

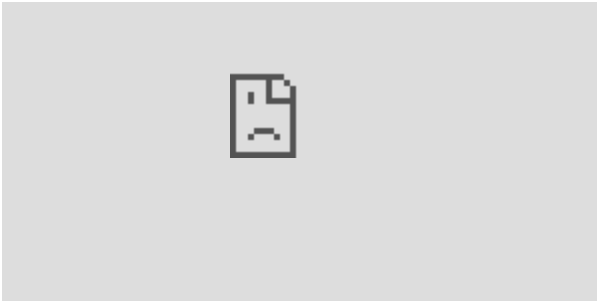
Googles search leaves users in the dark: DuckDuckGo CEO

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If you use Google's search engine, "There's no way of knowing what you're missing," says Gabriel Weinberg, CEO and founder of

search engine DuckDuckGo, whose company released a [study](#) Tuesday claiming that Google is manipulating Americans' search results.

The study concludes that Google is editorializing and providing different search results for different users who search for identical terms, within seconds and minutes of each other.

"The editorialized results are informed by the personal information Google has on you, like your search, browsing and purchase history," the study says.

"What we're seeing is intense amounts of variation," Weinberg told Yahoo Finance. "Most of the people in the study saw results completely unique to them."

By unique, Weinberg means that inconsistent source links appeared in search results, and some of the same links appeared in varying hierarchical order.

Seventy-two U.S. participants in the study entered three independent Google search terms — gun control, immigration, and vaccinations — using a desktop Chrome browser at 9 p.m. eastern time on July 24, 2018.

Unique results were returned for 68% of private searches for "gun control," 57% of searches for "immigration," and 92% of searches for "vaccinations."

According to the study, Google returned these filtered results, regardless of whether participants searched in private "[incognito](#)," or non-private mode.

“It’s exactly opposite of what people would expect,” Weinberg said.



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Source: Yahoo Finance

In non-private mode, unique search results were generated for 59% of searches for “gun control,” 63% of searches for “immigration,” and 92% of searches for “vaccinations.”



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Source: Yahoo Finance

“Our proposition is that if you search in the U.S. you should be seeing the same things, especially when you search major political topics,” Weinberg said.

‘Search personalization doesn’t actually help search results’

DuckDuckGo decided to run the new study after a previous version examined Google search results in connection with the 2012 presidential campaigns. A [Wall Street Journal study](#), commissioned around the same time, mirrored DuckDuckGo’s findings, showing that Google’s personalized search results inserted tens of millions of more links for then-candidate Barack Obama than for his primary challenger Mitt Romney.

“Search personalization doesn’t actually help search results, it really hurts in the aggregate, making people more politically polarized,” Weinberg said.

In his experience, Weinberg says when consumers think of search personalization they’re really expecting search localization for services like local weather, local restaurants, and maps, rather than national or international political issues.

“You can do that all without a filter bubble because it’s not based on your search history,” he said, adding that search-based ad revenue is not dependent on search personalization.

DuckDuckGo’s study controlled for local results by designating all local search results as equal and accounting for no variation if the local links appeared in the same hierarchical order. A result showing an LA Times link, for example, was treated the same as link to the Chicago Tribune.

For critics who dispense with the importance of result order, Weinberg says they’re mistaken.

“The first link gets about 40% of the clicks, the second gets about 20%, and it drops off by half with each [subsequent] link,” he said. “If you switch the second and first link, that’s actually a huge difference” because the one is now getting twice as many clicks as the other.