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# **Politicians from 12 countries rarely engage with researchers on social media, but this can change when expertise gains salience**

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Work-in-progress workshop

Aarhus University

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# Background

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Research evidence can be valuable in informing and shaping policy decisions by equipping policymakers with data and information to create and execute policies to address societal problems (e.g., [Bavel et al. 2020](#); [Berger et al. 2021](#); [Geddes 2021](#))

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The endeavor to understand how academic research insights are integrated into policymaking has a long tradition in the social sciences (e.g., [Weiss 1979](#); [Caplan 1979](#); [Huberman 1994](#))

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Growing body of literature looking at: “**What would a policy decisionmaker do if she were confronted with this research insight?**” (e.g., [Vivalt and Coville, 2023](#); [Lee, 2022](#); [Baekgaard et al., 2019](#))

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Since research is rarely there with calls-to-action for all policy problems, academic researchers and scientific insights compete with other types of information for politicians' attention ([Senninger & Seeberg, 2022](#); [Walgrave & Dejaeghere, 2017](#))

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## Individual inclination to engage with researchers

Since science is increasingly tied with calls-to-action for all policy problems, academic researchers and scientific insights compete with other types of information for politicians' attention (Senninger & Seeberg, 2022; Walgrave & Dejaeghere, 2017)

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**Individual inclination to engage with researchers and self-selection into research evidence can matter**

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The structure of online social networks can be revealing of individuals' latent features (e.g., [Barberá 2015](#); [He and Tsvetkova 2023](#))

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Social media, specifically Twitter, are increasingly important for political and scientific communities ([Brainard 2022](#); [Castanho Silva and Proksch 2022](#); [Jungherr, 2016](#)).

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# Materials and Methods

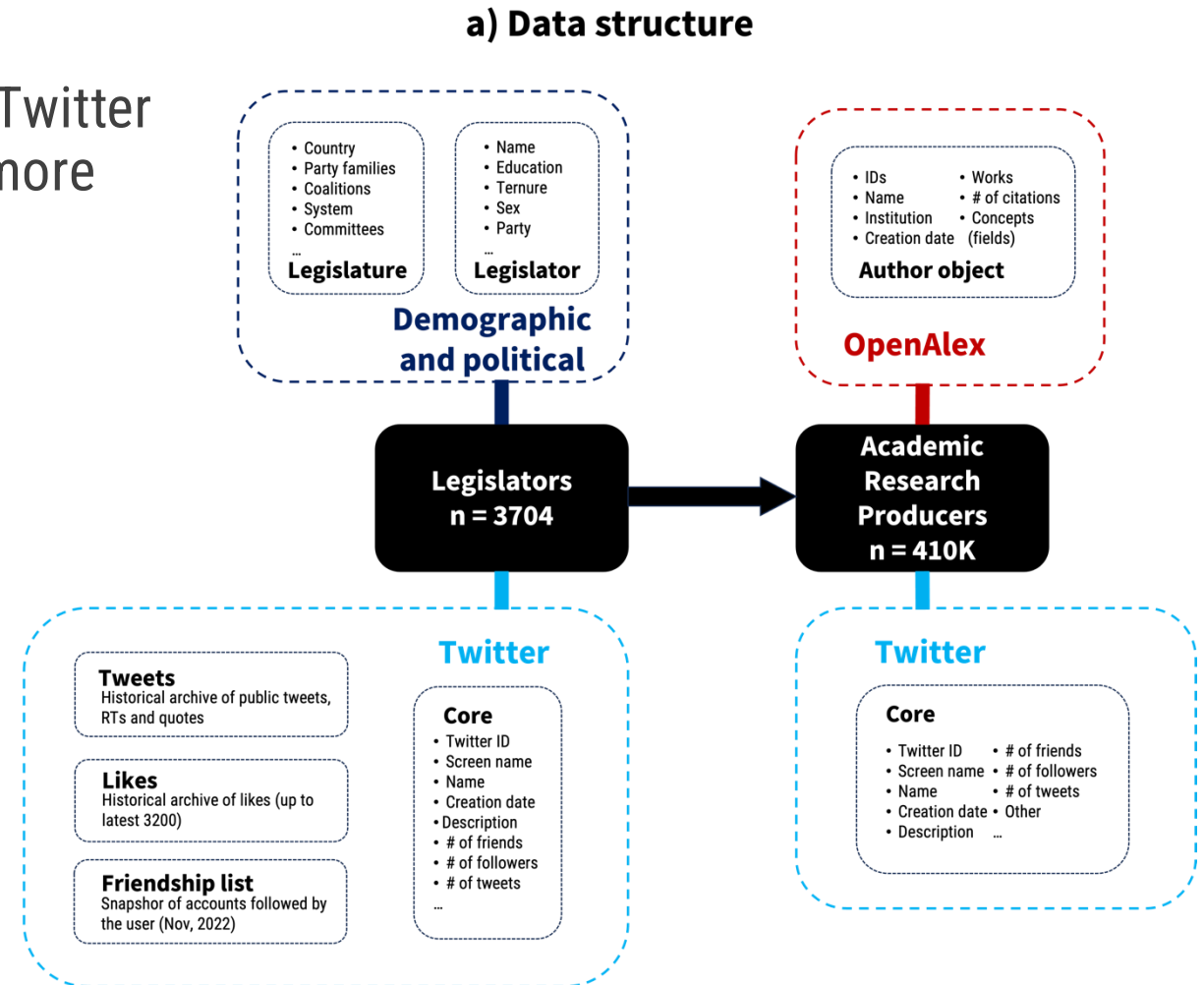
# Materials and Methods

I employ digital trace data from legislators' Twitter profiles

COUNTRY		SEATS	ON TWITTER
Pooled		4134	3704
Ireland		160	154
UK		650	590
Spain		349	314
Colombia		108	104
Canada		338	325
Argentina		72	61
Germany		736	597
US Senate		100	100
US House		435	431
Italy		400	286
Mexico		128	114
France		577	552
Brazil		81	76

# Materials and Methods

I employ digital trace data from legislators' Twitter profiles and map it onto a novel dataset of more than 410K researcher producers.

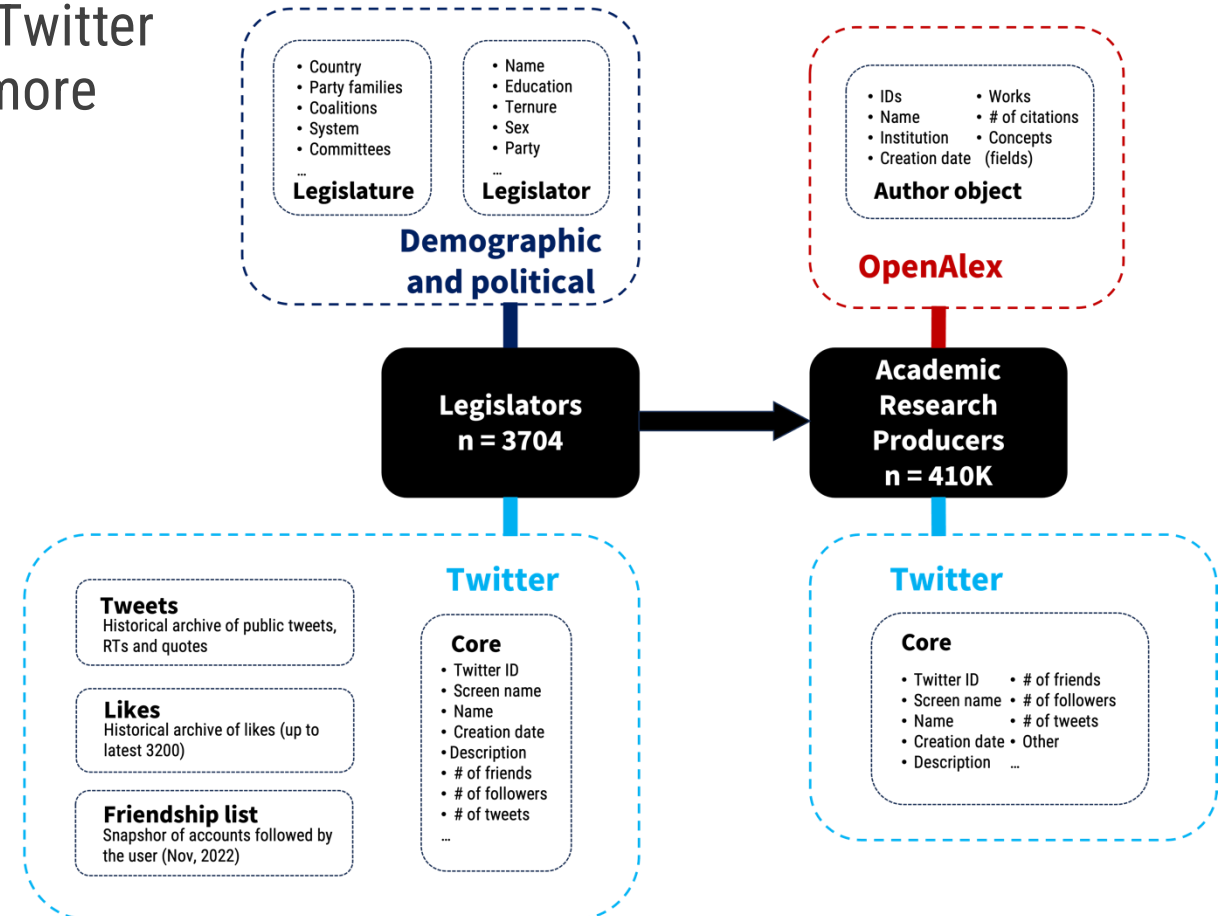


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- historical archive of all their public posts ( $\approx 20\text{M}$ )
- followed accounts ( $\approx 2.6\text{M}$ )
- liked posts ( $\approx 6.5\text{M}$ )

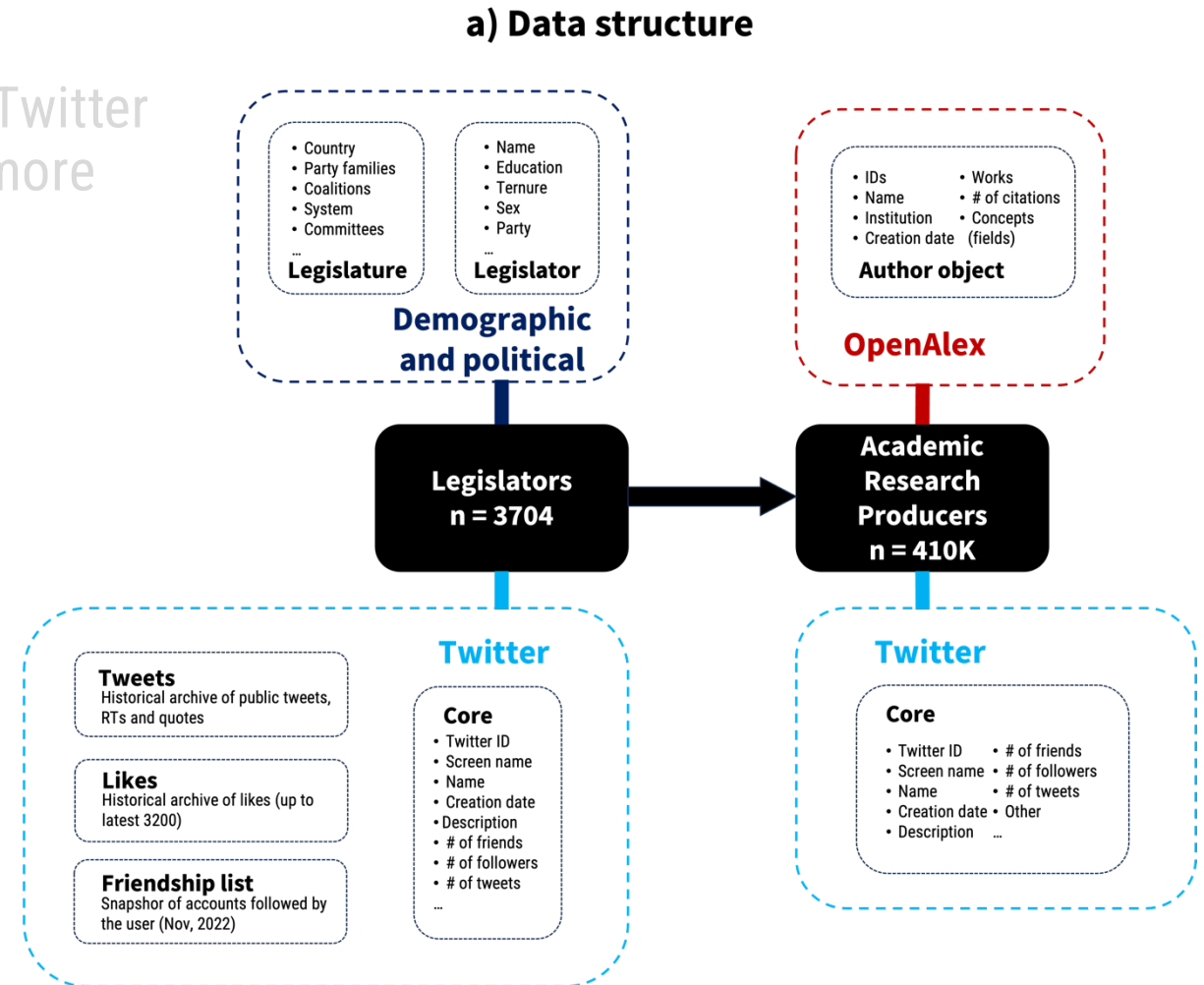
## a) Data structure



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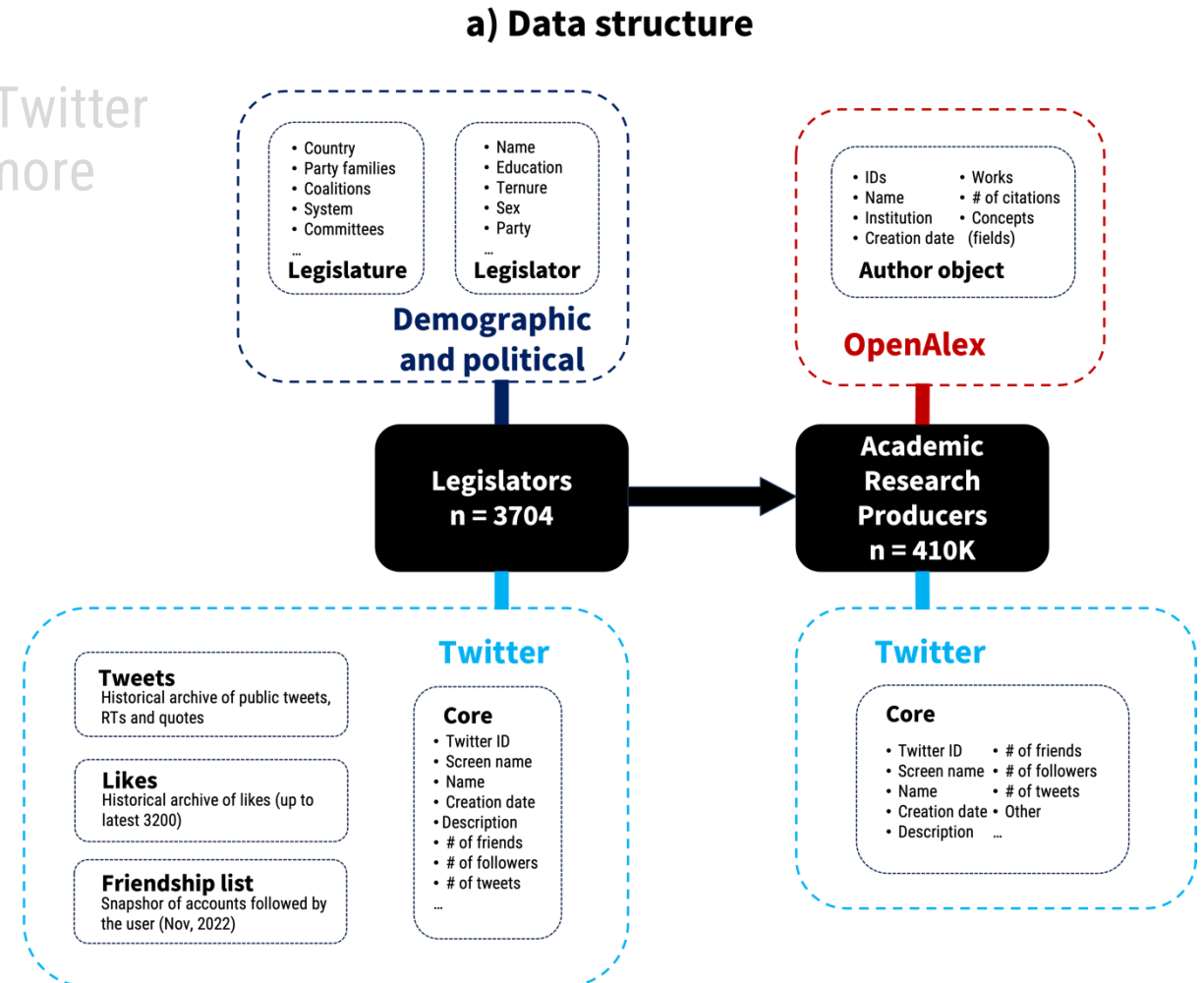
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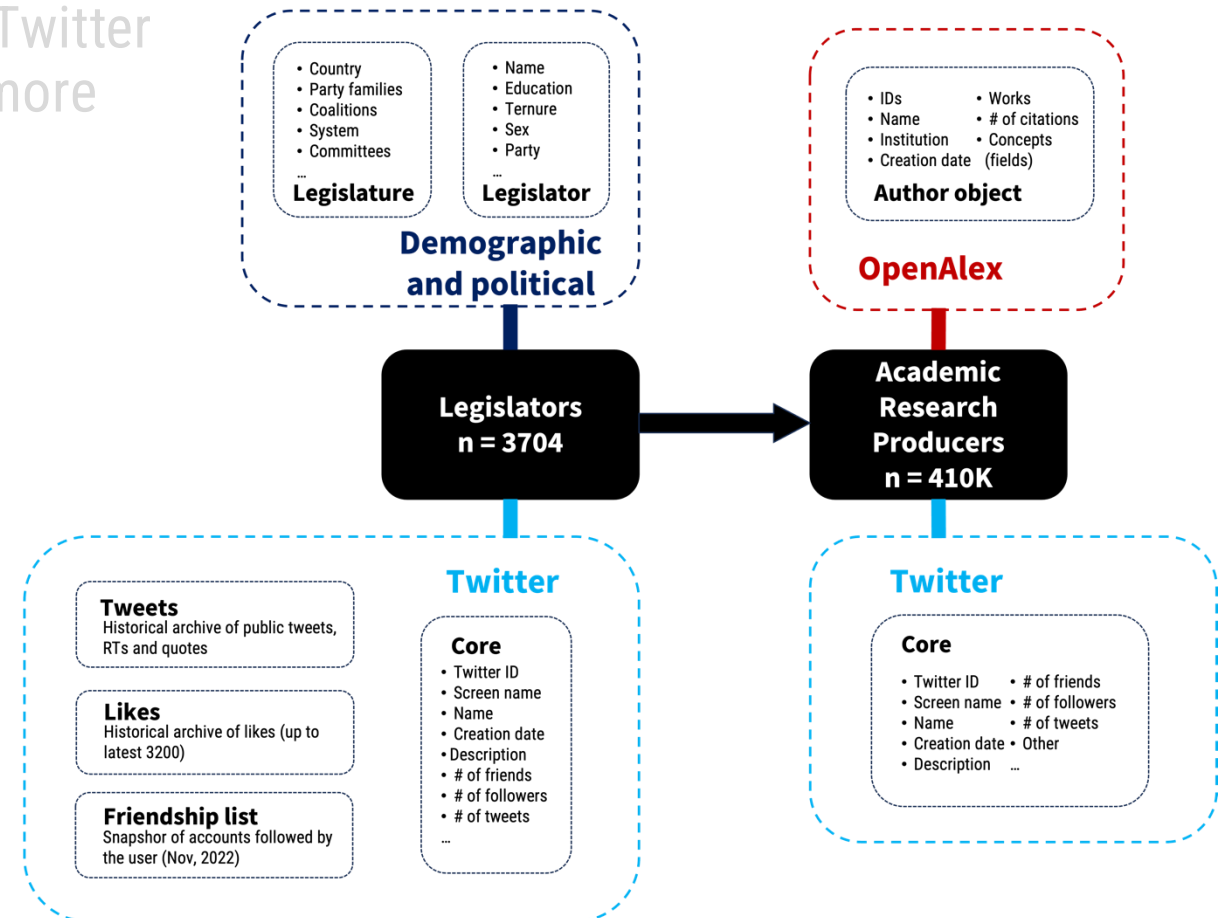


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3. Do legislators **adapt** their behaviors to **exogenous shocks** to the salience of expertise?

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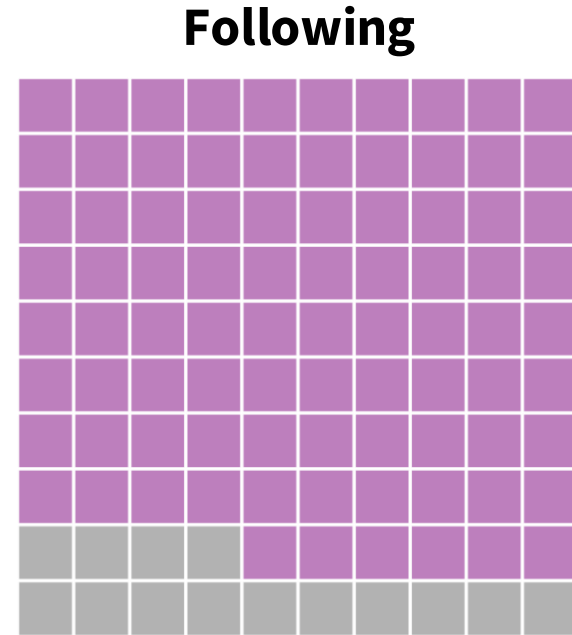


# Results

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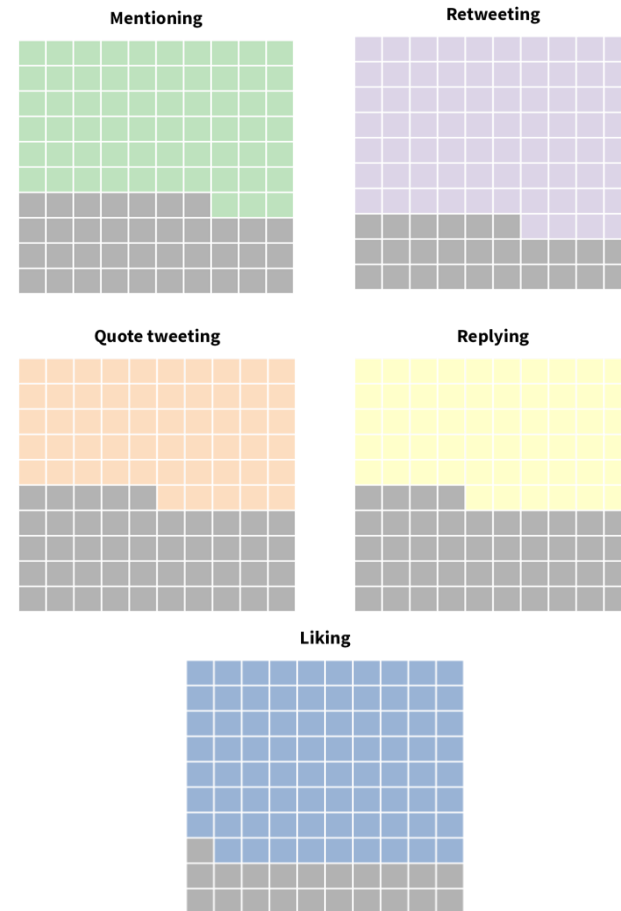
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86% of legislators follow at least one of researchers 'in the wild'

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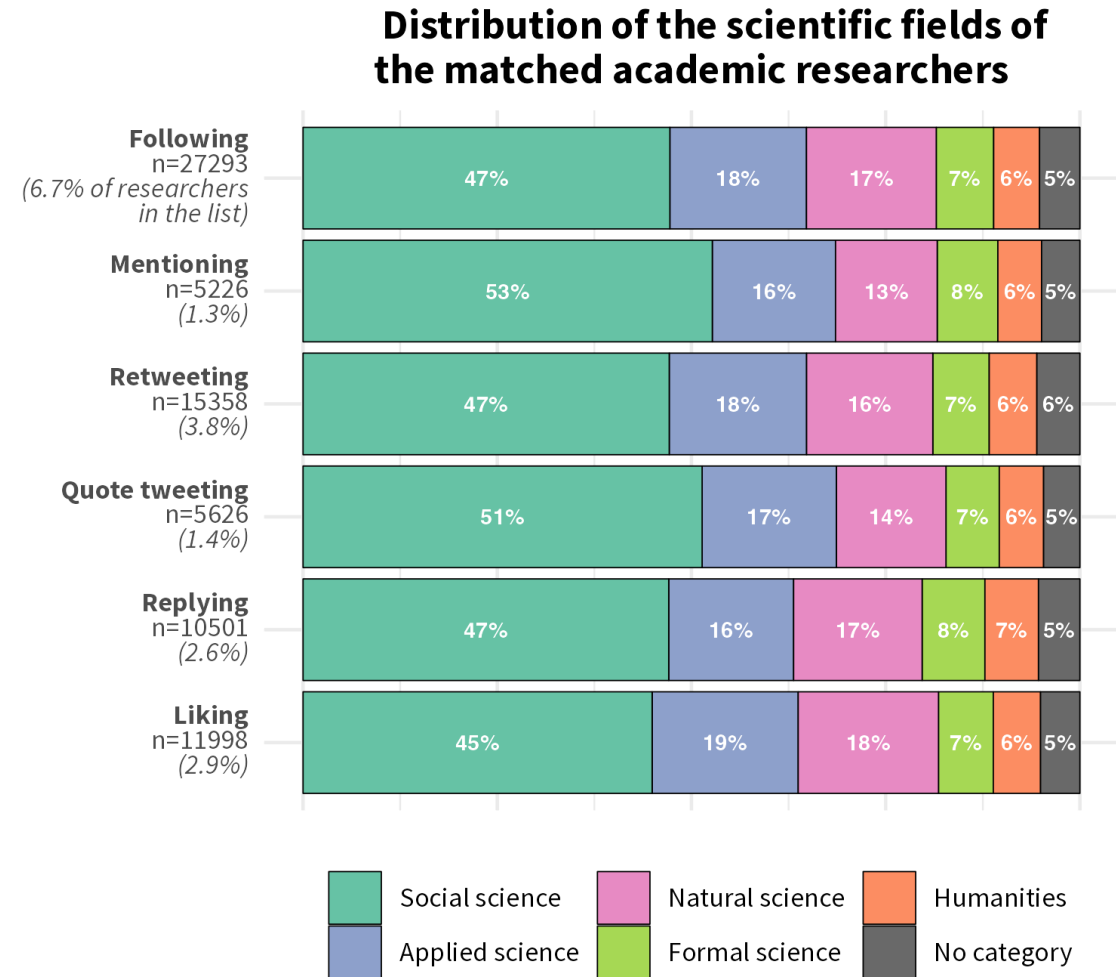
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The **majority** legislators also **engages** in more “expensive” behaviors

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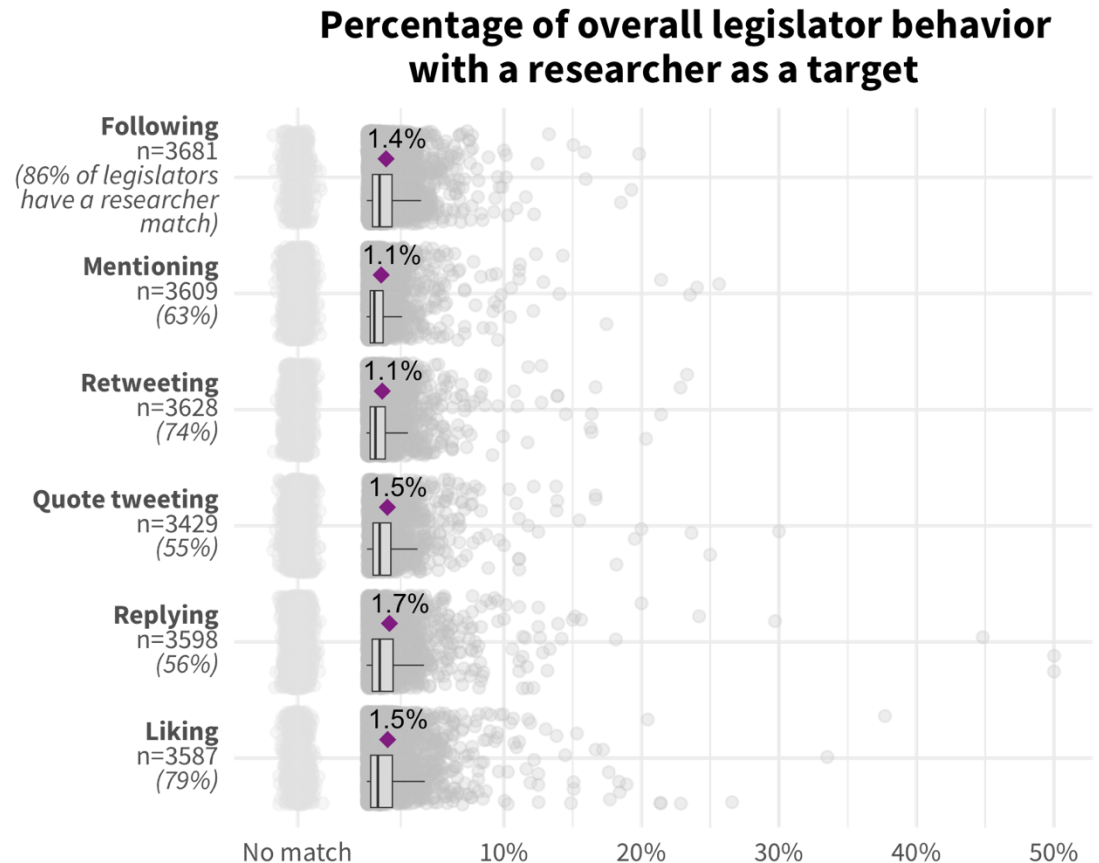
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**Most** of legislators' "attention" goes to **social scientists**

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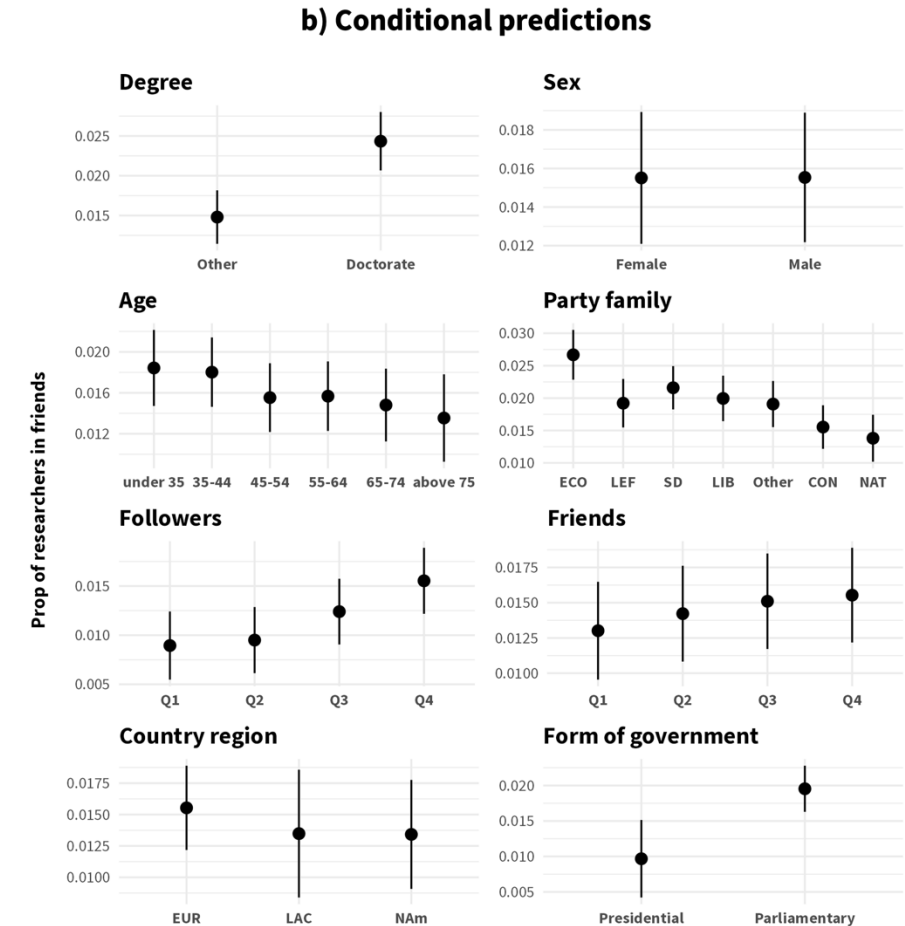
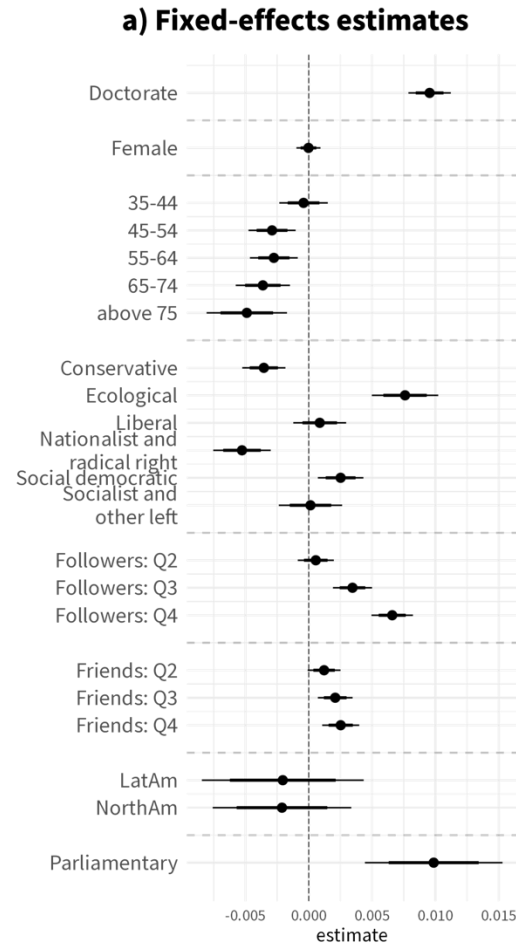
There are **some differences**, but for the most part these researchers represent a **small fraction** of whom lawmakers follow and engage with on social media

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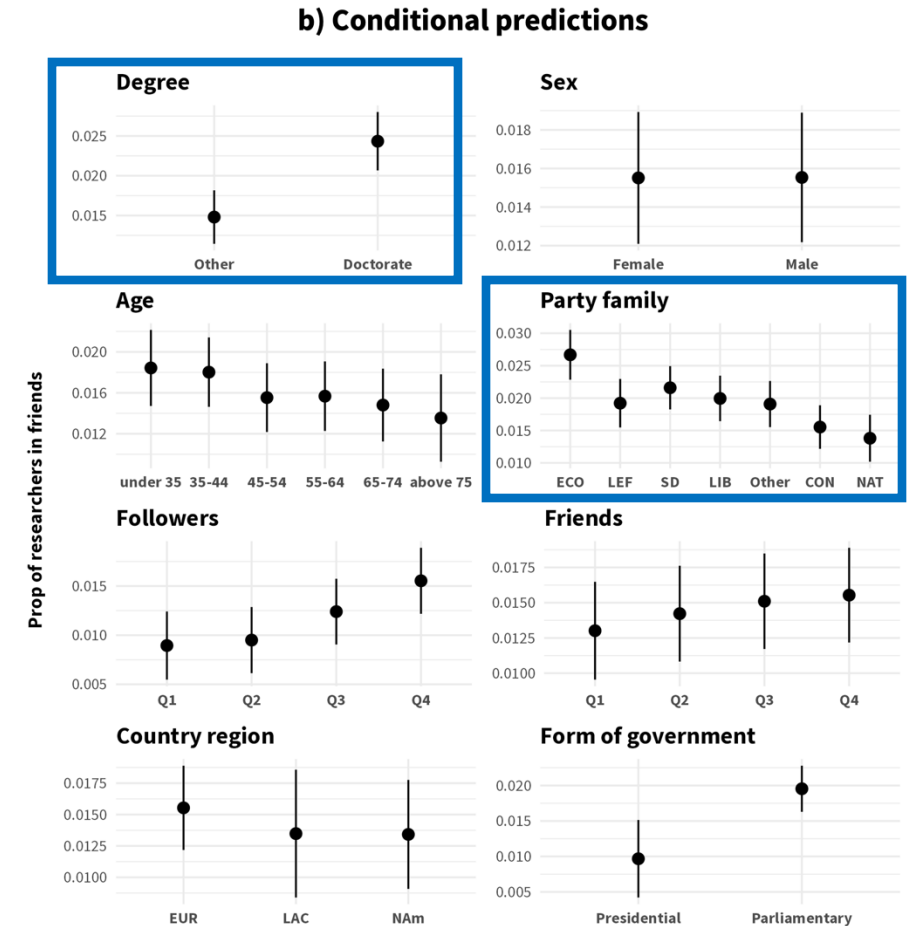
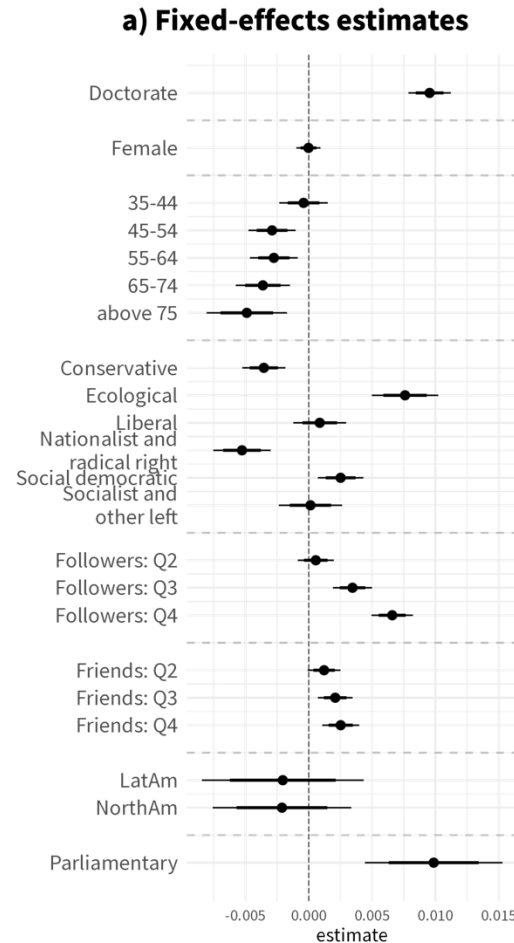


**Estimated effects of legislator and legislature characteristics on the proportion of researchers in their networks.** Estimated effects of legislator and legislature characteristics on the proportion of researchers in their networks. Results from a linear mixed-effects model with legislature random effects with age (under 35), party family (other), country region (Europe), system (presidential), and Q1 for followers and friends as references for categorical variables. Number of observations: 3,247. Panel a presents the coefficients with 80% and 95% confidence intervals. The conditional predictions are computed with numeric covariates are held at their means and the other covariates at their modes: no research degree, presidential, European, male, 45-54, Q1, and Conservative party..

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Legislators' **research background** and **political ideology** are predictors across behaviors



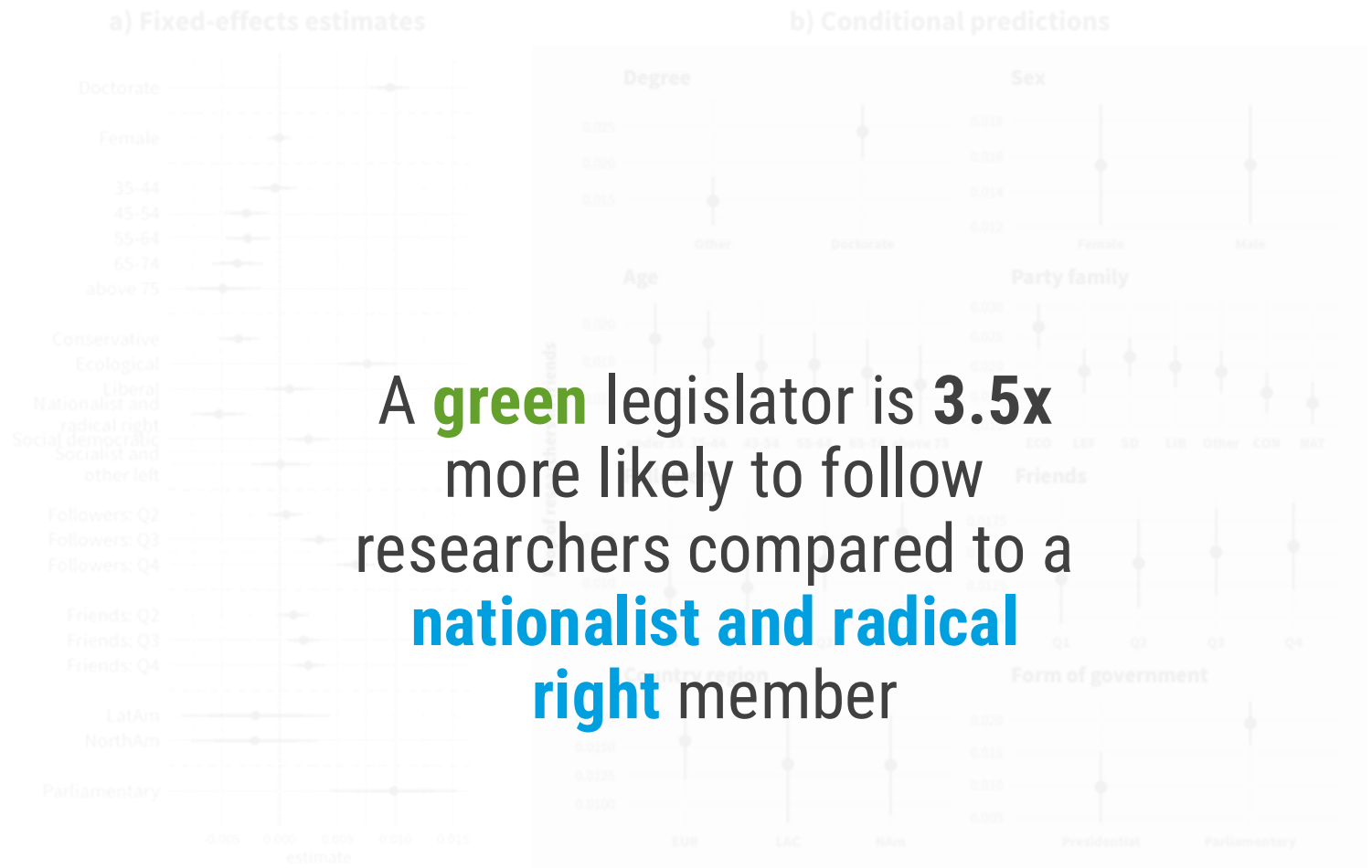
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A **green** legislator is **3.5x** more likely to follow researchers compared to a **nationalist and radical right** member

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The New York Times

Covid-19 > New Shots The New Variants Testing Mask Guidance Covid Fatigue Reinfections Paxlovid Rebounds

## W.H.O. Declares Global Emergency as Wuhan Coronavirus Spreads

The announcement came as nearly 10,000 cases have been reported worldwide.

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People outside the Beijing Railway Station on Thursday. The vast majority of coronavirus infections have occurred in China. Carlos Garcia Rawlins/Reuters

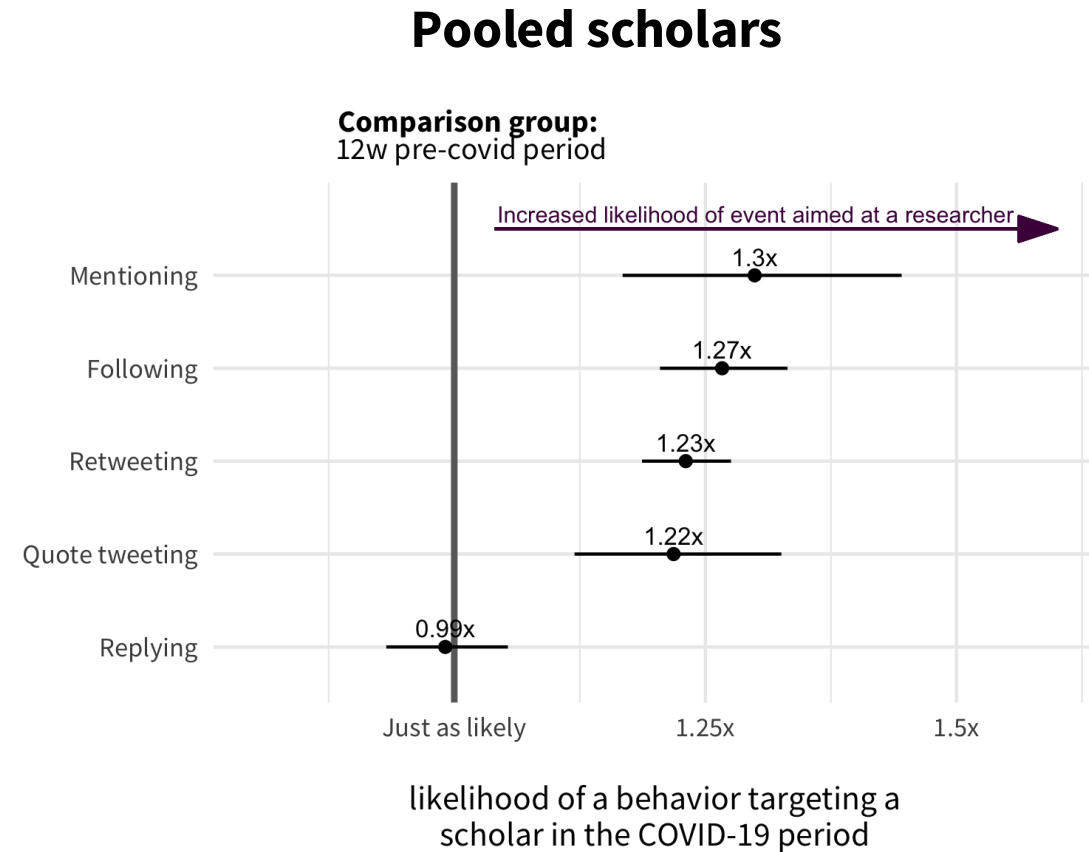
By Sui-Lee Wee, Donald G. McNeil Jr. and Javier C. Hernández

Published Jan. 30, 2020

The World Health Organization declared a global health emergency on Thursday as the [coronavirus](#) outbreak spread well

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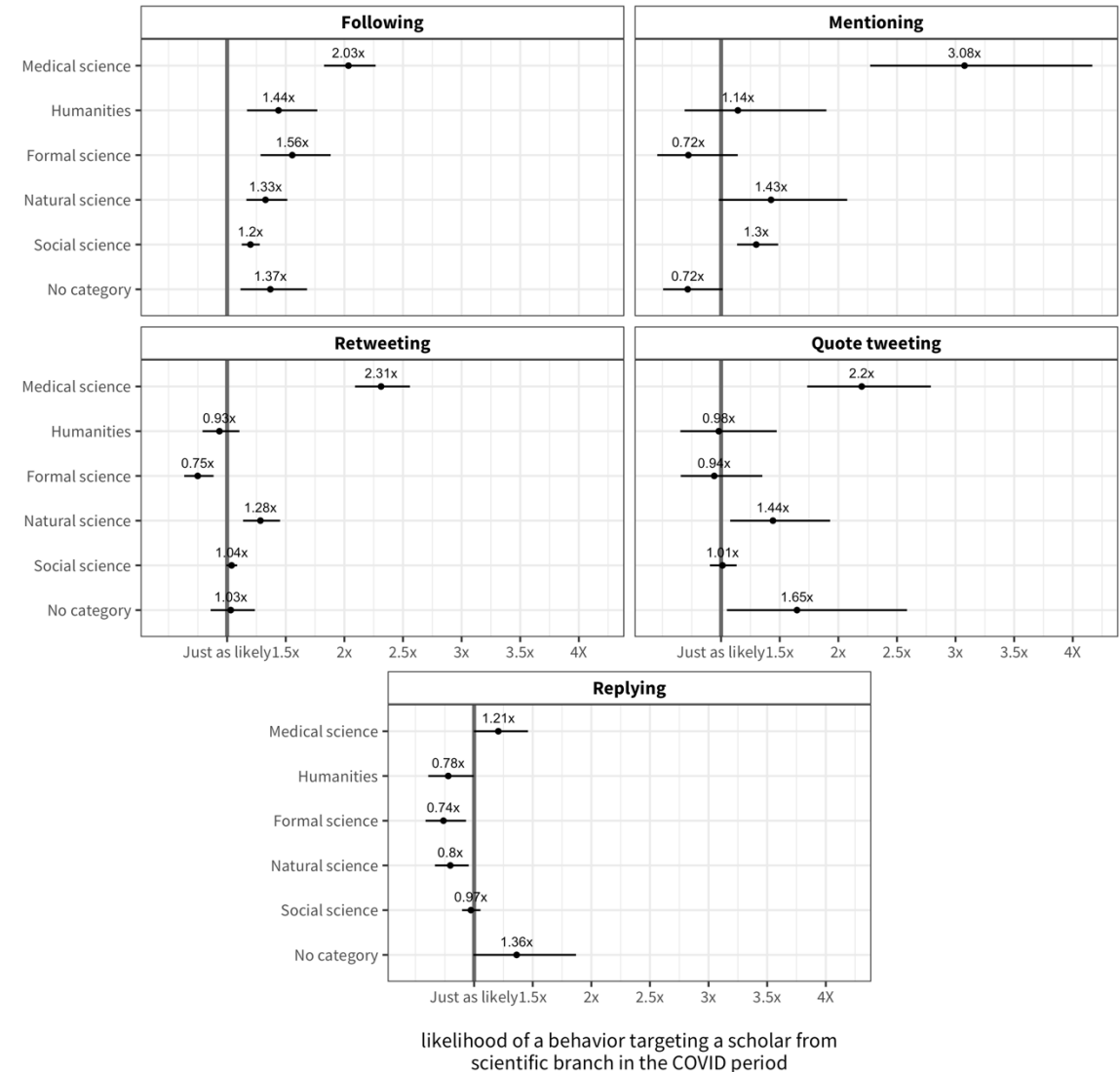


**Marginal effects of public health crisis on following and engagement with academic researchers during the COVID versus pre-COVID periods with a ±12 week bandwidth.** Results from a logistic mixed-effects models with legislature random effects. The estimates in the figure are relative risks representing the ratio of the probability of an event in the COVID period to the probability of an outcome in a pre-COVID period.

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## Scholars by branch



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3. I investigate **potential shifts in the digital engagement** behaviors of legislators with research producers in times when the demand for evidence should be pronounced

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2. Legislators' **research background** and **political ideology** are predictors across behaviors
3. Legislators' digital behaviors seem to be **responsive to exogenous shocks** to the **salience of expertise**

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# Thank you!



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