

Top Twitter influencers flee to Bluesky amid Musk's continued debasing

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Yesterday, Twitter rival Bluesky experienced its biggest spike in users yet. Between Wednesday and Thursday, Bluesky doubled its user base, Bloomberg reported.

The surge in Bluesky's popularity came as some of Twitter's most influential users began joining Bluesky, including writer-comedian Dril, United States Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and filmmaker James Gunn. Some of these influencers may have been seeking to distance themselves from Twitter after the platform gifted many legacy accounts with blue verified badges that falsely labeled the accounts as paid subscribers.

Still in beta testing, Bluesky is currently available to more than 40,000 users, Bluesky CEO Jay Graber told Bloomberg today. There's much more interest from users, though. The iPhone app has been downloaded approximately 360,000 times, and the Android app is reportedly a top download after only recently launching in the US, the United Kingdom, and Japan.

Now that influencers are tweeting out their Bluesky handles, though, it's likely that many more users have joined the waitlist, which is seemingly the only way to get an invite code right now. It's possible that beta users will soon have

invites to share, too. Ars could not immediately reach Bluesky for comment.

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The eagerness to find a Twitter replacement has seemed to escalate after Twitter removed and then reinstated verification badges on legacy verified accounts. Many Twitter users have started joking about getting or wanting Bluesky invites at a time when one of Bluesky's newest users, model Chrissy Teigen, recently described having Twitter's blue badge on her account as a form of "punishment."

Beyond celebrities and influencers who felt stung by receiving blue checks they never asked for falsely branding their accounts, even users who never really cared about badges may be more actively seeking a Twitter alternative as the platform grows less reliable.

In the past few months, several news organizations left the platform, many government accounts lost verification, and many apps broke when Twitter turned off its free API. This week, Mashable reported that Twitter made search unavailable without a login, further restricting access to tweets. Just yesterday, New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) became one of the first major transportation agencies to stop sharing live updates on Twitter. In MTA's press release, acting chief customer officer Shanifah Rieara said that MTA terminated those posting services because "reliability of the platform can no longer be guaranteed."

But while it's easy to criticize Twitter's inconsistencies while CEO Elon Musk tries to find new ways to monetize the platform, Bluesky in its beta form may not be a perfect alternative for users worried about things like impersonation, content moderation, or customizable news feeds.

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