



# Elon Musk

**Elon Reeve Musk** FRS (/ˈiːlɒn/; born June 28, 1971) is a businessman known for his key roles in the space company SpaceX and the automotive company Tesla, Inc. His other involvements include ownership of X Corp., the company that operates the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), and his role in the founding of the Boring Company, xAI, Neuralink, and OpenAI. Musk is the wealthiest individual in the world; as of December 2024, *Forbes* estimates his net worth to be US\$432 billion.<sup>[2]</sup>

A member of the wealthy South African Musk family, Musk was born in Pretoria and briefly attended the University of Pretoria before immigrating to Canada at the age of 18, acquiring citizenship through his Canadian-born mother. Two years later, he matriculated at Queen's University at Kingston in Canada. Musk later transferred to the University of Pennsylvania and received bachelor's degrees in economics and physics. He moved to California in 1995 to attend Stanford University but never enrolled in classes, and with his brother Kimbal co-founded the online city guide software company Zip2. The startup was acquired by Compaq for \$307 million in 1999. That same year, Musk co-founded X.com, a direct bank. X.com merged with Confinity in 2000 to form PayPal. In 2002, Musk acquired US citizenship, and that October eBay acquired PayPal for \$1.5 billion. Using \$100 million of the money he made from the sale of PayPal, Musk founded SpaceX, a spaceflight services company, in 2002.

In 2004, Musk was an early investor in electric-vehicle manufacturer Tesla Motors, Inc. (later Tesla, Inc.), providing most of the initial financing and assuming the position of the company's chairman. He later became the product architect and, in 2008, the CEO. In 2006, Musk helped create SolarCity, a solar energy company that was acquired by Tesla in 2016 and became Tesla Energy. In 2013, he proposed a hyperloop high-speed vactrain transportation system.

## Elon Musk

FRS



Musk in 2018

### Personal details

<b>Born</b>	<div>Elon Reeve Musk</div> <div>June 28, 1971</div> <div>Pretoria, <u>Transvaal</u>, South Africa</div>
<b>Citizenship</b>	<div>South Africa</div> <div>Canada</div> <div>United States (from 2002)</div>
<b>Political party</b>	<div><u>Independent</u></div>
<b>Spouses</b>	<div><div><u>Justine Wilson</u></div><div>(<u>m.</u> 2000; <u>div.</u> 2008)</div></div> <div><div><u>Talulah Riley</u></div><div>(<u>m.</u> 2010; <u>div.</u> 2012)</div><div>(<u>m.</u> 2013; <u>div.</u> 2016)</div></div>
<b>Children</b>	<div>12<sup>[1]</sup></div>
<b>Parents</b>	<div><u>Errol Musk</u></div> <div><u>Maye Musk</u></div>
<b>Relatives</b>	<div><u>Kimbal Musk</u> (brother)</div> <div><u>Tosca Musk</u> (sister)</div>

In 2015, he co-founded OpenAI, a nonprofit artificial intelligence research company. The following year Musk co-founded Neuralink, a neurotechnology company developing brain-computer interfaces, and The Boring Company, a tunnel construction company. In 2018 the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) sued Musk, alleging that he had falsely announced that he had secured funding for a private takeover of Tesla. To settle the case Musk stepped down as the chairman of Tesla and paid a \$20 million fine. In 2022, he acquired Twitter for \$44 billion, merged the company into the newly-created X Corp. and rebranded the service as X the following year. In March 2023, Musk founded xAI, an artificial-intelligence company.

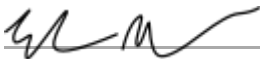
Musk's actions and expressed views have made him a polarizing figure. He has been criticized for making unscientific and misleading statements, including COVID-19 misinformation, promoting right-wing conspiracy theories, and endorsing an antisemitic trope; he has since apologized for the latter, but continued endorsing such statements. His ownership of Twitter has been controversial because of the layoffs of large numbers of employees, an increase in hate speech, misinformation and disinformation posts on the website, and changes to website features, including verification.

By early 2024, Musk became active in American politics as a vocal and financial supporter of Donald Trump, becoming Trump's second-largest individual donor in October 2024. In November 2024, Trump announced that he had chosen Musk along with Vivek Ramaswamy to co-lead Trump's planned Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) advisory board which will make recommendations on improving government efficiency through measures such as slashing "excess regulations" and cutting "wasteful expenditures".

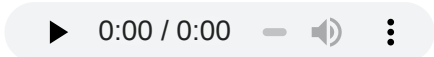
## Early life and education

### Childhood and family

Elon Reeve Musk was born on June 28, 1971, in Pretoria, South Africa's administrative capital.<sup>[3][4]</sup> He is of British and Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry.<sup>[5][6]</sup> His mother, Maye (née Haldeman), is a model and dietitian born in Saskatchewan, Canada, and raised in South Africa.<sup>[7][8][9]</sup> His father, Errol Musk, is a South African electromechanical engineer, pilot, sailor, consultant, emerald dealer, and property

	<u>Lyndon Rive</u> (cousin)
Education	<u>University of Pennsylvania</u> (BA, BS)
Occupation	Businessman
Profession	Founder, CEO, and chief engineer of <u>SpaceX</u> CEO and product architect of <u>Tesla, Inc.</u> Owner, CTO and executive chairman of <u>X</u> (formerly <u>Twitter</u> ) President of the <u>Musk Foundation</u> Founder of <u>The Boring Company</u> , <u>X Corp.</u> , and <u>xAI</u> Co-founder of <u>Neuralink</u> , <u>OpenAI</u> , <u>Zip2</u> , and <u>X.com</u> (part of <u>PayPal</u> )
Awards	<u>Full list</u>
Signature	

Elon Musk's voice



Elon Musk speaking about India and his meeting with its Prime Minister, Narendra Modi  
Recorded June 20, 2023

developer, who partly owned a rental lodge at the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve.<sup>[10][11][12][13]</sup> Elon has a younger brother, Kimbal, and a younger sister, Tosca.<sup>[9][14]</sup> Elon has four paternal half-siblings.<sup>[15][16][17]</sup>

The family was wealthy during Elon's youth.<sup>[13]</sup> Despite both Elon and Errol previously stating that Errol was a part owner of a Zambian emerald mine,<sup>[13]</sup> in 2023, Errol recounted that the deal he made was to receive "a portion of the emeralds produced at three small mines".<sup>[18][19]</sup> Errol was elected to the Pretoria City Council as a representative of the anti-apartheid Progressive Party and has said that his children shared their father's dislike of apartheid.<sup>[3]</sup>

Elon's maternal grandfather, Joshua N. Haldeman, was an American-born Canadian who took his family on record-breaking journeys to Africa and Australia in a single-engine Bellanca airplane; Haldeman died when Elon was still a toddler.<sup>[16][20][21][22]</sup> Elon has recounted trips to a wilderness school that he described as a "paramilitary Lord of the Flies" where "bullying was a virtue" and children were encouraged to fight over rations.<sup>[23]</sup>

After his parents divorced in 1980, Elon chose to live primarily with his father.<sup>[5][10]</sup> Elon later regretted his decision and became estranged from his father.<sup>[24]</sup> Elon attended Bryanston High School.<sup>[25]</sup> In one incident, after an altercation with a fellow pupil, Elon was thrown down concrete steps and beaten severely by the boy and his friends, leading to him being hospitalized for his injuries.<sup>[26]</sup> Elon described his father berating him after he was discharged from the hospital, saying, "I had to stand for an hour as he yelled at me and called me an idiot and told me that I was just worthless."<sup>[26]</sup> Errol denied berating Elon but claimed, "The boy had just lost his father to suicide and Elon had called him stupid. Elon had a tendency to call people stupid. How could I possibly blame that child?".<sup>[27]</sup> After the incident, Elon was enrolled in private school.<sup>[26][27]</sup>

Elon was an enthusiastic reader of books, later attributing his success in part to having read *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Foundation* series, and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.<sup>[12][28]</sup> At age ten, he developed an interest in computing and video games, teaching himself how to program from the VIC-20 user manual.<sup>[29]</sup> At age twelve, Elon sold his BASIC-based game *Blastar* to PC and Office Technology magazine for approximately \$500.<sup>[30][31]</sup>

## Education

Musk attended Waterkloof House Preparatory School, Bryanston High School, and then Pretoria Boys High School, where he graduated.<sup>[32]</sup> Musk was a good but not exceptional student, earning a 61 in Afrikaans and a B on his senior math certification.<sup>[33]</sup> Musk applied for a Canadian passport through his Canadian-born mother to avoid South Africa's mandatory military service,<sup>[34][35]</sup> which would have forced him to participate in the apartheid regime,<sup>[3]</sup> and to ease his path to immigration to the United States.<sup>[36]</sup> While waiting for his application to be processed, he attended the University of Pretoria for five months.<sup>[37]</sup>



Musk graduated from Pretoria Boys High School in South Africa.

Musk arrived in Canada in June 1989, connected with a second cousin in Saskatchewan,<sup>[38]</sup> and worked odd jobs including at a farm and a lumber mill.<sup>[39]</sup> In 1990, he entered Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.<sup>[40][41]</sup> Two years later, he transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied until 1995.<sup>[42]</sup> Although Musk has said that he earned his degrees in 1995, the University of Pennsylvania did not award them until 1997 – a Bachelor of Arts in physics and a Bachelor of Science in economics from the university's Wharton School.<sup>[43][44][45][46][47][48]</sup> He reportedly hosted large, ticketed house parties to help pay for tuition, and wrote a business plan for an electronic book-scanning service similar to Google Books.<sup>[49]</sup>

In 1994, Musk held two internships in Silicon Valley: one at energy storage startup Pinnacle Research Institute, which investigated electrolytic ultracapacitors for energy storage, and another at Palo Alto–based startup Rocket Science Games.<sup>[50][51]</sup> In 1995, he was accepted to a graduate program in materials science at Stanford University, but did not enroll.<sup>[46][43][52]</sup> Musk decided to join the Internet boom, applying for a job at Netscape, to which he reportedly never received a response.<sup>[53][34]</sup> *The Washington Post* reported that Musk lacked legal authorization to remain and work in the United States after failing to enroll at Stanford.<sup>[52]</sup> In response, Musk claimed he was allowed to work at that time and that his student visa transitioned to an H1-B. According to numerous former business associates and shareholders, Musk claimed he was on a student visa at the time.<sup>[54]</sup>


## Business career

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### Zip2

In 1995, Musk, his brother Kimbal, and Greg Kouri founded Global Link Information Network, later renamed Zip2.<sup>[55][56]</sup> The company developed an Internet city guide with maps, directions, and yellow pages, and marketed it to newspapers.<sup>[57]</sup> They worked at a small rented office in Palo Alto,<sup>[58]</sup> with Musk coding the website every night.<sup>[58]</sup> Musk and his brother's immigration statuses during this period were described by Musk as a "gray area", although Kimbal maintained they were working as illegal immigrants.<sup>[59][60]</sup> A *Washington Post* exposé from October 2024 reported Musk worked illegally while building the company, citing an email from Musk submitted as evidence during a 2005 defamation trial and the funding agreement from venture capital firm Mohr Davidow Ventures.<sup>[52]</sup>

#### External videos

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

Eventually, Zip2 obtained contracts with *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.<sup>[49]</sup> The brothers persuaded the board of directors to abandon a merger with CitySearch;<sup>[61]</sup> however, Musk's attempts to become CEO were thwarted.<sup>[62]</sup> Compaq acquired Zip2 for \$307 million in cash in February 1999,<sup>[63][64]</sup> and Musk received \$22 million for his 7-percent share.<sup>[65]</sup>

### X.com and PayPal

In March 1999,<sup>[66]</sup> Musk co-founded X.com, an online financial services and e-mail payment company with \$12 million of the money he made from the Compaq acquisition.<sup>[67]</sup> X.com was one of the first online banks that was federally insured, and over 200,000 customers joined in its initial months of operation.<sup>[68]</sup>

Musk's friends expressed skepticism about the naming of the online bank, fearing it might have been mistaken for a pornographic site. Musk brushed off their concerns, emphasizing that the name was meant to be straightforward, memorable, and easy to type. Additionally, he was fond of the email addresses derived from it, such as "e@x.com".<sup>[66]</sup> Although Musk founded the company, investors regarded him as inexperienced and replaced him with Intuit CEO Bill Harris by the end of the year.<sup>[69]</sup>

In 2000, X.com merged with the online bank Confinity to avoid competition,<sup>[58][69][70]</sup> as the latter's money-transfer service PayPal was more popular than X.com's service.<sup>[71]</sup> Musk then returned as CEO of the merged company. His preference for Microsoft- over Unix-based software caused a rift among the company's employees, and eventually led Confinity co-founder Peter Thiel to resign.<sup>[72]</sup> With the company suffering from compounding technological issues and the lack of a cohesive business model, the board ousted Musk and replaced him with Thiel in September 2000.<sup>[73][a]</sup> Under Thiel, the company focused on the money-transfer service and was renamed PayPal in 2001.<sup>[75][76]</sup>

In 2002, PayPal was acquired by eBay for \$1.5 billion in stock, of which Musk—PayPal's largest shareholder with 11.7% of shares—received \$176 million.<sup>[77][78]</sup> In 2017, more than 15 years later, Musk purchased the X.com domain from PayPal for its "sentimental value".<sup>[79][80]</sup> In 2022, Musk discussed a goal of creating "X, the everything app".<sup>[81]</sup>

## SpaceX

In early 2001, Musk became involved with the nonprofit Mars Society and discussed funding plans to place a growth-chamber for plants on Mars.<sup>[82]</sup> In October of the same year, he traveled to Moscow, Russia with Jim Cantrell, Adeo Ressi, and future NASA Administrator Michael D. Griffin<sup>[83]</sup> to buy refurbished intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that could send the greenhouse payloads into space. He met with the companies NPO Lavochkin and Kosmotras; however, Musk was seen as a novice<sup>[84]</sup> and the group returned to the United States without an agreement to purchase Russian launch services. 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. He instead decided to start a company that could build affordable rockets.<sup>[84]</sup> With \$100 million of his own money,<sup>[85]</sup> Musk founded SpaceX in May 2002 and became the company's CEO and chief engineer.<sup>[86][87]</sup>

SpaceX attempted its first launch of the Falcon 1 rocket in 2006.<sup>[88]</sup> Although the rocket failed to reach Earth orbit, it was awarded a Commercial Orbital Transportation Services program contract from NASA, now led by Michael D. Griffin as Administrator.<sup>[89][90]</sup> After two more failed attempts that nearly caused Musk and his companies to go bankrupt,<sup>[88]</sup> SpaceX succeeded in launching the Falcon 1 into



Then-NASA Administrator Charles Bolden congratulating Musk by the SpaceX Dragon following its 2012 mission



orbit in 2008.<sup>[91]</sup> Later that year, SpaceX received a \$1.6 billion Commercial Resupply Services contract from NASA for 12 flights of its Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon spacecraft to the International Space Station (ISS), replacing the Space Shuttle after its 2011 retirement.<sup>[92]</sup> In 2012, the Dragon vehicle docked with the ISS, a first for a commercial spacecraft.<sup>[93]</sup>



Musk examining F9R Dev1 debris in 2014

Working towards its goal of reusable rockets, in 2015 SpaceX successfully landed the first stage of a Falcon 9 on a land platform.<sup>[94]</sup> Later landings were achieved on autonomous spaceport drone ships, an ocean-based recovery platform.<sup>[95]</sup> In 2018, SpaceX launched the Falcon Heavy; the inaugural mission carried Musk's personal Tesla Roadster as a dummy payload.<sup>[96][97]</sup>

Since 2019,<sup>[98]</sup> SpaceX has been developing Starship, a fully-reusable, super-heavy-lift launch vehicle intended to replace the Falcon 9 and the Falcon Heavy.<sup>[99]</sup> In 2020, SpaceX launched its first crewed flight, the Demo-2, becoming the first private company to place astronauts into orbit and dock a crewed spacecraft with the ISS.<sup>[100]</sup> In 2024, NASA awarded SpaceX an \$843 million contract to deorbit the ISS at the end of its lifespan.<sup>[101]</sup>

## Starlink

In 2015, SpaceX began development of the Starlink constellation of low-Earth-orbit satellites to provide satellite Internet access.<sup>[102]</sup> 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.<sup>[103]</sup> The total cost of the decade-long project to design, build, and deploy the constellation was estimated by SpaceX in 2020 to be \$10 billion.<sup>[104][b]</sup> Some critics, including the International Astronomical Union, have alleged that Starlink blocks the view of the sky and poses a collision threat to spacecraft.<sup>[107][108][109]</sup>



50 Starlink satellites shortly before deployment to low Earth orbit, 2019

During the March 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Musk sent Starlink terminals to Ukraine to provide Internet access and communication.<sup>[110]</sup> In October 2022, Musk stated that about 20,000 satellite terminals had been donated to Ukraine, together with free data transfer subscriptions, which cost SpaceX \$80 million. After asking the United States Department of Defense to pay for further units and future subscriptions on behalf of Ukraine,<sup>[111]</sup> Musk publicly stated that SpaceX would continue to provide Starlink to Ukraine for free, at a yearly cost to itself of \$400 million.<sup>[112][113][114]</sup> At the same time, Musk refused to block Russian state media on Starlink, declaring himself "a free speech absolutist".<sup>[115][116]</sup>

In September 2023, Ukraine asked for the activation of Starlink satellites over Crimea to attack Russian naval vessels located at the port Sevastopol; Musk denied the request, citing concerns that Russia would respond with a nuclear attack.<sup>[117][118][119]</sup>

## Tesla

Tesla, Inc., originally Tesla Motors, was incorporated in July 2003 by Martin Eberhard and Marc Tarpenning. Both men played active roles in the company's early development prior to Musk's involvement.<sup>[120]</sup> Musk led the Series A round of investment in February 2004; he invested \$6.35 million, became the majority shareholder, and joined Tesla's board of directors as chairman.<sup>[121][122]</sup> Musk took an active role within the company and oversaw Roadster product design, but was not deeply involved in day-to-day business operations.<sup>[123]</sup>



Musk next to a Tesla Model S, 2011

Following a series of escalating conflicts in 2007, and the financial crisis of 2007–2008, Eberhard was ousted from the firm.<sup>[124][125]</sup> Musk assumed leadership of the company as CEO and product architect in 2008.<sup>[126]</sup> A 2009 lawsuit settlement with Eberhard designated Musk as a Tesla co-founder, along with Tarpenning and two others.<sup>[127][128]</sup> As of 2019, Musk was the longest-tenured CEO of any automotive manufacturer globally.<sup>[129]</sup> In 2021, Musk nominally changed his title to "Technoking" while retaining his position as CEO.<sup>[130]</sup>



Musk before a Model X at the 2014 Tesla Inc. annual shareholder meeting

Tesla began delivery of the Roadster, an electric sports car, in 2008. With sales of about 2,500 vehicles, it was the first serial production all-electric car to use lithium-ion battery cells.<sup>[131]</sup> Tesla began delivery of its four-door Model S sedan in 2012.<sup>[132]</sup> A crossover, the Model X was launched in 2015.<sup>[133]</sup> A mass-market sedan, the Model 3, was released in 2017.<sup>[134]</sup> In 2020, the Model 3 became the all-time bestselling plug-in electric car worldwide, and in June 2021 it became the first electric car to sell 1 million units globally.<sup>[135][136]</sup> A fifth vehicle, the Model Y crossover, was launched in 2020, and in December 2023, became the best-selling vehicle of any type,<sup>[137]</sup> as well as the all-time best-selling electric car.<sup>[138]</sup> The Cybertruck, an all-electric pickup

truck, was unveiled in 2019,<sup>[139]</sup> and delivered in November 2023.<sup>[140]</sup> Under Musk, Tesla has also constructed multiple lithium-ion battery and electric vehicle factories, named Gigafactories.<sup>[141]</sup>

Since its initial public offering in 2010,<sup>[142]</sup> Tesla stock has risen significantly; it became the most valuable carmaker in summer 2020,<sup>[143][144]</sup> and it entered the S&P 500 later that year.<sup>[145][146]</sup> In October 2021, it reached a market capitalization of \$1 trillion, the sixth company in US history to do so.<sup>[147]</sup> In November 2021, Musk proposed on Twitter to sell some of his Tesla stock.<sup>[148]</sup> After more than 3.5 million Twitter accounts supported the sale, Musk sold \$6.9 billion of Tesla stock within a week,<sup>[148]</sup> and a total of \$16.4 billion by year end, reaching the 10% target.<sup>[149]</sup> In February 2022, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that both Musk and his brother Kimbal were under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for possible insider trading related to the sale.<sup>[150]</sup> In 2022, Musk unveiled Optimus, a robot being developed by Tesla.<sup>[151]</sup> In June 2023, Musk met with Indian prime minister Narendra Modi in New York City, stating he was interested in investing in India "as soon as humanly possible".<sup>[152]</sup>

## SEC and shareholder lawsuits regarding tweets

In 2018, Musk was sued by the SEC for a tweet stating that funding had been secured for potentially taking Tesla private.<sup>[153][c]</sup> The lawsuit characterized the tweet as false, misleading, and damaging to investors, and sought to bar Musk from serving as CEO of publicly traded companies.<sup>[153][157][158]</sup> 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.<sup>[159]</sup> Shareholders filed a lawsuit over the tweet,<sup>[160]</sup> and in February 2023, a jury found Musk and Tesla not liable.<sup>[161]</sup> Musk has stated in interviews that he does not regret posting the tweet that triggered the SEC investigation.<sup>[162][163]</sup>

In 2019, Musk stated in a tweet that Tesla would build half a million cars that year.<sup>[164]</sup> The SEC reacted by asking a court to hold him in contempt for violating the terms of the 2018 settlement agreement. A joint agreement between Musk and the SEC eventually clarified the previous agreement details,<sup>[165]</sup> including a list of topics about which Musk needed preclearance.<sup>[166]</sup> In 2020, a judge blocked a lawsuit that claimed a tweet by Musk regarding Tesla stock price ("too high imo") violated the agreement.<sup>[167][168]</sup> Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)-released records showed that the SEC concluded Musk had subsequently violated the agreement twice by tweeting regarding "Tesla's solar roof production volumes and its stock price".<sup>[169]</sup>

## SolarCity and Tesla Energy

Musk provided the initial concept and financial capital for SolarCity, which his cousins Lyndon and Peter Rive founded in 2006.<sup>[170]</sup> By 2013, SolarCity was the second largest provider of solar power systems in the United States.<sup>[171]</sup> In 2014, Musk promoted the idea of SolarCity building an advanced production facility in Buffalo, New York, triple the size of the largest solar plant in the United States.<sup>[172]</sup> Construction of the factory started in 2014 and was completed in 2017. It operated as a joint venture with Panasonic until early 2020.<sup>[173][174]</sup>



SolarCity solar-panel installation vans in 2009

Tesla acquired SolarCity for \$2 billion in 2016 and merged it with its battery unit to create Tesla Energy. The deal's announcement resulted in a more than 10% drop in Tesla's stock price; at the time, SolarCity was facing liquidity issues.<sup>[175]</sup> Multiple shareholder groups filed a lawsuit against Musk and Tesla's directors, stating that the purchase of SolarCity was done solely to benefit Musk and came at the expense of Tesla and its shareholders.<sup>[176][177]</sup> Tesla directors settled the lawsuit in January 2020, leaving Musk the sole remaining defendant.<sup>[178][179]</sup> Two years later, the court ruled in Musk's favor.<sup>[180]</sup>

## Neuralink

In 2016, Musk co-founded Neuralink, a neurotechnology startup company, with an investment of \$100 million.<sup>[181][182]</sup> Neuralink aims to integrate the human brain with artificial intelligence (AI) by creating devices that are embedded in the brain. Such technology could enhance memory or allow the devices to communicate with software.<sup>[182][183]</sup> The company also hopes to develop devices with which to treat neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and spinal cord injuries.<sup>[184]</sup>



In 2019, Musk announced work on a device akin to a sewing machine that could embed threads into a human brain.<sup>[181]</sup> In an October 2019 paper that detailed some of Neuralink's research,<sup>[185]</sup> Musk was listed as the sole author, which rankled Neuralink researchers.<sup>[186]</sup> At a 2020 live demonstration, Musk described one of their early devices as "a Fitbit in your skull" that could soon cure paralysis, deafness, blindness, and other disabilities. Many neuroscientists and publications criticized these claims,<sup>[187][188][189]</sup> with *MIT Technology Review* describing them as "highly speculative" and "neuroscience theater".<sup>[187]</sup> During the demonstration, Musk revealed a pig with a Neuralink implant that tracked neural activity related to smell.<sup>[184]</sup> In 2022, Neuralink announced that clinical trials would begin by the end of the year.<sup>[190]</sup>



Musk discussing a Neuralink device during a live demonstration in 2020

Neuralink has conducted further animal testing on macaque monkeys at the University of California, Davis' Primate Research Center. In 2021, the company released a video in which a Macaque played the video game Pong via a Neuralink implant. The company's animal trials—which have caused the deaths of some monkeys—have led to claims of animal cruelty. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine has alleged that Neuralink's animal trials have violated the Animal Welfare Act.<sup>[191]</sup> Employees have complained that pressure from Musk to accelerate development has led to botched experiments and unnecessary animal deaths. In 2022, a federal probe was launched into possible animal welfare violations by Neuralink.<sup>[192]</sup> In September 2023, the Food and Drug Administration approved Neuralink to initiate human trials, and it plans to conduct a six-year study.<sup>[193]</sup>

## The Boring Company

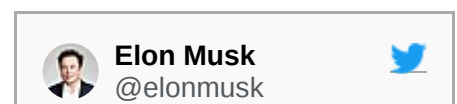
In 2017, Musk founded The Boring Company to construct tunnels, and revealed plans for specialized, underground, high-occupancy vehicles that could travel up to 150 miles per hour (240 km/h) and thus circumvent above-ground traffic in major cities.<sup>[194][195]</sup> Early in 2017, the company began 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 that required no permits.<sup>[196]</sup> The Los Angeles tunnel, less than two miles (3.2 km) in length, debuted to journalists in 2018. It used Tesla Model Xs and was reported to be a rough ride while traveling at suboptimal speeds.<sup>[197]</sup>



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

Two tunnel projects announced in 2018, in Chicago and West Los Angeles, have been canceled.<sup>[198][199]</sup> However, a tunnel beneath the Las Vegas Convention Center was completed in early 2021.<sup>[200]</sup> Local officials have approved further expansions of the tunnel system.<sup>[201]</sup>

## Twitter / X



Musk expressed interest in buying Twitter as early as 2017,<sup>[203]</sup> and had questioned the platform's commitment to freedom of speech.<sup>[204][205]</sup> Additionally, his ex-wife Talulah Riley had urged him to buy Twitter to stop the "woke-ism".<sup>[206]</sup> In January 2022, Musk started purchasing Twitter shares, reaching a 9.2% stake by April,<sup>[207]</sup> making him the largest shareholder.<sup>[208][d]</sup> When this was publicly disclosed, Twitter shares experienced the largest intraday price surge since the company's 2013 initial public offering.<sup>[210]</sup> On April 4, Musk agreed to a deal that would appoint him to Twitter's board of directors and prohibit him from acquiring more than 14.9% of the company.<sup>[211][212]</sup> However, on April 13, Musk made a \$43 billion offer to buy Twitter, launching a takeover bid to buy 100% of Twitter's stock at \$54.20 per share.<sup>[208][213]</sup> In response, Twitter's board adopted a "poison pill" shareholder rights plan to make it more expensive for any single investor to own more than 15% of the company without board approval.<sup>[214]</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of the month Musk had successfully concluded his bid for approximately \$44 billion.<sup>[215]</sup> This included about \$12.5 billion in loans against his Tesla stock and \$21 billion in equity financing.<sup>[216][217]</sup>

I made an offer  
[\(https://sec.gov/Archives/edgar\)](https://sec.gov/Archives/edgar)  
([https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/0001418091/000110465922045641/tm2212748d1\\_sc13da.htm](https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/0001418091/000110465922045641/tm2212748d1_sc13da.htm))

April 14, 2022<sup>[202]</sup>

Tesla's stock market value sank by over \$100 billion the next day in reaction to the deal.<sup>[218][219]</sup> He subsequently tweeted to his 86 million followers criticism of Twitter executive Vijaya Gadde's policies, which led to some of them engaging in sexist and racist harassment against her.<sup>[220]</sup> Exactly a month after announcing the takeover, Musk stated that the deal was "on hold" following a report that 5% of Twitter's daily active users were spam accounts.<sup>[221]</sup> Although he initially affirmed his commitment to the acquisition,<sup>[222]</sup> he sent notification of his termination of the deal in July; Twitter's board of directors responded that they were committed to holding him to the transaction.<sup>[223]</sup> On July 12, 2022, Twitter formally sued Musk in the Chancery Court of Delaware for breaching a legally binding agreement to purchase Twitter.<sup>[224]</sup> In October 2022, Musk reversed again, offering to purchase Twitter at \$54.20 per share.<sup>[225]</sup> The acquisition was officially completed on October 27.<sup>[226]</sup>

Immediately after the acquisition, Musk fired several top Twitter executives including CEO Parag Agrawal.<sup>[226][227]</sup> Musk became the CEO instead.<sup>[228]</sup> He instituted a \$7.99 monthly subscription for a "blue check",<sup>[229][230][231]</sup> and laid off a significant portion of the company's staff.<sup>[232][233]</sup> Musk lessened content moderation, including reinstating accounts like The Babylon Bee.<sup>[234][235]</sup> The Southern Poverty Law Center noted that Twitter has verified numerous extremists;<sup>[236]</sup> hate speech also increased on the platform after his takeover.<sup>[237][238]</sup>

In December 2022, Musk released internal documents relating to Twitter's moderation of Hunter Biden's laptop controversy in the leadup to the 2020 presidential election.<sup>[239]</sup> Comments on these internal documents by journalists Matt Taibbi, Bari Weiss, Michael Shellenberger and others were posted on Twitter as the Twitter Files. Musk and many Republicans alleged the documents showed the FBI had engaged in government censorship by ordering Twitter to suppress a New York Post story about the laptop. Upon review of the documents, Taibbi said he had found no evidence to support the allegation, and Twitter attorneys denied the allegation in a subsequent court filing.<sup>[240][241]</sup> The United States House Committee on the Judiciary held hearings on the Twitter Files on March 9, 2023, at which Taibbi and Shellenberger gave testimony.<sup>[242]</sup>

In late 2022, Musk promised to step down as CEO after a Twitter poll posted by Musk found that a majority of users wanted him to do so.<sup>[243][244]</sup> Five months later, Musk stepped down from CEO and placed former NBCUniversal executive Linda Yaccarino in the position and transitioned his role to executive chairman and chief technology officer.<sup>[245]</sup>

On November 20, 2023, in a U.S. District Court in Texas, X filed a lawsuit stating that Media Matters "manipulated" the X platform, in that it used accounts that followed major brands, and "resorted to endlessly scrolling and refreshing" the feed until it found ads next to extremist posts.<sup>[246]</sup>

The Wall Street Journal reported in August 2024 that the \$13 billion Musk borrowed to buy Twitter "is now considered the worst deal in merger finance that banks have participated in since the 2008 to '09 financial crisis", adding that "the allure of banking Elon Musk, providing capital for him to buy a company, not only would reward them handsomely if things went according to plan" but "you can certainly say things have not gone according to plan".<sup>[247]</sup> The Washington Post reported in September 2024 that the company had lost \$24 billion in equity value, "a vaporization of wealth that has little parallel outside the realm of economic or industry-specific crashes, or devastating corporate scandals".<sup>[248]</sup> Two years after the acquisition, Fidelity Investments estimated the value of its stake in X that implied the company had lost 79% of its value.<sup>[249]</sup>

## Leadership style



Musk giving a speech to SpaceX employees in 2012

Musk is often described as a micromanager and has called himself a "nano-manager".<sup>[250]</sup> The New York Times has characterized his approach as absolutist.<sup>[251]</sup> Musk does not make formal business plans.<sup>[251]</sup> He has forced employees to adopt the company's own jargon and launched ambitious, risky, and costly projects against his advisors' recommendations, such as removing front-facing radar from Tesla Autopilot. His insistence on vertical integration causes his companies to move most production in-house. While this resulted in saved costs for SpaceX's rocket,<sup>[252]</sup> vertical integration (as of 2018) has caused many usability problems for Tesla's internal corporate software.<sup>[250]</sup>

Musk's handling of employees—whom he communicates with directly through mass emails—has been characterized as "carrot and stick", rewarding those "who offer constructive criticism" while also being known to impulsively threaten, swear at, and fire his employees.<sup>[253][254][255]</sup> Musk said he expects his employees to work for long hours, sometimes 80 hours per week.<sup>[256]</sup> He has his new employees sign strict non-disclosure agreements and often fires in sprees,<sup>[257][255]</sup> such as during the Model 3 "production hell" in 2018.<sup>[255]</sup> In 2022, Musk revealed plans to fire 10 percent of Tesla's workforce, due to his concerns about the economy.<sup>[258]</sup> That same month, he suspended remote work at SpaceX and Tesla and threatened to fire employees who do not work 40 hours per week in the office.<sup>[259]</sup> He laid off more than 10 percent of the Tesla workforce in early 2024.

Musk's leadership has been praised by some, who credit it with the success of Tesla and his other endeavors,<sup>[250]</sup> and criticized by others, who see him as callous and his managerial decisions as "show[ing] a lack of human understanding".<sup>[255][260]</sup> The 2021 book Power Play contains anecdotes of

Musk berating employees.<sup>[261]</sup> *The Wall Street Journal* reported that, after Musk insisted on branding his vehicles as "self-driving", he faced criticism from his engineers for putting customer "lives at risk", with some employees resigning in 2017 in consequence.<sup>[262]</sup>

## Other activities

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### Musk Foundation

Musk is president of the Musk Foundation he founded in 2001,<sup>[263][264]</sup> whose stated purpose is to: provide solar-power energy systems in disaster areas; support research, development, and advocacy (for interests including human space exploration, pediatrics, renewable energy and "safe artificial intelligence"); and support science and engineering educational efforts.<sup>[265]</sup>

As of 2020, the foundation has made 350 donations. Around half of them were made to scientific research or education nonprofits. Notable beneficiaries include the Wikimedia Foundation, his alma mater the University of Pennsylvania, and his brother Kimbal's nonprofit Big Green.<sup>[266]</sup> From 2002 to 2018, the foundation gave \$25 million directly to nonprofit organizations, nearly half of which went to Musk's OpenAI,<sup>[267]</sup> which was a nonprofit at the time.<sup>[268]</sup> The Foundation also allocated \$100 million of donations to be used to establish a new higher education university in Texas.<sup>[269]</sup>

In 2012, Musk took the Giving Pledge, thereby committing to give the majority of his wealth to charitable causes either during his lifetime or in his will.<sup>[270]</sup> He has endowed prizes at the X Prize Foundation, including \$100 million to reward improved carbon capture technology.<sup>[271]</sup>

Vox said in February 2021, "the Musk Foundation is almost entertaining in its simplicity and yet is strikingly opaque", noting that its website was only 33 words in plain-text.<sup>[267]</sup> In 2020, *Forbes* gave Musk a philanthropy score of 1, because he had given away less than 1% of his net worth.<sup>[266]</sup> In November 2021, Musk donated \$5.7 billion of Tesla's shares to charity, according to regulatory filings.<sup>[272]</sup> However, Bloomberg News noted that all of it went to his own foundation, bringing Musk Foundation's assets up to \$9.4 billion at the end of 2021. The foundation disbursed \$160 million to nonprofits that year.<sup>[273]</sup> Reporting by *The New York Times* found that in 2022, the Musk Foundation gave away \$230 million less than the minimum required by law to maintain tax-deductible status, and that in 2021 and 2022 over half the foundation's funds went to causes connected to Musk, his family, or his businesses.<sup>[274]</sup>



Musk at a conference in 2024

### Hyperloop

In August 2013, Musk announced plans for a version of a vacuum tube train and assigned a dozen engineers from SpaceX and Tesla to establish the conceptual foundations and create initial designs.<sup>[275]</sup> Later that year, Musk unveiled the concept, which he dubbed the Hyperloop.<sup>[276]</sup> The alpha design for the



system was published in a whitepaper posted to the Tesla and SpaceX blogs.<sup>[277]</sup> 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, at an estimated cost of \$6 billion.<sup>[278]</sup> The proposal, if technologically feasible at the costs cited, would make Hyperloop travel cheaper than any other mode of transport for such long distances.<sup>[279]</sup> Biographer Ashlee Vance noted that Musk hoped Hyperloop would "make the public and legislators rethink the high-speed train" proposal current in California at the time and consider more "creative" ideas.<sup>[280]</sup>



A tube part of the 2017 Hyperloop pod competition sponsored by SpaceX

In 2015, Musk announced a design competition for students and others to build Hyperloop pods, to operate on a SpaceX-sponsored mile-long track, for a 2015–2017 Hyperloop pod competition. The track was used in January 2017, and Musk also announced that the company had started a tunnel project, with Hawthorne Municipal Airport as its destination.<sup>[281]</sup> In July 2017, Musk said that he had received "verbal government approval" to build a Hyperloop from New York City to Washington, D.C., with stops in Philadelphia and Baltimore.<sup>[282]</sup> Mention of the projected DC-to-Baltimore leg was removed from The Boring Company website in 2021.<sup>[283]</sup> The tunnel project to Hawthorne was discontinued in 2022 and is planned to be converted into parking spots for SpaceX workers.<sup>[284]</sup>

Mobility experts have criticized the Hyperloop concept for potential safety issues, planning complexity, low passenger capacity, and extremely high costs.<sup>[285][286]</sup> Jose Gomez-Ibanez, a professor of urban planning and public policy at Harvard, said, "It gives me pause to think that otherwise intelligent people are buying into this kind of utopian vision."<sup>[287]</sup>

## OpenAI and xAI

In December 2015, Musk co-founded OpenAI, a not-for-profit artificial intelligence (AI) research company aiming to develop artificial general intelligence intended to be safe and beneficial to humanity.<sup>[288]</sup> A particular focus of the company was to democratize artificial superintelligence systems, against governments and corporations.<sup>[24]</sup> Musk pledged \$1 billion of funding to OpenAI.<sup>[289]</sup> In 2023, Musk tweeted that he had ended up giving a total of \$100 million to OpenAI. TechCrunch later reported that, according to its own investigation of public records, "only \$15 million" of OpenAI's funding could be definitively traced to Musk. Musk subsequently stated that he had donated about \$50 million.<sup>[290]</sup>

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.<sup>[291]</sup> Since then, OpenAI has made significant advances in machine learning, producing neural networks such as ChatGPT (producing human-like text),<sup>[292]</sup> and DALL-E (generating digital images from natural language descriptions).<sup>[293]</sup>

On July 12, 2023, Elon Musk launched an artificial intelligence company called xAI, which aims to develop a generative AI program that competes with existing offerings like ChatGPT. The company hired engineers from Google and OpenAI.<sup>[294]</sup> Musk obtained funding from investors in SpaceX and Tesla.<sup>[295]</sup>

On February 29, 2024, Musk sued OpenAI, its Chief Executive Sam Altman, and its President Greg Brockman. He accused the company of violating its founding agreement by prioritizing profits over AI safety.<sup>[296]</sup>

## Tham Luang cave rescue and defamation case

In July 2018, Musk arranged for his employees to build a mini-submarine to assist the rescue of children trapped in a flooded cavern in Thailand.<sup>[297]</sup> Richard Stanton, leader of the international rescue diving team, encouraged Musk to facilitate the construction of the vehicle as a backup in case flooding worsened. However, Stanton concluded that the mini-submarine would not work and said that Musk's involvement "distracted from the rescue effort".<sup>[298]</sup> Engineers at SpaceX and The Boring Company built the mini-submarine from a Falcon 9 liquid oxygen transfer tube in eight hours and personally delivered it to Thailand.<sup>[299][300]</sup> Thai authorities ultimately declined to use the submarine, stating that it wasn't practical for the rescue mission.<sup>[297][301]</sup> In March 2019, Musk was one of the 187 people who received various honors conferred by the King of Thailand for involvement in the rescue effort.<sup>[302]</sup>

Soon after the rescue, Vernon Unsworth, a British recreational caver who had been exploring the cave for the previous six years and played a key advisory role in the operation, criticized the submarine on CNN as amounting to nothing more than a public relations effort with no chance of success, maintaining 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 a "pedo guy".<sup>[303]</sup> He then deleted the tweets,<sup>[303]</sup> apologized,<sup>[304]</sup> and deleted his responses to critical tweets from Cher Scarlett, a software engineer, which had caused his followers to harass her.<sup>[305]</sup> In an email to BuzzFeed News, Musk later called Unsworth a "child rapist" and said that he had married a child.<sup>[306][307]</sup>

In September, Unsworth filed a defamation suit seeking \$190 million in damages.<sup>[308][309][310]</sup> In his defense, Musk argued that, "'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."<sup>[32]</sup> During the trial Musk apologized to Unsworth again for the tweet. In December 2019, the jury ruled that Musk was not liable.<sup>[311][312]</sup>

## 2018 cannabis incident

In September 2018, Musk was interviewed on The Joe Rogan Experience podcast, during which he appeared to smoke a joint.<sup>[313]</sup> In 2022, Musk said that he and other SpaceX employees had subsequently been required to undergo random drug tests for about a year following the incident, as required by the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 for Federal contractors.<sup>[314]</sup> In a 2019 60 Minutes interview, Musk had said, "I do not smoke pot. As anybody who watched that podcast could tell, I have no idea how to smoke pot."<sup>[315]</sup>

## Music

In March 2019, Musk, through his own label Emo G Records, released a rap track, "RIP Harambe", on SoundCloud.<sup>[316][317]</sup> The track refers to the killing of Harambe the gorilla and the subsequent Internet sensationalism surrounding the event.<sup>[318]</sup> The following year, Musk released an EDM track, "Don't

Doubt Ur Vibe", featuring his own lyrics and vocals.<sup>[319]</sup> While *Guardian* critic Alexi Petridis described it as "indistinguishable... from umpteen competent but unthrilling bits of bedroom electronica posted elsewhere on SoundCloud",<sup>[320]</sup> TechCrunch said it was "not a bad representation of the genre".<sup>[319]</sup>

## Private jet

Musk uses a private jet owned by Falcon Landing LLC, a SpaceX-linked company, and acquired a second jet in August 2020.<sup>[321][322]</sup> His heavy use of the jets—which flew over 150,000 miles in 2018 alone—and the consequent fossil fuel usage has received criticism.<sup>[321][323]</sup> Musk's flight usage is tracked on social media through ElonJet. After Musk said that his son X AE A-XII had been harassed by a stalker after the account posted the airport at which his jet had landed,<sup>[324][325][326]</sup> Musk banned the ElonJet account on Twitter, as well as the accounts of journalists that posted stories regarding the incident, including Donie O'Sullivan, Keith Olbermann, and journalists from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, and *The Intercept*.<sup>[327]</sup> Musk equated the reporting to doxxing.<sup>[328]</sup> Police do not believe there is a link between the account and alleged stalker.<sup>[329]</sup> Musk later took a Twitter poll on whether the journalists' accounts should be reinstated, which resulted in reinstating the accounts.<sup>[330]</sup>

## Company towns

After 2020, thousands of acres of land just outside Austin, Texas, were acquired by Musk and his companies with a total value of \$2.5 billion.<sup>[331][332]</sup> The project to build the company town named Snailbrook in Bastrop County, Texas began in 2021 according to reports by *The Wall Street Journal*.<sup>[333]</sup> Musk's then-girlfriend Grimes and Kanye West were involved in the planning.<sup>[333]</sup> The name "Snailbrook" alludes to The Boring Company's stated goal of building a machine that can bore tunnels faster than a snail can move.<sup>[333]</sup> In 2023 the town had a reported population of 12 people.<sup>[334]</sup> There are plans to establish a school and a university there.<sup>[331]</sup>

## Wealth

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Musk was first listed on the *Forbes Billionaires List* in 2012, with a net worth of \$2 billion.<sup>[335]</sup>

## Personal actions, views, and social media usage

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Musk credits science fiction writers, particularly Robert A. Heinlein, for inspiring many of his personal views and business ventures, including SpaceX, Grok, and his libertarian inclinations.<sup>[336][337]</sup> Since joining Twitter (now known as X) in 2009,<sup>[338]</sup> Musk has been an active user and has over 163 million followers as of November 2023.<sup>[339]</sup> He posts memes, promotes business interests, and comments on contemporary political and cultural issues.<sup>[340]</sup> Musk's statements have provoked controversy, such as for mocking preferred gender pronouns<sup>[341][342]</sup> and comparing Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau to Adolf Hitler.<sup>[343]</sup>

*The New York Times* describes his contributions to international relations as "chaotic", and critics of Musk argue that there is a lack of separation between his opinions and his business interests.<sup>[344]</sup> As CEO of Twitter, Musk emerged as a source of misinformation and right-wing conspiracy theories, for example by

suggesting online details about mass murderer Mauricio Garcia's apparent interest in Nazism could have been planted as part of a psyop.<sup>[345]</sup> Allegations of him being transphobic appeared as well in response to actions taken by Twitter under his guidance.<sup>[346][347]</sup>

## Finance

Musk said that the US government should not provide subsidies to companies, but impose a carbon tax to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>[348][349]</sup> The free market, in his view, would achieve the best solution, and producing environmentally unfriendly vehicles should have consequences.<sup>[350]</sup>

Tesla has received billions of dollars in subsidies.<sup>[351]</sup> As of February 2024, Tesla has made \$9 billion from government-initiated systems of zero-emissions credits.<sup>[352]</sup> Tax credits offered in California, at the United States federal level, and by other governments have enabled Tesla's battery electric vehicles to be price-competitive in comparison with internal combustion engine vehicles and facilitated initial consumer adoption of Tesla vehicles.<sup>[353]</sup>

Musk, a longtime opponent of short-selling, has repeatedly criticized the practice and argued it should be illegal.<sup>[354][355]</sup> *Wired* magazine speculated that Musk's opposition to short-selling stems from how short sellers have an incentive to find and promote unfavorable information about his companies.<sup>[356]</sup> In early 2021, he encouraged the GameStop short squeeze.<sup>[357][358]</sup>

In December 2022, Musk sold \$3.6 billion of his stock in Tesla, equal to 22 million shares in the company,<sup>[359]</sup> despite pledging earlier in the year that he would not sell any additional shares.<sup>[360]</sup>

## Technology

Musk has promoted cryptocurrencies and supports them over traditional government-issued fiat currencies.<sup>[361]</sup> Given the influence of Musk's tweets in moving cryptocurrency markets,<sup>[362]</sup> his statements about cryptocurrencies have been viewed as market manipulation by some, such as economist Nouriel Roubini.<sup>[363]</sup> Musk's social media praising of Bitcoin and Dogecoin was credited for increasing their prices. Consequently, Tesla's 2021 announcement, against the backdrop of Musk's social media behavior, that it bought \$1.5 billion worth of Bitcoin, raised questions.<sup>[364]</sup> Tesla's announcement that it would accept Bitcoin for payment was criticized by environmentalists and investors, due to the environmental impact of cryptocurrency mining. A few months later, in response to the criticism, Musk announced on Twitter that Tesla would no longer accept payments in Bitcoin and would not engage in any Bitcoin transactions until the environmental issues are solved.<sup>[365][366]</sup>

Despite The Boring Company's involvement in building mass transit infrastructure, Musk has criticized public transport and promoted individualized transport (private vehicles).<sup>[367][368][369]</sup> His comments have been called "elitist" and have sparked widespread criticism from both transportation and urban planning experts, who have pointed out that public transportation in dense urban areas is more economical, more energy efficient, and requires much less space than private cars.<sup>[368][370][369]</sup>

## Existential threats

Musk has been described as believing in longtermism, emphasizing the needs of future populations.<sup>[371]</sup> Accordingly, Musk has stated that artificial intelligence poses the greatest existential threat to humanity.<sup>[372][373]</sup> He has warned of a "Terminator-like" AI apocalypse and suggested that the





Musk giving details about Falcon 9 and Dragon spacecraft at the 2006 Mars Society Conference

government should regulate its safe development.<sup>[374][375]</sup> In 2015, Musk was a cosignatory, along with Stephen Hawking and hundreds of others, of the Open Letter on Artificial Intelligence, which called for the ban of autonomous weapons.<sup>[376]</sup> Musk's AI stances have been called alarmist and sensationalist by critics such as computer scientist Yann LeCun and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg,<sup>[377][378]</sup> and led the think tank Information Technology and Innovation Foundation to award Musk its Annual Luddite Award in 2016.<sup>[379]</sup>

Musk has described climate change as the greatest threat to humanity after AI,<sup>[380]</sup> and has advocated for a carbon tax.<sup>[381]</sup>

Musk was a critic of President Donald Trump's stance on climate change,<sup>[382][383]</sup> and resigned from two presidential business advisory councils following Trump's 2017 decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement.<sup>[384]</sup> In 2021, Musk donated \$100 million to fund a competition for new carbon removal ideas.<sup>[385]</sup> However, Musk's lifestyle has been criticized for high greenhouse gas emissions,<sup>[386]</sup> and SpaceX has been found violating environmental regulations by repeatedly polluting waters in Texas.<sup>[387][388]</sup> In an interview with Trump in August 2024, in the lead-up to the 2024 United States presidential election, Musk tried to educate Trump on climate change,<sup>[389]</sup> supporting solar and nuclear energy,<sup>[390]</sup> but chose not to challenge Trump's dismissive remarks on the issue.<sup>[391][392]</sup> In the same interview, Musk stated that the economy would collapse without oil and gas, repeating previous statements that it was wrong to "vilify" the oil and gas industries.<sup>[390][393][394][395]</sup>

Musk has long promoted the colonization of Mars and argues that humanity should become a "multiplanetary species".<sup>[396]</sup> He has suggested the use of nuclear weapons to terraform Mars.<sup>[397][398]</sup> He envisioned establishing a direct democracy on Mars, with a system in which more votes would be required to create laws than remove them.<sup>[399]</sup> Musk has also voiced concerns about human population decline,<sup>[400][401]</sup> saying that, "Mars has zero human population. We need a lot of people to become a multiplanet civilization."<sup>[402]</sup> Speaking at *The Wall Street Journal*'s CEO Council session in 2021, Musk claimed that the supposedly declining birth rate, and consequent population decline, is one of the biggest risks to human civilization.<sup>[403]</sup> According to anonymous sources inside SpaceX speaking with *The New York Times*, Musk has repeatedly volunteered his sperm to help colonize Mars.<sup>[404]</sup> He denied the claim.<sup>[405]</sup>

## Politics

By early 2024, Musk had become a vocal and financial supporter of Donald Trump.<sup>[406]</sup> By October 2024, he was Trump's second-largest individual 2024 presidential campaign donor.<sup>[407]</sup> Musk's views are generally described as right-wing and conservative.<sup>[408][409][410][411][412]</sup> While previously considered relatively apolitical and moderate, he has since shifted to the right and become more vocal about his views, notably since acquiring Twitter in 2022.<sup>[413]</sup> He is an outlier among social media executives who typically avoid partisan political advocacy. Musk has shared far-right misinformation<sup>[414][415][416]</sup> and numerous conspiracy theories.<sup>[417][418]</sup> Despite this, Musk still describes himself as politically moderate, rejecting the conservative label.<sup>[419]</sup>

Musk was a registered independent voter when he lived in California. Historically, he has donated to both Democrats and Republicans.<sup>[420]</sup> many of whom are in states in which he has a vested interest.<sup>[421]</sup> Beginning in the late 2010s, his political contributions have shifted almost entirely to supporting Republicans.<sup>[422]</sup>

Musk voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 US presidential election.<sup>[423]</sup> In the 2020 Democratic Party presidential primaries, Musk endorsed candidate Andrew Yang and expressed support for his proposed universal basic income.<sup>[424]</sup> He also endorsed Kanye West's 2020 presidential campaign.<sup>[425]</sup> He said he voted for Joe Biden in the 2020 US presidential election.<sup>[426]</sup> In May 2022, Musk said that he could "no longer support" the Democrats because they are the "party of division & hate",<sup>[427][428]</sup> and wrote a tweet encouraging "independent-minded voters" to vote Republican in the 2022 US elections.<sup>[429][430]</sup> That fall he gave over \$50 million to Citizens for Sanity, a conservative political action committee that ran advertisements in swing states attacking Democrats on issues such as transgender care and illegal immigration.<sup>[431]</sup> He has supported Republican Ron DeSantis for the 2024 US presidential election, giving \$10 million to the campaign in 2023,<sup>[431]</sup> and hosted DeSantis's campaign announcement on a Twitter Spaces event.<sup>[432][433][434]</sup> In August 2023, Musk suggested Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy should be the vice presidential candidate on the Republican ticket.<sup>[435]</sup>



Musk with Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Mike Johnson and President-elect Donald Trump on November 16, 2024

After the attempted assassination of Donald Trump, Musk wished Trump a speedy recovery and endorsed him for president.<sup>[436][437]</sup> In a July 2024 post on X, Musk shared a deepfake video of Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump's opponent in the 2024 presidential election, which appeared to show Harris saying she was the "ultimate diversity hire" and did not know how to manage the United States.<sup>[438]</sup> Musk wrote that the video was "amazing" and did not reveal that it was edited, despite X prohibiting "synthetic, manipulated" content "that may deceive".<sup>[438]</sup> In August 2024, Musk and Trump spoke for over two hours on a livestream on X, in which Musk suggested that Trump create a government efficiency commission which he offered to serve on.<sup>[439]</sup> Trump said he would "love" to have Musk involved and later said he needed Musk's help to eliminate the Department of Education.<sup>[439]</sup> On September 15, 2024, after the second assassination attempt on Donald Trump, Musk wrote on X that it was odd that nobody had tried to kill Biden or Kamala Harris. He then deleted the post following widespread condemnation.<sup>[440]</sup> On September 19, the United States Secret Service announced that the agency was probing the post.<sup>[441]</sup> In October 2024, Musk joined Trump on stage at a campaign rally.<sup>[442]</sup> He has used his X account in support of Trump to repeatedly push falsehoods about immigration and voter fraud.<sup>[443][444]</sup> After becoming president-elect, Trump announced that Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy would advise a new Department of Government Efficiency.<sup>[445]</sup>

Musk opposes a "billionaire tax",<sup>[446]</sup> and has argued on Twitter with more left-leaning Democratic politicians such as Bernie Sanders,<sup>[447][448]</sup> Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,<sup>[449]</sup> and Elizabeth Warren.<sup>[450]</sup> He has raised questions about the Black Lives Matter protests, partially based on the fact that the phrase "Hands up, don't shoot" was made up.<sup>[451][452]</sup> Musk promoted a baseless theory relating to the attack of Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, but Musk deleted his tweet.<sup>[453]</sup> He also used X to spread disinformation and "election conspiracy theories" about the Federal Emergency Management Agency's

relief efforts for Hurricane Helene.<sup>[454]</sup> Musk repeatedly used his platform on X to promote the claim that Democrats had been "importing" immigrants to vote for them. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger requested that X remove a fabricated video purporting to show a Haitian immigrant who had voted multiple times. Musk complied, but the video had already gone viral.<sup>[455]</sup>

## Conservative PAC activities

In July 2024, Bloomberg reported that Musk donated an unknown sum to the pro-Donald Trump America PAC, a super PAC;<sup>[456]</sup> in a later interview, Musk clarified that he created America PAC.<sup>[457]</sup> In October 2024, a Federal Election Commission filing showed that Musk contributed almost \$75 million to his America PAC during the previous three months, and during that time, the PAC spent approximately \$72 million to support Trump's campaign.<sup>[458][459]</sup>

In October 2024, Musk promoted a sweepstakes conducted by his America PAC, offering to pay \$1 million per day to randomly selected registered voters in battleground states who signed a petition pledging support of the First and Second Amendments. Within days the U.S. Justice Department wrote America PAC warning that the sweepstakes might be illegal. Compensating people to register to vote violates federal law, and although registering to vote was not a condition to signing the petition, some legal analysts said the sweepstakes might induce people to register in order to participate. Musk's defenders said signing the petition did not specifically induce people to register, although he had previously said registering voters was one of his goals in Pennsylvania and had begun describing prize winners as America PAC "spokespeople".<sup>[460][461]</sup> After receiving the Justice Department's warning, Musk awarded two people \$1 million each.<sup>[462]</sup> On October 28, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, sued Musk and America PAC.<sup>[463]</sup> Although Musk had originally said that the prize would be "randomly" awarded, his lawyer argued that recipients "earn" the money after being "selected based on their suitability to serve as spokesperson for America PAC". After an all-day hearing on November 4, the day before Election Day, the judge ruled that Musk could continue his daily giveaway.<sup>[464]</sup>

Musk provided over \$50 million in 2022 to fund Citizens for Sanity, a group created by former Trump senior advisor Steven Miller to finance \$93 million in advertisements related to culture war issues. The New York Times and OpenSecrets reported in October 2024 that some of Musk's donations were routed through Building America's Future, a hub of a dark money network supporting Trump. Building America's Future created "Progress 2028", presented as the left's response to Project 2025, that promoted misinformation about the agenda of Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris. Musk has promoted the Fair Election Fund, which is heavily funded by Building America's Future, and offers rewards for evidence of election fraud. That group is heavily involved in America PAC, founded and funded exclusively by Musk.<sup>[465][466][467][468]</sup>

In October 2024, OpenSecrets, a nonprofit organization that tracks and publishes data on campaign finance and lobbying, reported that Musk and other donors had reportedly funneled over \$100 million into Building America's Future, a dark money network backing Donald Trump. This network operates Progress 2028, a campaign posing as a pro-Kamala Harris initiative but aimed at undermining her support by spreading divisive and misleading information.<sup>[469][470]</sup>

## International politics

Musk has praised China and has been described as having a close relationship with the Chinese government, allowing access to its markets for Tesla.<sup>[471]</sup> After Gigafactory Shanghai produced its first batch of vehicles, Musk thanked the Chinese government and Chinese people while criticizing the United States and its people.<sup>[472]:207–208</sup> In 2022, Musk wrote an article for *China Cyberspace*, the official publication of Cyberspace Administration of China, which enforces Internet censorship in China. His writing the article was described as conflicting with his advocacy for free speech.<sup>[473][474]</sup> Musk later advocated for Taiwan to become a "special administrative zone" of China which drew cross-party criticism from Taiwanese lawmakers.<sup>[475][476][477]</sup>

In October 2022, Musk posted a Twitter poll and "peace plan" to resolve the Russian invasion of Ukraine by allowing Russia to keep the Crimea Peninsula, while Ukraine would adopt a neutral status and drop the bid to join NATO.<sup>[478][479]</sup> It was reported that Musk allegedly spoke with Russian president Vladimir Putin prior to the proposal, which Musk denied.<sup>[480][481][482]</sup> Musk has repeatedly expressed concern that a protracted war between Russia and Ukraine could lead to the use of nuclear weapons and the outbreak of World War III.<sup>[483][484][485][486]</sup>

In a YouTube podcast interview on November 10, 2023, Musk criticized Israel's retaliatory actions in the Gaza Strip during the Israel– Hamas war, saying that Hamas "wanted to commit the worst atrocities that they could in order to provoke the most aggressive response possible from Israel". He added that, "if you kill somebody's child in Gaza, you have made at least a few Hamas members who will die just to kill an Israeli."<sup>[487]</sup> On November 17, 2023, Musk announced a policy change on the X platform, stating that X users who use terms such as "decolonization" and "from the river to the sea", or similar expressions that "necessarily imply genocide" of the Jewish people in Israel, will be suspended.<sup>[488]</sup> Several weeks later, Musk traveled to Israel where he toured with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu the kibbutz Kfar Aza, site of one of the worst atrocities during the 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel. He described the experience as "jarring".<sup>[489]</sup>



Musk with Israeli president Isaac Herzog in Jerusalem, November 27, 2023

In August 2024, Musk criticized UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer amid the riots taking place in that country, saying, "Shouldn't you be concerned about attacks on \*all\* communities?"<sup>[490]</sup> Responding to a tweet with footage of the disorder that said the riots were due to the "effects of mass migration and open borders", Musk tweeted, "Civil war is inevitable." His comments were condemned by Starmer's official spokesman. Musk had previously restored far-right UK activist Tommy Robinson's account (after Robinson had been banned under Twitter's previous owners) and interacted with him on the platform.<sup>[491][492][493][494]</sup> Musk went on to refer to Starmer as "two-tier Keir" and ask, "Why aren't all communities protected in Britain?"<sup>[495][496]</sup> Musk promoted a conspiracy theory that the UK government was planning to build detainment camps in the Falkland Islands to hold rioters.<sup>[497][498]</sup> In November 2024, he wrote that Britain was "going full Stalin" following the Labour government's decision to end the inheritance tax exemption on agricultural assets worth more than £1 million.<sup>[499]</sup> In December 2024, it was reported that Musk was planning to donate \$100 million to Nigel Farage's Reform UK party ahead of the next UK election, aiming to help Farage become Prime Minister. It was suggested that Musk could route the funds through X's UK branch to bypass donation laws.<sup>[500]</sup>



*The Wall Street Journal* reported in October 2024 that Musk had been in regular contact with Vladimir Putin, Sergey Kiriyenko, and other high ranking Russian government officials since late 2022, discussing personal topics, business and geopolitical matters. The Kremlin denied the report, stating Musk and Putin had spoken only once.<sup>[501][502]</sup> The *Journal* reported that in one instance Putin had asked Musk to avoid activating his Starlink satellite system over Taiwan, to appease Chinese president Xi Jinping, according to a former Russian intelligence officer briefed on the situation.<sup>[503]</sup> Bloomberg and others had also previously reported in July 2023 that communications between Taiwan and SpaceX had broken down over the ownership of Starlink's subsidiary in the country.<sup>[504][505]</sup> The communications with Putin were reported to be a closely held secret in government, given Musk's involvement in promoting the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump. One person said no alerts were raised by the US government, noting the dilemma of the government being dependent on Musk's technologies.<sup>[503]</sup> Democrat lawmakers and NASA administrator Bill Nelson stated that it should be investigated to find out if the report was accurate. "We should investigate what Elon Musk is up to to make sure that it is not to the detriment of the national security of the United States", elaborated Representative Adam Smith.<sup>[506]</sup> SpaceX officially responded via their X account stating, "Starlink is not available [in Taiwan] because Taiwan has not given us a license to operate, and regulators declined to remove a requirement that a foreign entity own 51% of Starlink to operate there. SpaceX has not accepted such a condition for any market in which it operates."<sup>[507]</sup>

## **Government advisory roles**

US president-elect Donald Trump announced on November 12, 2024 that Musk would become an inaugural leader of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), a governmental advisory body that will "slash excess regulations [and] cut wasteful expenditures". Vivek Ramaswamy would be tasked with leading the department alongside Musk.<sup>[508][509]</sup>

## **Accusations of antisemitism**

The Israeli government and several media outlets have accused Musk of sowing antisemitism due to his promotion of George Soros conspiracy theories,<sup>[510]</sup> although some Israeli officials defended Musk and denied that his criticism of Soros constituted antisemitism.<sup>[511]</sup>

On November 15, 2023, Twitter user Charles Weber, who identifies as a Jewish conservative, posted a video from StopJewishHate.org condemning the phrase "Hitler was right"; Weber captioned the video: "To the cowards hiding behind the anonymity of the internet and posting 'Hitler was right': You got something you want to say? Why don't you say it to our faces."<sup>[512][513]</sup> In response, a second user posted "Okay. Jewish communities have been pushing the exact kind of dialectical hatred against whites that they claim to want people to stop using against them. I'm deeply disinterested in giving the tiniest shit now about western Jewish populations coming to the disturbing realization that those hordes of minorities that support flooding their country don't exactly like them too much. You want truth said to your face, there it is." To this second user, Musk replied, "You have said the actual truth."<sup>[512][513]</sup> Musk further clarified that he doesn't believe that "all Jewish communities" hate white people, but specifically took aim at the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).<sup>[514]</sup> He added, "You [*sic*] right that this does not extend to all Jewish communities, but it is also not just limited to ADL."<sup>[515]</sup>

The first tweet was widely regarded as echoing white nationalist sentiments<sup>[516]</sup> and affirmed another antisemitic conspiracy theory that Jews push "hatred against Whites".<sup>[517][518]</sup> The following day, Musk made a tweet which critics regarded as supporting white pride.<sup>[519][520]</sup> Advertisers distanced themselves from his tweets.<sup>[521]</sup>

At the DealBook Summit on November 29, 2023, after comments from Disney CEO Bob Iger explaining his decision to stop advertising on X after Musk's recent post, journalist Andrew Ross Sorkin questioned Musk about the withdrawal of advertisers. Musk responded, "I hope they stop. Don't advertise" and "If somebody is going to try to blackmail me with advertising, blackmail me with money, go fuck yourself. Go fuck yourself. Is that clear? I hope it is"; Musk singled out Iger, saying, "Hey Bob, if you're in the audience."<sup>[522][523]</sup> Musk acknowledged to Sorkin that one of his tweets—the one affirming an antisemitic conspiracy theory—was a mistake, saying, "I handed a loaded gun to those who hate me and to those who are antisemitic and for that I am quite sorry."<sup>[524]</sup> Musk described his tweet as "one of the most foolish, if not the most foolish, thing I've done".<sup>[525][526]</sup>

In January 2024, Musk visited the Auschwitz concentration camp with European Jewish Association Chairman Rabbi, conservative political commentator Ben Shapiro and Holocaust survivor Gidon Lev.<sup>[527]</sup> He also spoke on a conference about rising antisemitism.<sup>[528]</sup> *The New York Times* described the trip as a part of an image "rehabilitation tour".<sup>[529]</sup>

## COVID-19

Musk was criticized for his public comments and conduct related to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[530][531]</sup> He spread misinformation about the virus, including promoting a widely discredited paper on the benefits of chloroquine and claiming that COVID-19 death statistics were inflated.<sup>[532]</sup>

In March 2020, Musk stated, "The coronavirus panic is dumb."<sup>[533][534]</sup> In an email to Tesla employees, Musk referred to COVID-19 as a "specific form of the common cold" and predicted that confirmed COVID-19 cases would not exceed 0.1% of the US population.<sup>[530]</sup> On March 19, 2020, Musk predicted that there would be "probably close to zero" new cases in the US by end of April.<sup>[531]</sup> *Politico* labeled this statement one of "the most audacious, confident, and spectacularly incorrect prognostications [of 2020]".<sup>[535]</sup> Musk also falsely stated that children "are essentially immune" to COVID-19.<sup>[536][537]</sup>



Musk wearing a bandana as a face mask during the COVID-19 pandemic, April 2021

Musk condemned COVID-19 lockdowns and initially refused to close the Tesla Fremont Factory in March 2020, defying the local shelter-in-place order.<sup>[530][538][539]</sup> In May 2020, he reopened the Tesla factory, defying the local stay-at-home order,<sup>[540][541]</sup> and warned workers that they would be unpaid, and their unemployment benefits might be jeopardized, if they did not report to work.<sup>[541]</sup> In December 2022, Musk called for prosecution of former National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Anthony Fauci.<sup>[542][543]</sup>

In March 2020, Musk promised that Tesla would make ventilators for COVID-19 patients if there were a shortage.<sup>[544]</sup> After figures such as New York City mayor Bill de Blasio responded to Musk's offer,<sup>[545]</sup> Musk offered to donate ventilators which Tesla would build or buy from a third party.<sup>[544]</sup> However,

Musk ultimately purchased and donated BiPAP and CPAP machines rather than ventilators.<sup>[546][547]</sup>

In September 2020, Musk stated that he would not get the COVID-19 vaccine, because he and his children were "not at risk for COVID".<sup>[548][549]</sup> Two months later, Musk contracted COVID-19 but suggested his COVID-19 rapid antigen test results were dubious, as he had been tested four times on the same device with the same nurse but had received equal numbers of positive and negative results.<sup>[550]</sup> Following this, a postdoctoral fellow at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto explained in a Tweet why this result does not undermine the value of the test, referring to Musk as "Space Karen", which then trended on Twitter.<sup>[550][551]</sup> In December 2021, Musk said that he and his eligible children had received the vaccine, saying that the science behind the COVID vaccines was "unequivocal" but expressing his opposition to COVID vaccine mandates.<sup>[552]</sup>

## Personal life

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Musk became a US citizen in 2002.<sup>[553]</sup> From the early 2000s until late 2020, Musk resided in California, where both Tesla and SpaceX were founded.<sup>[554]</sup> He then relocated to Austin, Texas, saying that California had become "complacent" about its economic success.<sup>[554][555][556]</sup> While hosting Saturday Night Live in 2021, Musk stated that he has Asperger syndrome, although he has never been medically diagnosed.<sup>[557][558]</sup>

Musk trained in Brazilian jiu-jitsu while preparing for a proposed fight with Mark Zuckerberg.<sup>[559]</sup> In his leisure time, he plays video games including Quake, Diablo IV, Elden Ring, and Polytopia.<sup>[560][561]</sup> Musk has stated he uses doctor-prescribed ketamine for occasional depression and that he uses it "once every other week",<sup>[562]</sup> while *The Wall Street Journal* has repeatedly alleged he uses it and other drugs recreationally.<sup>[563][564][565]</sup>

## Relationships and children

Musk has at least 12 children, one of whom is deceased.<sup>[1]</sup> He met his first wife, Canadian author Justine Wilson, while attending Queen's University in Ontario, Canada; they married in 2000.<sup>[566]</sup> In 2002, their first child died of sudden infant death syndrome at the age of 10 weeks.<sup>[567]</sup> After his death, the couple used in vitro fertilization (IVF) to continue their family;<sup>[568]</sup> they had twins in 2004 followed by triplets in 2006.<sup>[568]</sup> The couple divorced in 2008 and shared custody of their children.<sup>[569][570]</sup>

In 2022, the elder twin officially changed her name to Vivian Jenna Wilson,<sup>[571]</sup> reflecting her gender identity as a trans woman and using her mother's surname because she no longer wished to be associated with Musk.<sup>[571]</sup> Musk blamed the estrangement of his daughter on what the *Financial Times* characterized as "the supposed takeover of elite schools and universities by neo-Marxists", and has said that her gender transition is primarily what sparked his drive to "destroy the woke mind virus".<sup>[572][573]</sup> In a July 2024 episode of Jordan Peterson's podcast, Musk said regarding Vivian that he had "lost [his] son, essentially" because of gender-affirming care. He commented: "You know, they call it deadnaming for a reason. The reason it's called deadnaming is because your son is dead", and went on to state that the eldest twin "is dead, killed by the woke mind virus".<sup>[574]</sup> Vivian responded publicly, criticizing Musk for lying about her and the circumstances of her transition; saying that Musk was "cold", "quick to anger",

"uncaring and narcissistic", whose infrequent visits commonly involved him berating her for being feminine.<sup>[575]</sup> On November 7, 2024, in response to a news article about his daughter's reaction to Trump's win, Elon Musk wrote "the woke mind virus killed my son."<sup>[576]</sup>

In 2008, Musk began dating English actress Talulah Riley.<sup>[577]</sup> They married two years later at Dornoch Cathedral in Scotland.<sup>[578][579]</sup> In 2012, the couple divorced, before remarrying the following year.<sup>[580]</sup> After briefly filing for divorce in 2014,<sup>[580]</sup> Musk finalized a second divorce from Riley in 2016.<sup>[581]</sup> Musk then dated Amber Heard for several months in 2017;<sup>[582]</sup> he had reportedly been pursuing her since 2012.<sup>[583]</sup>

In 2018, Musk and Canadian musician Grimes said that they were dating.<sup>[584]</sup> Grimes gave birth to their son in May 2020.<sup>[585][586]</sup> Musk and Grimes originally gave the baby the name "X Æ A-12", which would have violated California regulations as it contained characters that are not in the modern English alphabet,<sup>[587][588]</sup> which they then changed to "X Æ A-Xii".<sup>[589][590]</sup> They have received criticism for choosing such an impractical and difficult to pronounce name.<sup>[591]</sup>

In December 2021, Grimes and Musk had a second child, a daughter born via surrogacy.<sup>[592]</sup> Despite the pregnancy, Musk confirmed reports that the couple were "semi-separated" in September 2021; in an interview with Time in December 2021, he said he was single.<sup>[593][594]</sup> In March 2022, Grimes said of her relationship with Musk: "I would probably refer to him as my boyfriend, but we're very fluid."<sup>[592]</sup> Later that month, Grimes tweeted that she and Musk had broken up again.<sup>[595]</sup> In September 2023 it was reported that the pair had a third child, a son.<sup>[596]</sup> In October 2023, Grimes sued Musk over parental rights and custody of their eldest son.<sup>[597][598][599]</sup>

In July 2022, *Insider* published court documents revealing that Musk had twins via IVF with Shivon Zilis, director of operations and special projects at Neuralink, in November 2021.<sup>[600]</sup> They were born weeks before Musk and Grimes had their second child via surrogate in December. The news "raise[d] questions about workplace ethics", given that Zilis directly reported to Musk.<sup>[601]</sup> Their third child together was born in early 2024 via surrogacy.<sup>[602][1]</sup> Also in July 2022, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that Musk allegedly had an affair with Nicole Shanahan, the wife of Google co-founder Sergey Brin, in 2021, leading to their divorce the following year.<sup>[603]</sup> Musk denied the report.<sup>[604]</sup> Musk also had a relationship with Australian actress Natasha Bassett, who has been described as "an occasional girlfriend".<sup>[605]</sup> In October 2024, *The New York Times* reported Musk bought a Texas compound for his children and the mothers of his children.<sup>[606]</sup>

## Legal matters after 2020

In May 2022, *Business Insider* cited an anonymous friend of an unnamed SpaceX contract flight attendant, alleging that Musk engaged in sexual misconduct in 2016. The source stated that in November 2018, Musk, SpaceX, and the former flight attendant entered into a severance agreement granting the attendant a \$250,000 payment in exchange for a promise not to sue over the claims.<sup>[607]</sup> Musk responded, "If I were inclined to engage in sexual harassment, this is unlikely to be the first time in my entire 30-year career that it comes to light." He accused the article from *Business Insider* of being a "politically motivated hit piece".<sup>[608][609]</sup> After the release of the article, Tesla's stock fell by more than 6%,<sup>[610]</sup> and *Barron's* wrote, "...some investors considered key-man risk – the danger that a company could be badly hurt by the loss of one individual."<sup>[611]</sup>



In April 2023, the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands sought to subpoena Musk for documents in a lawsuit alleging that JPMorgan Chase profited from Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking operation.<sup>[612]</sup> The efforts to subpoena Musk for documents do not implicate him in any wrongdoing and do not seek to have Musk testify under oath.<sup>[612]</sup>

Musk's former girlfriend Grimes filed a parental relationship petition in late September 2023 as part of a custody dispute. The petition came a month after Grimes openly accused him in a social media post of blocking her access to the youngest of their three children.<sup>[613][614]</sup> On July 27, 2024, Grimes' mother accused Musk of withholding the passports of her grandchildren.<sup>[615]</sup>

Ben Brody, a 22-year-old Los Angeles-based college graduate, initiated a defamation lawsuit in October 2023 against Musk for over \$1 million. He alleged Musk had falsely identified him as a participant "in a violent street brawl on behalf of a neo-Nazi extremist group" near Portland, Oregon.<sup>[616][617][618]</sup> According to Brody's complaint, one of Musk's X posts promoted conspiracy theories that "Ben Brody's alleged participation in the extremist brawl meant the incident was probably a 'false flag' operation to deceive the American public".<sup>[616]</sup> The complaint also alleged that Musk's accusations led to Brody and his family being subjected to harassment and threats.<sup>[616][617][619]</sup> In February 2024, Musk was ordered to testify in a deposition for the lawsuit.<sup>[620]</sup> In the deposition, Musk denied knowing who was suing him and admitted to doing no research on whether his claims were true. Musk attempted to keep the deposition from being made public.<sup>[621][622]</sup>

In October 2023, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) sued Musk over his refusal to testify a third time in an investigation into whether he violated federal law by purchasing Twitter stock in 2022.<sup>[623][624][625]</sup> Musk claimed the SEC was harassing him.<sup>[623][625]</sup> In February 2024, Judge Laurel Beeler ruled that Musk must testify again.<sup>[626]</sup>

In January 2024, Delaware Judge Kathaleen McCormick ruled in a 2018 lawsuit that Musk's \$55 billion pay package from Tesla be rescinded.<sup>[627]</sup> McCormick called the compensation granted by the company's board "an unfathomable sum" that was unfair to shareholders. In response to the ruling, Musk posted on X: "Never incorporate your company in the state of Delaware."<sup>[628]</sup> A re-ratification shareholders' vote passed in mid-June 2024, although much follow-up litigation is expected, including a lawsuit filed by a Tesla investor beforehand that alleged Musk employed "coercive tactics" to move the vote in his favor.<sup>[629]</sup>

In June 2024, *The Wall Street Journal* reported Musk had a "romantic relationship" with a former intern at SpaceX, confirmed with affidavits supplied by the intern's lawyers who also represent Musk, and alleged that he had sexual relations with a woman who directly reported to him there. The article further alleges he also pursued sex with other SpaceX employees, and repeatedly asked an employee who reported directly to him to "have his babies".<sup>[630]</sup> In the same month, eight ex-employees, the same eight who were previously fired for penning an anti-Musk letter at SpaceX, filed a lawsuit against Musk alleging sexual harassment.<sup>[631]</sup>

Also in June 2024, a former Twitter executive sued Musk for "cheating" him and other ousted executives out of \$200 million in severance pay.<sup>[632]</sup>

In August 2024, Musk sued advertisers for a boycott of X (formerly Twitter).<sup>[633][634][635]</sup> Later that month, Olympic boxer Imane Khelif filed a lawsuit for cyber harassment against X over alleged "acts of aggravated cyber harassment", in which Musk was named.<sup>[636]</sup>

In October 2024, Musk and his America PAC were sued in Pennsylvania for allegedly operating an unlawful lottery before the 2024 US presidential election.<sup>[637]</sup> Musk's lawyer argued the giveaway wasn't a lottery since the recipients weren't chosen by chance, leading one prosecuting attorney to call the effort a "scam" designed to influence the election.<sup>[638]</sup> In November 2024, he was sued again regarding the lottery<sup>[639]</sup> and two US senators called for a probe into alleged contacts with Putin.<sup>[640]</sup>

## Public perception

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Although his ventures have been highly influential within their separate industries up to current day, Musk only became a public figure in the early 2010s. He has been described as an eccentric who makes spontaneous and impactful decisions, while also often making controversial statements, contrary to other billionaires who prefer reclusiveness to protect their businesses. Musk's actions and his expressed views have made him a polarizing figure.<sup>[641]</sup> Biographer Ashlee Vance described people's opinions of Musk as polarized due to his "part philosopher, part troll" role on Twitter.<sup>[642]</sup>

Musk was a partial inspiration for the characterization of Tony Stark in the Marvel film Iron Man (2008).<sup>[643]</sup> Musk also had a cameo appearance in the film's 2010 sequel, Iron Man 2.<sup>[644]</sup>

Musk has made cameos and appearances in other films such as Machete Kills (2013),<sup>[645]</sup> Why Him? (2016),<sup>[646]</sup> and Men in Black: International (2019).<sup>[647]</sup> Television series in which he has appeared include The Simpsons ("The Musk Who Fell to Earth", 2015),<sup>[648]</sup> The Big Bang Theory ("The Platonic Permutation", 2015),<sup>[649]</sup> South Park ("Members Only", 2016),<sup>[650][651]</sup> Young Sheldon ("A Patch, a Modem, and a Zantac®", 2017),<sup>[652]</sup> Rick and Morty ("One Crew over the Crewcoo's Morty", 2019),<sup>[653][654]</sup> and Saturday Night Live (2021).<sup>[655]</sup> He contributed interviews to the documentaries Racing Extinction (2015) and the Werner Herzog-directed Lo and Behold (2016).<sup>[656][657]</sup>

Awards for his contributions to the development of the Falcon rockets include the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics George Low Transportation Award in 2008,<sup>[658]</sup> the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale Gold Space Medal in 2010,<sup>[659]</sup> and the Royal Aeronautical Society Gold Medal in 2012.<sup>[660]</sup> In 2015, he received an honorary doctorate in engineering and technology from Yale University<sup>[661]</sup> and an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Honorary Membership.<sup>[662]</sup> Musk was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) in 2018.<sup>[663]</sup>

Time has listed Musk as one of the most influential people in the world on four occasions: in 2010,<sup>[664]</sup> 2013,<sup>[665]</sup> 2018,<sup>[666]</sup> and 2021.<sup>[667]</sup> Musk was selected as Time's "Person of the Year" for 2021. Then Time editor-in-chief Edward Felsenthal wrote that, "Person of the Year is a marker of influence, and few individuals have had more influence than Musk on life on Earth, and potentially life off Earth too."<sup>[668][669]</sup>

In February 2022, Musk was elected to the National Academy of Engineering.<sup>[670]</sup>



Musk (right) with then-President Barack Obama and Air Force Colonel Lee Rosen at the Cape Canaveral Space Launch Complex 40, launch site of the SpaceX Falcon 9, 2010

In 2024, Musk's Royal Society membership was criticized by 74 members over his alleged anti-scientific behavior and promotion of misinformation, prompting debates about the society's standards on membership and leading to Dorothy Bishop, a renowned neuropsychologist at University of Oxford, to resign over her dissatisfaction with the Society's response.<sup>[671]</sup>

Musk has been described as an American oligarch due to his extensive influence over public discourse, social media, industry, politics, and government policy.<sup>[672]</sup>

## Notes and references

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### Notes

- a. Musk remained on the board and served as an advisor.<sup>[74][75]</sup>
- b. SpaceX received nearly \$900 million in Federal Communications Commission subsidies for Starlink.<sup>[105][106]</sup>
- c. Musk stated he was considering taking Tesla private at a price of \$420 a share, an alleged reference to marijuana.<sup>[154]</sup> Members of Tesla's board and rapper Azealia Banks alleged that Musk may have been under the influence of recreational drugs when he wrote the tweet.<sup>[155][156]</sup>
- d. He did not file the necessary SEC paperwork within 10 days of his stake passing 5%, a violation of US securities laws.<sup>[209]</sup>

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meet these criteria, but the story always begins the same way. Once upon a time in Pretoria, there was a boy who wanted to be a man." (p. 10.)

## External links

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- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?1020671>) on C-SPAN
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