

Uber's scandals, blunders and PR disasters: the full list

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Uber has been rocked by a steady stream of scandals and negative publicity in recent years, including revelations of questionable spy programs, a high-stakes technology lawsuit, claims of sexual harassment and discrimination, and embarrassing leaks about executive conduct. The PR disasters culminated in chief executive Travis Kalanick resigning on Wednesday amid promises of bold reform that largely ignored the ride-hailing company's strained relationship with drivers.

THE IRISH TIMES

Here is a timeline of some of the most consequential controversies.

'Boob-er' backlash, February 2014

Uber chief executive Travis Kalanick faced backlash for a sexist joke about his increasing desirability, telling an *Esquire* reporter: "We call that Boob-er."

Targeting the competitor, August 2014

Uber faced accusations that it booked thousands of fake rides from its competitor Lyft in an effort to cut into its profits and services. Uber recruiters also allegedly spammed Lyft drivers in an effort to recruit them away from the rival.

The 'God View' scandal, November 2014

Uber executive Emil Michael suggested digging up dirt on journalists and spreading personal information of a female reporter who was critical of the company. He later apologised. It was also revealed that Uber has a so-called "God View" technology that allows the company to track users' locations, raising privacy concerns. One manager had accessed the profile of a reporter without her permission.

Spying on Beyoncé, December 2016

A former forensic investigator for Uber testified that employees regularly spied on politicians, exes and celebrities, including Beyoncé.

Self-driving pilot failure, December 2016

Regulators in California ordered Uber to remove self-driving vehicles from the road after the company launched a pilot without permits. On the first day of the programme, the vehicles were caught running red lights, and cycling advocates in San Francisco also raised concerns about the cars creating hazards in bike lanes. The company blamed red-light issues on "human error", but the *New York Times* later claimed that the company's statements were false and that the autonomous technology failed.

False advertising, January 2017

Uber was forced to pay \$20 million to settle allegations that the company duped people into driving with false promises about earnings. The Federal Trade Commission claimed that most Uber drivers earned far less than the

rates Uber published online in 18 major cities in the US.

#DeleteUber goes viral, January 2017

A #DeleteUber campaign went viral after the company lifted surge pricing during a taxi protest at a New York airport against Donald Trump's travel ban. A total of roughly 500,000 users reportedly deleted accounts after the scandal erupted.

Trump ties, February 2017

Chief executive Travis Kalanick resigned from Trump's advisory council after users threatened a boycott. Kalanick said: "Joining the group was not meant to be an endorsement of the president or his agenda but unfortunately it has been misinterpreted to be exactly that."

Sexual harassment scandal, February 2017

Former Uber engineer Susan Fowler went public with allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination, prompting the company to hire former US attorney general Eric Holder to investigate her claims. The story sparked widespread debate about sexism and misconduct across Silicon Valley startups.

Google lawsuit, February 2017

Waymo, the self-driving car company owned by Google's parent corporation Alphabet, filed a lawsuit against Uber, accusing the startup of "calculated theft" of its technology. The suit, which could be a fatal setback for Uber's autonomous vehicle ambitions, alleged that a former Waymo employee, Anthony Levandowski, stole trade secrets for Uber. Uber later fired the engineer.

Deceiving law enforcement, March 2017

The *New York Times* reported that Uber for years used a tool called Greyball to systematically deceive law enforcement in cities where the company violated local laws. The company used Greyball to identify people believed to be working for city agencies and carrying out sting operations, the *Times* reported. The revelations led to the launch of a federal investigation.

Chief executive caught yelling at a driver, March 2017

Kalanick was caught on camera arguing with his own Uber driver, who complained about the difficulty making a living with the company's declining rates. The embattled chief executive yelled at the driver: "Some people don't like to take responsibility for their own shit ... They blame everything in their life on somebody else. Good luck!" He later issued an apology and said he intended to get "leadership help".

Escorts in Seoul, March 2017

Tech news site the *Information* reported that a group of senior employees, including Kalanick, visited an escort and karaoke bar in Seoul in 2014, leading to an human resources complaint from a female marketing manager. Patrons at the bar typically select women to sing karaoke with before taking them home.

Spying on the rival, April 2017

News leaked of a secret programme that Uber internally called “Hell” that allowed the company to spy on its rival Lyft to uncover drivers working for both companies and to help steer them away from the competitor.

Underpaying drivers, May 2017

Uber agreed to pay drivers in New York City tens of millions of dollars after admitting it underpaid them for more than two years by taking a larger cut of fares than it was entitled. The average payout per driver is expected to be about \$900.

Twenty employees fired, June 2017

Uber revealed that it had fired more than 20 employees following an investigation into the sexual harassment claims and workplace culture.

Questioning a rape victim, June 2017

Reports revealed that a top Uber executive had obtained the medical records of a woman who was raped by an Uber driver, allegedly to cast doubt upon the victim’s account. The executive, Eric Alexander, was fired after journalists learned of the incident, according to tech website *Recode* and the *New York Times*. The woman later sued the company for violating her privacy rights and defaming her.

Kalanick takes leave of absence, June 2017

Kalanick announced that he would take an indefinite leave of absence as the company released a damning report on workplace culture that recommended Uber “review and reallocate” the chief executive’s responsibilities.

Board member’s sexist joke, June 2017

David Bonderman resigned from Uber’s board after he made a sexist joke during an all-staff meeting about reforming the company and combatting sexual harassment. The venture capitalist had joked that there was “likely to be more talking” with another woman on the board. He apologized and stepped down hours later.

Kalanick steps down as chief executive, June 21st 2017

Kalanick steps down as chief executive after a shareholder revolt made it untenable for him to stay on at the company. Mr Kalanick’s exit came under pressure after hours of drama involving Uber’s investors. Earlier, five of Uber’s major investors demanded that the chief executive resign immediately. The investors included one of Uber’s biggest shareholders, the venture capital firm Benchmark, which has one of its partners, Bill Gurley, on Uber’s board.