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The 2022 Ranking Of Free-Market Think Tanks Measured By Social Media Impact

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Covid-19 restrictions have led most organizations to increase their social media presence during the past two years. Think tanks and other organizations that promote a free economy were no exception. With the worst of the pandemic behind us, some of the most popular platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, have seen slower user traffic growth rates. Some leading think tanks are thus witnessing a reduced following. For comparison, I also show the social media following of prominent think tanks that are not particularly pro-free-market, such as CSIS, Brookings, and Chatham House. These established groups have extensive networks on LinkedIn, much larger than their more pro-free-market competitors.

Most leading think tanks experienced a reduction in unique visitors to their websites. Several successfully achieved sizable growth in at least one social media platform. BrasilParalelo (grew by 78%), Judicial Watch (20%), and FreedomWorks (20%) were exceptions and were able to increase traffic to their websites. Among the competition, CSIS and Chatham House achieved a healthy increase. I use the data from SimilarWeb, which only includes think tanks above a certain threshold of traffic.

The tables show how leading pro-free-market organizations performed on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, SimilarWeb, LinkedIn, and Instagram during the last twelve months, as measured during the first week of April 2022.

	Twitter	Followers	Facebook	Likes	YouTube	Subscribers	YouTube	TopVideo	LinkedIn	Instagram	Followers	
	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021
US-Based												
Heritage Foundation	629	628	1,908	2,068	226	203	384	520	44	32	140	123
Mises USA	150	129	225	228	139	129	66	855	7	5	37	32
Cato Institute	364	364	351	357	80	67	3	226	38	30	39	36
Acton Institute	23	22	754	769	17	15	191	10	4	3	5	4
American Enterprise Institute (AEI)	155	145	313	312	206	195	9	15	31	26	18	17
Foundation for Economic Education (FEE)	62	51	190	182	272	241	323	454	11	6	41	30
Foreign												
Mises Brazil	45	44	267	281	75	70	12	84	8	7	133	101
Fundacion Para el Progreso (Chile)	45	41	277	275	203	140	431	234	2	1	50	37
Adam Smith Institute (UK)	56	56	52	53	7	7	3	1	4	3	2	2
Fraser Institute (Canada)	32	31	36	32	n/a	n/a	23	10	13	11	3	2
CIDAC/Mexico Evalua (Mexico)	116	107	79	80	4	2	2	4	5	2	3	2
Istituto Bruno Leoni (Italy)	31	30	22	22	4	3	1	10	3	2	5	4
CEP (Chile)	76	75	25	23	16	11	109	4	5	3	16	13
Fundacion Libertad y Progreso (Argentina)	20	18	36	35	126	114	168	481	1	1	26	25
CEDICE (Venezuela)	117	116	12	12	6	5	2	7	1	0	12	11
Libertad y Desarrollo (Chile)	51	49	11	11	2	2	4	3	2	1	9	7
ILISP.org (Brazil)	58	61	251	258	5	5	0	0	-	-	21	22
Instituto Millenium (Brazil)	35	35	404	406	54	54	6	11	27	26	45	48

Selected free-market think tanks social media impact: presence in Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, ... [+]

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Although it saw a slight decline in Facebook likes, The Heritage Foundation continues to lead among U.S. free-market groups, capturing first place on all platforms except YouTube. Like last year it came second in the number of subscribers. The Foundation for Economic Education, one of the oldest think tanks (founded in 1946) but now catering to a younger audience, ended up first again in YouTube subscribers and grew in Facebook likes.

PragerU leads on all platforms except website traffic among groups focusing on educational videos. BrasilParalelo, a pro-free-society Netflix NFLX -3.7% or History Channel, is also earning impressive growth. It now has over 2.5 million YouTube subscribers. During these past twelve months, it has produced a series on Austrian economics with Helio Beltrão, the founder of the Mises Institute Brasil. It has also made several programs on inflation, cryptocurrencies, and monetary topics with Fernando Ulrich and a longer film, *Cortina de Fumaça (Smokescreen)*, about the Amazonian fires, which already has over two million views.

	Twitter Followers		Facebook Likes		YouTube Subscribers		YouTube TopVideo		LinkedIn		Instagram Followers	
	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021
Magazines and Media Focused efforts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brasil Paralelo	348	255	618	531	2,540	1,650	2,007	2,000	9	2	1,200	805
Reason	272	260	591	578	752	637	863	1,800	4	3	32	24
Media Research Center	234	200	1,784	1,847	134	131	45	943	2	2	93	30
Daily Signal	75	67	979	965	117	92	1,172	2,500	1	1	59	41
National Review (Magazine)	333	327	1,028	1,042	17	16	8	22	7	4	45	41
CNSNews.com	119	113	2,309	2,304	3	3					2	-
Prager U	618	537	4,441	3,851	2,940	2,880	7,674	9,400	21	11	1,900	1,600
EIAmerican	78	-	147	5	8	2	18	13	0	0	53	4
PanamPost (Spanish)	211	205	366	368	18	18	4	5	0	0	53	51
Competition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brookings	438	424	412	408	130	116	97	29	147	124	33	28
MoveOn.org	379	384	1,628	1,653	51	50	41	189	9	7	413	368
Chatham House (UK)	244	225	105	104	47	37	39	32	115	91	15	11
CSIS	363	334	534	540	186	143	423	459	203	160	63	54

Media and video groups social media impact: presence in Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and ...

Several Latin American think tanks achieved an impressive social media presence. Among them are Fundación para el Progreso (FPP, Chile), and Fundación Libertad y Progreso (Argentina), which have continued to consolidate their leadership on YouTube.

Below are the free-market think tanks scoring first or second in the United States and from around the world (data compiled during the first week of April 2022):

- Most **Facebook** likes (U.S.): **#1** Heritage (1.908 million) **#2** Acton Institute (754K); (Non-U.S.): **#1** Instituto Millenium, Brazil (404K), **#2** Fundación para el Progreso, Chile (277K)
- Most **Twitter** followers (U.S.): **#1** Heritage Foundation (629K) **#2** Cato Institute (364K); (Non-U.S.): **#1** CEDICE, Venezuela (117K) **#2** México Evalúa/CIDAC, Mexico (116K)

· Most monthly website visitors, as reported by SimilarWeb (U.S.): #1 Heritage (1.9 million) #2 FEE (901K); (Non-U.S.): #1 México Evalúa/CIDAC (287K) #2 Mises Institute, Brazil (232K).

· Most subscribers to **YouTube** (U.S.): #1 FEE (272K) #2 Heritage (226K); (Non-U.S.): #1 Fundación para el Progreso, Chile (203K) #2 Fundación Libertad y Progreso, Argentina (126K)

· Most views of **YouTube** video (longer than 2 min) uploaded in past twelve months (U.S.): #1 Heritage (384K) #2 FEE (323K); (Non-U.S.): #1 Fundación Para el Progreso, Chile (431K) #2 Fundación Libertad y Progreso, Argentina (168K)

· Most **LinkedIn** Followers (U.S.): #1 Heritage (44K) #2 Cato (38K); (Non-U.S.): #1 Instituto Millenium, Brazil (27K) #2 Fraser Institute, Canada (13K)

· **Instagram** followers (U.S.): #1 Heritage (140K) #2 FEE (41K); (Non-U.S.): #1 Instituto Mises, Brazil (133K) #2 Fundación Para el Progreso, Chile (50K)

PragerU continues to attract a massive following for its short videos. Unlike other groups mentioned in this article, PragerU grew on Facebook, Twitter, and other popular platforms. As in 2021, PragerU ranks first in categories other than web traffic. Except for LinkedIn, where they doubled their network, PragerU scored better than think tanks. *National Review* and *Reason* continue to lead in traffic among groups anchored on their magazines.

Leaders in pro-free-market videos, magazines and news outlets include:

· Most **Facebook** likes: #1 PragerU (4.441 million) #2 CNSNews (2.309 million)

· Most **Twitter** followers: #1 PragerU (618K) #2 Brasil Paralelo (348K)

· Most monthly visitors to the website, as reported by SimilarWeb: #1 National Review (6.7 million) #2 Reason (3 million)

· Most subscribers to **YouTube** channel: #1 PragerU (2.94 million) #2 BrasilParalelo (2.54 million)

· Most views of **YouTube** video uploaded in last 12 months: #1 PragerU (7.674 million) #2 Brasil Paralelo (2.007 million)

· Most **Instagram** followers: #1 PragerU (1.9 million) #2 BrasilParalelo (1.2 million)

Turning Point leader among youth groups

Turning Point USA, like PragerU, continues to grow in most categories. The organization identifies, educates, trains, and organizes students to promote freedom. Among think tanks, only Heritage has more Twitter followers than Turning Point. It has now passed Heritage in Facebook likes. Its CEO and founder, Charlie Kirk, now has 1.9 million followers on Instagram and 1.7 million on Twitter. The organization now has an annual budget of over \$50 million. It has attracted and empowered many other young voices to achieve a wide following. Candace Owens, for example, now has 4.3 million followers on Instagram. She beats Kirk on these platforms with 3 million followers on Twitter and 1.8 million on Parler.

Turning Point also has a considerable lead in Facebook likes. Leadership Institute's Campus Reform project, also focusing on university students, ranks first in web traffic. Young Americans for Freedom had the video with the most views during the last twelve months.

Among grassroots and activist groups, Judicial Watch is the leader. It is the pro-free-economy organization with the largest budget in my sample. It averages a yearly income of \$100 million from over 600,000 donors. It has 1.6 million followers on Twitter, 899K followers on Instagram, 6.6 million likes on Facebook, and 489K subscribers on YouTube.

	Twitter	Followers	Facebook	Likes	YouTube	Subscribers	YouTube	TopVideo	LinkedIn	Instagram	Followers	
	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021
Advocacy Groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Judicial Watch	1,600	1,600	6,639	6,454	489	458	324	899	4	4	899	792
Freedom Works*	275	267	4,431	4,991	0	14	1	11	4	3	215	164
Americans for Prosperity	91	93	952	1,051	8	7	1	-	8	6	11	8
Judicial Activism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alliance Defending Freedom	43	-	1,653	-	34	-	1,917	-	6	-	19	-
Institute for Justice	40	-	128	-	200	-	6,620	-	6	-	5	-
The Federalist Society	62	-	128	-	66	-	237	-	17	-	9	-
University-Based	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hoover Institution	144	132	514	520	614	498	1,856	3,600	16	9	27	22
Mercatus	34	33	37	37	22	17	32	-	4	3	2	2
Student Advocacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turning Point	467	427	2,675	1,939	524	358	1,761	1,400	15	10	1,700	1,400
Young Americans for Liberty	115	82	1,061	735	9	7	70	9	3	2	69	43
Young America's Foundation	114	100	1,443	1,133	659	425	4,161	398	4	3	398	329
Campus Reform	141	145	298	301	364	313	792	1,600	1	1	11	5
Students for Liberty	45	44	142	142	7	6	1	2	12	9	17	15

Organizations favorable to a free economy social media impact: presence in Twitter, Facebook, ... [+]

The Hoover Institution (at Stanford University) and Mercatus Center (at George Mason University) continue to lead among pro-free-market university-based centers. University-based think tanks are one of the fastest-growing segments in the market. Perhaps I missed some new university group, but I doubt any now outperform these two longtime leaders.

Each year I try to see if I neglected any pro-free-society group excelling on a social media platform. This time I looked into another of the fastest-growing segments of the think tank market: that which focuses on legal defense, legal training, investigations, and judicial activism. I have been including Judicial Watch in my analysis; among the organizations that complement its work, none excels on all platforms. Alliance Defending Freedom, ADF, leads in Facebook likes, with over 1.6 million, more than ten times the Institute for Justice and the Federalist Society. ADF also leads on Instagram with almost 19K followers. The Federalist Society leads in Twitter followers (62K) and LinkedIn, with 16K people in its network. Project Veritas leads in YouTube subscribers (1.48 million), and the Institute for Justice had the most popular video during the last twelve months (6.7 million views).

Podcasts

Most think tanks that promote a free economy have podcasts. Unlike most other platforms, I have not found open-source information about the number of listeners reached by different groups. Until I get a large enough sample, I will rely on information personally provided by some groups' social media managers.

Like last year, I started with the leading think tank on social media, the Heritage Foundation. Their ten different Heritage podcast channels attracted more than 3.5 million listens in 2020. In 2021 they combined their nine podcasts on the Heritage Podcast Network to provide listeners with an easier way to access their programs. Their combined shows received 3.1 million total listens in 2021. *The Dai DAI -0.3%ly Signal Podcast* is the most popular, with 2 million listens in 2021. Their most popular episode (33,778 listens) was "Is Biden's Vaccine Mandate Legal? Constitutional Expert Explains," released September 15, 2021. New additions include *The Kevin Roberts Show* and *On-Air with Heritage Action*.

This year I also asked the Heartland Institute for their numbers. Heartland produces eight podcasts (plus a "fire-hose" feed called the *Heartland Daily Podcast*) that got 6.2 million listens in 2021. Its most-popular individual show is *In the Tank*, the flagship weekly podcast with 1.4 million hits in 2021. Heartland's 2021 budget was \$4,350,000, just over 5% of Heritage's, which shows that the organization's size does not matter much when it comes to podcasts.

Social media influencers

In previous analyses, I mentioned the Brazilian philosopher Olavo de Carvalho (1947-2022), who at the time of his death earlier this year had over 3 million followers on all platforms combined. His large following on social media helps put some think tank numbers in perspective. Following in the footsteps of Carvalho is the Argentinean Agustín Laje Arrigoni, who already has more than 2.8 million followers on the leading platforms. His YouTube channel is approaching 1.3 million subscribers. Laje, who is only 33 years old and is studying for a Ph.D. in philosophy, is one of the founders of the LIBRE think tank, an organization primarily present in social media. It focuses on economic freedom and responsibility and combatted socialist ideologies and movements. Laje's first bestseller, coauthored with Nicolás Marquez, *The Black Book of the New Left (El Libro Negro de la Nueva Izquierda)*, describes the changing tactics of socialists, focusing more on culture and less on economics. It has sold approximately 200,000 copies. His current bestseller, *The Cultural Battle (La Batalla Cultural)*, focuses on how the "new right" should approach the cultural battle. It has sold 20,000 copies since its launch a month ago. Like Carvalho, who wrote in Portuguese, Laje writes in Spanish, so his writings are not yet well known in the English-speaking world.

Three economists from the Spanish-speaking world I mentioned last year continue to expand their social media presence. Juan Ramón Rallo (350K Twitter followers), Daniel Lacalle (318K), and Roberto Cachanosky (285K) are well-respected independent economists who compete and collaborate with think tanks. The first two are from Spain and the last from Argentina. In the English-speaking world, the faithful promoter of economist Thomas Sowell has 871K followers, a 25% increase over last year.

Congratulations to three South American groups listed in this ranking that work in Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela, countries with much smaller populations than Brazil or Mexico. My apologies if I missed a better-scoring free-market organization or policy influencer. Social media influence is a growing field, both in platforms and players, so it is not easy to cover everything. Elon Musk completed his purchase of Twitter just when I was finishing this article. Although there is room for optimism, it is too early to know the impact of Twitter's new ownership. I had been chatting these past days with George Farmer, the CEO of Parler, about the need for more competition in social media. It is not too early to conclude that efforts for increased competition

on social media platforms should continue and would be beneficial for the work of the groups mentioned in this piece and their goals to promote a freer economic system.