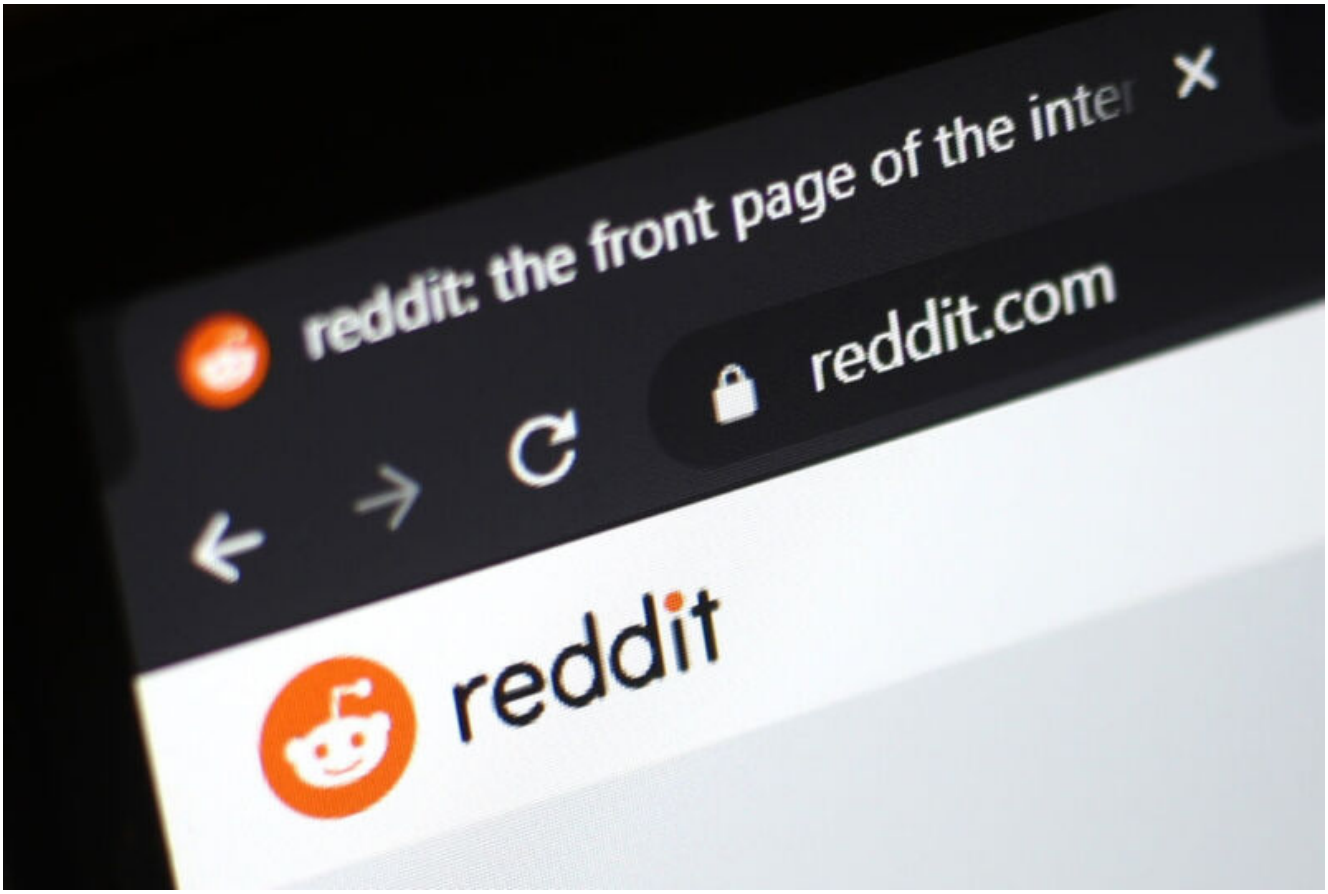
API pricing protests caused Reddit to crash for 3 hours



reader comments

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It took less than 11 hours for Reddit to feel the impact of widespread protests of its API fees. Over 7,000 subreddits became private in order to "go dark" and resist Reddit's controversial API pricing hike, which caused some instability for the site, and it was down from about 10:25 am ET to 1:26 pm today.

Amid the outage, Reddit spokesperson Tim Rathschmidt told The Verge:

> *A significant number of subreddits shifting to private caused*

> *some expected stability issues, and we've been working on resolving the anticipated issue.*

As of this writing, 7,856 subreddits have joined the protest, according to a counter on Twitch, and 8,191 have said they will do so. Some of the subreddits going dark have tens of millions of subscribers. But with the outage, the protests have already affected users who *don't* use a protesting subreddit.

During the outage, I couldn't use Reddit's site, which showed a main feed with the note, "Something went wrong. Just don't panic" and a pop-up saying, "Sorry, we couldn't load posts for this page." TechCrunch reported that users couldn't view threads on Reddit's app either. According to The Verge, "some" subreddits loaded during this time. There were 45,887 reports of outages at the problem's peak, per Downdetector.

Thousands of subreddits unified in going private or read-only starting June 12 (some began their protests earlier, though, and some say they'll protest indefinitely) through June 14 to revolt against how much Reddit will charge to access its API, which used to be free. Some believe the changes announced in April are an intentional death knell for third-party Reddit apps, similar to how Twitter virtually eliminated third-party apps with its API price hike in February.

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iOS app Apollo, which set the controversy into overdrive when it said the new pricing scheme would require it to pay $20 million a year to keep functioning, said it would shutter on June 30. Apollo is the most popular third-party Reddit app and not the only one preparing for the end.

And while the three-hour outage may feel like a win for the little guy, Reddit has yet to show any signs of relenting.

In an uncomfortable Q&A on the matter on Friday ahead of the

protests, Reddit CEO Steve Huffman was unyielding on pricing, saying in his initial post that “Reddit needs to be a self-sustaining business, and to do that, we can no longer subsidize commercial entities that require large-scale data use.”

“We’ll continue to be profit-driven until profits arrive. Unlike some of the 3P apps, we are not profitable,” Huffman responded when asked about concerns “that Reddit has become increasingly profit-driven and less focused on community engagement.”

Reddit is giving a free pass to apps that “address accessibility needs,” Rathschmidt told The Verge last week, and some, like RedReader and Dystopia, confirmed receiving exemptions.
But beyond that, Reddit has insisted it should be “fairly paid” to support third-party apps. The company seems to be on a quest for cash, which included reported layoffs and hiring freezes last week. Reddit filed for an initial public offering in late 2021, and The Information reported in February that it wants to go public this year.

Reddit denied trying to end third-party apps, but skepticism persists, especially considering the pricing scheme. Reddit will charge $0.24 per 1,000 requests or $12,000 for 50 million. For comparison, Imgur charges $500 per month for 7.5 million requests per month or $10,000 monthly for 150 million requests per month, and Twitter charges $42,000 for 50 million tweets.

Advance Publications, which owns Ars Technica parent Condé Nast, is the largest shareholder in Reddit.

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