

Jury in Los Angeles finds Meta, YouTube negligent in social media addiction trial

SICK BASTARDS AT FACEBOOK AND GOOGLE PREYED ON KIDS

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KEY POINTS

- A jury in Los Angeles determined that Meta and Google were negligent and failed to warn users of the dangers associated with using their platforms in a high-profile social media case.
- It's the first of several trials taking place this year that experts have characterized as the social media industry's "Big Tobacco" moment.

- **Compensatory damages were assessed at \$3 million, with Meta on the hook for**

70% and YouTube the remaining 30%.

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A jury in Los Angeles determined on Wednesday that [Meta](#) and [Google's](#) YouTube were negligent and failed to warn users of the dangers associated with using their platforms, in a case that could have repercussions across the social media landscape.

The personal injury trial [commenced](#) in late January in LA Superior Court. A young woman identified as K.G.M., or Kaley, alleged that she became addicted to apps like Instagram and YouTube as a child. Deliberations began Friday, March 13.

Jurors ultimately ruled in favor of the plaintiff, who claimed that Meta and YouTube's negligence played a "substantial factor" in causing mental health-related harms. Compensatory damages were assessed at \$3 million, with Meta on the hook for 70% and YouTube the remaining 30%. Punitive damages amount to an additional \$3 million, with \$2.1 million to be paid by Meta and \$900,000 by YouTube.

"Today's verdict is a historic moment — for Kaley and for the thousands of children and families who have been waiting for this day," attorneys representing the plaintiff said in a statement after the verdict. "She showed extraordinary courage bringing this case and telling her story in open court. A jury of Kaley's peers heard the evidence, heard what Meta and YouTube knew and when they knew it, and held them accountable for their conduct."

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg leaves the Federal Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles after defending the company in a landmark social media addiction trial in Los Angeles, United States, on February 19, 2026.

Jon Putman | Anadolu | Getty Images

A Meta spokesperson said in a statement, "We respectfully disagree with the verdict and are evaluating our legal options."

"We disagree with the verdict and plan to appeal. This case misunderstands YouTube, which is a responsibly built streaming platform, not a social media site," a Google spokesperson said in a statement.

It's one of several trials taking place this year that experts have characterized as the social media industry's "Big Tobacco" moment, comparing it with the 1990s, when tobacco companies were forced to pay billions of dollars for lying to the public about the safety and potential harms of their products.

On Tuesday, jurors in Santa Fe, New Mexico, found that Meta willfully violated the state's unfair practices after Attorney General Raúl Torrez [alleged](#) that the company failed to properly safeguard its apps from online predators targeting children. Meta was ordered to pay \$375 million in damages based on the number of violations. The company said it would appeal the case.

The New Mexico case is separate from other [social media lawsuits](#) that state attorneys general have brought against [companies](#) including Meta and TikTok.

During the six-week trial in LA, jury members were tasked with determining whether Meta and YouTube implemented certain design features in their apps like recommendation algorithms and auto-play that contributed to K.G.M.'s crippling, mental distress. The 20-year-old woman alleged that she suffered from severe body dysmorphia, depression and suicidal thoughts due to her near-constant use of the apps and the constant notifications that made it difficult for her to stop.

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Meta and YouTube denied the plaintiff's claims, and said they take safety and health concerns seriously and have implemented features intended to minimize potential harms. Attorneys representing the tech giants alleged that K.G.M.'s mental health problems stemmed from a turbulent childhood and related family issues, and that she used the services as a way to cope with trauma.

The court chose the plaintiff's case as a bellwether to help determine verdicts in similar and connected litigation throughout the state of California under so-called Judicial Council Coordination Proceedings. Although TikTok and [Snap](#) were originally part of the case, they [settled](#) with the plaintiff before the trial began, and are still involved in other legal proceedings.

A federal trial is set to begin this summer in the Northern District of California involving similar, consolidated claims by school districts and parents nationwide. They claim apps from Meta, YouTube, TikTok and Snap helped foster detrimental mental health-related harms to young users.

A central legal strategy for prosecutors and plaintiff attorneys is to focus on alleged design flaws related to apps like Instagram and YouTube instead of specific content in order to counter arguments made by tech companies that they shouldn't be held liable for certain third-party content on their platforms due to Section 230, which protects Internet speech.

The LA trial featured testimony from several high-level executives, including Meta CEO [Mark Zuckerberg](#), Instagram head Adam Mosseri and YouTube vice president of engineering Cristos Goodrow.

Mosseri pushed back last month on the notion of [social media addiction](#), characterizing it as "problematic" usage. Zuckerberg's testimony the following week included the revelation that the Facebook co-founder once contacted [Apple](#) CEO [Tim Cook](#) to discuss the [well-being of teens and children](#) and also explained to jury members the company's decision-making process related to digital filters promoting cosmetic surgery and other matters.

Goodrow [said](#) in his testimony that YouTube was "not designed to maximize time."

Lawyers representing both parties made closing arguments about two weeks ago.

— MS Now’s Jillian Frankel and CNBC’s Stephen Desaulniers contributed to this report.

Meta and YouTube Lose Landmark Social-Media Addiction Trial

Jurors found the companies negligent and said their app designs caused harm to children

By

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and

[Katherine Sayre](#)



Jurors heard from Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg during the Los Angeles trial. Kyle

Grillot/Bloomberg News

LOS ANGELES—A 20-year-old woman prevailed in a landmark social-media trial against [Meta Platforms](#) META **0.33%** and Google's YouTube in which the companies were accused of designing their apps to be addictive and harmful to adolescents.

A jury found Instagram's owner Meta and YouTube negligent for operating a product that harmed kids and teens and failed to warn about those dangers. The decision dealt a blow to the companies that have historically been shielded by Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act.

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