Background

The following data was derived from the Digital Advertising Accountability Program’s monitoring of websites and mobile apps for express advocacy political advertising. The data describes ads encountered across the United States from January 1, 2020, to February 20, 2020. The data includes ads encountered on a number of social media platforms, websites, and search engines. Because of difficulties sampling, we cannot generalize our data to the larger population or assess it for statistical significance. Rather, the summaries below represent a snapshot of activity on the web and in mobile apps as we have encountered them and are offered for illustrative purposes only. Note also that while many tables add up to our N of 314, some may not, for example where an ad was counted but one aspect of it was unreadable or unknowable.

The Results

Table 1. Where we found political ads online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of site/service</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-social media website</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search engine</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>314</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. (to the right) How many ads were associated with which states.

“Associated” in this context means that the ad met one of the four following criteria:
1. The text of the ad explicitly mentioned a state
2. The candidate was running for statewide office in a specific state
3. The ad appeared on a state-specific website (e.g., local news websites)
4. The ad otherwise appeared to target a specific individual or group in a given state (e.g., targeted advertising)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>314</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. The top ten advertisers (the person or entity that paid for an ad) from our dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of site/service</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warren for President</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Bloomberg 2020</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Steyer 2020</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaime Harrison for US Senate</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete for America</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden for President</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie 2020</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Andrew Yang</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump Make America Great Again Committee</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy McGrath for Senate</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Whether the political advertiser provided any “Enhanced Notice” and “Notice” to users.

For the purposes of this document, “enhanced notice” means any indication of a particular ad’s political nature, such as link, icon, or combination of words and phrases. “Notice” means any explanation, linked from an enhanced notice, that provides insight about the ad.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notice type</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Enhanced notice” &amp; “notice”</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Enhanced notice,” but no “notice”</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>311</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Use of AdChoices icon.

We noticed that many political ads deployed the familiar AdChoices icon as its enhanced notice where we would have expected an icon or wording indicating that the ad was political. Further, we note that no ad in our dataset used the PoliticalAd icon as enhanced notice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of “enhanced notice” in ads</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used AdChoices icon</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used other form</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>266</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Types of entities that paid for political ads in our dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of advertiser</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campaign</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>310</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Types of contest (federal or state).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of contest</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>314</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8. Types of federal contests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of federal contest</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressman</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>306</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Types of statewide contests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of statewide contest</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt. Governor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Ads where the advertiser was related to a particular political party.

For example, an advertiser may have “Republican” or “Democrat” as part of its name, or the advertiser may be a candidate for office running on a specific party’s ticket.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political party</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>314</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. The top ten candidates for whom we encountered “pro” ads—that is, ads advocating for the election of this particular candidate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate name</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Warren</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Bloomberg</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete Buttigieg</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Steyer</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy McGrath</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Biden</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Yang</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie Sanders</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaime Harrison</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>259</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12. The six candidates for whom we encountered “anti” ads—that is, ads advocating for the defeat of this particular candidate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate name</th>
<th>Number of ads seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey Graham</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch McConnell</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Parson</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris Kobach</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Jordan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>