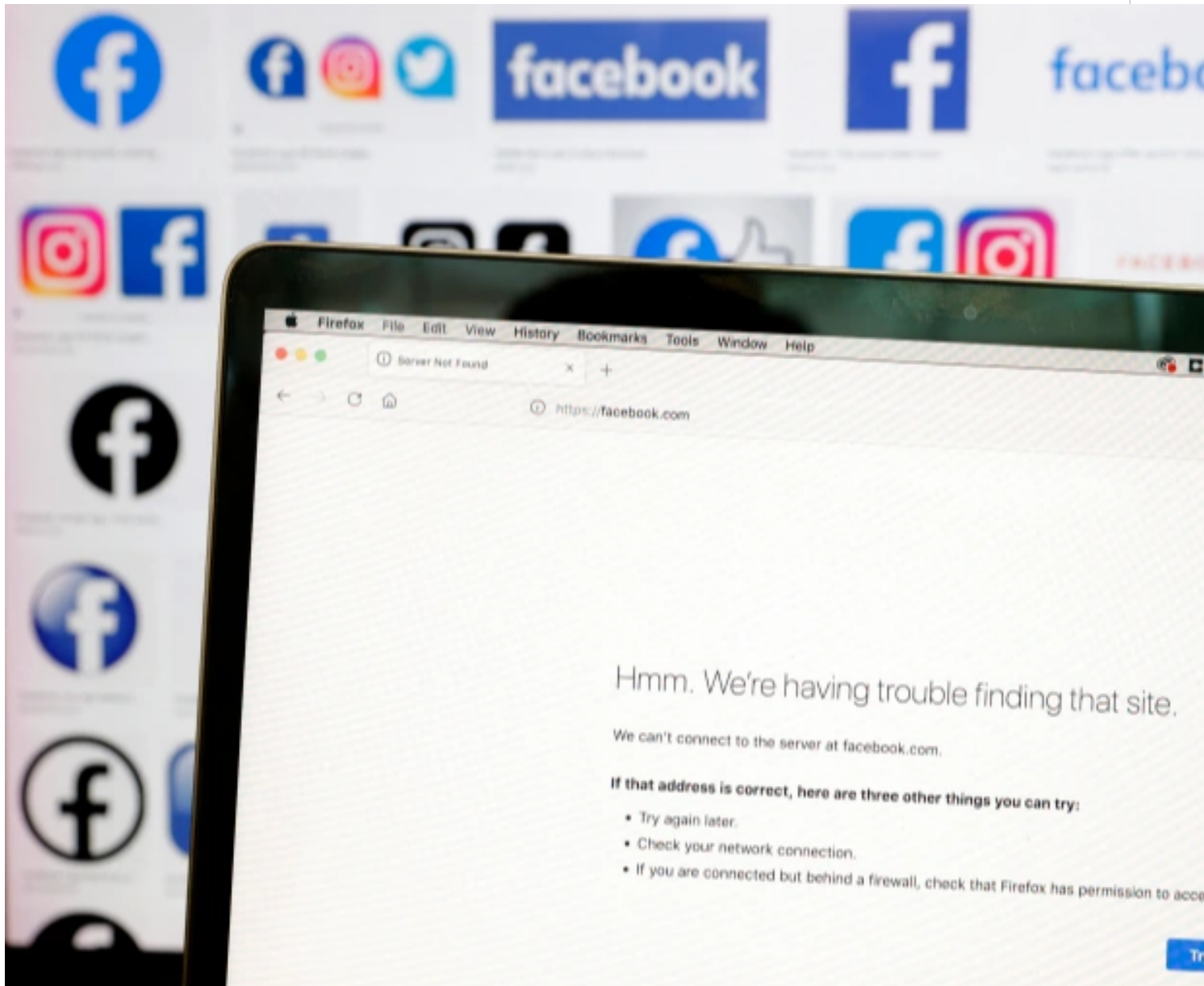


Facebook, Instagram services begin to return after outage



Facebook says its apps are coming back online, but it has not confirmed what exactly caused the outage on Monday [Justin Sullivan/Getty Images via AFP]

New York, October 4 (RHC)-- Service appears to be restored for some Facebook and Instagram users after a global outage that disabled the social media platforms, owned by Facebook Inc, for nearly six hours. Facebook-owned WhatsApp messaging app was still experiencing issues late on Monday.

In a tweet on Monday evening, Facebook confirmed its apps were coming back online and apologised to users for the outage that affected millions of people across the world.

“To the huge community of people and businesses around the world who depend on us: we’re sorry,” Facebook said. “We’ve been working hard to restore access to our apps and services and are happy to report they are coming back online now.”

Outage tracking website Downtdetector.com said it had received 10.6 million reports of problems ranging from the United States and Europe to Colombia and Singapore, with trouble first popping up around 15:45 GMT.

Service were not restored until several hours later in what Downtdetector described as “the largest outage we’ve ever seen.” Earlier in the day, Facebook said on Twitter that it was “aware that some people are having trouble accessing our apps and products”.

“We’re working to get things back to normal as quickly as possible, and we apologize for any inconvenience,” the company said, without specifying exactly what had caused the problem. A similar message confirming the outage also was posted on WhatsApp’s Twitter account.

Al Jazeera could not independently confirm what was affecting the platforms, while Facebook did not immediately respond to requests for comment from the Reuters and AFP news agencies.

WhatsApp was down for more than 35,000 users, Reuters reported on Monday afternoon, and Facebook Messenger was also down for nearly 9,800 users.

Al Jazeera’s Alan Fisher, reporting from Washington, DC, said the outage was much longer than a 2019 shutdown of Facebook-owned apps that lasted for about an hour and which WhatsApp said at that time “was caused by technical problems.”

“This is obviously very concerning,” Fisher added about Monday’s problem. The error message appearing on Facebook.com throughout the day read: “Sorry, something went wrong. We’re working on it and we’ll get it fixed as soon as we can.” The message suggested a Domain Name System (DNS) error, Reuters reported.

DNS allows web addresses to take users to their destinations. A similar outage at cloud company Akamai Technologies Inc took down multiple websites in July. Downtdetector, which only tracks outages by collating status reports from a series of sources, including user-submitted errors on its platform, showed there were more than 50,000 incidents of people reporting issues with Facebook and Instagram.

Ian Sherr, editor-at-large at CNET, told Al Jazeera that judging by early reporting and the error messages users received on Monday, it appears most likely that “something is configured incorrectly.”

“My bet is that someone pushed a button wrong, or a cord got unplugged, which seems very minor but the reality is that we’ve seen these things before where suddenly something is configured incorrectly and entire swaths of the internet are not available,” Sherr said.

The outage came as Facebook is facing mounting pressure in the US, after a leaked internal investigation showed the social media giant was aware of how its Instagram app harmed the mental health of teenagers.

In a series of articles, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) newspaper reported that Facebook knew its Instagram platform caused some teenagers, girls in particular, to feel bad about their self-image. The company has rejected the reports as a distortion of the probe's findings.

"We care deeply about the safety and security of the people on our platform," Facebook's Head of Global Security, Antigone Davis, said during a Senate subcommittee hearing last week. "We have put in place multiple protections to create safe and age-appropriate experiences for people between the ages of 13 and 17."

On Tuesday, former Facebook employee Frances Haugen will testify at another hearing of the Senate Commerce subcommittee about Facebook and Instagram's impacts on young users.

Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal, chair of the subcommittee, said the testimony is "critical to understanding what Facebook knew about its platforms' toxic effects on young users, when they knew it, and what they did about it."

Last week, Instagram announced it was pausing plans to launch a platform for children, saying the move aimed to give the company "time to work with parents, experts, policymakers and regulators, to listen to their concerns, and to demonstrate the value and importance of this project for younger teens online today."

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