

Methodology

To analyze how legislators in some countries outside the United States used Twitter to discuss the killing of George Floyd by a police officer on May 25 and the protests that resulted, researchers obtained 99,500 public tweets from each of the 1,327 members of national legislatures in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada who tweeted between May 26 and June 10, 2020. Researchers used the public Twitter Application Programming Interface (API) to collect the tweets. Of 1,327 legislators who have a Twitter account and posted at least once in the two weeks following Floyd’s killing, 644 legislators, or 49%, tweeted or retweeted content related to Floyd’s death, the Black Lives Matter movement or the more general conversation about protests and racism that followed these events.

Identifying tweets about ‘Black lives matter’

To identify tweets about the Black Lives Matter movement and George Floyd, researchers used a case-insensitive regular expression – a pattern of keywords – that consists of the terms: BLM, black lives, blacklives, livesmatter, floydgeorge, George Floyd, georgefloyd, black_lives and blacklifematters. This pattern identified 4,058 tweets as mentioning Floyd or close variations of the phrase “Black lives matter.” After accounting for false positives, researchers analyzed 4,024 tweets in the final dataset.

To evaluate the performance of the regular expression, researchers took a random sample of 500 tweets created between May 26 and June 10, 2020. A researcher examined this set to determine whether they mentioned Floyd or “Black lives matter” in order to compare human decisions with the decisions from the regular expression. Overall, the human decisions agreed with the keyword method 98% of the time. Cohen’s Kappa – a statistic that examines agreement while adjusting for chance agreement – was 0.81 for the same comparison. Another researcher also classified the set of 500 tweets independently to ensure their decisions were comparable: Cohen’s Kappa for coder-to-code comparisons was 0.69.

Topic coding

Researchers limited their analysis to tweets that mentioned Floyd or “Black lives matter” created from May 26 through June 10, 2020. Researchers then manually examined this sample of tweets and retweets to assess which topics were prevalent when discussing these topics. Based on this manual examination, researchers generated a list of coding categories and separately coded the tweets into agreed-upon categories.

Four researchers then separately coded 40 tweets and achieved high levels of intercoder reliability on the subset that they all reviewed (Krippendorff's $\alpha=0.70$) before each coding part of the remaining sample. For 34 tweets, researchers found false positives or ambiguous content and dropped these from the analysis. For example, the "BLM" keyword falsely tagged as relevant tweets from the account "@BLMedieval," which tweets about medieval manuscripts in the British Library and received retweets from legislators in the database.

Researchers coded both the text and any content captured in pictures or links of each tweet. It is important to note that this method may fail to correctly classify tweets that use irony or sarcasm to convey feelings or ideas about Floyd's killing and subsequent protests. In other words, this analysis captures only the specific subset of the larger conversation on Twitter among legislators that involves overt or explicit discussion of, or engagement with, these topics.

More information on the Center's global legislators database research, see ["For Global Legislators on Twitter, an Engaged Minority Creates Outsize Share of Content"](#) and its methodology page [here](#).

Categories used to code legislators' tweets

Topic	# of tweets
Solidarity with global protests, Black Lives Matter movement and goals	2,260
George Floyd and/or family	1,759
Racism in legislator's country	1,174
Racism in U.S.	679
Coronavirus/COVID-19, wearing masks, social distancing	528
U.S. protests, including any general discussion regardless of sentiment	415
Local protests: support	393
Trump handling of situation: critical	346
Indigenous groups/rights, including direct mentions of groups such as Maori	274
Local protests: neutral	248
Tear gas or other protest-related exports to the U.S.	230
Local issues (catchall category for anything not covered in other local topics)	227
Slavery/colonialism/empire explicit mentions	171
Local protests: critical	153
U.S. (catch-all category for anything not covered in other U.S. topics)	117
Statues/monuments/renaming: support removing them	89
Statues/monuments/renaming: oppose removing them	38
Trump handling of situation: support	25

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, posted May 26-June 10, 2020. N = 4,024 tweets from 1,327 legislators who tweeted at least once about George Floyd or Black Lives Matter movement.

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