

Leaders & Tweeters

Twitter Activity and Institutional Power in Congress

Ben Burnley

GWG Spring 24



Ben Burnley (GWG Spring 24)



Leaders & Tweeters

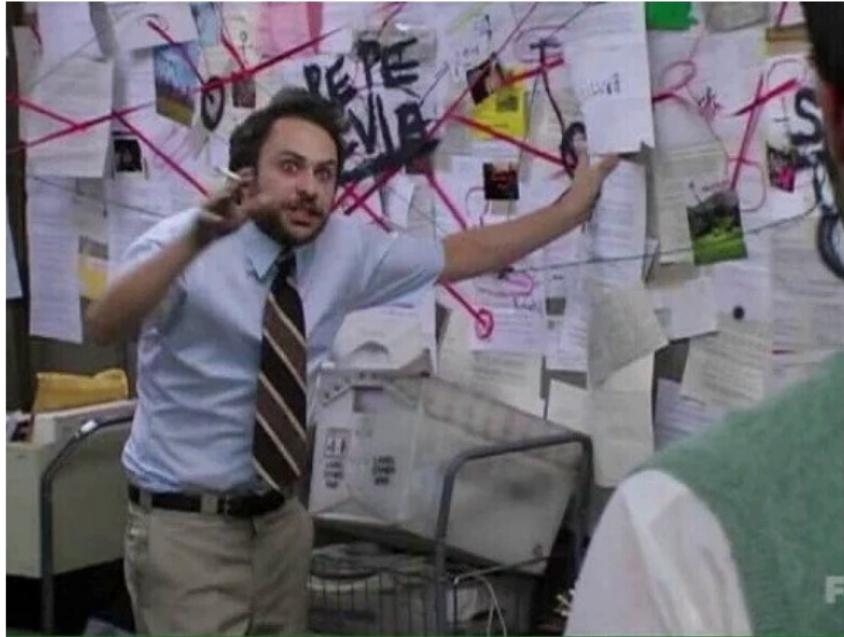


Billy Long



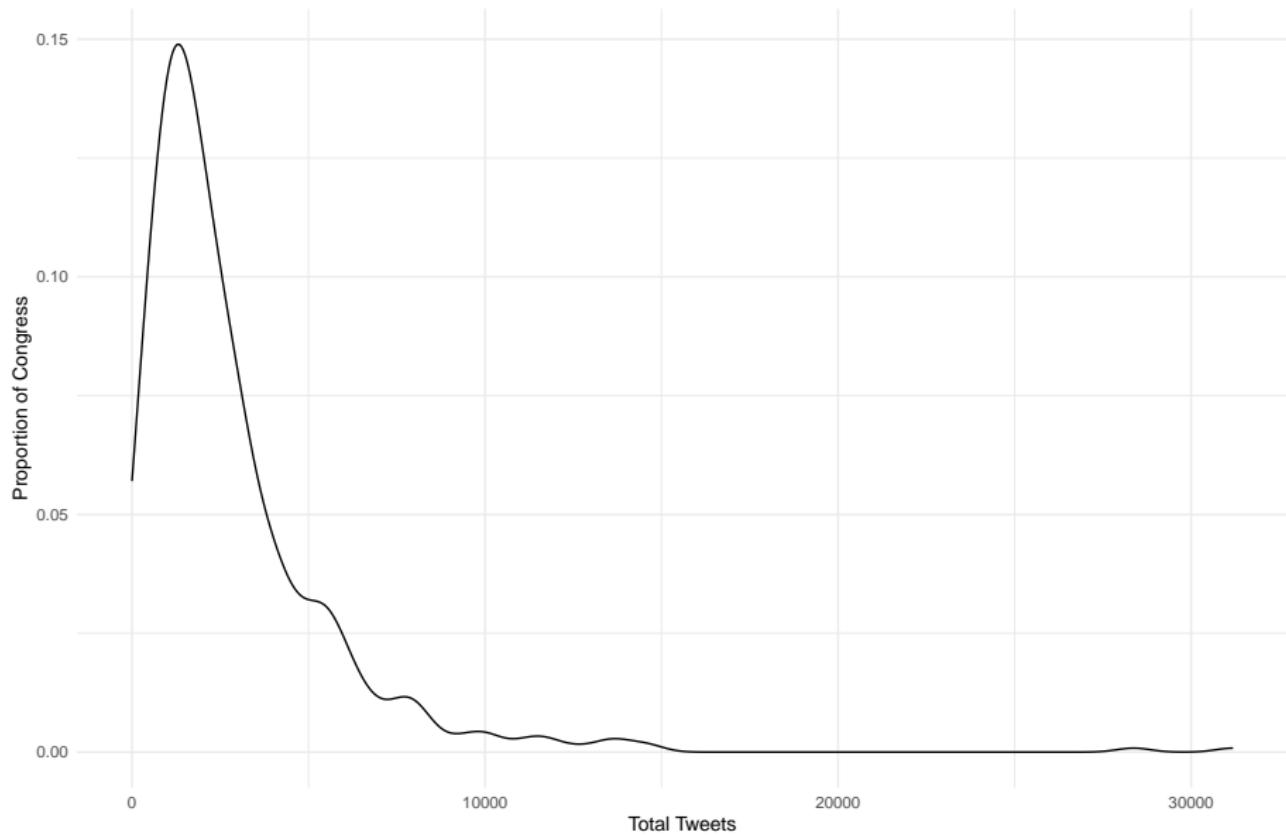
Blaine Luetkemeyer

Billy Long Blaine Luetkemeyer **Same initials....**



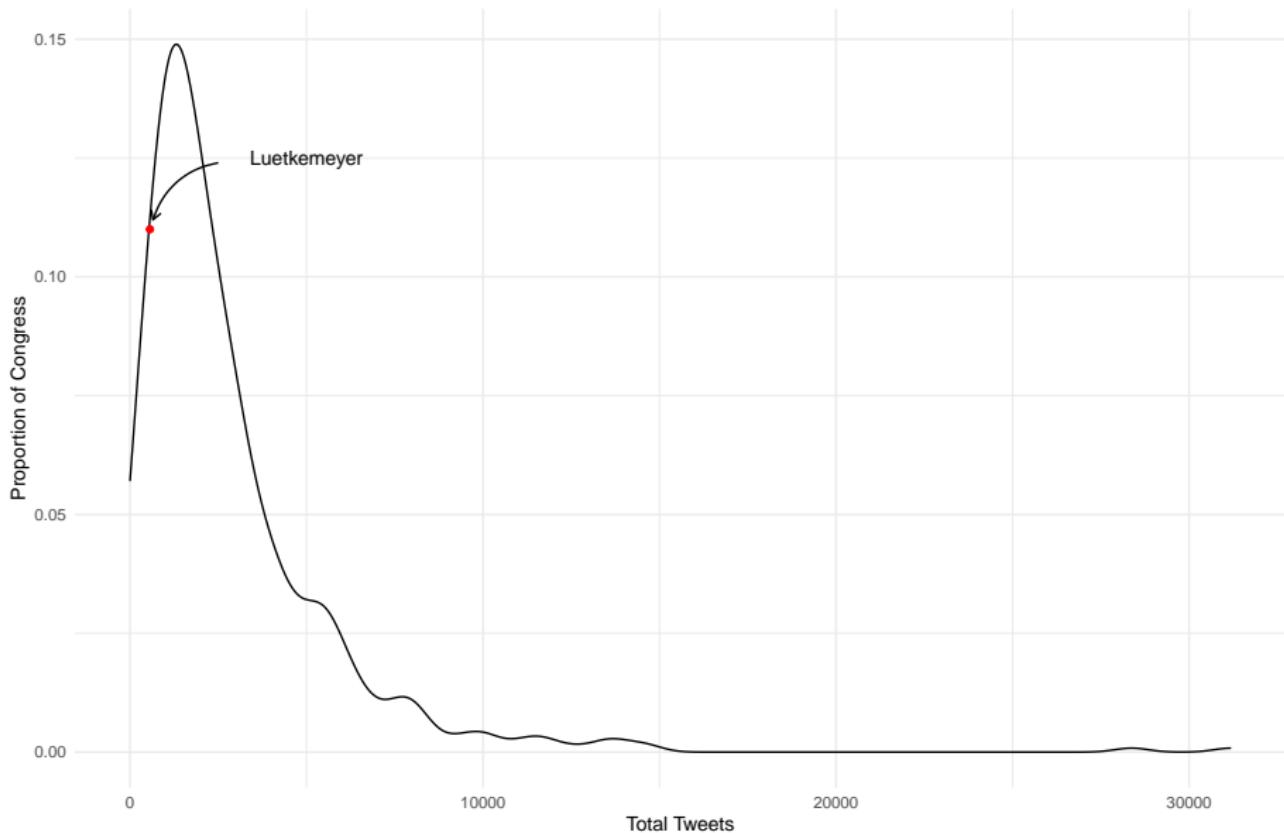
Distribution of Total Tweets

116th Congress



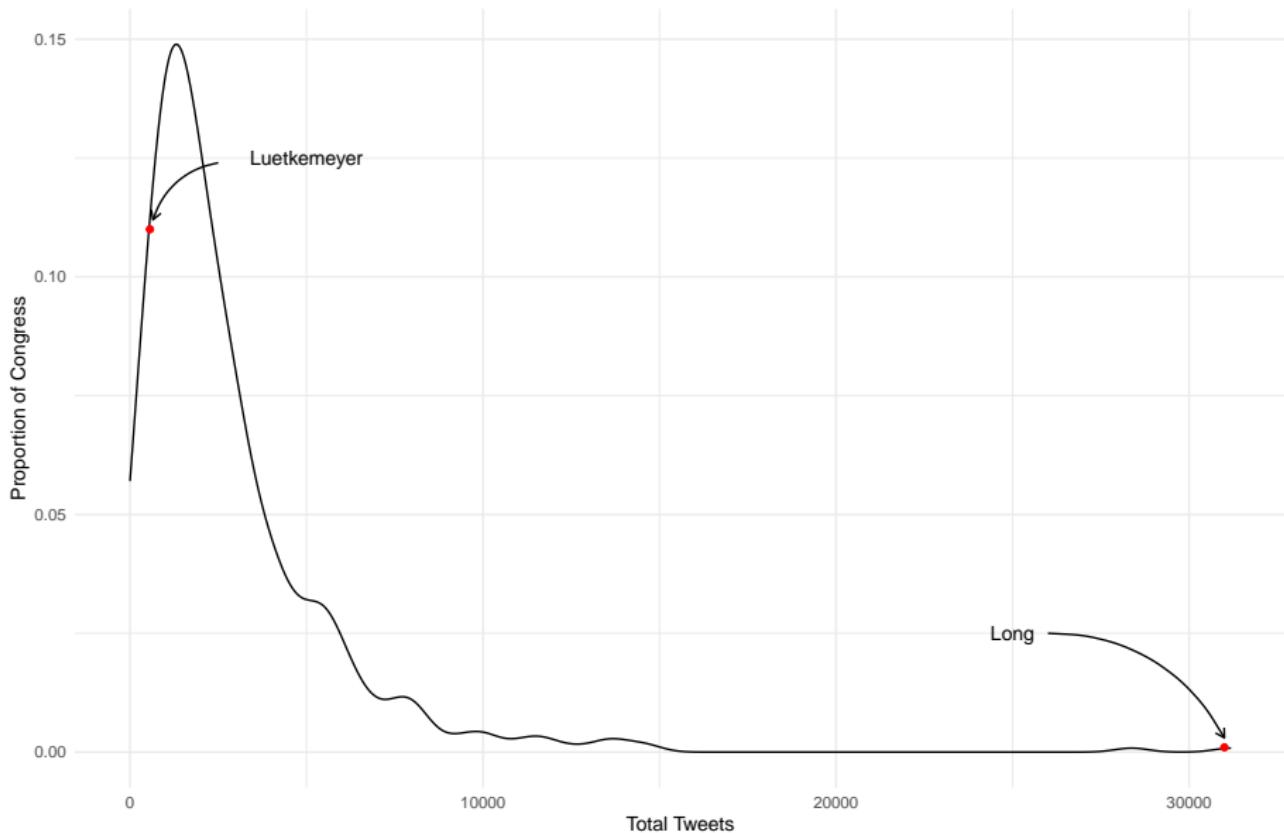
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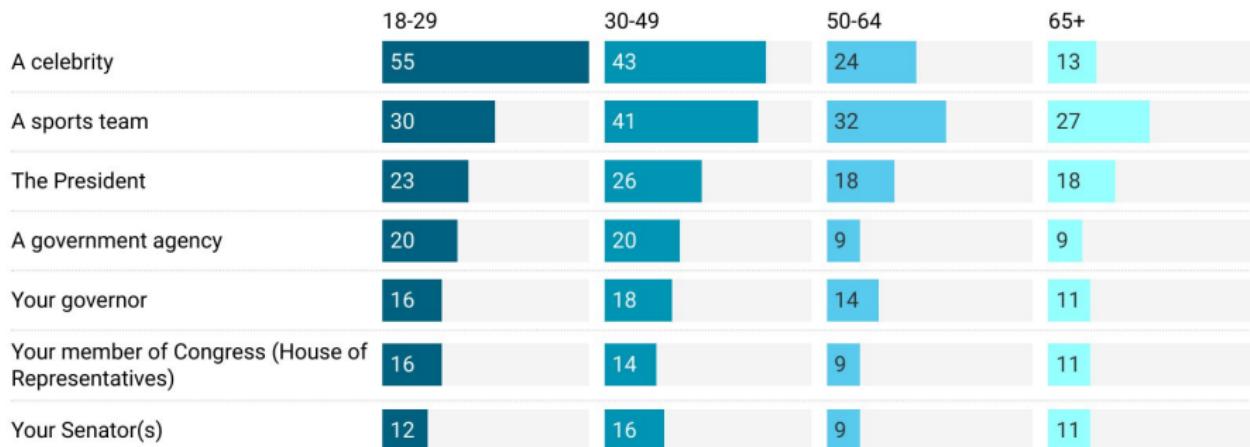
What explains the difference if not their political and demographic factors?

Who follows Members of Congress?

Followed Subjects on Social Media by Age

Which of these do you follow on social media? Select all that apply. (N = 2,000)

■ 18-29 ■ 30-49 ■ 50-64 ■ 65+



Verasight collected data for this survey from September 07 - September 13, 2023. The questionnaire text can be found in the accompanying codebook for this project. The sample consists of 2,000 United States adults. The margin of sampling error, which accounts for the design effect and is calculated using the classical random sampling formula, is +/- 2.3%.

VERASIGHT

Literature

Congress

- MCs have different styles in Congress:
 - ▶ Work horses vs. show horses (Payne 1980)
 - ▶ Legislative style (Bernhard and Sulkin 2018)
- Personal style impacts content of digital communication (Russell 2021)

Communication

- Those without power are the first to innovate (Epstein 2018)
- Leveraging personal brand, audience, and attention (Hund 2023)

Research Questions

RQ1: Do party and committee leaders tweet more?

RQ2 What demographic and political factors lead to more Twitter activity?

RQ3 Do those who tweet frequently differ in tone or topic?

Data

All tweets from the 116th and 117th Congresses (3.03 million)

Member covariates DW-NOMINATE and Legislative Effectiveness Scores

Analysis

- Descriptive comparisons

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- LDA topic model

Typology

Party Leaders = if the MC holds any position within party leadership

Committee Leaders = all committee chairs and ranking members

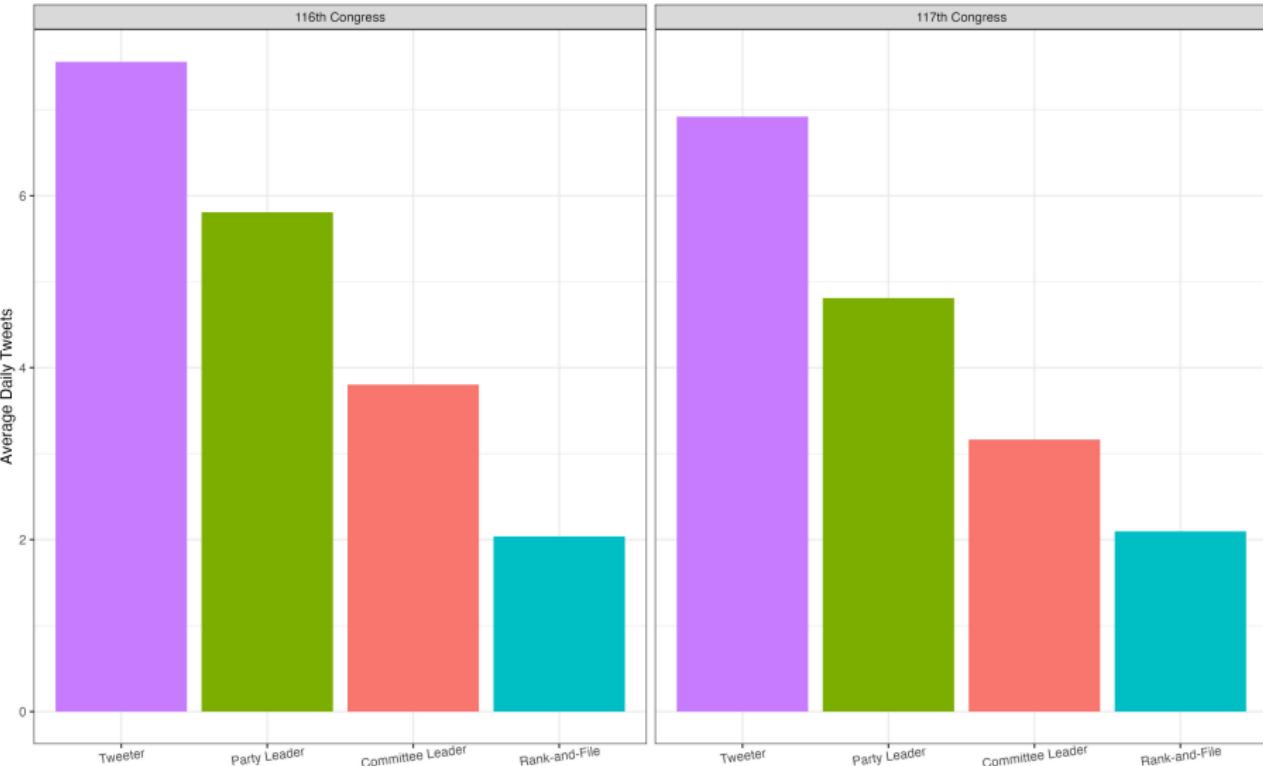
Tweeters = Lack institutional power, but tweet more than their party-chamber mean

Rank-and-File = Lack institutional power and tweet less than their party chamber mean

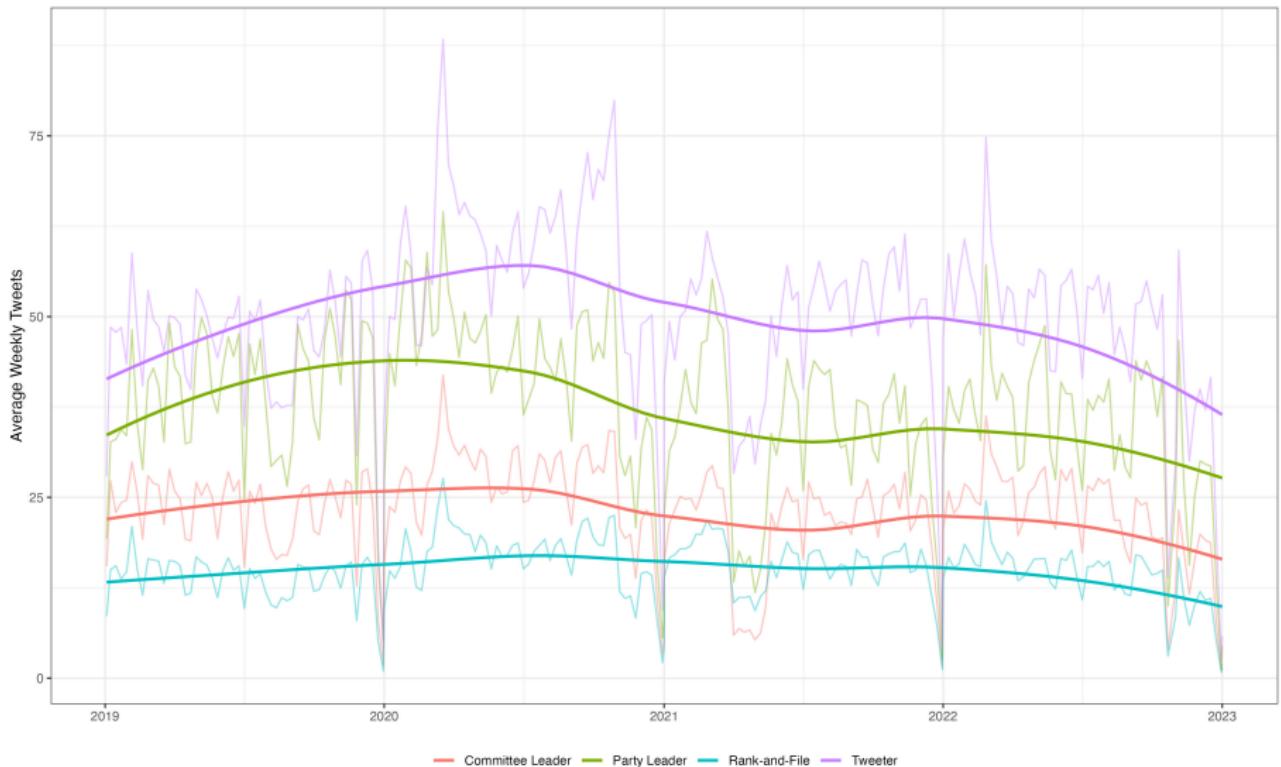
Typology

Group	116th Congress	117th Congress
Party Leader	85	80
Committee Leader	30	40
Tweeter	141	129
Rank-and-File	269	284

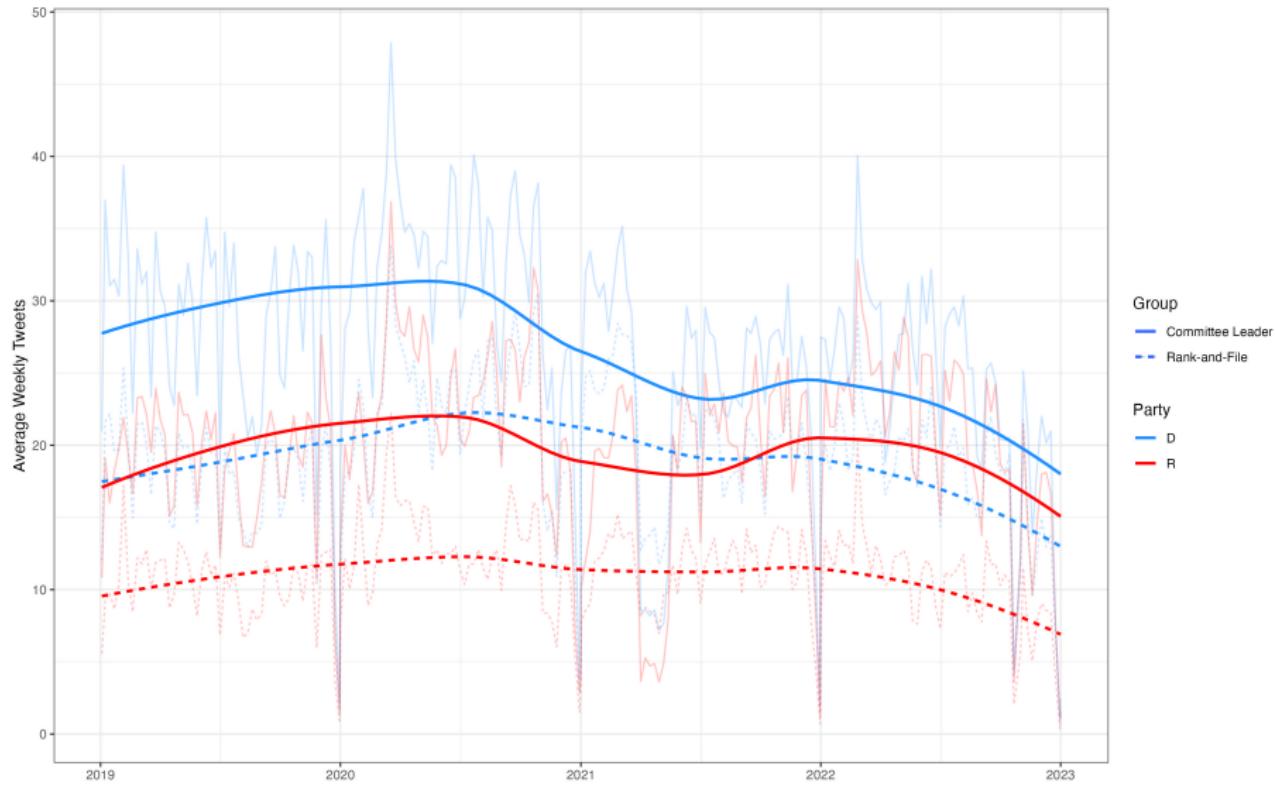
Comparisons



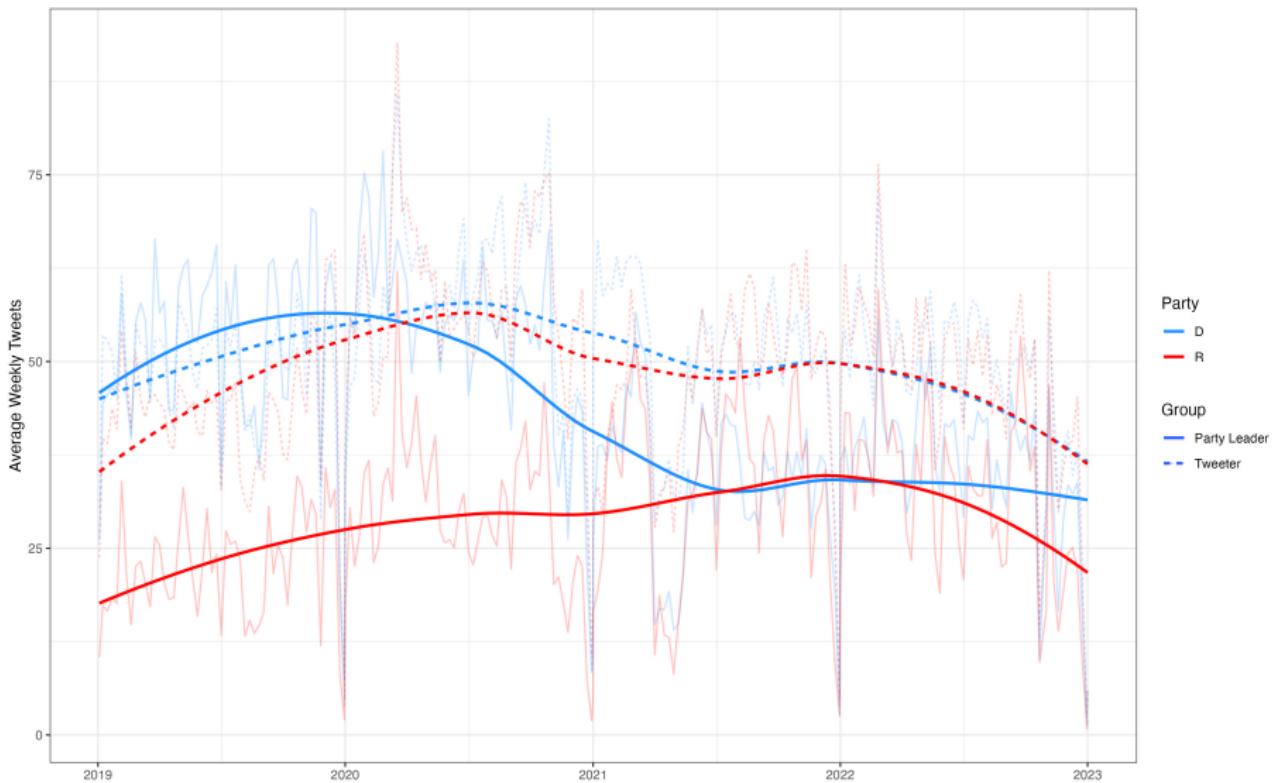
Over Time



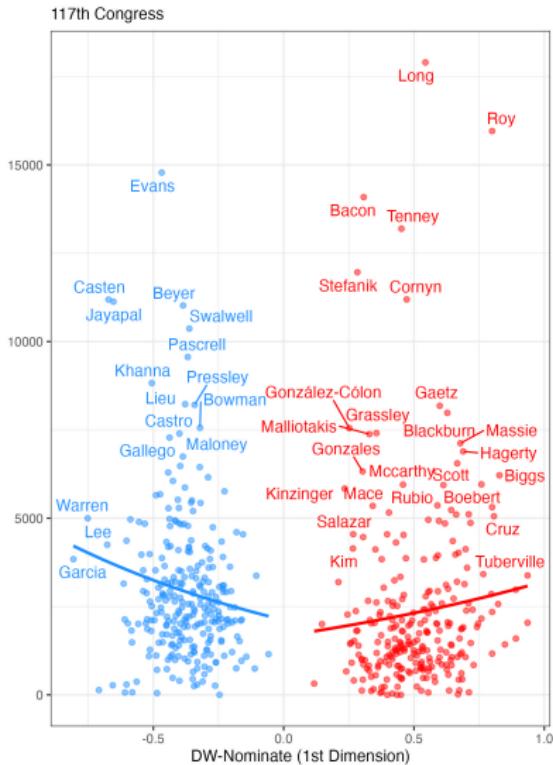
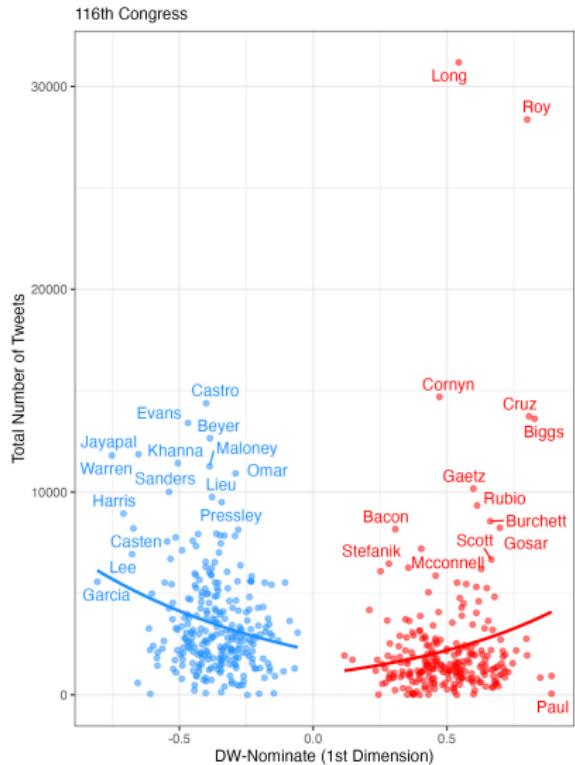
Low Activity Partisanship



High Activity Partisanship

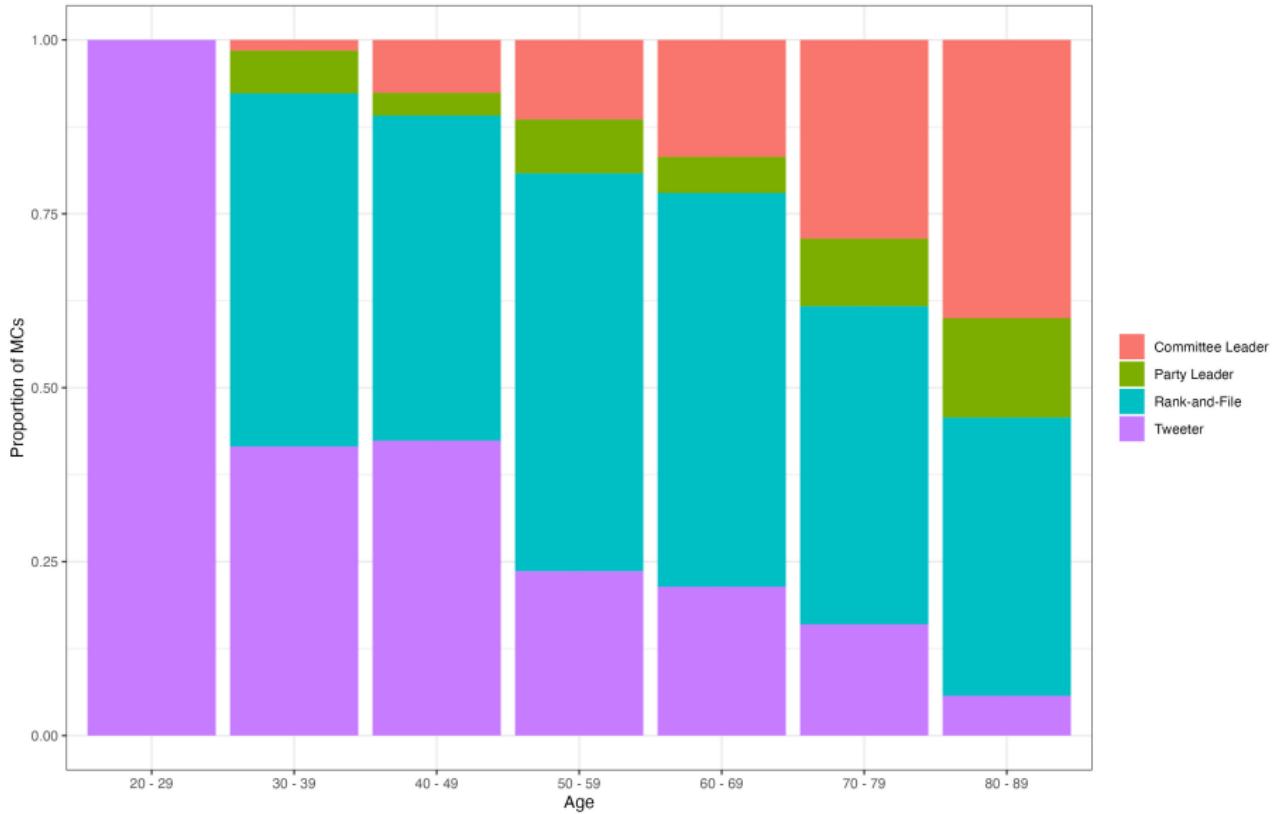


Ideology



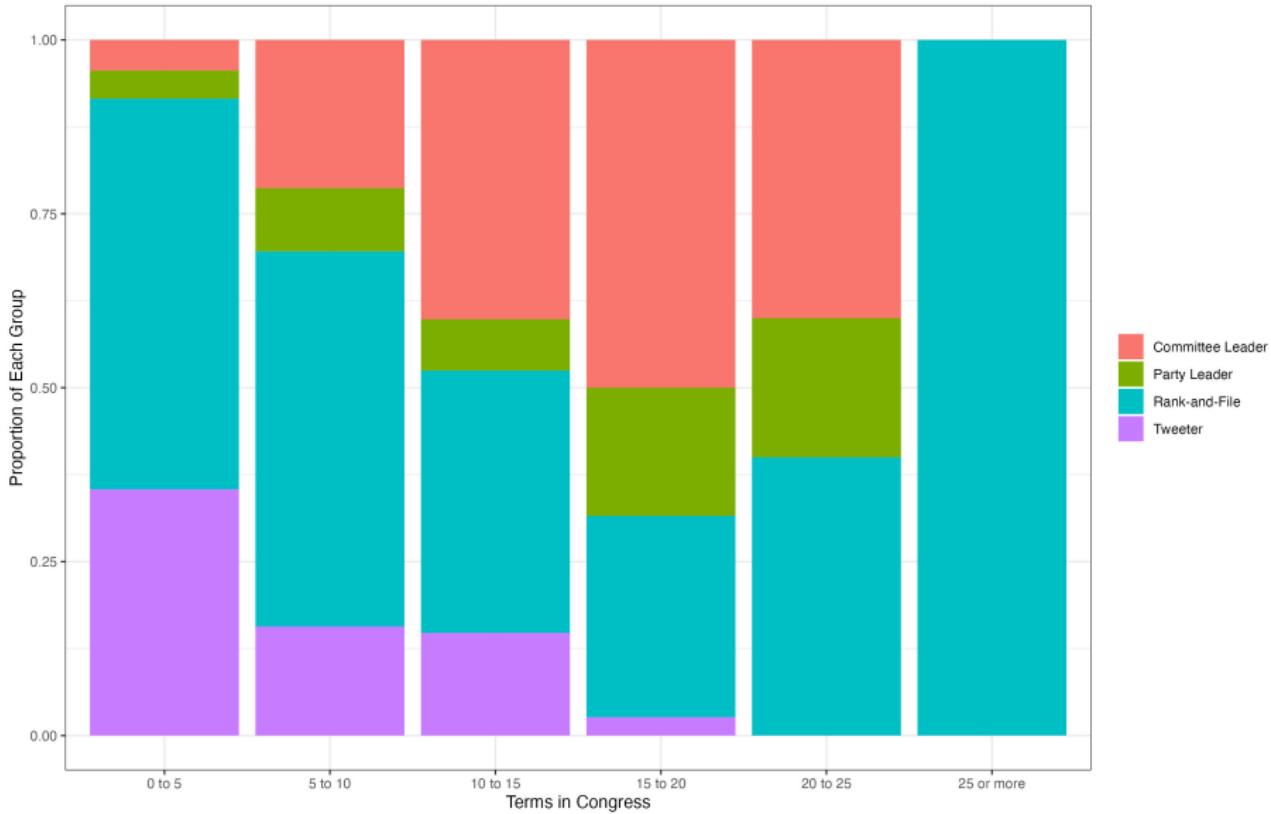
Age

116th and 117th Congresses Combined

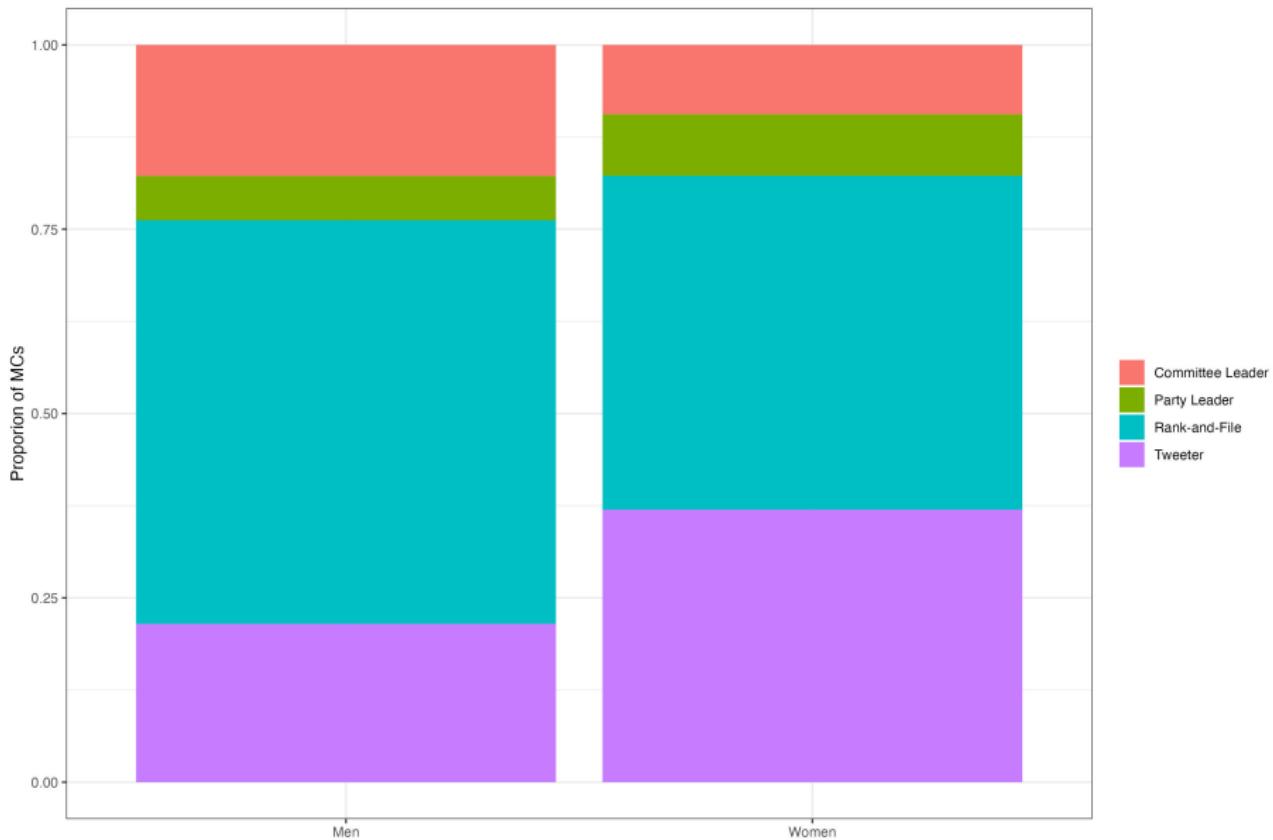


Seniority

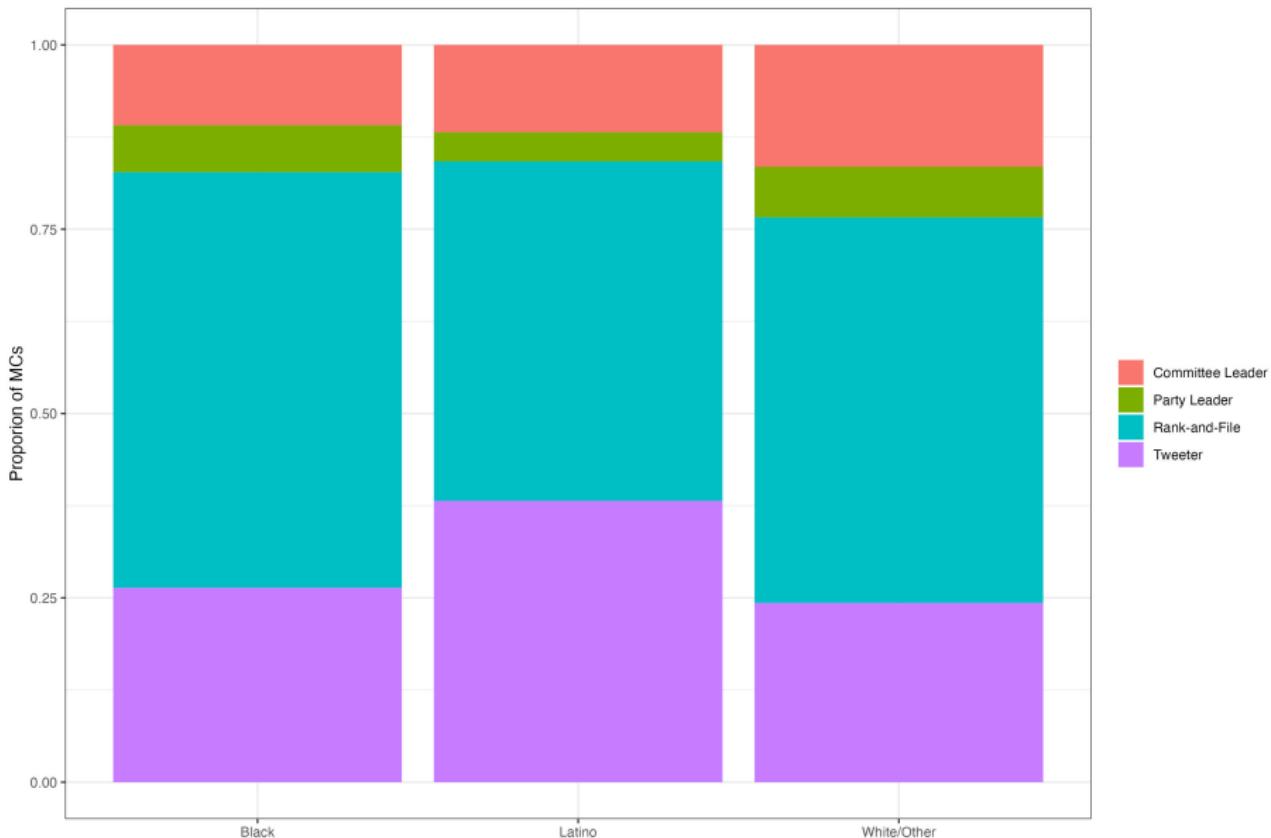
116th and 117th Congresses Combined



Gender



Race



What Makes a Tweeter?

- Tweeters are the most active group, outpacing party leaders and committee leaders who have more resources. - They are ideologically more extreme, but the most active members tend to fall near their party median.

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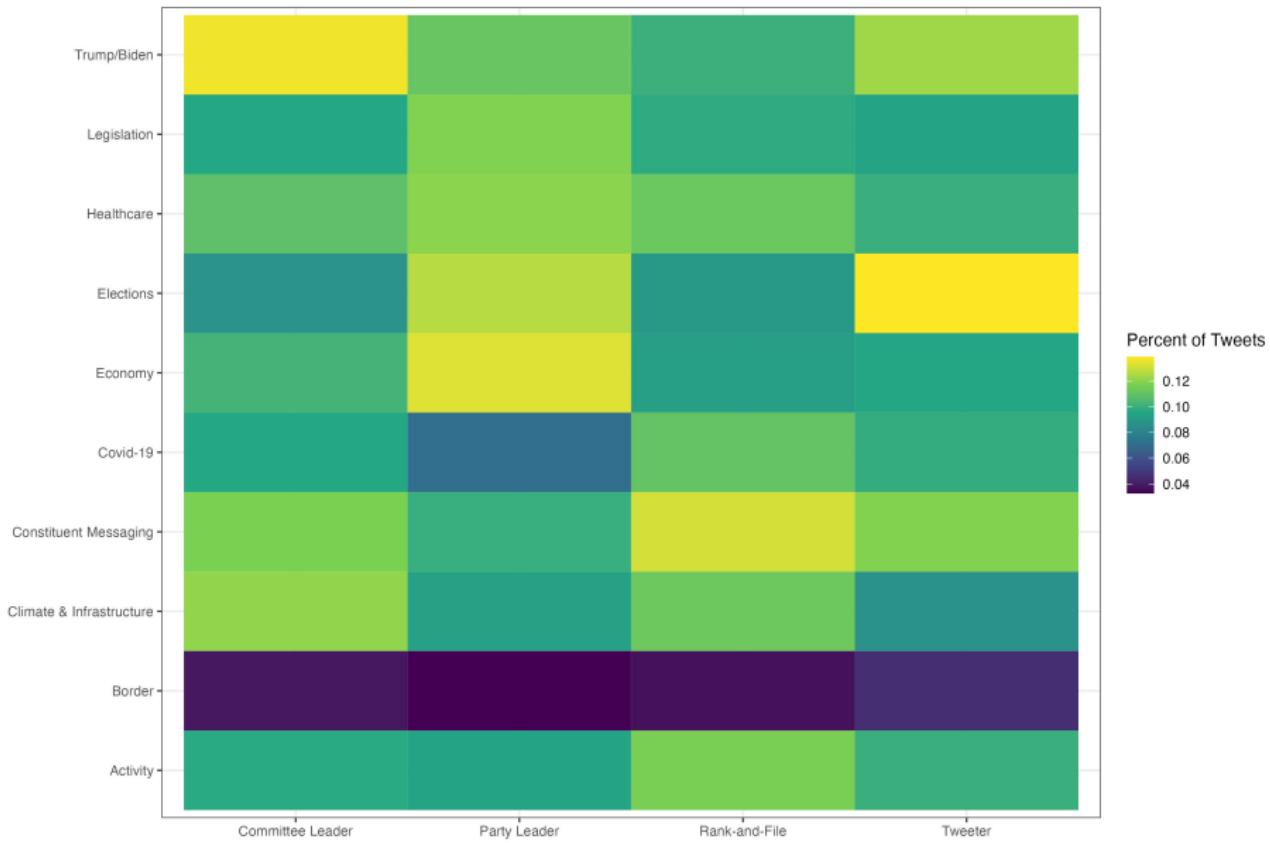
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- **These are the characteristics shut out of power in Congress**

How do they differ in activity from party leaders?

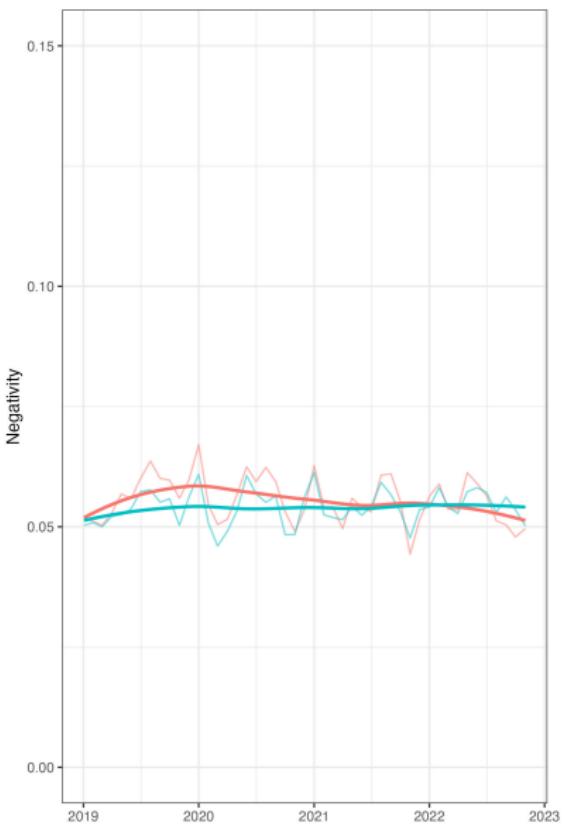
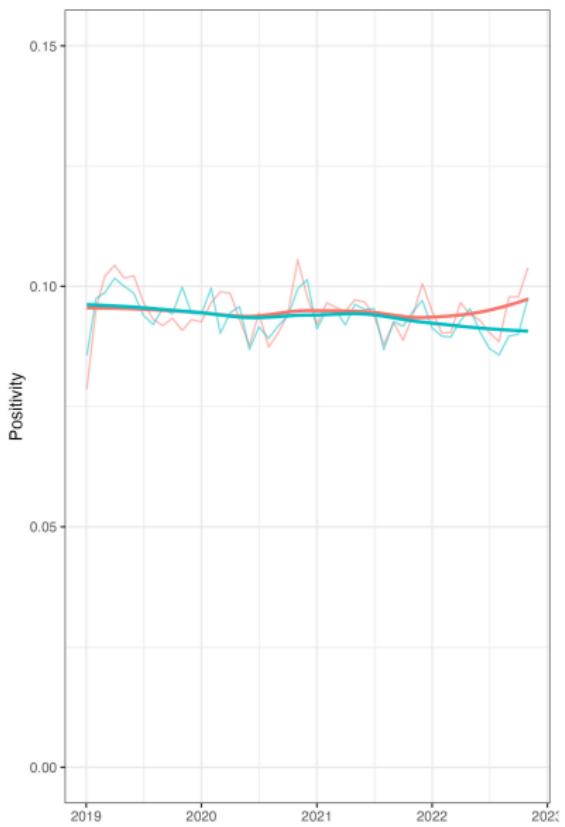
Topic Model



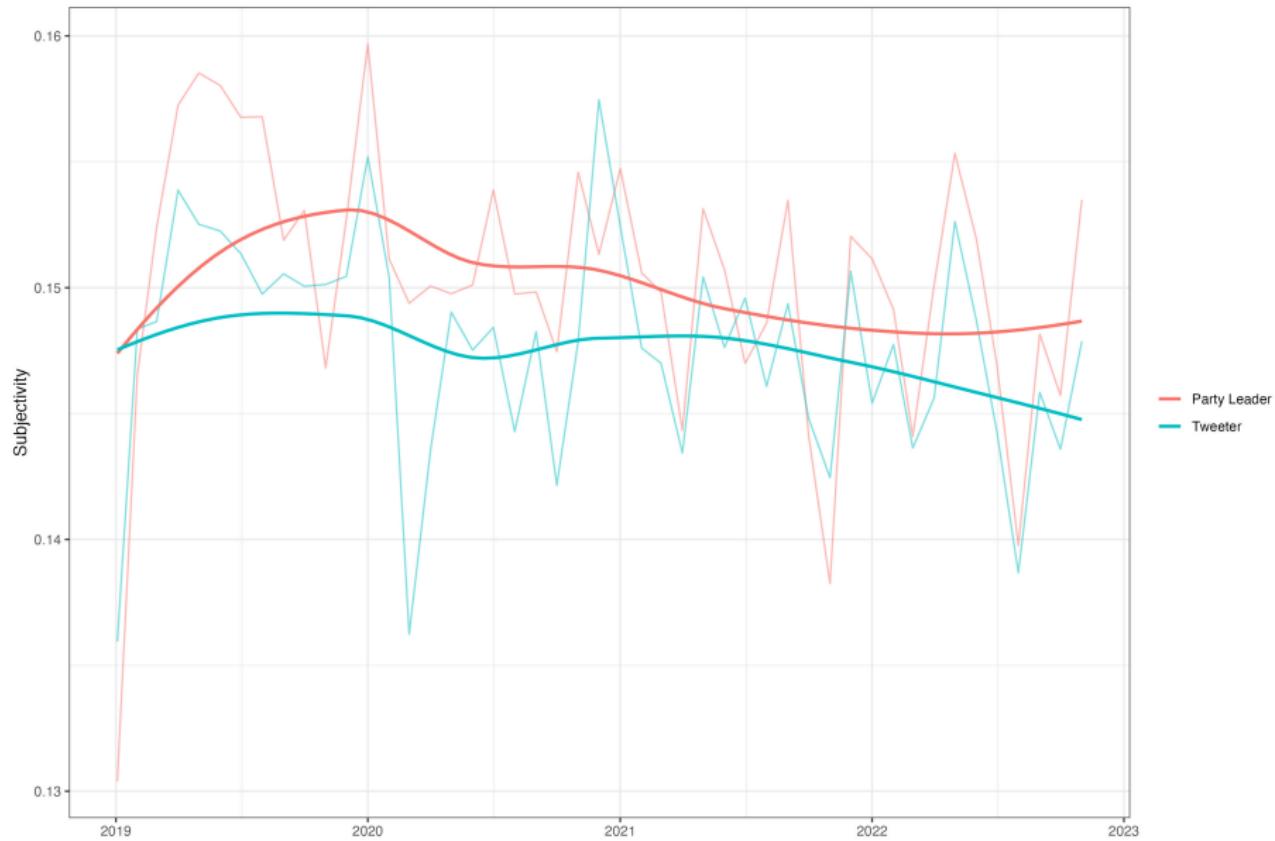
Tweeters vs. Leaders Topics



Positive and Negative Words



Subjectivity



Conclusions

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- As a group, they are more active than party leaders and committee leaders, despite having more in common with rank-and-file colleagues.
- They focus on different topics than party leadership (reverse image)
- They are slightly less emotional than party leaders.

Thank you!

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