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**Research: TikTok Lite Lacks Critical**

**Safety Features, Neglects Global Majority Users**

*“TikTok's ‘bite-size’ Lite app is a safety hazard” — Control features to limit offensive content and warning labels to protect users from harm are absent.*

**(GLOBAL | JULY 23, 2024) —** Mozilla and AI Forensics’ investigation into TikTok Lite — a low-bandwidth alternative to the TikTok app predominantly accessible in Global Majority countries — has revealed significant safety concerns.

Researchers found major discrepancies between safety features on TikTok Lite and the flagship TikTok app, several of which contradict the platforms’ very own policies. According to the researchers, multiple of these safety guardrails are easy to integrate into TikTok Lite without increasing the app’s size.

The research — titled “**Light on Safety: How TikTok Lite Sacrifices User Protections in the Global Majority**” — reveals how TikTok Lite lacks crucial user protections across two categories:

 **• TikTok Lite users lack basic, proactive user controls at their disposal, including the ability to filter offensive content and unwanted keywords; and, screen management tools that can mitigate app addiction**

 **• TikTok Lite provides no warning labels or banners on a range of potentially harmful content, from dangerous prank videos and graphic content to health and elections-related misinformation and AI-generated content**

TikTok Lite recently came under scrutiny by EU regulators for the addictive design of TikTok Lite’s reward system, which paid users to watch more content. A few days after announcing the investigation, TikTok suspended the program.

TikTok Lite is currently not available in the U.S. and the majority of Europe, but has over one billion users, according to app store statistics. It operates as a mini version of the flagship app, consuming less internet data, storage, and phone battery use while remaining functional in poor connectivity environments. The research findings reinforce a recent Mozilla report that found platforms disproportionately deploy fewer policies in Global Majority regions.

**Says Odanga Madung, a researcher at Mozilla :** “TikTok's ‘bite-size’ Lite app is a safety hazard for more than one billion of its users. It's the equivalent of removing seat belts and airbags from a car and then selling it to an unsuspecting customer. In an effort to reduce the app’s required bandwidth, TikTok has also reduced crucial safety protections for users across the Global Majority.”

**Says Claudio Agosti, co-founder of AI Forensics:** “The safety features TikTok Lite lacks aren’t complex and are perfectly compatible with a lower-bandwidth app. TikTok’s decision to ignore these safety measures is clearly a choice, not a technical necessity.”

Research methodology entailed analysis of community guideline policies, settings, and other features across both versions of TikTok. Researchers evaluated nine features categorized under “labeling measures” and “user control functions.” Under labeling measures, they scrutinized how well the platforms flagged misinformation, dangerous acts, graphic content, and synthetic content. On the user control functions, they studied screen time management, content preference settings, comment filtering, reporting and blocking, and child restrictions.

TikTok Lite’s deficiencies fit within a larger pattern of the technology industry neglecting users across the Global Majority, where there is currently limited regulatory oversight.

**The Details**

**TikTok Lite has a safety problem.** TikTok’s policy on Dangerous Acts and Activity is clear: “We do not allow showing or promoting dangerous activity and challenges.” In cases where potentially dangerous undertakings are depicted, TikTok includes a warning banner that illustrates that the activity is done by a professional or in the company of professional guidelines. While these labels exist in the mainstream app, they are not present on the Lite version.

Similarly, banners used to warn users about graphic or disturbing content are also not available on the TikTok Lite version. Sensitive explicit content can easily go unflagged, reaching millions of users. Other significant discrepancies include TikTok Lite’s failure to assign labels on suspiciously inaccurate content or AI-generated content. Researchers found only three common safety features in both TikTok “full” and Lite: malicious content reporting, search filters, and blocking.

**TikTok Lite curtails user agency.** Researchers found significant user control disparities that affect people’s ability to enhance their safety and avoid toxicity on the platform. Lite users cannot block particular keywords, spam, or offensive comments from appearing on their feeds. Users also cannot enable approval features for comments before they are published.

**TikTok Lite lacks well-being protections.** The flagship TikTok app has introduced features that mitigate addictive patterns on the platform, like “screen break” settings However, these features are not present on the Lite version.

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