

Elon Reeve Musk (/ˈiːlɒn/; born June 28, 1971) is a businessman and investor known for his key roles in space company SpaceX and automotive company Tesla, Inc. Other involvements include ownership of X Corp., formerly Twitter, and his role in the founding of The Boring Company, xAI, Neuralink and OpenAI. He is one of the wealthiest people in the world; as of June 2024, Forbes estimates his net worth to be US\$214 billion.[4]

Musk was born in Pretoria, a member of the South African Musk family, and briefly attended the University of Pretoria before immigrating to Canada at age 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 dropped out after two days and, with his brother Kimbal, co-founded 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 October 2002, 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.). He became the company's chairman and product architect, assuming the position of CEO in 2008. 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 vacuum train transportation system. 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. He subsequently merged the company into newly created X Corp. and rebranded the service as X the following year. In March 2023, Musk founded xAI, an artificial intelligence company.

Musk has expressed views that have made him a polarizing figure.[5] He has been criticized for making unscientific and misleading statements, including COVID-19 misinformation and appearing to endorse antisemitic conspiracy theories, the latter of which he later apologized for.[5][6] His ownership of Twitter has been similarly controversial, being marked by layoffs of large numbers of employees, an increase in hate speech, misinformation and disinformation posts on the website, and changes to Twitter Blue verification.

Early life and education

Childhood and family

Elon Reeve Musk was born on June 28, 1971, in Pretoria, South Africa's administrative capital.[7][8] He is of British and Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry.[9][10] His mother, Maye Musk (née Haldeman), is a model and dietitian born in Saskatchewan, Canada, and raised in South Africa.[11][12][13] His father, Errol Musk, is a South African electromechanical engineer, pilot, sailor, consultant,

emerald dealer, and property developer, who partly owned a rental lodge at the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve.[14][15][16][17] Elon has a younger brother, Kimbal, and a younger sister, Tosca.[13][18] Elon has four paternal half-siblings.[19][20][21]

The family was wealthy during Elon's youth.[17] Despite both Musk and Errol previously stating that Errol was a part owner of a Zambian emerald mine,[17] in 2023, Errol recounted that the deal he made was to receive "a portion of the emeralds produced at three small mines." [22][23] 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.[7]

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 a still toddler.[20][24][25][26]

Elon recalled trips to a wilderness school ("veldskool") which, he described as a "paramilitary Lord of the Flies" where "bullying was a virtue" and children were encouraged to fight over rations.[27]

After his parents divorced in 1980, Elon chose to live primarily with his father.[9][14] Elon later regretted his decision and became estranged from his father.[28] In one incident, after an altercation with a fellow student, Elon was thrown down concrete steps and beaten severely by the boy and his friends, leading to him being hospitalized for his injuries.[29] 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".[29][30] After the attack, Elon was enrolled in private school.[29][30]

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*. [16][31] At age ten, he developed an interest in computing and video games, teaching himself how to program from the VIC-20 user manual.[32] At age twelve, Elon sold his BASIC-based game *Blastar* to PC and Office Technology magazine for approximately \$500.[33][34]

Education

An ornate school building

Musk graduated from Pretoria Boys High School in South Africa

Musk attended Waterkloof House Preparatory School, Bryanston High School, and then Pretoria Boys High School, where he graduated.[35] Musk was a good but not exceptional student, earning a 61 in Afrikaans and a B on his senior math certification.[36] Musk applied for a Canadian passport through his Canadian-born mother,[37][38] knowing that it would be easier to immigrate to the United States this way.[39] While waiting for his application to be processed, he attended the University of Pretoria for five months.[40]

Musk arrived in Canada in June 1989, connected with a second cousin in Saskatchewan,[41] and worked odd jobs including at a farm and a lumber mill.[42] In

1990, he entered Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.[43][44]

Two years later, he transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, an Ivy League university in Philadelphia, where he earned two degrees, a Bachelor of Arts in physics, and a Bachelor of Science degree in economics from the university's Wharton School.[45][46][47][48] Although Musk has said that he earned the degrees in 1995, the University of Pennsylvania did not award them until 1997.[49][46][50] 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.[51]

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.[52][53] In 1995, he was accepted to a graduate program in materials science at Stanford University, but did not enroll.[46][50] Musk decided to join the Internet boom, applying for a job at Netscape, to which he reportedly never received a response.[54][37]

Business career

Zip2

Main article: Zip2

External videos

video icon Musk speaks of his early business experience during a 2014 commencement speech at USC on YouTube

In 1995, Musk, his brother Kimbal, and Greg Kouri founded Global Link Information Network, later renamed to Zip2.[55][56] The company was started with \$28,000 (equivalent to \$56,000 in 2023) from Errol Musk.[32] The company developed an Internet city guide with maps, directions, and yellow pages, and marketed it to newspapers.[57] They worked at a small rented office in Palo Alto,[58] with Musk coding the website every night.[58] Eventually, Zip2 obtained contracts with The New York Times and the Chicago Tribune.[51] The brothers persuaded the board of directors to abandon a merger with CitySearch;[59] however, Musk's attempts to become CEO were thwarted.[60] Compaq acquired Zip2 for \$307 million in cash in February 1999,[61][62] and Musk received \$22 million for his 7-percent share.[63]

X.com and PayPal

Main articles: X.com (bank), PayPal, and PayPal Mafia

In March 1999,[64] 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.[65] X.com was one of the first federally insured online banks, and over 200,000 customers joined in its initial months of operation.[66]

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 configuration derived from it, such as "e@x.com".[64]

Even though Musk founded the company, investors regarded him as inexperienced and replaced him with Intuit CEO Bill Harris by the end of the year.[67]

In 2000, X.com merged with the online bank Confinity to avoid competition,[58][67][68] as the latter's money-transfer service PayPal was more popular than X.com's service.[69] 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.[70] 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.[71][b] Under Thiel, the company focused on the money-transfer service and was renamed PayPal in 2001.[73][74]

In 2002, PayPal was acquired by eBay for \$1.5 billion in stock, of which Musk–PayPal's largest shareholder with 11.72% of shares–received \$175.8 million.[75][76] In 2017, more than 15 years later, Musk purchased the X.com domain from PayPal for its "sentimental value".[77][78] In 2022, Musk discussed a goal of creating "X, the everything app".[79]

SpaceX

Main article: SpaceX

Musk shakes hands with NASA Administrator Charles Bolden before a SpaceX Dragon capsule

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

In early 2001, Musk became involved with the nonprofit Mars Society and discussed funding plans to place a growth-chamber for plants on Mars.[80] In October of the same year, he traveled to Moscow with Jim Cantrell and Adeo Ressi 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[81] and the group returned to the United States empty-handed. In February 2002, the group returned to Russia with Mike Griffin (president of In-Q-Tel) 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.[81] With \$100 million of his own money,[82] Musk founded SpaceX in May 2002 and became the company's CEO and Chief Engineer.[83][84]

SpaceX attempted its first launch of the Falcon 1 rocket in 2006.[85] Though the rocket failed to reach Earth orbit, it was awarded a Commercial Orbital Transportation Services program contract from NASA Administrator (and former SpaceX consultant[86]) Mike Griffin later that year.[87][88] After two more failed attempts that nearly caused Musk and his companies to go bankrupt,[85] SpaceX succeeded in launching the Falcon 1 into orbit in 2008.[89] 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, replacing the Space Shuttle after its 2011 retirement.[90] In 2012, the Dragon vehicle docked with the ISS, a first for a commercial spacecraft.[91]

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 an inland platform.[92] Later landings were achieved on autonomous spaceport drone ships, an ocean-based recovery platform.[93] In 2018, SpaceX launched the Falcon Heavy; the inaugural mission carried Musk's personal Tesla Roadster as a dummy payload.[94][95] Since 2019,[96] SpaceX has been developing Starship, a fully-reusable, super-heavy-lift launch vehicle intended to replace the Falcon 9 and the Falcon Heavy.[97] 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.[98]

Starlink

Main article: Starlink

See also: Starlink in the Russo-Ukrainian War

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

In 2015, SpaceX began development of the Starlink constellation of low-Earth-orbit satellites to provide satellite Internet access,[99] 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.[100] The total cost of the decade-long project to design, build, and deploy the constellation is estimated by SpaceX to be about \$10 billion.[101][c] Some critics, including the International Astronomical Union, have alleged that Starlink blocks the view of the sky and poses a collision threat to spacecraft.[104][105][106]

During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Musk sent Starlink terminals to Ukraine to provide Internet access and communication.[107] 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,[108] Musk publicly stated that SpaceX would continue to provide Starlink to Ukraine for free, at a yearly cost to itself of \$400 million.[109][110][111] At the same time, Musk refused to block Russian state media on Starlink, declaring himself "a free speech absolutist".[112][113]

Ukraine had 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.[114][115][116]

Tesla

Main article: Tesla, Inc.

Musks stands, arms crossed and grinning, before a Tesla Model S

Musk next to a Tesla Model S, 2011

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.[117] 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.[118][119] Musk took an active role within the company and oversaw Roadster product design, but was not deeply involved in day-to-day business operations.[120]

Following a series of escalating conflicts in 2007, and the financial crisis of 2007–2008, Eberhard was ousted from the firm.[121][page needed][122] Musk assumed leadership of the company as CEO and product architect in 2008.[123] A 2009 lawsuit settlement with Eberhard designated Musk as a Tesla co-founder, along with Tarpenning and two others.[124][125] As of 2019, Musk was the longest-tenured CEO of any automotive manufacturer globally.[126] In 2021, Musk nominally changed his title to "Technoking" while retaining his position as CEO.[127]

Musk speaking with a microphone, a projected image of a Tesla is behind him
Musk before a Model X at the 2014 Tesla Inc. annual shareholder meeting
Tesla began delivery of an electric sports car, the Roadster, in 2008. With sales of about 2,500 vehicles, it was the first serial production all-electric car to use lithium-ion battery cells.[128] Tesla began delivery of its four-door Model S sedan in 2012.[129] A cross-over, the Model X was launched in 2015.[130] A mass-market sedan, the Model 3, was released in 2017.[131] The Model 3 is 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.[132][133] A fifth vehicle, the Model Y crossover, was launched in 2020.[134] The Cybertruck, an all-electric pickup truck, was unveiled in 2019.[135] Under Musk, Tesla has also constructed multiple lithium-ion battery and electric vehicle factories, named Gigafactories.[136]

Since its initial public offering in 2010,[137] Tesla stock has risen significantly; it became the most valuable carmaker in summer 2020,[138][139] and it entered the S&P 500 later that year.[140][141] In October 2021, it reached a market capitalization of \$1 trillion, the sixth company in U.S. history to do so.[142] In November 2021, Musk proposed, on Twitter, to sell 10% of his Tesla stock, since "much is made lately of unrealized gains being a means of tax avoidance".[143] After more than 3.5 million Twitter accounts supported the sale, Musk sold \$6.9 billion of Tesla stock within a week,[143] and a total of \$16.4 billion by year end, reaching the 10% target.[144] In February 2022, The Wall Street Journal reported that both Elon and Kimbal Musk were under investigation by the SEC for possible insider trading related to the sale.[145] In 2022, Musk unveiled a robot developed by Tesla, Optimus.[146] On June 20, 2023, Musk met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New York City, suggesting that he might be interested in investing in India "as soon as humanly possible".[147]

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.[148][d] 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.[148][152][153] 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.[154] In April 2022, the shareholder who sued Musk over the tweet, along with several Tesla shareholders, said that a federal judge had ruled that the tweet was false, although the ruling in question has not been unsealed.[155] In February 2023, the jury found Musk and Tesla not liable.[156] Musk has stated in interviews that he does not regret posting the tweet that triggered the SEC investigation.[157][158]

In 2019, Musk stated in a tweet that Tesla would build half a million cars that year.[159] The SEC reacted to Musk's tweet by filing in court, asking the court to hold him in contempt for violating the terms of a settlement agreement with such a tweet; the accusation was disputed by Musk. This was eventually settled by a joint agreement between Musk and the SEC clarifying the previous agreement details.[160] The agreement included a list of topics that Musk would need preclearance before tweeting about.[161] In 2020, a judge prevented a lawsuit from proceeding that claimed a tweet by Musk regarding Tesla stock price ("too high imo") violated the agreement.[162][163] Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)-released records showed that the SEC itself concluded Musk has subsequently violated the agreement twice by tweeting regarding "Tesla's solar roof production volumes and its stock price".[164]

SolarCity and Tesla Energy

Main articles: SolarCity and Tesla Energy

Two green vans sporting the SolarCity logo

SolarCity solar-panel installation vans in 2009

Musk provided the initial concept and financial capital for SolarCity, which his cousins Lyndon and Peter Rive founded in 2006.[165] By 2013, SolarCity was the second largest provider of solar power systems in the United States.[166] 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.[167] Construction of the factory started in 2014 and was completed in 2017. It operated as a joint venture with Panasonic until early 2020.[168][169]

Tesla acquired SolarCity for over \$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.[170] 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.[171][172] Tesla directors settled the lawsuit in January 2020, leaving Musk the sole remaining defendant.[173][174] Two years later, the court ruled in Musk's favor.[175]

Neuralink

Main article: Neuralink

Musk standing next to bulky medical equipment on a stage

Musk discussing a Neuralink device during a live demonstration in 2020

In 2016, Musk co-founded Neuralink, a neurotechnology startup company, with an investment of \$100 million.[176][177] Neuralink aims to integrate the human brain with artificial intelligence (AI) by creating devices that are embedded in the brain to facilitate its merging with machines. Such technology could enhance memory or allow the devices to communicate with software.[177][178] The company also hopes to develop devices with which to treat neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and spinal cord injuries.[179]

In 2019, Musk announced work on a device akin to a sewing machine that could embed threads into a human brain.[176] He is listed as the sole author of an October 2019 paper that details some of Neuralink's research,[180] although Musk's being listed as such rankled the Neuralink team's researchers.[181] 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,[182][183][184] with MIT Technology Review describing them as "highly speculative" and "neuroscience theater".[182] During the demonstration, Musk revealed a pig with a Neuralink implant that tracked neural activity related to smell.[179] In 2022, Neuralink announced that clinical trials would begin by the end of the year.[185]

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.[186] 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.[187] In September 2023, the company was approved to initiate human trials and plans to conduct a six-year study.[188]

The Boring Company

Main article: The Boring Company

Musk speaks to a crowd of journalists. Behind him is a lighted tunnel. Musk during the 2018 inauguration of the Boring Test Tunnel in Hawthorne, California 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.[189][190] 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.[191] 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.[192]

Two tunnel projects announced in 2018, in Chicago and West Los Angeles, have been canceled.[193][194] However, a tunnel beneath the Las Vegas Convention Center was completed in early 2021.[195] Local officials have approved further expansions of the tunnel system.[196] In 2021, tunnel construction was approved for Fort Lauderdale, Florida.[197]

Twitter / X

Further information: Acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk and Twitter under Elon Musk

Elon Musk Twitter logo, a stylized blue bird

@elonmusk

I made an offer

<https://sec.gov/Archives/edgar...>

April 14, 2022[198]

Musk expressed interest in buying Twitter as early as 2017,[199] and had questioned the platform's commitment to freedom of speech.[200][201] Additionally, his ex-wife

Talulah Riley had urged him to buy Twitter to stop the "woke-ism".[202] In January 2022, Musk started purchasing Twitter shares, reaching a 9.2% stake by April,[203] making him the largest shareholder.[204][e] When this was publicly disclosed, Twitter shares experienced the largest intraday price surge since the company's 2013 IPO.[206] 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.[207][208] 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.[204][209] 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.[210] Nevertheless, by the end of the month Musk had successfully concluded his bid for approximately \$44 billion.[211] This included about \$12.5 billion in loans against his Tesla stock and \$21 billion in equity financing.[212][213]

Tesla's stock market value sank by over \$100 billion the next day in reaction to the deal.[214][215] He subsequently tweeted criticism of Twitter executive Vijaya Gadde's policies to his 86 million followers, which led to some of them engaging in sexist and racist harassment against her.[216] 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.[217] Although he initially affirmed his commitment to the acquisition,[218] 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.[219] On July 12, 2022, Twitter formally sued Musk in the Chancery Court of Delaware for breaching a legally binding agreement to purchase Twitter.[220] In October 2022, Musk reversed again, offering to purchase Twitter at \$54.20 per share.[221] The acquisition was officially completed on October 27.[222]

Immediately after the acquisition, Musk fired several top Twitter executives including CEO Parag Agrawal;[222][223] Musk became the CEO instead.[224] He instituted a \$7.99 monthly subscription for a "blue check",[225][226][227] and laid off a significant portion of the company's staff.[228][229] Musk lessened content moderation, including reinstating accounts like The Babylon Bee,[230][231] and in December, Musk released internal documents relating to Twitter's moderation of Hunter Biden's laptop controversy in the leadup to the 2020 presidential election.[232] The Southern Poverty Law Center noted that Twitter has verified numerous extremists;[233] hate speech also increased on the platform after his takeover.[234][235]

Comments on these internal documents by journalists, Matt Taibbi, Bari Weiss, Michael Shellenberger and others were posted at Twitter as the Twitter Files. 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.[236]

In late 2022, Musk promised to step down as CEO after a Twitter poll posted by Musk found that majority of user wanted him to do so.[237][238] 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.[239]

On November 20, 2023, in a U.S. District Court in Texas, X filed a lawsuit stating that Media Matters "manipulated" the X platform. X stated that Media Matters used accounts that followed accounts for major brands, and "resorted to endlessly scrolling and refreshing" the feed until it found ads next to extremist posts.[240]

Leadership style

Musk is pictured delivering a speech to SpaceX employees while standing at a podium besides a capsule in 2012

Musk giving a speech to SpaceX employees in 2012

Musk is often described as a micromanager and has called himself a "nano-manager".[241] The New York Times has characterized his approach as absolutist.[242] Musk does not make formal business plans.[242] 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,[243] vertical integration has caused many usability problems for Tesla's software.[241]

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.[244][245][246] Musk said he expects his employees to work for long hours, sometimes for 80 hours per week.[247] He has his new employees sign strict non-disclosure agreements and often fires in sprees,[248][246] such as during the Model 3 "production hell" in 2018.[246] In 2022, Musk revealed plans to fire 10 percent of Tesla's workforce, due to his concerns about the economy.[249] 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.[250] He later 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,[241] and criticized by others, who see him as callous and his managerial decisions as "show[ing] a lack of human understanding." [246][251] The 2021 book *Power Play* contains anecdotes of Musk berating employees.[252] 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 consequence.[253]

Other activities

Musk Foundation

Musk is president of the Musk Foundation he founded in 2001,[254][255] 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.[256]

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.[257] From 2002 to 2018, the foundation gave \$25 million directly to nonprofit organizations, nearly half of which went to Musk's OpenAI,[258] which was a nonprofit at the time.[259] The Foundation also allocated \$100 million of donations to be used to establish a new higher education university in Texas.[260]

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.[261] He has endowed prizes at the X Prize Foundation, including \$100 million to reward improved carbon capture technology.[262]

Vox said in February of 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.[258] In 2020, Forbes gave Musk a philanthropy score of 1, because he had given away less than 1% of his net worth.[257] In November 2021, Musk donated \$5.7 billion of Tesla's shares to charity, according to regulatory filings.[263] 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.[264] 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.[265]

Hyperloop

Main articles: Hyperloop and Hyperloop pod competition

A long white tube about 10 feet in diameter

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

In August 2013, Musk announced plans for a version of a vactrain—a vacuum tube train—and assigned a dozen engineers from SpaceX and Tesla to establish the conceptual foundations and create initial designs.[266] Later that year, Musk unveiled the concept, which he dubbed the hyperloop.[267] The alpha design for the system was published in a whitepaper posted to the Tesla and SpaceX blogs.[268] 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.[269] The proposal, if technologically feasible at the costs cited, would make Hyperloop travel cheaper than any other mode of transport for such long distances.[270]

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.[271] 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 both Philadelphia and Baltimore.[272] Mention of the projected DC-to-Baltimore leg was removed from The Boring Company website in 2021.[273] The tunnel project to Hawthorne was discontinued in 2022 and is cited to be converted into parking spots for SpaceX workers.[274]

Biographer Ashlee Vance has 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.[275]

OpenAI and xAI

Further information: OpenAI and xAI (company)

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.[276] A particular focus of the company is to democratize artificial superintelligence systems, against governments and corporations.[28] Musk pledged \$1 billion of funding to OpenAI.[277] 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.[278]

In 2018, Musk left the OpenAI board to avoid possible future conflicts with his role as CEO of Tesla as the latter company increasingly became involved in AI through Tesla Autopilot.[279] Since then, OpenAI has made significant advances in machine learning, producing neural networks such as GPT-3 (producing human-like text),[280] and DALL-E (generating digital images from natural language descriptions).[281]

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 has reportedly hired engineers from Google and OpenAI.[282] The company, which is incorporated in Nevada, purchased 10,000 graphics processing units. Musk was reportedly obtaining funding from investors in SpaceX and Tesla.[283]

Tham Luang cave rescue and defamation case

Further information: Tham Luang cave rescue

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.[284] Richard Stanton, leader of the international rescue diving team, urged Musk to facilitate the construction of the vehicle as a back-up, in case flooding worsened.[285] 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.[286][287] By this time, however, eight of the 12 children, had already been rescued, the rescuers employing full face masks, oxygen, and anesthesia; consequently, Thai authorities declined to use the submarine.[284] In March 2019, Musk was later one of the 187 people who received various honors conferred by the King of Thailand for involvement in the rescue effort.[288]

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".[289] He deleted the tweets,[289] and apologized,[290] and

he deleted his responses to critical tweets from Cher Scarlett, a software engineer, which had caused his followers to harass her.[291] In an email to BuzzFeed News, Musk later called Unsworth a "child rapist" and said that he had married a child.[292][293]

In September, Unsworth filed a defamation suit in the District Court for the Central District of California.[294][295] 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".[35] The defamation case began in December 2019, with Unsworth seeking \$190 million in damages.[296] During the trial Musk apologized to Unsworth again for the tweet. On December 6, the jury found in favor of Musk and ruled he was not liable.[297][298]

2018 cannabis incident

In September 2018, Musk was interviewed on an episode of The Joe Rogan Experience podcast, during which he sampled a cigar laced with cannabis.[299] 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.[300] 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." [301]

Music

In April 2019, Musk, through Emo G Records, released a rap track, "RIP Harambe", on SoundCloud.[302] The track, which refers to the killing of Harambe the gorilla and the subsequent Internet sensationalism surrounding the event, was performed by Yung Jake, written by Yung Jake and Caroline Polachek, and produced by BloodPop.[303] The following year, Musk released an EDM track, "Don't Doubt Ur Vibe", featuring his own lyrics and vocals.[304] While Guardian critic Alexi Petridis described it as "indistinguishable... from umpteen competent but unthrilling bits of bedroom electronica posted elsewhere on SoundCloud", [305] TechCrunch said it was "not a bad representation of the genre".[304]

Private jet

Main articles: *ElonJet* and 2022 Twitter suspensions

In 2003, Musk said his favorite plane he owned was an L-39 Albatros.[306] He uses a private jet owned by Falcon Landing LLC, a SpaceX-linked company, and acquired a second jet in August 2020.[307][308] His heavy use of the jet—which flew over 150,000 miles in 2018 alone—and the consequent fossil fuel usage has received criticism.[307][309]

His flight usage is tracked on social media through *ElonJet*. The Twitter version of the account was blocked in December 2022, 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.[310][311][312] This led to Musk banning 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.[313] Musk equated the reporting to doxxing.[314] Police do not believe there is a link between the account and alleged stalker.[315] Musk later took a Twitter poll on whether the journalists'

accounts should be reinstated, which resulted in reinstating the accounts.[316]

Company towns

Main articles: Boca Chica Village, Texas and Snailbrook, Texas

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.[317][318] The project to build the company town named Snailbrook in Bastrop County, Texas began in 2021 according to reports by the Wall Street Journal.[319] Musk's then-girlfriend Grimes and Kanye West were involved in the planning.[319] 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.[319] In 2023 the town had a reported population of 12 people.[320] There are plans to establish a school and a university here.[317]

Wealth

Main article: Wealth of Elon Musk

Musk made \$175.8 million when PayPal was sold to eBay in October 2002.[321] He was first listed on the Forbes Billionaires List in 2012, with a net worth of \$2 billion.[322]

Personal views and Twitter usage

Further information: Views of Elon Musk

Since joining Twitter (now known as X) in 2009,[323] Musk has been an active user and has over 163 million followers as of November 2023.[324] He posts memes, promotes business interests, and comments on contemporary political and cultural issues.[325] Musk's statements have provoked controversy, such as for mocking preferred gender pronouns[326][327] and comparing Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to Adolf Hitler.[328] 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.[329] 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.[330] Allegations of him being transphobic appeared as well in response to actions taken by Twitter under his guidance.[331][332]

Finance

Musk said that the U.S. government should not provide subsidies to companies, but impose a carbon tax to discourage poor behavior.[333][334] The free market, in his view, would achieve the best solution, and producing environmentally unfriendly vehicles should have consequences.[335] Tesla has received billions of dollars in subsidies.[336] In addition, Tesla made large sums from government-initiated systems of zero-emissions credits offered in California and at the United States federal level, which facilitated initial consumer adoption of Tesla vehicles, as the tax credits given by governments enabled Tesla's battery electric vehicles to be price-competitive, in comparison with existing lower-priced internal combustion engine vehicles.[337] Tesla generates some of its revenue from its sales of carbon credits granted to the company, by both the European Union Emissions Trading System and the Chinese national carbon trading scheme.[338][339][340][341]

Musk, a longtime opponent of short-selling, has repeatedly criticized the practice and argued it should be illegal.[342][343] 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.[344] In early 2021, he encouraged the GameStop short squeeze.[345][346]

In December 2022, Musk sold \$3.6 billion of his stock in Tesla, equal to 22 million shares in the company,[347] despite pledging earlier in the year that he would not sell any additional shares.[348]

Technology

Musk has promoted cryptocurrencies and supports them over traditional government-issued fiat currencies.[349] Given the influence of Musk's tweets in moving cryptocurrency markets,[350] his statements about cryptocurrencies have been viewed as market manipulation by some, such as economist Nouriel Roubini.[351] 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.[352] 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.[353][354]

Despite The Boring Company's involvement in building mass transit infrastructure, Musk has criticized public transport and promoted individualized transport (private vehicles).[355][356][357] 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.[356][358][357]

Existential threats

Musk standing at a wooden podium talking at the 2006 Mars Society Conference
Musk giving details about Falcon 9 and Dragon spacecraft at the 2006 Mars Society Conference

Musk has been described as believing in longtermism, emphasizing the needs of future populations.[359] Accordingly, Musk has stated that artificial intelligence poses the greatest existential threat to humanity.[360][361] He has warned of a "Terminator-like" AI apocalypse and suggested that the government should regulate its safe development.[362][363] 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.[364] Musk's AI stances have been called alarmist and sensationalist by critics such as computer scientist Yann LeCun and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg,[365][366] and led the think tank Information Technology and Innovation Foundation to award Musk its Annual Luddite Award in 2016.[367]

Musk has described climate change as the greatest threat to humanity after AI,[368] and has advocated for a carbon tax.[369] Musk was a critic of President Donald Trump's stance on climate change,[370][371] and resigned from two presidential

business advisory councils following Trump's 2017 decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement.[372]

Musk has long promoted the colonization of Mars and argues that humanity should become a "multiplanetary species".[373] He has suggested the use of nuclear weapons to terraform Mars.[374][375] He envisioned establishing a direct democracy on Mars, with a system in which more votes would be required to create laws than remove them.[376] Musk has also voiced concerns about human population decline,[377][378] saying that "Mars has zero human population. We need a lot of people to become a multiplanet civilization." [379] Speaking at The Wall Street Journal's CEO Council session in 2021, Musk stated that a declining birth rate, and consequent population decline, is one of the biggest risks to human civilization.[380]

Politics

Musk converses with U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein beside a red Tesla

Musk converses with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, the Second Lady, and other officials

Musk with Senator Dianne Feinstein at the opening of the Tesla Fremont Factory in 2010 (left), and with Vice President Mike Pence alongside then-NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine at the Kennedy Space Center before SpaceX's Crew Dragon Demo-2 launch in 2020 (right)

While often described as libertarian, Musk has called himself "politically moderate" and was a registered independent voter when he lived in California. The New York Times wrote that Musk "expresses views that don't fit neatly into [the American] binary, left-right political framework".[381] Historically, Musk has donated to both Democrats and Republicans,[382] many of whom are in states in which he has a vested interest.[381] Beginning in the late 2010s, Musk's political contributions have shifted almost entirely to supporting Republicans.[383]

Musk voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.[384] In the 2020 Democratic Party presidential primaries, Musk endorsed candidate Andrew Yang and expressed support for his proposed universal basic income.[385] He also endorsed Kanye West's 2020 presidential campaign.[386] He said he voted for Joe Biden in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.[387] In 2022, Musk said that he could "no longer support" the Democrats because they are the "party of division & hate",[388][389] and wrote a tweet encouraging "independent-minded voters" to vote Republican in the 2022 U.S. elections, which was an outlier among social media executives who typically avoid partisan political advocacy.[390][391] He has supported Republican Ron DeSantis for the 2024 U.S. presidential election, and Twitter hosted DeSantis's campaign announcement on a Twitter Spaces event.[392][393][394] In August 2023, Musk hosted Vivek Ramaswamy on Twitter Spaces, and shared his support.[395] As of May 2023, Musk was declining to endorse any specific candidate.[393]

Musk opposes a "billionaire's tax", [396] and has argued on Twitter with more left-leaning Democratic politicians such as Bernie Sanders,[397][398] Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,[399] and Elizabeth Warren.[400] 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.[401][402] Musk also promoted a baseless theory relating to the attack of Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, but Musk deleted his tweet.[403] In May 2022, Musk traveled to Brazil to discuss projects to protect the Amazon

rainforest with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.[404][405]

Musk has praised China and has been described as having a close relationship with the Chinese government, allowing access to its markets for Tesla.[406] 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.[407]: 207–208 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.[408][409] Musk later advocated for Taiwan to become a "special administrative zone" of China which drew cross-party criticism from Taiwanese lawmakers.[410][411][412]

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.[413][414] It was reported that Musk allegedly spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin prior to the proposal, which Musk denied.[415][416][417] 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.[418][419][420][421]

Musk with Israeli President Isaac Herzog in Jerusalem, Israel, November 27, 2023
In a YouTube podcast interview on November 10, 2023, Musk criticized Israel's retaliatory actions in the Gaza Strip during the 2023 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." [422] 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.[423] Several weeks later, Musk traveled to Israel by visiting the kibbutz Kfar Aza with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which had been part of the aftermath of the 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel, and described it as "jarring." [424]

Accusations of antisemitism

The Israeli government and several media outlets accused Musk of sowing antisemitism due to his promotion of George Soros conspiracy theories,[425] although some Israeli officials defended Musk and denied his criticism of Soros was antisemitic.[426]

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".[427][428] 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." [427][428] Musk further clarified that he doesn't believe that "all Jewish communities" hate white people, but specifically took aim at the Anti-Defamation League. [429] He also tweeted that his criticism applies to more Jewish groups than just the ADL but was not a general statement toward all Jewish communities, "You [sic] right that this does not extend to all Jewish communities, but it is also not just limited to ADL". [430]

The first tweet was widely regarded as echoing white nationalist sentiments [431] and affirmed another antisemitic conspiracy theory that Jews push "hatred against Whites." [432][433] The following day, Musk made a tweet which critics regarded as supporting white pride. [434][435] Advertisers distanced themselves from his tweets. [436]

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." [437][438] 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." [439] Musk described his tweet as "one of the most foolish, if not the most foolish, thing I've done." [440][441]

In January 2024, Elon Musk visited the Auschwitz concentration camp with European Jewish Association Chairman Rabbi, conservative political commentator Ben Shapiro and Holocaust survivor Gidon Lev. [442] He also spoke on a conference about rising antisemitism. [443] The New York Times described the trip as a part of an image "rehabilitation tour." [444]

COVID-19

Musk wearing a face mask

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

Musk was criticized for his public comments and conduct related to the COVID-19 pandemic. [445][446] 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. [447]

In March 2020, Musk stated, "The coronavirus panic is dumb." [448][449] 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 U.S. population. [445] On March 19, 2020, Musk predicted that there would be "probably close to zero new cases in [the U.S.] by end of April". [446] Politico labeled this statement one of "the most audacious, confident, and spectacularly incorrect prognostications [of 2020]". [450] Musk also falsely stated that children "are essentially immune" to COVID-19. [451][452]

Musk condemned COVID-19 lockdowns and initially refused to close the Tesla Fremont Factory in March 2020, defying the local shelter-in-place order.[445][453][454] In May 2020, he reopened the Tesla factory, defying the local stay-at-home order,[455][456] and warned workers that they would be unpaid, and their unemployment benefits might be jeopardized, if they did not report to work.[456] In December 2022, Musk called for prosecution of former National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Anthony Fauci.[457][458]

In March 2020, Musk promised that Tesla would make ventilators for COVID-19 patients if there were a shortage.[459] After figures like New York City mayor Bill de Blasio responded to Musk's offer,[460] Musk offered to donate ventilators which Tesla would build or buy from a third party.[459] However, Musk ended up buying and donating BiPAP and CPAP machines, which are devices that support respirations of someone able to breathe on their own, rather than the much more expensive and sought-after mechanical ventilator machines that are able to breathe for a patient entirely.[461][462]

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".[463][464] 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.[465] 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.[465][466] 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.[467]

Personal life

In 2002, Musk became a U.S. citizen.[468] From the early 2000s until late 2020, Musk resided in California, where both Tesla and SpaceX were founded.[469] He then relocated to Austin, Texas, saying that California had become "complacent" about its economic success.[469][470][471] While hosting Saturday Night Live in 2021, Musk stated that he has Asperger syndrome, although he has never been medically diagnosed.[472][473] Musk supported numerous initiatives to improve the lives of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Tesla cars provide sensory-friendly and quieter options to accommodate individuals with autism. Also, the Musk Foundation, has provided funding for autism research and support programs.[474]

During a South African safari in late 2000, he contracted malaria and was then hospitalized in an intensive care unit back in California.[475]

Musk trained in Brazilian jiu-jitsu while preparing for the proposed fight between himself and Mark Zuckerberg.[476] In his leisure time, he plays video games including Quake, Diablo IV, Elden Ring, and Polytopia.[477][478] Musk has claimed he uses ketamine for occasional depression, while the Wall Street Journal has repeatedly alleged he uses it and other drugs recreationally.[479][480][481]

Relationships and children

Musk has at least 11 surviving children.[3] He met his first wife, Canadian author Justine Wilson, while attending Queen's University in Ontario, Canada; they married in 2000.[482] In 2002, their first child died of sudden infant death syndrome at the age of 10 weeks.[483] After his death, the couple used IVF to continue their family;[484] they had twins in 2004 followed by triplets in 2006.[484] The couple divorced in 2008 and shared custody.[485][486] In 2022, the eldest twin officially changed her name to reflect her gender identity as a trans woman and to use Wilson as her last name because she no longer wished to be associated with Musk.[487] 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." [488]

In 2008, Musk began dating English actress Talulah Riley.[489] They married two years later at Dornoch Cathedral in Scotland.[490][491] In 2012, the couple divorced, before remarrying the following year.[492] After briefly filing for divorce in 2014,[492] Musk finalized a second divorce from Riley in 2016.[493] Musk then dated Amber Heard for several months in 2017;[494] he had reportedly been pursuing her since 2012.[495]

In 2018, Musk and Canadian musician Grimes said that they were dating.[496] Grimes gave birth to their son in May 2020.[497][498] Musk and Grimes originally gave the baby a name that would have violated California regulations as it contained characters that are not in the modern English alphabet,[499][500] which they then changed to a name that complied with regulations.[501][502]

In December 2021, Grimes and Musk had a second child, a daughter born via surrogacy.[1] 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.[503][504] In March 2022, Grimes said of her relationship with Musk: "I would probably refer to him as my boyfriend, but we're very fluid." [1] Later that month, Grimes tweeted that she and Musk had broken up again.[505] In September 2023 it was reported that the pair had a third child, a son.[506] In October 2023, Grimes sued Musk over parental rights and custody of their eldest son.[507][508][509]

In July 2022, Insider published court documents revealing that Musk had had twins with Shivon Zilis, director of operations and special projects at Neuralink, in November 2021.[510] 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.[511] Their third child together was born in early 2024, according to sources from Bloomberg.[3] 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.[512] Musk denied the report.[513] Musk also had a relationship with Australian actress Natasha Basset, who has been described as "an occasional girlfriend." [514]

Legal matters after 2020

Further information: Personal and business legal affairs of Elon Musk; List of lawsuits involving Tesla, Inc.; and Criticism of Tesla, Inc.

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.[515] 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".[516][517] After the release of the article, Tesla's stock fell by more than 6%,[518] decreasing Musk's net worth by \$10 billion.[519] Barron's wrote "...some investors considered key-man risk – the danger that a company could be badly hurt by the loss of one individual." [520]

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.[521] In May, a judge granted the U.S. Virgin Islands' request to serve Musk electronically through Tesla after the U.S. territory had difficulty locating him.[521] The efforts to subpoena Musk for documents do not implicate him in any wrongdoing and do not seek to have Musk testify under oath.[521]

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.[522][523]

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.[524][525][526] 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".[524] The complaint also alleged that Musk's accusations led to Brody and his family being subjected to harassment and threats.[524][525][527] In February 2024, Musk was ordered to testify in a deposition for the lawsuit.[528] 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.[529][530]

In October 2023, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) sued Musk, alleging that he was refusing to testify in an investigation into whether he violated federal law by purchasing Twitter stock in 2022.[531][532][533] According to the lawsuit, Musk testified twice in 2022 but refused to testify a third time in 2023, claiming the SEC was harassing him.[531][533] In February 2024, Judge Laurel Beeler ruled that Musk must testify again.[534]

In January 2024, Delaware Judge Kathaleen McCormick ruled in a 2018 lawsuit that Musk's \$55 billion pay package from Tesla be rescinded.[535] 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." [536] A re-ratification shareholders' vote passed

in mid-June 2024, though 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.[537]

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 a direct report to "have his babies." [538] 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.[539] Also in June, a former Twitter executive sued Musk for "cheating" him and other ousted executives out of \$200 million in severance pay.[540]