



Mr. Sundar Pichai  
Chief Executive Officer  
Alphabet Inc.  
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway  
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai,

We, the undersigned, write with concern following research that showed the spread of harmful climate denial narratives on your platforms. We firmly believe that it is Google's responsibility to promptly and decisively address this issue, especially as what we call the 'new' climate denial proliferates on your platforms.

On January 16, 2024, the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) published a report documenting the emergence of a new form of climate denial on YouTube.<sup>1</sup> CCDH found that, as the devastating effects of climate change have grown harder to deny, many climate deniers have expanded upon traditional outright rejection of anthropogenic climate change. They've begun peddling a new collection of narratives that aim to portray climate change as harmless or even beneficial, argue climate solutions are ineffective, and paint climate science and the climate movement as unreliable.<sup>2</sup> CCDH found that this "new denial" made up 70% of denialist claims they studied on YouTube in 2023, up from 35% in 2018.<sup>3</sup>

The narrative shift to new denial seeks to undermine the solutions to mitigating the climate crisis and delay political action. In November 2023, the United Nations declared 2023 the hottest year in human history.<sup>4</sup> It is well-established that rising temperatures will bring about extreme wildfires, floods, and heat, threatening the lives and livelihoods of billions worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

Google has repeatedly committed itself to fighting climate change, including by limiting the spread of climate denialism on its platforms. In 2021, Google announced that it would cease bankrolling climate denialism by prohibiting ads on videos that "contradict[t] the well-established scientific consensus around the

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<sup>1</sup> "The New Denial", Center for Countering Digital Hate, January 16, 2024, <https://counterhate.com/research/new-climate-denial/>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 9-14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> "UN Declares 2023 Hottest Year Ever as Crucial Climate Summit Starts", Bloomberg, 30 November 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2023-11-30/united-nations-calls-2023-hottest-year-ever-a-t-dubai-cop28-climate-talks?leadSource=verify%20wall>

<sup>5</sup> "Climate Change" World Health Organization, October 12 2023, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health#:~:text=Research%20shows%20that%203.6%20billion,highly%20susceptible%20to%20climate%20change>



existence and causes of climate change.”<sup>6</sup> That same year you claimed that “when people come to Google Search with questions about climate change, we’ll show authoritative information from sources like the United Nations”.<sup>7</sup>

However, these declarations of intent have failed to translate into effective action. Numerous media reports, including research from the Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD) coalition, have documented how ads for mainstream brands continue to run alongside content that violates Google’s policy against climate denial.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Google has yet to update its inadequate policies to address the spread of new denial claims.<sup>9</sup>

In light of these concerns, we urge you to ensure that Google:

1. Extend its existing climate disinformation policy to explicitly encompass assertions which fall under categories of ‘new climate denial’, including claims that “the impacts of global warming are beneficial or harmless” and “climate solutions won’t work” that contradict the scientific consensus. This includes assertions that:
  - a. The earth's climate has low sensitivity to global warming
  - b. That global warming is beneficial to ecosystems
  - c. Deny the role of CO<sub>2</sub> in warming the planet
  - d. Deny the efficacy of proven clean energy technologies.<sup>10</sup>
2. Demonetize and commit to not amplify climate denial content
3. Collaborate with NGOs and academic experts to continuously update policies to effectively combat the evolving landscape of climate denial, including the emergence of new denial narratives.

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<sup>6</sup> “Updating our ads and monetization policies on climate change”, Google, October 7, 2021, <https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/11221321?hl=en>

<sup>7</sup> “Giving you more sustainable choices with Google”, Google, October 6, 2021, <https://blog.google/outreach-initiatives/sustainability/sustainability-2021/>

<sup>8</sup> “Google Promised to Defund Climate Lies, but the Ads Keep Coming”, The New York Times, Nico Grant, Steven Lee Myers, May 2, 2023,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/02/technology/google-youtube-disinformation-climate-change.html>; Meet the ad exchanges making money from climate disinformation (hint: you already know them), Nandini Jammi, Claire Atkin, December 11, 2023, <https://checkmyads.org/adtech-climate-disinfo-caad/>

<sup>9</sup> “Falsehoods Follow Close Behind This Summer’s Natural Disasters”, *The New York Times*, Tiffany Hsu, August 30, 2023,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/30/business/media/maui-idalia-disinformation-climate-change.html>; “Google still profits from climate lies on YouTube”, *The Verge*, Justine Calma, May 2, 2023,

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/5/2/23707993/google-youtube-ads-climate-change-disinformation> ; “Google let Daily Wire advertise on ‘climate change is a hoax’ searches”, *The Guardian*, Geoff Dembicki, January 23, 2023,

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jan/27/daily-wire-google-ads-climate-crisis-deniers>

<sup>10</sup> “Computer-assisted classification of contrarian claims about climate change”, Travis Coan et al., November 16, 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-01714-4>



We believe that by taking these actions, Google can make significant progress towards fulfilling its responsibility to combat climate denial on its platform and contribute to global efforts to address climate change.

Please respond in writing with your intentions to adopt or reject these requests and your intended timelines for action.

Signed,

- The Center for Countering Digital Hate
- Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement (AQME)
- Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment & Management (CECIC)
- The Climate Coalition
- ClimateMama
- Équiterre
- Friends of the Earth
- Friends of the Earth (England, Wales & Northern Ireland)
- Global Action Plan
- Kairos Fellows
- One Earth Sangha
- Stand.earth
- Texas Campaign for the Environment
- TIAA-Divest!
- QuotaClimat
- The Working Class Climate Alliance
- 350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
  
- Constantine Boussalis, Trinity College Dublin
- John Cook, University of Melbourne
- Marie-Eve Carignan, Université de Sherbrooke / Chaire UNESCO en prévention de la radicalisation et de l'extrémisme violents
- Mirjam O. Nanko, University of Exeter
- Sander van der Linden, University of Cambridge
- Stanley Rothbardt, Climate Reality Project
- Stephan Lewandowsky, University of Bristol