogan podcast appearance

On September 6, 2018, Musk appeared on The Joe Rogan Experience podcast and discussed various topics for over two hours. One of the highest-profile and controversial aspects of the program was Musk's sampling a single puff from a cigar consisting, Joe Rogan claimed, of tobacco laced with cannabis. To Rogan's inquiry on how often he smoked cannabis, Musk replied: "Almost never. I know a lot of people like weed and that's fine, but I don't find that is very good for productivity... not for me." The Washington Post observed that, "In the media's hands, it became a story about Musk's growing instability."^[188]

Tesla stock dropped after the incident, which coincided with the confirmation of the departure of Tesla's vice president of worldwide finance earlier that day.^{[189][190]} *Fortune* wondered if the cannabis use could have ramifications for SpaceX contracts with the United States Air Force, though an Air Force spokesperson told *The Verge* that there was no investigation and that the Air Force was still processing the situation.^{[191][192]} In a *60 Minutes* interview, Musk said of the incident: "I do not smoke pot. As anybody who watched that podcast could tell, I have no idea how to smoke pot."^{[193][194]}

Music ventures

On March 30, 2019, Musk released a rap track, "RIP Harambe", on SoundCloud under the name "Emo G Records".^[195] The track was performed by Yung Jake, written by Yung Jake and Caroline Polachek, and produced by BloodPop.^{[196][197]} On January 30, 2020, Musk released an EDM track, "Don't Doubt Ur Vibe", featuring his own lyrics and vocals.^[198] While *Guardian* critic Alexi Petridis described it as "indistinguishable... from umpteen competent but unthrilling bits of bedroom electronica posted elsewhere on Soundcloud",^[199] TechCrunch said it was "not a bad representation of the genre".^[198]

Donations and non-profits

Musk is chairman of the Musk Foundation, which states its purpose is to provide solar-power energy systems in disaster areas as well as other goals.^{[200][201]} Since 2002, the foundation has made over 350 contributions. Around half were to scientific research or education nonprofits. Notable beneficiaries include the Wikimedia Foundation, his alma mater the University of Pennsylvania, and his brother Kimball's Big Green.^[202] *Vox* described the foundation as "entertaining in its simplicity and yet is strikingly opaque", noting that its website was only 33 words in plain-text.^[203] The foundation has been criticized for the relatively small amount of wealth donated. From 2002 to 2018, it gave out \$25 million directly to non-profits, nearly half of which went to Musk's OpenAI,^[203] which was at the time a non-profit organization.^[204]

Musk is also a trustee of the X Prize Foundation.^{[205][206]} In January 2021, he promised to donate \$100 million as a prize to whomever developed the best carbon capture technology.^{[207][208][209]}

Wealth



Musk at the 2019 Tesla annual shareholder meeting

Musk has stated he graduated from college with \$100,000 in student debt.^[210] Musk made his fortune with PayPal's \$1.5 billion sale to eBay in 2002. He was first listed on the Forbes Billionaires List in 2012, with a net worth of \$2 billion.^[211]

At the start of 2020, Musk was the 35th richest person in the world.^[212] Throughout that year, his net worth increased by \$150 billion, largely driven by his ownership of around 20% of Tesla stock.^[213] During this, Musk's net worth was often volatile. For example, it dropped \$16.3 billion in September, the largest such plunge according to *Bloomberg*.^[214] In November of that year, Musk passed Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg to become the third-richest person in the world; a week later he passed Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates to become the second-richest.^[215] In January 2021, Musk, with a net worth of \$185 billion, surpassed Amazon founder Jeff Bezos to become the richest person in the world.^[216] Bezos reclaimed the top spot the

following month.^[217]

Around three-quarters of Musk's wealth derives from Tesla.^[215] Musk has tied his personal earnings to Tesla's valuation and revenue.^[213] As he does not receive a salary, Musk agreed to a compensation plan with the board. It is an "at-risk performance award" that "ensures [Musk] will be compensated only if Tesla and all of its shareholders do extraordinarily well."^[218] Created in 2018, the deal stipulated that Musk only receive the compensation if Tesla reached certain market values.^[219] It was the largest such deal ever done between a CEO and board.^[218] In the first award, given in May 2020, he was eligible to purchase 1.69 million TSLA shares - around one percent of the company - at below-market prices.^{[218][219]}

Musk has repeatedly described himself as "cash poor".^{[220][221]} Most of his equity is in Tesla, SpaceX, and TBC, none of which pay dividends. According to *Bloomberg*, Musk has "professed to have little interest in the material trappings of wealth".^[220] In 2012, Musk signed The Giving Pledge and, in May 2020, Musk pledged to "sell almost all physical possessions".^{[221][222]}

Views

Politics

Musk backs direct democracy and has stated he thinks the government on Mars should be a direct democracy.^[223] In an interview with *The Washington Post*, Musk stated he was a "significant (though not top-tier) donor to Democrats," but that he also gives heavily to Republicans. Musk further stated that political contributions are a requirement to have a voice in the United States government.^{[224][225]} Musk criticized then-candidate Donald Trump,^[226] but later accepted an invitation to participate in two business advisory councils for Trump.^{[227][228][229]} He subsequently resigned from both in June 2017, in protest against Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement.^{[230][231]} In the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, Musk endorsed candidate Andrew Yang and expressed support for his proposed universal basic income.^[232] he endorsed Kanye West's independent campaign in the general election.^[233]



Musk with US Vice President Mike Pence in 2020 at the Kennedy Space Center shortly before SpaceX's Crew Dragon Demo-2 launch

In July 2020, Musk tweeted "Pronouns suck" to significant backlash on Twitter, including from his partner Grimes.^{[234][235][236][237][238]} The tweet has been perceived by some as transphobic and an attack on non-binary identities.^[239] In a series of December 2020 tweets, Musk again mocked the use of pronouns. The Human Rights Campaign, which had previously given Tesla the number one ranking on its Corporate Equality Index, criticized his tweets and called for him to apologize.^{[240][241]}

Musk has stated that he does not believe the US government should provide subsidies to companies but should instead use a carbon tax to discourage poor behavior. Musk says that the free market would achieve the best solution, and that producing environmentally unfriendly vehicles should come with its own consequences.^[242] His stance has been called hypocritical as his businesses have received billions of dollars in subsidies.^{[243][244][245]}

Musk, a longtime opponent of short-selling, has repeatedly criticized the practice and argued it should be illegal.^{[246][247]} In early 2021, he encouraged the GameStop short squeeze.^{[248][249]}

COVID-19



Musk was criticized for his public comments and conduct related to the COVID-19 pandemic.^{[251][252][253][254]} He spread misinformation about the virus, including promoting chloroquine and claiming that death statistics were manipulated.^{[255][256]} He claimed that "Kids are essentially immune" to the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus,^{[257][258]} and called "the coronavirus panic...dumb."^{[259][260][261][262][263]} Musk repeatedly criticized lockdowns and violated local orders by re-opening the Tesla Fremont factory.^{[264][265][266][267]} In March 2020, Musk predicted there would be "close to zero new cases in US too by end of April."^{[251][268][269][270][271]} Politico later labeled this statement one of "the most audacious, confident and spectacularly incorrect prognostications [in 2020]."^[272] In November 2020, the phrase "Space Karen" trended on Twitter in connection with Musk after he criticized the effectiveness of COVID-19 testing.^{[273][274][275]}



Elon Musk
@elonmusk

[Twitter](#)

Based on current trends, probably close to zero new cases in US too by end of April

March 19, 2020^[250]

Also in March 2020, Musk offered to donate ventilators which Tesla would build or buy from a third party.^[276] Multiple hospitals noted that the devices eventually donated were BiPAP and CPAP machines, not the sought-after ventilators, but the machines could still be used to free up ventilators for the sickest patients.^{[277][278]} In 2021, findings of an antibody-testing program that Musk and a SpaceX medical executive worked with doctors and academic researchers to create were published in Nature Communications with Musk listed as a co-author.^{[279][280]}

Artificial intelligence and public transit

Musk has frequently spoken about the potential dangers of artificial intelligence (AI), repeatedly calling it the greatest threat to humanity.^{[281][282]} Musk's opinions about AI have provoked controversy.^[283] Consequently, according to CNBC, Musk is "not always looked upon favorably" by the AI research community.^[284] Musk and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg have clashed on the issue, with Zuckerberg calling his warnings "pretty irresponsible."^{[285][286][287][288][289]} Musk's claims that humans live in a computer simulation have also been criticized.^{[290][291]}

Musk has criticized public transportation,^{[292][293]} a stance that has been called elitist.^[294] His comments have sparked widespread criticism from both transportation and urban planning experts.^{[295][296]}

Personal life

Musk met his first wife, Canadian author Justine Wilson, while attending Queen's University. They married in 2000 and separated in 2008.^[297] Their first son, Nevada Alexander Musk,^[298] died of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) at the age of 10 weeks.^{[2][299]} They share custody of five sons.^{[300][301][302]}

In 2008, Musk began dating English actress Talulah Riley, and in 2010, the couple married. In 2012, Musk announced a divorce from Riley.^{[303][304][305]} In 2013, Musk and Riley remarried. In December 2014, Musk filed for a second divorce from Riley; however, the action was withdrawn.^[306] A second divorce was finalized in 2016.^[307] Musk then dated Amber Heard, whom he had reportedly been pursuing since 2012,^[308] for several months in 2017.^{[309][308]} Musk was later accused of having an affair with Heard while she was still married to Johnny Depp.^{[310][311][312][313]}

In May 2018, Musk and Canadian musician Grimes revealed that they were dating.^{[314][315][316]} Grimes gave birth to their son in May 2020.^{[317][318]} According to Musk and Grimes, his name was "X Æ A-12"; however, the name was deemed illegal under California law, because it contained characters that are not in the

modern English alphabet,^{[319][320]} and was then changed to "X Æ A-Xii". This drew more confusion, as Æ is not a letter in the modern English alphabet.^[321] The child was eventually named "X AE A-XII", with "X" as a first name and "AE A-XII" as a middle name.^[322]

From the early 2000s until late 2020, Musk resided in the Los Angeles area of California where both Tesla and SpaceX were founded and where their headquarters are still located.^[323] As of December 2020, Musk resides in Texas.^{[323][324][325]}

In popular culture

Musk has had multiple cameos and appearances in films such as *Iron Man 2* (2010),^[326] *Why Him?* (2016),^[327] and *Men in Black: International* (2019).^[328] Television series on which he has appeared include *The Simpsons* (2015),^[329] *The Big Bang Theory* (2015),^[330] *South Park* (2016),^{[331][332]} and *Rick and Morty* (2019).^{[333][334]} He has contributed interviews to the documentaries *Racing Extinction* (2015) and the Werner Herzog-directed *Lo and Behold* (2016).^{[335][336]}

Recognition

Musk has received recognition and praise for his contributions to business and technology. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 2018 and was listed among *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in 2010, 2013 and 2018.^{[337][338][339][340][341]} He has received various other awards, such as the Order of the Direkgunabhorn given for his contributions to the Tham Luang cave rescue.^{[342][343]}

Notes and references

Notes

- One child is deceased.^[2]
- A lawsuit settlement agreed to by Martin Eberhard and Tesla in September 2009 designated five people as company founders, including Musk, Eberhard, JB Straubel, Marc Tarpenning, and Ian Wright.^{[4][5]}
- The pendulum frequently shifts to either Musk or Jeff Bezos being the richest person in the world.^{[1][6]}

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1. Musk remained on the board and served as an advisor.^{[58][59]}
2. SpaceX received nearly \$900 million in Federal Communications Commission subsidies.^{[84][85]}
3. Musk claimed he was taking Tesla private at a price of \$420 a share, an alleged reference to marijuana.^[114]

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External links

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 - [Elon Musk \(https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1907769/\)](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1907769/) at [IMDb](#)
 - [Elon Musk \(https://www.ted.com/speakers/elon_musk\)](https://www.ted.com/speakers/elon_musk) at [TED](#) 
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