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Legislators in UK, Canada and Australia Express Post-election Enthusiasm for Biden Administration on Twitter

Broader discussion of U.S. focuses on how the election and new administration will affect bilateral ties and trade

BY *Kat Devlin, Regina Widjaya, J.J. Moncus, Christine Huang, Aidan Connaughton and Athena Chapekis*

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this analysis to learn more about how officials in three key allied nations have been discussing the 2020 U.S. presidential elections and candidates. This analysis examines 209,862 tweets from 1,310 national-level officials in parliaments in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. It excludes heads of government but includes both upper and lower legislative chambers where applicable. The research team collected every tweet posted by these legislators from Aug. 28 to Sept. 30, 2020, and a second batch from Nov. 7 to 14, 2020, using the Twitter API. The data collection period includes the first presidential debate and the release of the "Woodward tapes," but stops prior to the announcement that President Donald Trump had tested positive for COVID-19. The second batch includes a week of tweets starting from the announcement by the Associated Press and other media organizations that Joe Biden won the election. All tweets were collected prior to rioting at the U.S. Capitol building on Jan. 6, 2021.

Researchers used a series of case-insensitive regular expressions – a pattern of keywords and text formatting – to identify three sets of tweets: tweets about the U.S., tweets that mention President Trump and Vice President Pence, and tweets that reference President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. Each of these three sets was analyzed separately. These patterns identified 5,842 tweets as mentioning the U.S., Trump/Pence or Biden/Harris. After accounting for false positives, researchers analyzed 5,637 tweets in the final dataset.

Researchers created legislative rosters by hand, manually identifying all sitting members in each country's national legislature and then searching for their Twitter accounts. These lists have been continually updated to account for elections, resignations, legislators changing parties and other events. Legislator accounts in the database include official, verified legislator accounts as well as any unofficial accounts that belong to the legislator, such as personal or campaign accounts. See the full methodology for more details.

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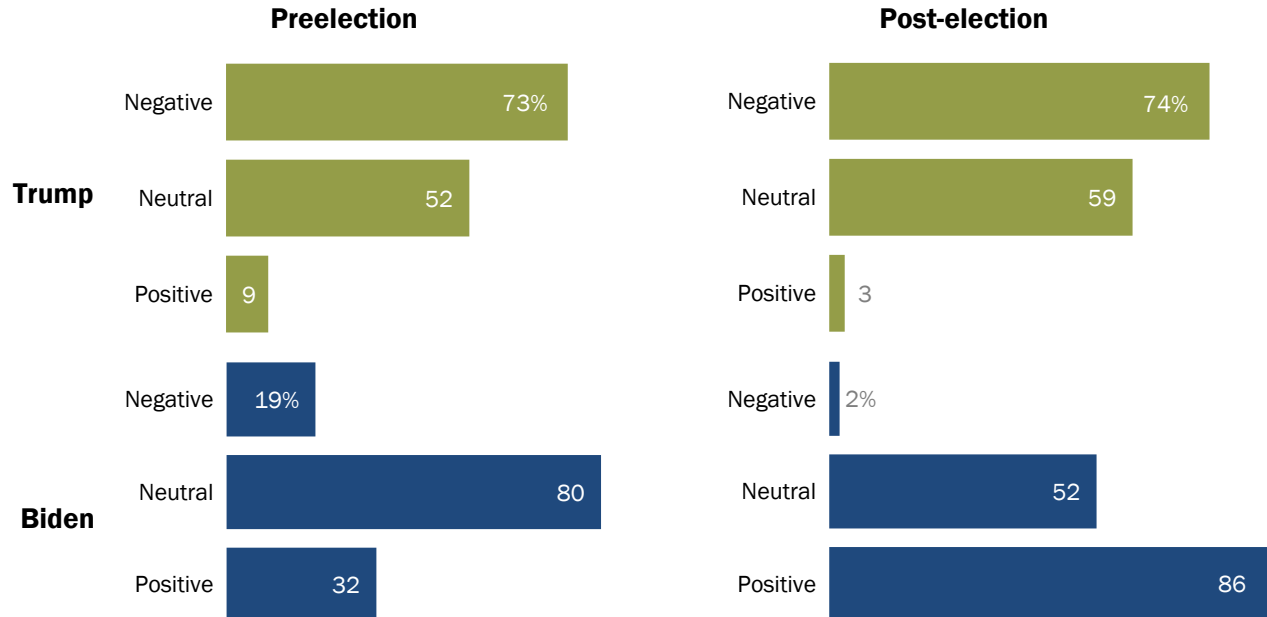
Broader discussion of U.S. focuses on how the election and new presidency will affect bilateral ties and trade

As President-elect Joe Biden takes office next week, his administration is likely to enact strikingly different policies than his predecessor on a host of issues that will impact the nation's allies – from climate change and national security to the international response to the coronavirus pandemic and the global economic crisis.

To better understand how elected officials publicly framed the role of the United States and the two major candidates in the run-up to Election Day and after the winner was announced, Pew Research Center collected and analyzed the content of more than 200,000 tweets from legislators in the key American ally nations of Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom from Aug. 28 to Sept. 30 and Nov. 7 to 14, 2020. This analysis does not cover the time period of rioting at the U.S. Capitol building on Jan. 6, 2021.

Pre- and post-election lawmaker tweets about Trump largely negative; tweets about Biden much more positive after his announcement as president-elect

% of legislators in UK, Canada and Australia who tweeted ___ content about Trump/Biden, among those who tweeted at least once about that candidate from Aug. 28-Sept. 30 and Nov. 7-14, 2020

Preelection

Trump

Negative	73%
Neutral	52
Positive	9

Biden

Negative	19%
Neutral	80
Positive	32

Post-election

Trump

Negative	74%
Neutral	59
Positive	3

Biden

Negative	2%
Neutral	52
Positive	86

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in Australia, Canada and the UK posted Aug. 28-Sept. 30, 2020 and Nov. 7-14, 2020. Before the election, n=241 legislators who tweeted at least once about Donald Trump and n=119 legislators who tweeted at least once about Joe Biden. After the election, n=236 legislators who tweeted at least once about Donald Trump and n=678 legislators who tweeted at least once about Joe Biden. Percentages total more than 100% if the same legislator sent multiple tweets about a candidate with different sentiment.
"Legislators in UK, Canada and Australia Express Post-election Enthusiasm for Biden Administration on Twitter"

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For the most part, lawmakers in these three nations were hesitant to mention the candidates directly before the election: Just 272 lawmakers in these three countries out of the 1,289 who tweeted during this period (or 21% of the total) made direct reference to either President Donald Trump or former Vice President Joe Biden. But among those legislators who did weigh in, those who tweeted content related to Trump tended to voice negative opinions of the American leader. Some of these critical tweets discussed Trump's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic – a sentiment shared among the general public in these three nations – or worried that their own country's leaders would follow his example in governing. Others mentioned the president's temperament, especially after his performance in the first presidential debate on Sept. 29.

[Embed tweet: https://twitter.com/RhonddaBryant/status/1311134603562938368?s=20]

Those who shared tweets about Biden, on the other hand, tended to take a more neutral tone toward the presidential hopeful. These tweets included general statements about Biden's position on particular issues, direct quotes from the candidate or references to polling results without additional commentary. Positive mentions of Biden included portrayals of him as a preferred foil to Trump, while some negative tweets expressed concern about potential Biden policies or worry that he would extend Obama administration strategies they disagreed with.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/amcarmichaelMP/status/1308079277263532032?s=20]

In both volume and tone, a different pattern appeared in these legislators' Twitter activity once Biden was declared the winner by numerous media organizations on Nov. 7. In the week following his victory, more than half of lawmakers who posted at least one tweet mentioned Biden or his running mate Vice President-elect Kamala Harris – and most who did expressed positive sentiment toward the new administration. Many of these legislators sent their congratulations, and several also expressed positive feelings about their nation's future relations with the U.S. Legislators who tweeted about Trump after the election used a more negative tone, similar to before the election.

When it comes to discussion of the United States more broadly, legislators from these three countries focused their preelection tweets on trade and bilateral relations. In the UK, where the government was continuing plans to officially leave the European Union, legislators often weighed in on trade, such as a potential U.S.-UK trade deal and how Brexit will affect the special relationship between the two nations. Canadian legislators tweeted about trade with the U.S. amid a standoff related to tariffs on Canadian aluminum as well as the pandemic, which resulted in a U.S.-imposed closure of the border in March. Australian legislators most often tweeted about the U.S. through the lens of the coronavirus pandemic and other topics, including comparing their country to the U.S. on policies like publicly funded education. In none of the three countries did the U.S. election itself garner the majority of attention from legislators on Twitter.

These are among the findings of a new Pew Research Center analysis of legislators on Twitter. The Center examined more than 160,000 tweets posted between Aug. 28 and Sept. 30, 2020, and 40,000 tweets posted Nov. 7-14, 2020, by national-level legislators representing Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

In the post-election period, tweets about the incoming Biden administration were widespread – and took a largely positive tone

Lawmakers in Australia, Canada and the UK took to Twitter to express their enthusiasm toward a Biden presidency after the Associated Press and other media organizations announced the presidential challenger's victory on the morning of Nov. 7.
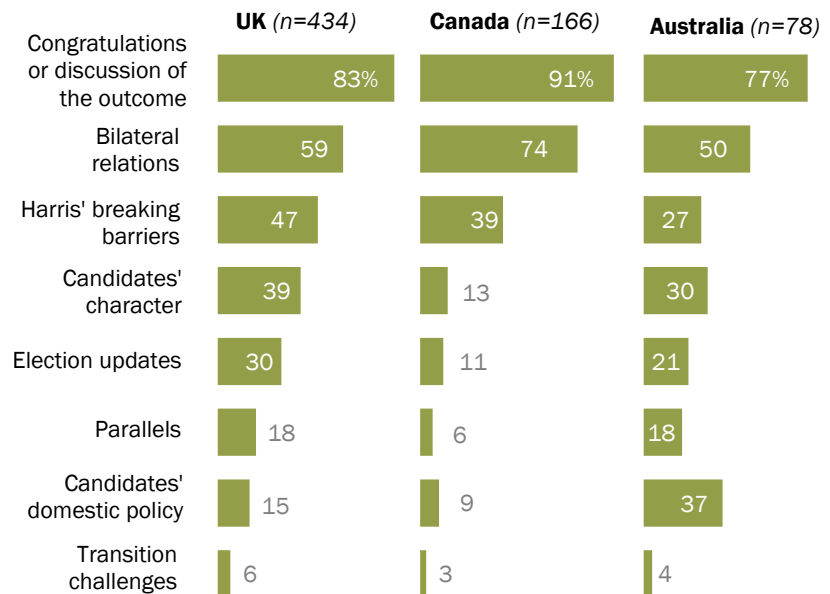
In the week following that announcement, 678 legislators from these three countries tweeted about either Joe Biden or Kamala Harris. That is nearly six times the number of legislators who tweeted about them (119) in the entire month of September, and roughly double the number who tweeted about either set of candidates during that month. Among legislators across these countries who tweeted after the announcement, half or more (ranging from 50% to 59%) mentioned either Biden or Harris.

In contrast, fewer lawmakers (236 in total) mentioned either Donald Trump or Mike Pence in the post-election period – a sharp change from the preelection period, when mentions of the current president were much more common than those of his challenger. The share of active tweeters in each country who mentioned Trump or Pence in the week after the election ranged from 7% (in Canada) to 26% (in the UK).

Across these countries, the largest share of legislators (85%) who mentioned Biden and Harris were reacting to the

Post-election discussion of Biden dominated by congratulations, talk of bilateral relations

Among legislators who tweeted about Biden or Harris, % who tweeted about …

	UK (n=434)	Canada (n=166)	Australia (n=78)
Congratulations or discussion of the outcome	83%	91%	77%
Bilateral relations	59	74	50
Harris' breaking barriers	47	39	27
Candidates' character	39	13	30
Election updates	30	11	21
Parallels	18	6	18
Candidates' domestic policy	15	9	37
Transition challenges	6	3	4

Note: Percentages are of unique legislators in each country who have at least one Twitter account and tweeted at least once from Nov. 7-14, 2020.
Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the UK, Canada and Australia, posted from Nov. 7-14, 2020. N=1,475 legislators with Twitter accounts, including 1,228 who tweeted at least once.
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outcome of the election by offering congratulations, acknowledgments or thoughts on their victory.

[Embed tweet: https://twitter.com/tanya_plibersek/status/1325159639428734981]

Along with these statements, sizable shares of lawmakers in Canada (74%), the UK (59%) and Australia (50%) mentioned the new administration in the context of the various bilateral and multilateral relationships their countries share with the U.S., as well as broader global issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

In the UK, legislators specifically discussed the implications of Biden's victory to the future of a post-Brexit trade agreement between the two governments in light of the proposed Internal Market Bill. The bill, a version of which was later passed into law by the UK's Parliament, sought to facilitate trade between the four constituents of the UK, at the risk of violating the terms of the Brexit's Withdrawal Agreement and the Belfast Agreement.

[Embed tweet: https://twitter.com/JustinTrudeau/status/1325865589039132685]

[Embed tweet: https://twitter.com/LordCFalconer/status/1325231334575529995]

Legislators also took to Twitter to congratulate Kamala Harris on her achievements in breaking multiple "glass ceilings" and becoming the first woman and person of color to be elected U.S. vice president. Harris was widely cited in these tweets as an inspiration to the next generation of women and people of color with aspirations for public office.

[Embed tweet: https://twitter.com/cafreeland/status/1325161349215784960]

Smaller shares of lawmakers referenced the incoming administration by drawing parallels with politicians or political figures in their home countries, or by referencing domestic policies of the new administration. This latter theme was especially common in Australia, where several lawmakers cited Biden's $2 trillion pledge for the mitigation of climate change to galvanize the Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, to take similar actions.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/helenhainesindi/status/1325304307906834433]

As was the case with Biden, Trump was most often mentioned in the context of lawmakers offering congratulations, acknowledgments or thoughts on the election. However, the overall sentiment of Trump mentions in this topic was much different from those mentioning Biden. Across all three countries, tweets that discussed the outcome of elections mentioned the Biden administration in a positive or neutral way, with very few such tweets expressing negative sentiments. By contrast, it was rare for these tweets to mention Trump or the outgoing administration in a positive light.

Post-election lawmaker tweets mentioning Trump dominated by reactions, talk of Trump's character, and parallels between Trump and national leaders

Among legislators who tweeted about Trump, % of those who tweeted about …

	UK *(n=193)*	Canada *(n=24)*	Australia *(n=19)*
Discussions of the election outcome	56%	58%	42%
Candidates' character	50	46	37
Parallels	43	17	42
Transition challenges	38	25	37
Election updates	35	21	37
Bilateral relations	30	8	37
Candidates' domestic policy	20	13	16

Note: Percentages are of unique legislators in each country who have at least one Twitter account and tweeted at least once from Nov. 7-14, 2020.
Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the UK, Canada and Australia, posted from Nov. 7-14, 2020. N=1,475 legislators with Twitter accounts, including 1,228 who tweeted at least once.
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[Embed:

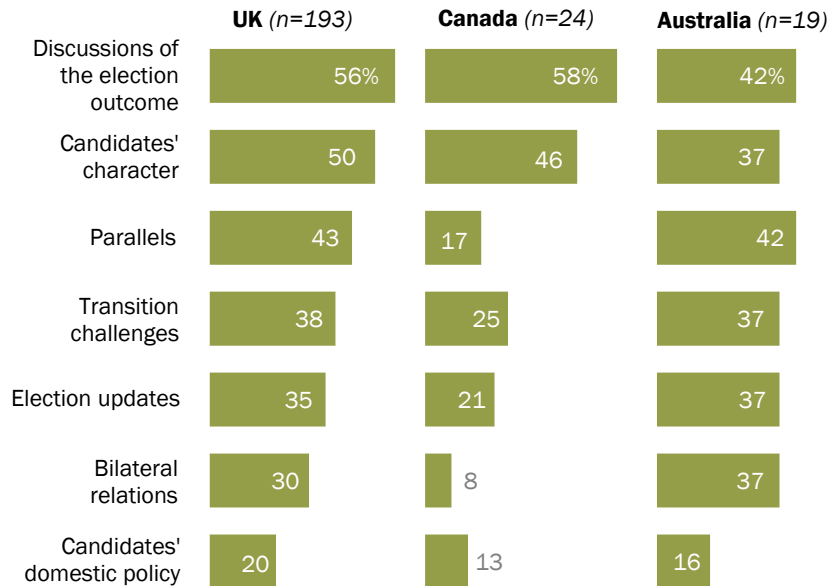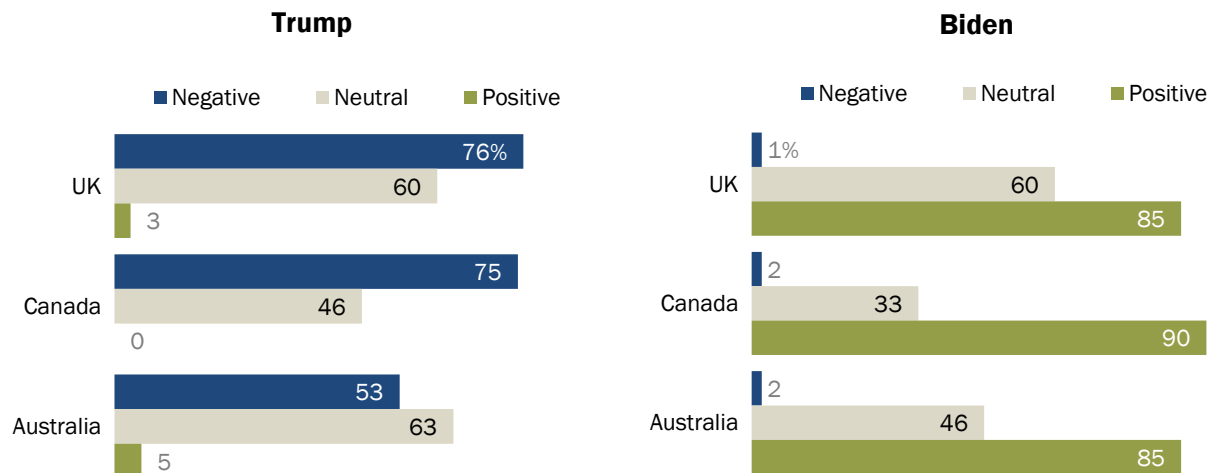https://twitter.com/JohnCryerMP/status/1325155155612856320]

These lawmakers also mentioned topics and issues that were less prominent in their discussions of the Biden administration. Some 49% of those who posted Trump-related tweets mentioned the personal character of one or both of the candidates, while a comparable share (40%) referenced parallels between Trump and members of their own country's leadership. The latter category of tweets was relatively common in the UK, where some lawmakers compared Trump to Prime Minster Boris Johnson.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/DavidLammy/status/1324983600958369792]

Lawmakers expressed largely positive sentiment toward incoming Biden administration

Across all three countries, a majority of lawmakers who tweeted after the election expressed positive sentiments when mentioning a prospective Biden administration – ranging from 85% in the UK and Australia to 90% in Canada. Fewer than 2% of legislative tweeters in each country who mentioned the president-elect were negative in tone, with the remainder being neutral or expressing no sentiment one way or the other.

After the election, lawmaker tweets mentioning Biden were mostly positive; tweets related to Trump remained negative or neutral

% of legislators who tweeted ___ content about Trump/Biden, among those who tweeted about that candidate at least once from Nov. 7-14, 2020

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in Australia, Canada and the UK posted from Nov. 7-14, 2020. N=678 legislators who tweeted at least once about Donald Trump and n=236 legislators who tweeted at least once about Joe Biden. Percentages total more than 100% if the same legislator sent multiple tweets about a candidate with different sentiment.
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By contrast, fewer than 5% in each country expressed positive sentiment toward Trump. Of the 240 lawmakers who mentioned the incumbent president, just seven expressed a positive sentiment. There were no such references from Canadian lawmakers and just one from a lawmaker in Australia. Meanwhile, the share of tweeters expressing negative sentiment toward the outgoing administration ranged from a low of 53% in Australia to a high of 76% in the UK.

Members of major left-leaning parties in Canada (Liberal), Australia (Labor) and the UK (Labour) were around twice as likely to tweet about Biden and Harris relative to their conservative

counterparts. However, in all countries, the vast majority of tweeters – regardless of political affiliation – conveyed positive sentiment toward the incoming president.

Prior to election, legislators abroad tweeted grievances about Trump, muted enthusiasm for a Biden administration

In the days immediately following the 2020 Republican National Convention and through the month of September, legislators in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom took to Twitter to comment on the two main candidates running in the U.S. presidential election. From Aug. 28 to Sept. 30, more engaged in conversation about the sitting U.S. president than about his opponent: 241 legislators tweeted about Donald Trump, and 119 tweeted about Joe Biden. However, explicit discussion of the two candidates was relatively uncommon. Across these three countries, only small shares of legislators who tweeted during this period mentioned Trump (12%-23%) or Biden (3%-13%) directly.
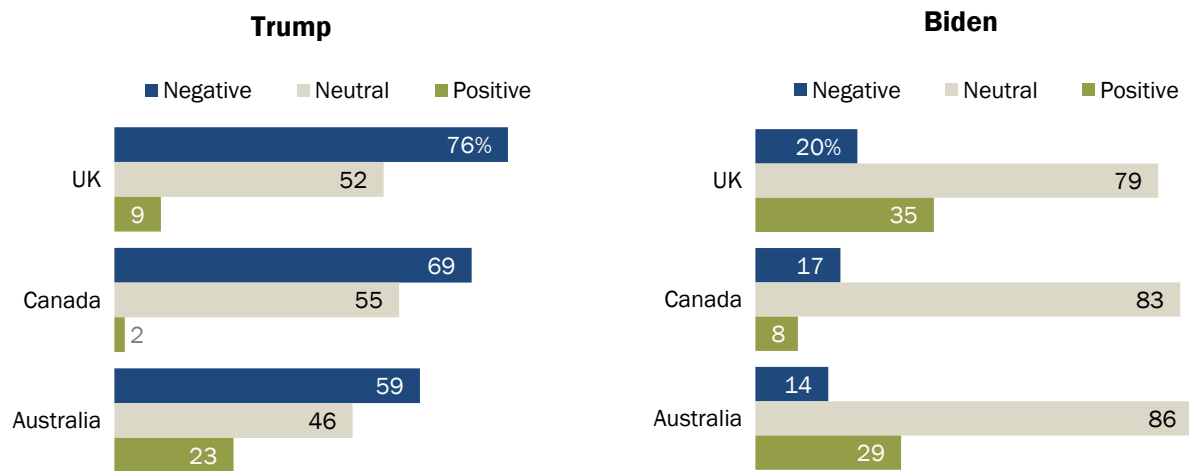
To the extent that they mentioned the candidates on Twitter, the tone that these legislators took before the general election varied based on which candidate was being discussed. Among the legislators who tweeted about Trump, 73% made negative references to the president. Roughly half (52%) sent out neutral tweets during the same period, and only 9% tweeted positive messages about Trump (these figures total more than 100% because some legislators posted multiple tweets containing different sentiments).

As recent Pew Research Center surveys have found, Trump also received largely negative reviews from the general public in these three countries: Just 23% of Australians, 20% of Canadians and 19% of those in the UK expressed confidence in him. And overall ratings for the U.S. have declined steeply during Trump's presidency.

The discussion around former Vice President Biden held a more neutral tone. Fully 80% of legislators who tweeted about Biden in late August and September shared impartial (neither explicitly negative nor positive) tweets about the Democratic presidential candidate. Just 19% tweeted negative remarks about Biden – a 54 percentage point difference compared with Trump. And 32% of legislators who mentioned Biden did so in a positive light.

Legislators who tweeted about Biden before the election leaned toward neutrality; Trump-related tweets were more negative

% of legislators who tweeted ___ content about Trump/Biden, among those who tweeted about that candidate at least once from Aug. 28-Sept. 30, 2020

Trump

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive

UK
- Negative: 76%
- Neutral: 52
- Positive: 9

Canada
- Negative: 69
- Neutral: 55
- Positive: 2

Australia
- Negative: 59
- Neutral: 46
- Positive: 23

Biden

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive

UK
- Negative: 20%
- Neutral: 79
- Positive: 35

Canada
- Negative: 17
- Neutral: 83
- Positive: 8

Australia
- Negative: 14
- Neutral: 86
- Positive: 29

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in Australia, Canada and the UK posted Aug. 28-Sept. 30, 2020. N=241 legislators who tweeted at least once about Donald Trump and n=119 legislators who tweeted at least once about Joe Biden. Percentages total more than 100% if the same legislator sent multiple tweets about a candidate with different sentiment.
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A similar pattern appeared within the three individual countries in the study. More than half of the legislators who tweeted about Trump in each of these three countries shared negative content, while between 46% and 55% tweeted neutral content about the president. And while 23% of Australian legislators who tweeted about Trump wrote something positive before the election, only 9% in the UK and 2% in Canada did the same.

Legislators in each of the three countries voiced negative opinions on Twitter for different reasons, usually related to policy issues that affected their own country. In the UK, for instance, bilateral trade relations motivated legislator tweets. Many there decried Trump's tariffs on Scotch whisky and critiqued Biden's comments on how the Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement, could affect a U.S.-UK trade deal should he become president.
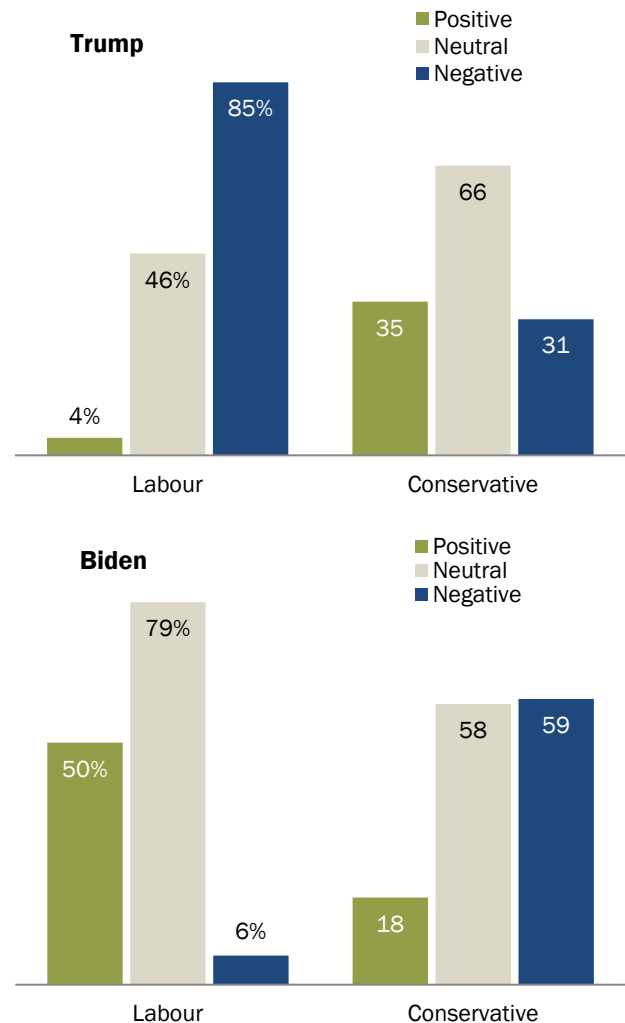
Legislators in all three nations voiced negative opinions of Trump based on his character or personality. In their preelection tweets, many brought up questions of Trump's integrity related to various news stories that broke in September, including concerns that he publicly downplayed the pandemic, alleged disparaging comments he made about military veterans and contentions that he paid just $750 in federal income taxes the year he won the presidency. Several legislators also tweeted negative remarks regarding Trump's demeanor in the first presidential debate. Few gave the same sort of critical attention to Biden.

Positive tweets about Trump were much less common and often came from politicians in right-leaning parties. For example, 35% of Conservative legislators in the UK who tweeted about Trump shared positive content, while only 4% of Labour politicians followed suit. Several of these tweets lauded the Trump administration's brokering of the Abraham Accords, an agreement for the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain to normalize relations with Israel, signed on Sept. 15.

Party differences also arose among those in the UK who tweeted about Biden. Most Labour members who tweeted about the former vice president shared neutral content, and half posted positive messages. Nearly equal numbers of legislators among Conservative members of Parliament tweeted neutral or negative content about Biden, including tweets related to his comments on the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and Brexit trade negotiations.

Before election, UK Labour members were more negative than Conservatives on Trump; both parties relatively neutral on Biden

% of UK legislators who tweeted ___ content about Trump/Biden by party, among those who tweeted about that candidate at least once from Aug. 28-Sept. 30, 2020

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the UK posted Aug. 28-Sept. 30, 2020. N=272 legislators who tweeted at least once about Donald Trump or Joe Biden. Percentages total more than 100% if the same legislator sent multiple tweets about a candidate with different sentiment.
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Legislative mentions of the U.S. before the election focused more on trade and political relations, less on elections

Beyond direct mentions of the two major candidates for president, discussion of the United States more broadly was much more common. From Aug. 28 to Sept. 30, 2020, 42% of lawmakers in Australia, Canada and the UK who tweeted did so at least once about the U.S. – either through direct mention of the name "United States" or some other variant such as "U.S." or "America." These mentions were similarly common among legislators in Canada (46% of legislators who tweeted) and the UK (42%), but less 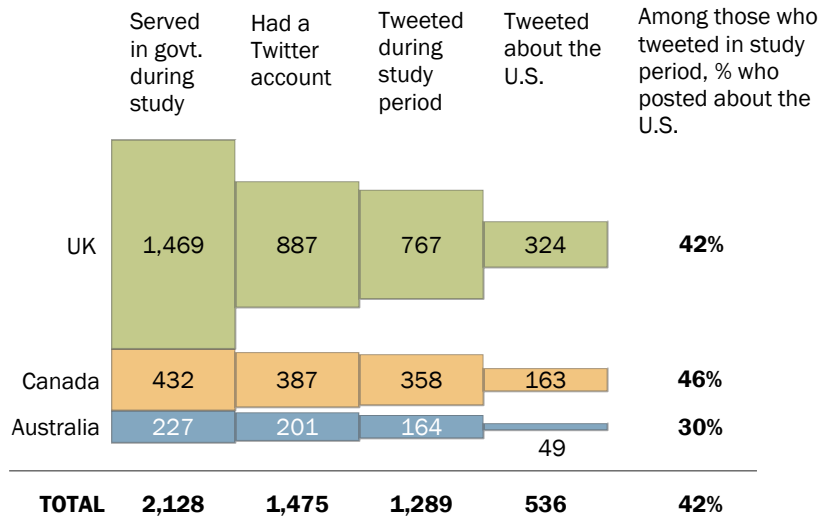so for those in Australia (30%). However, mentions of the U.S. made up only a small fraction of all social media content from these lawmakers:

As U.S. election approached, many legislators in three ally nations tweeted about the U.S.

Legislators in ___ who ...

	Served in govt. during study	Had a Twitter account	Tweeted during study period	Tweeted about the U.S.	Among those who tweeted in study period, % who posted about the U.S.
UK	1,469	887	767	324	**42%**
Canada	432	387	358	163	**46%**
Australia	227	201	164	49	**30%**
TOTAL	**2,128**	**1,475**	**1,289**	**536**	**42%**

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the UK, Canada and Australia, posted Aug. 28 to Sept. 30, 2020.
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approximately 1% of all tweets produced by all members of these parliaments in each country during this period.

Legislative tweeters who mentioned the U.S. were more likely to be members of left-leaning parties in their respective countries, such as the Australian Labor Party (40% tweeted at least once in the study period vs. 10% of members from the right-leaning Liberal Party), the Canadian Liberal Party (59% vs. 31% Conservative Party) and the British Labour Party (54% vs. 33% Conservative Party).

Around 25% of legislators in all three countries who mentioned the U.S. in a tweet talked about the upcoming American elections. This topic was most popular among British legislators, with 35% who referenced the U.S. also mentioning the November election. Legislators in other countries discussed the topic to a much lesser extent – 14% in Australia and 9% in Canada. Tweets about the U.S. election mentioned support or opposition for certain candidates, opinions on the first presidential debate or the implications of U.S. election results, among other topics.

Nearing the U.S. election, trade was still top of mind among legislators in the UK and Canada

% of legislators who tweeted about ___, among those who tweeted about the U.S. at least once from Aug. 28-Sept. 30, 2020

	UK	Canada	Australia
Trade	55%	41%	2%
Bilateral relations	54	20	20
U.S. presidential election	35	9	14
Other	23	18	33
Social movements	22	12	16
Historical events	22	33	14
President Trump, not about election	17	9	10
COVID-19	13	35	31
U.S. Supreme Court	13	15	18
Climate change	9	17	10
Technology	6	2	8

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the UK, Canada and Australia, posted Aug. 28 to Sept. 30, 2020. N=1,475 legislators with Twitter accounts, including 1,289 who tweeted at least once.
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Members from left-leaning parties more often tweeted about the upcoming U.S. election compared with their right-leaning counterparts. For example, 39% of Labour MPs in the UK shared election-related content while 26% of Conservative MPs did the same.
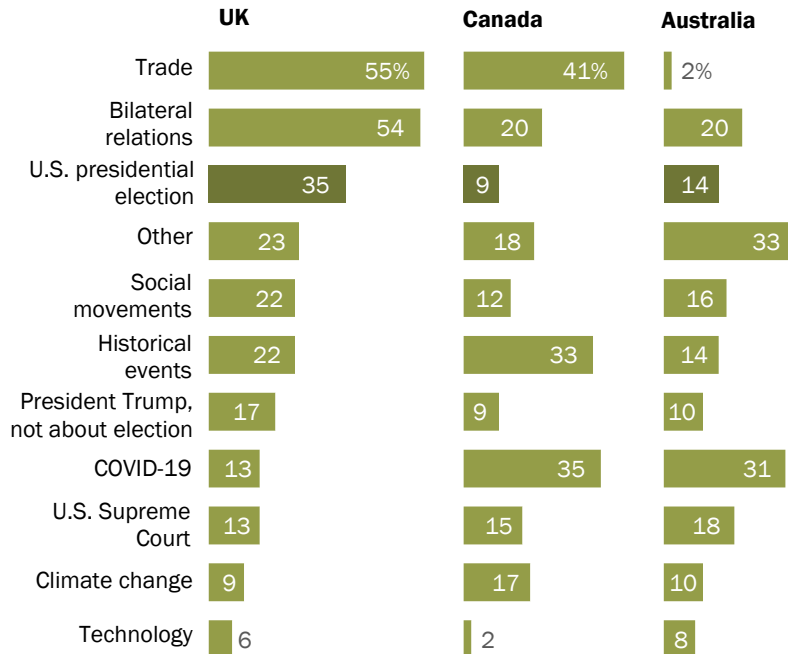
[Embed: https://twitter.com/MumilaaqQaqqaq/status/1309322395585523714]

Approximately 14% of tweeting legislators in Australia, Canada and the UK who mentioned the U.S. also discussed Donald Trump outside of the scope of the election, ranging from 17% in the UK to 9% in Canada. As highlighted in the previous section of this report, most of these tweets were critical in nature.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/AngelaRayner/status/1300817416029642753]

Despite Election Day fast approaching, the U.S. elections were not the most popular topic related to mentions of the U.S. among legislators in these three countries. The topic of "trade" held that distinction in the UK and Canada: 55% and 41%, respectively, of the legislators who tweeted and mentioned the U.S. did so through the lens of trade relations and policies. In the UK, speculation about the future of the U.S.-UK trade agreement garnered much attention, especially in response to a recent Brexit deal proposal that could potentially affect the Good Friday Agreement, also called the Belfast Agreement.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/LordRickettsP/status/1303805336843845637]

Beef was also a particular commodity of interest for legislators in the UK who tweeted about the U.S. Several celebrated the first shipment of UK beef to the U.S. market in more than 20 years, after the 1996 mad cow disease outbreak resulted in a U.S. ban of beef imports from the nation. At the same time, many voiced their support for the continued ban on American shipments of hormone-injected beef to the UK as part of ongoing Brexit trade negotiations with the U.S.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/kevinhollinrake/status/1311265136066342912]

In Canada, legislators lauded the end of tariffs on Canadian aluminum by the U.S. trade representative, the culmination of a month-long trade dispute between the two governments.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/mary_ng/status/1305955352807198729]

Around 40% of the legislators who tweeted about the U.S. ahead of the election talked about bilateral relations or other topics in global affairs, though this ranges from 54% in the UK to 20% in Canada and Australia. Legislators in Australia discussed this topic in connection to the potential extradition of Julian Assange, an Australian national who founded Wikileaks, to the U.S. In the UK, legislators who tweeted about international relations mentioned the U.S.-UK special relationship and the United States' role as a guarantor of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/columeastwood/status/1305884646513750016]

Months after the killing of George Floyd and subsequent protests that received legislator attention on Twitter, legislators in all three countries who tweeted continued to talk about issues related to social justice movements at home and in the U.S. This ranges from 12% in Canada to 22% in the UK.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/MatthewGreenNDP/status/1299853051243769856]

More than one-in-ten legislators in Australia, Canada and the UK who tweeted about the U.S. expressed their condolences on the death of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on Sept. 18, roughly halfway through the preelection study period. They also weighed in on the subsequent discussions regarding plans for her replacement.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/Puglaas/status/1307108273334685702]

For legislators in Canada, some themes, such as the pandemic (35%), remembering historical events (33%) and environmental issues (17%), uniquely stood out. Legislators tweeted in remembrance of the 19th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, lamenting the many Canadian lives lost alongside their American neighbors. The Canada-U.S. border featured in many tweets, especially those regarding COVID-19 and the environment. In mid-September, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced an extension to the border closures for nonessential travel to and from Canada. Legislators also worried about the effects of the ongoing wildfires in the western part of the continent.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/JonathanWNV/status/1305552638738661378]

The majority of legislators in Australia who tweeted about the U.S. before the election (32%) spoke about other topics, mentioning the U.S. mostly as a point of reference or as cautionary tale for the issues happening domestically. About one-in-five also mentioned the U.S. in regard to bilateral relations or the U.S. Supreme Court.

[Embed: https://twitter.com/tanya_plibersek/status/1306828668283441152]

Acknowledgments

Methodology

To analyze how legislators in three countries outside the United States used Twitter to discuss the U.S. elections and presidential candidates in the run-up to the election, researchers obtained 167,464 public tweets from each of the 1,289 members of national legislatures in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada who tweeted between Aug. 28 and Sept. 30, 2020. Researchers used the public Twitter Application Programming Interface (API) to collect the tweets. Of 1,289 legislators who have a Twitter account and posted at least once in the period directly after the end of the Republican National Convention until the end of September, 272 legislators, or 21%, tweeted or retweeted content related to presidential candidates. And 42% tweeted or retweeted content related to the U.S. more broadly, with 10% specifically relating to the upcoming November elections.

Researchers also obtained a second batch of 42,398 public tweets from 1,228 members of these national legislatures who tweeted in the week of Nov. 7 – when Joe Biden was announced the winner of the election – to Nov. 14. Of the 1,228 legislators who have a Twitter account and posted at least once in the week after Biden won the election, 698 legislators, or 57%, tweeted or retweeted content related to the presidential candidates or their running mates.

Identifying tweets about presidential candidates and their running mates

To identify tweets about presidential candidates for the Republican and Democratic parties – Donald Trump and Joe Biden, respectively – researchers used a case-insensitive regular expression, or a pattern of keywords, that consists of the terms: "Donald Trump," "Joe Biden," "Trump," "Biden," "realdonaldtrump," "joebiden," etc. This pattern identified 821 tweets mentioning Trump and 355 tweets mentioning Biden explicitly by name in the preelection set of tweets, and 813 tweets mentioning Trump and 2,170 tweets mentioning Biden in the post-election set. Researchers also used negative lookahead to exclude mentions of people who share the last name of the candidates, such as Ivanka Trump or Hunter Biden. After accounting for false positives, researchers analyzed 814 tweets about Trump and 352 tweets about Biden in the final preelection dataset. In the post-election dataset, we analyzed 803 tweets about Trump and 2,122 tweets about Biden. Researchers did not search for any third-party candidates.

Researchers also searched for tweets about the presidential candidates' running mates, Sen. Kamala Harris and Vice President Mike Pence. In the preelection dataset, the only tweet that mentioned Pence also referenced Donald Trump and was not analyzed separately. Eleven tweets mentioned Kamala Harris but not Joe Biden. Because of this low volume for tweets mentioning Pence and Harris, the preelection set of tweets focuses only on mentions of the presidential candidates. In the post-election dataset, we again saw few mentions of Pence independent from

mentions of Trump. Tweets mentioning Harris without Biden, such as mentions of her historic accession to the vice presidency, are included in the post-election analysis. These account for 370 tweets, or 14%, of post-election tweets that mention Biden or Harris.

To evaluate the performance of the regular expression, researchers took a random sample of 100 tweets about Trump and 100 tweets about Biden created between Aug. 28 and Sept. 30, 2020, and an additional two groups of 100 flagged as not mentioning Trump or Biden from the same time period. A researcher examined these sets and independently determined whether they mentioned the presidential candidates in order to compare human decisions with the results 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 0.96 on average between Trump and Biden mentions for the same comparison. Another researcher also classified the set of 200 tweets for each candidate independently to ensure their decisions were comparable. Cohen's Kappa for coder-to-code comparisons was 0.98 for mentions of Biden and 1 (perfect agreement) for Trump.

Coding of legislators' pre-election tweets

Sentiment coding for tweets about presidential candidates before the election

Using the validated tweets about presidential candidates, researchers hand-coded the sentiment of each tweet into one of three categories: positive, neutral or negative.

Tweets with a positive mention:

▪ Include any tweets in which the writer explicitly says the above parties are doing a good job, showing leadership, etc.
▪ Also include general expressions of thanks or gratitude or wishing them luck in the upcoming election.

Tweets with a negative mention:

▪ Include any tweets in which the writer explicitly says the above parties are doing a bad job, failing at key tasks or at their jobs more broadly or letting Americans down.
▪ Also include general expressions of shame or embarrassment, or hoping that they will lose in the upcoming election.
▪ Or refer to the candidates in disparaging terms, such as the phrases "Sleepy Joe" or calling something negative "Trumpian."

Tweets that are neutral:

▪ Include any tweets that do not express feelings toward any candidates on either party's presidential ticket or are strictly descriptive in nature regarding the candidate or related polling and news. For example, "Looking forward to joining the panel on the eve of the first Biden-Trump presidential debate. https://t.co/LkQo18EgyE" is considered a neutral tweet toward both candidates.

Researchers coded tweets about Trump and tweets about Biden separately in order to accurately classify tweets that mention both candidates. In the majority of cases, researchers were able to determine a tweet's sentiment based solely from the text of the tweet. In some cases, such as links to political cartoons, researchers followed links or images for additional context before making a decision. Through this process, researchers removed 10 false positives. 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 the candidates.

Identifying subtopics in the preelection sentiment coding

In addition to classifying the sentiment of these tweets, researchers also coded them into subtopics. Researchers manually examined this sample of tweets and retweets to assess which topics were prevalent when discussing the candidates. Based on manual examination, researchers generated a list of coding categories and separately coded the tweets into agreed-upon categories. The tweets were analyzed in two batches – those about Biden and those about Trump – and coded as being about that candidate specifically using the same criteria. Tweets that mentioned both Trump and Biden were coded independently in each set.

Five researchers then separately coded 200 tweets and achieved high levels of intercoder reliability on the subset that they all reviewed (average Krippendorf's alpha between the Biden and Trump set ranging from 0.76 to 0.87 for each topic) before each coding part of the remaining sample.

Categories used to code legislators' tweets about candidates before election

Topic	# of tweets
Personal traits: remarks on personality, morality, fitness, behavior	472
Election: voting, Electoral College, debates, election predictions	322
Candidate domestic policies: candidate track records, future policy predictions	200
Candidate foreign policies: bilateral relations implications, trade deals	200
Parallels: comparing U.S. candidate or policy to own country's leadership/policy	183

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the UK, Canada and Australia, posted Aug. 28-Sept. 30, 2020. N=1,039 tweets from 272 legislators who tweeted at least once about the presidential candidates.
"Legislators in UK, Canada and Australia Express Post-election Enthusiasm for Biden Administration on Twitter"

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Researchers coded the tweets primarily by reading the text of each tweet. In some cases, when a tweet contained attachments such as links or images, they were considered for additional context before making a decision. 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 the U.S. 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.

Identifying tweets about the United States

To identify tweets about the United States broadly, researchers used a case-insensitive regular expression that consists of the terms: "United States," "unitedstates," "US," "USA," "U.S.," etc. This pattern identified 1,905 tweets as mentioning the U.S. explicitly by name. Researchers also used negative lookahead to exclude mentions of places contain the word America but do not refer to the country, e.g., Latin America. After accounting for false positives, researchers analyzed 1,794 tweets about the United States in the final dataset.

To evaluate the performance of the regular expression, researchers took a random sample of 400 tweets created between Aug. 28 and Sept. 30, 2020. Two researchers examined this set to determine whether they mentioned the U.S. by name in order to compare human decisions with the decisions from the regular expression. Overall, the human decisions agreed with the keyword method 96% of the time. Cohen's Kappa was 0.90 for the same comparison. Another researcher also classified the set of 400 tweets independently to ensure their decisions were comparable. Cohen's Kappa for coder-to-code comparisons was 0.96.

Topic coding for tweets related to the U.S.

Researchers limited their analysis of tweets that explicitly mentioned the U.S. to those created from Aug. 28 through Sept. 30, 2020. Researchers 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 100 tweets and achieved high levels of intercoder reliability on the subset that they all reviewed (Krippendorf's alpha ranging from 0.75 to 0.96 for each topic) before each coding part of the remaining sample. For 111 tweets, researchers found false positives or ambiguous content and dropped these from the analysis. For example, the "US" keyword falsely tagged tweets containing currency symbols (e.g., "US$") that are not actually about the U.S.

Researchers coded the tweets mainly through reading the text of each tweet. In some cases, when a tweet's topic could not be discerned from the text alone, researchers used links or images in the tweet for additional context before making a decision. It is important to note that

Categories used to code legislators' tweets about U.S.

Topic	# of tweets
Trade relations: trade policy, tariffs, negotiations	500
International relations: bilateral relations, global affairs not related to trade	425
U.S. presidential election	205
Historical events: 9/11, World War II	170
COVID-19: U.S. handling, deaths, public health, effects on economy	155
Social movements: protests, LGBT rights, reproductive rights	150
Climate change: the environment, global warming, energy policy	101
President Trump, not about election	99
Supreme Court: nominations, death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg	88
Technology: cybersecurity, social media, effects on public life	33
Other: topics not covered in other categories	202

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the UK, Canada and Australia, posted Aug. 28-Sept. 30, 2020. N=1,794 tweets from 536 legislators who tweeted at least once about the U.S.
"Legislators in UK, Canada and Australia Express Post-election Enthusiasm for Biden Administration on Twitter"

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this method may fail to correctly classify tweets that use irony or sarcasm to convey feelings or ideas about the U.S. 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.

For 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.

Coding of legislators' post-election tweets

Sentiment coding for tweets about presidential candidates after the election

Using the validated tweets about presidential candidates and their running mates sent from Nov. 7 to 14, researchers hand-coded the sentiment of each tweet into one of three categories: positive, neutral or negative.

Tweets with a positive mention:

- Include any tweets in which the writer explicitly says the above parties are doing a good job, showing leadership, etc.
- Also include general expressions of thanks, gratitude or satisfaction with respect to the election outcome.

Tweets with a negative mention:

- Include any tweets in which the writer explicitly says the above parties are doing a bad job, failing at key tasks or at their jobs more broadly or letting Americans down.
- Also include general expressions of shame, embarrassment or dissatisfaction with the results of the election. Expressions of satisfaction or gratitude toward certain candidate's defeat in the election also belong in this category.
- Or refer to the candidates in disparaging terms, such as the phrases "Sleepy Joe" or calling something negative "Trumpian."

Tweets that are neutral:

- Include any tweets that do not express feelings toward any candidate on either party's presidential ticket or are strictly descriptive in nature regarding the candidate, election or related polling and news.

Researchers coded tweets about Trump and tweets about Biden separately in order to accurately classify tweets that mention both candidates. In the majority of cases, researchers were able to determine a tweet's sentiment based solely on the text of the tweet. In some cases, such as links to political cartoons, researchers followed links or images for additional context before making a decision. Through this process, researchers removed 10 false positives. 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 the candidates.

Identifying subtopics in the post-election sentiment coding

In addition to classifying the sentiment of these tweets, researchers also coded them into subtopics. Researchers manually examined this sample of tweets and retweets to assess which topics were prevalent when discussing the candidates. Based on manual examination, researchers generated a list of coding categories and separately coded the tweets into agreed-upon categories. The tweets were analyzed in two batches – those about Biden/Harris and those about Trump/Pence – and coded about that candidate pair specifically using the same criteria. Tweets that mentioned both Trump and Biden were coded independently in each set.

Five researchers then separately coded 200 tweets and achieved high levels of intercoder reliability on the subset that they all reviewed (average Krippendorf's alpha between the Biden and Trump set ranging from 0.73 to 0.84 for each topic) before each coding part of the remaining sample.

Researchers coded the tweets primarily by reading the text of each tweet. In some cases, when a tweet contained attachments such as links or images, they were considered for additional context before making a decision. 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 the U.S. 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.

Categories used to code legislators' tweets about candidates after election

Topic	# of tweets
Reactions: congratulating election winners, welcoming new administration, immediate opinion on the outcome of election	1,404
Candidate foreign policies: bilateral relations implications, trade deals	1,008
Personal traits: remarks on personality, morality, fitness, behavior	594
Kamala Harris: historic nature of her becoming the vice president	479
Election: voting, Electoral College, debates, election predictions	361
Parallels: comparing U.S. candidate or policy to own country's leadership/policy	308
Candidate domestic policies: candidate track records, future policy predictions	226
Transition: inauguration, Trump's lawsuits	203

Source: Analysis of tweets from national-level legislators in the UK, Canada and Australia, posted Nov. 7-14, 2020. N=3,060 tweets from 698 legislators who tweeted at least once about the presidential candidates or their running mates.

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