

Twitter traffic sinks in wake of changes and launch of rival platform Threads

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Twitter's website traffic is "tanking" according to the chief of internet services company Cloudflare, amid signs users are migrating to alternative platforms such as Threads, BlueSky and Mastodon. On Sunday, Matthew Prince posted a graph from Cloudflare's ranking of the most popular websites in the world showing Twitter has been in decline since the start of 2023, not long after Elon Musk took over the platform. The graph shows a significant drop in Cloudflare's domain server ranking for Twitter in mid-2023 coincided with unpopular changes Musk made to the site, and the launch of the Meta-owned rival platform Threads. At the end of June, Musk tweeted that Twitter had hit an all-time record in "user seconds". In early July, Twitter began forcing people to log in to view tweets. It also set a rate limit for the number of posts different account tiers could read each day – initially 6,000 for paying users and 600 for non-paying users. Musk said the changes were introduced to curb attempts to scrape the website. The limit has since been increased, and Twitter removed the login requirement last week. The Guardian received the customary auto-reply of a poop emoji when comment was sought from Twitter. Meta's answer to Twitter, Threads, surpassed 70 million users in the first three days since its launch on Thursday last week, and is expected to hit 100m on Monday. That excludes users from the European Union who can not access the app until it complies with EU law. Meta's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, said in a post on Threads that he believes the toxicity of Twitter – which is purported to have 250 million users – has kept the site from being successful. "The goal is to keep [Threads] friendly as it expands. I think it's possible and will ultimately be the key to its success," he said last week. "That's one reason why Twitter never succeeded as much as I think it should have, and we want to do it differently." While Threads aims to be a "kinder" place, research from Media Matters showed "within 24 hours of Threads' release, right-wing and fringe figures signed up for the platform". That included white nationalist Richard Spencer, who used to write for Breitbart, and white supremacists such as Nick Fuentes, an outspoken antisemite. Some far-right accounts are testing the platform's moderation – which adopts the same rules as Facebook and Instagram – in attempts to get banned as a badge of honour. Mastodon, an earlier Twitter rival, has seen a slight rise in its monthly active users in July, after stagnating since earlier this year. It has almost returned to two million active monthly users, according to an analysis by the Guardian. While BlueSky is still in beta and users can join the platform by invitation only, it had to momentarily pause new sign-ups to cope with demand after Twitter's rate limit change was implemented.