

# HASHTAG BOYCOTT ON TWITTER IN 2020 AND 2021



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# Methodology

The data were gathered using the Twitter application programming interface (API). We searched for #boycott. We gathered 173,129 tweets from January 1, 2020 to December 29, 2020. We also gathered 150,272 tweets from January 1, 2021 to December 30, 2021.

To complete coding of content, we removed duplicates, then selected tweets that received 20 or more likes. In 2020, the selection process resulted in the coding of 1,295 posts (from 173,129) and in 2021, 1,167 posts (from 150,272). For the 2020 data, the second and fourth authors of this report coded the posts. For the 2021 data, the second and third authors of this report coded the posts. In terms of intercoder reliability, please contact the first author.

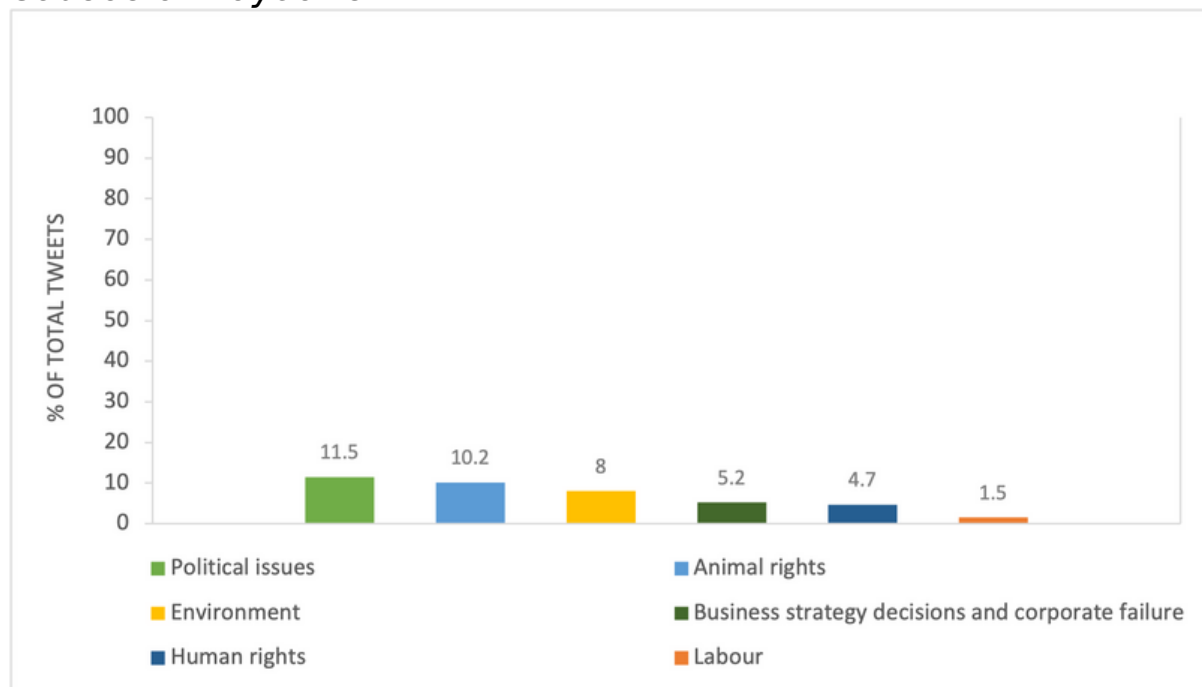
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# Causes of Boycotts

We began by coding the cause for the call to boycott. The causes for the boycott were not mutually exclusive, as a single tweet could mention more than one cause for the boycott. Overall, political issues were mentioned the most frequently as a cause for the boycott, and labour issues were rarely mentioned as a cause. Figure 1 documents the most popular reasons for the boycotts in the pooled results (combining 2020 and 2021 tweets). In Figures 2 to 7, we compare the reasons across the two years of data collection.

## Figure 1.

### *Causes of Boycotts*

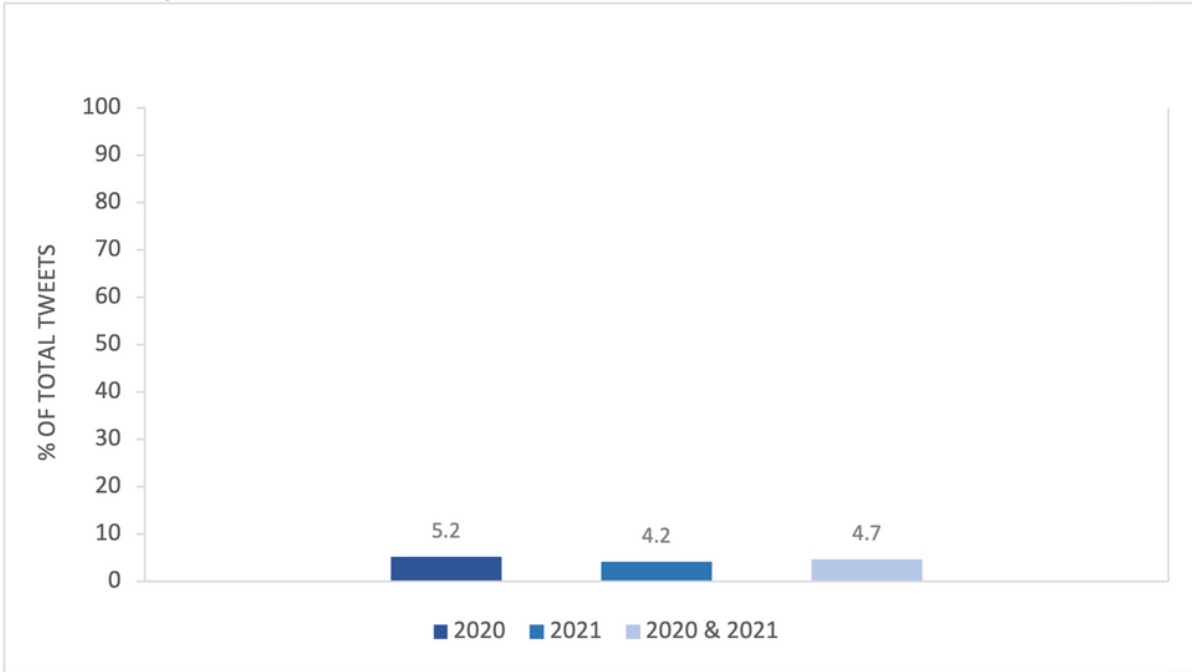


**Note:** a single tweet could reference multiple causes for the call to boycott



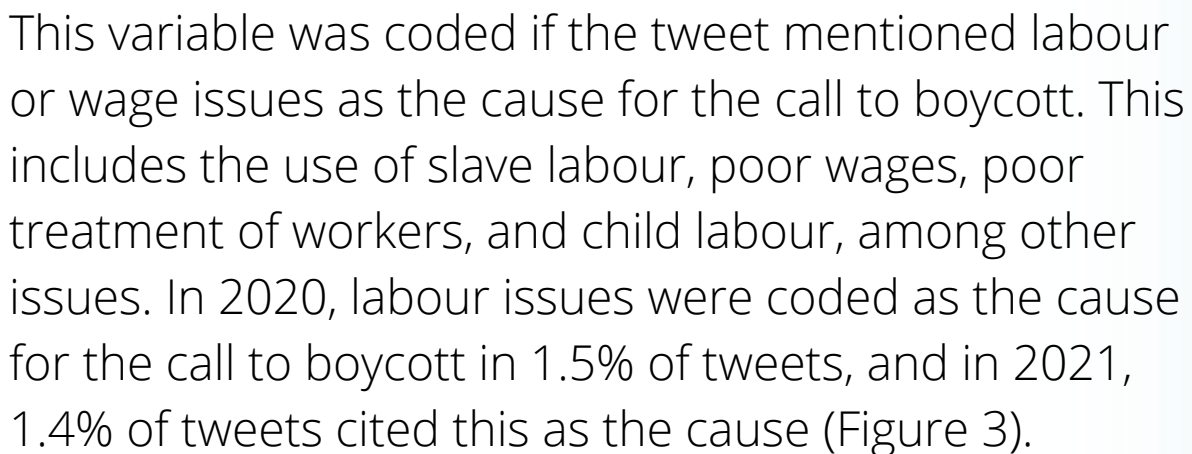
## Figure 2.

## Human rights

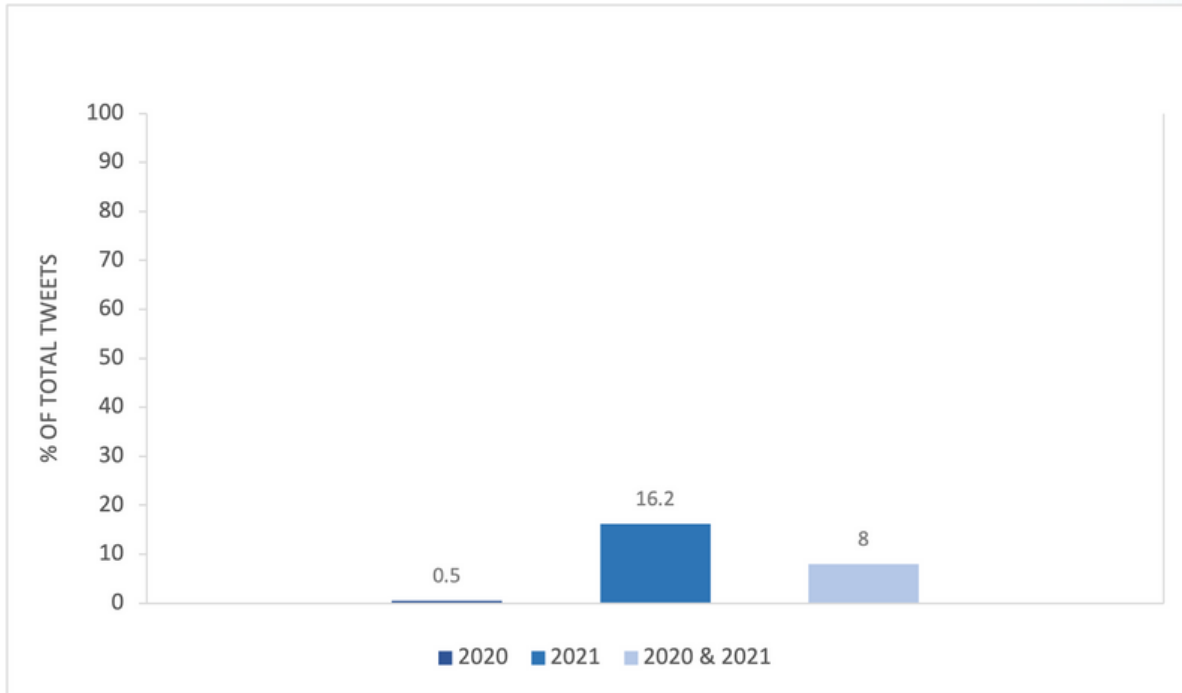


This variable was coded if the cause for the boycott could be linked to the idea that people's rights to life or free speech are violated. These types of tweets would usually mention a group that is being treated unfairly or experiencing discrimination. For example, this cause would include issues such as the Uyghur genocide or the refusal of service to a target group, to name a few. In 2020, approximately 5% of tweets cited human rights issues as a cause for the call to boycott, and in 2021, this number was slightly less with only about 4% of tweets citing this as the cause (Figure 2).

*Labour*



## Environment

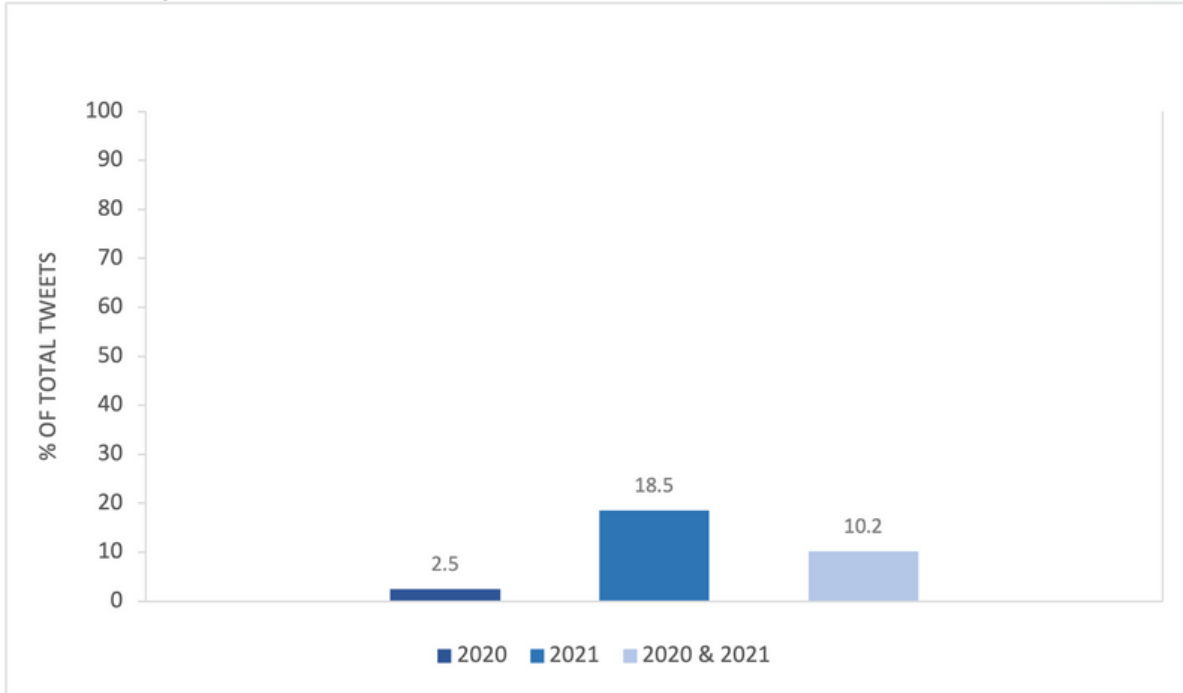


This variable was coded if the tweet mentioned environmental protection issues as the reason for the call to boycott. This would include the destruction of rainforests, deforestation, and anything related to the pollution of water, air, ground, etc. In 2020, less than 1% of tweets referenced environmental protection issues as the cause for the call to boycott. In 2021, this number increased substantially making up about 16% of tweets (Figure 4).



## Figure 5.

*Animal rights*

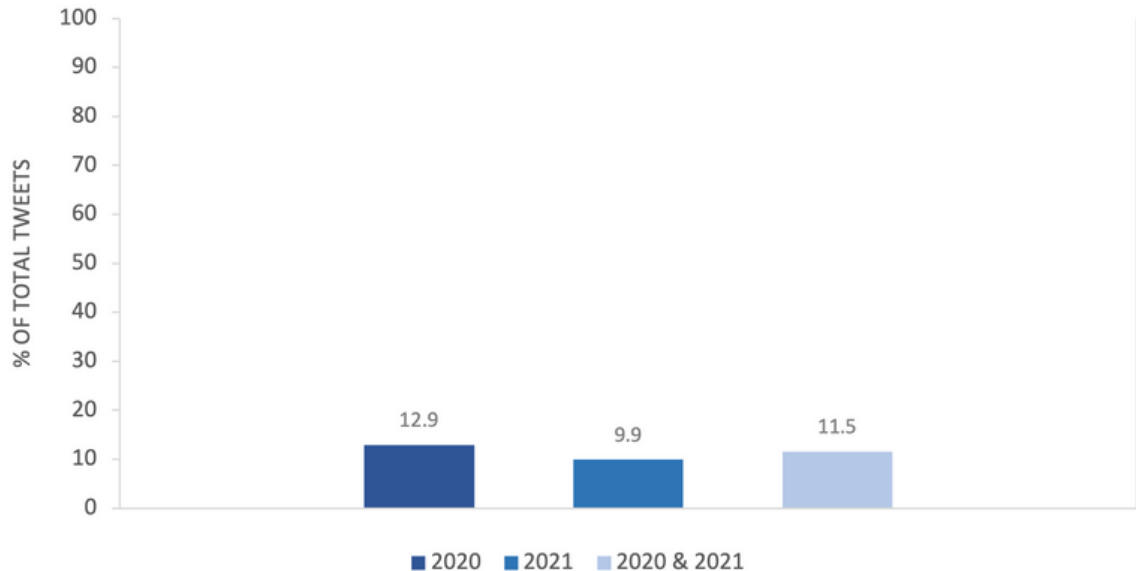


If the cause for the call to boycott included discussions surrounding the safety, well-being, or survival of animals, this variable would be coded. Animal rights would include issues such as animal poaching, captivity, the destruction of animal habitats, and other topics surrounding animal welfare and abuse. In 2020, only about 2.5% of tweets cited animal rights as the reason for the call to boycott. In 2021, this number jumped to 18.5% (Figure 5).

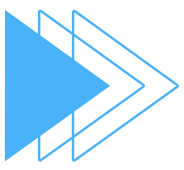




## Political issues



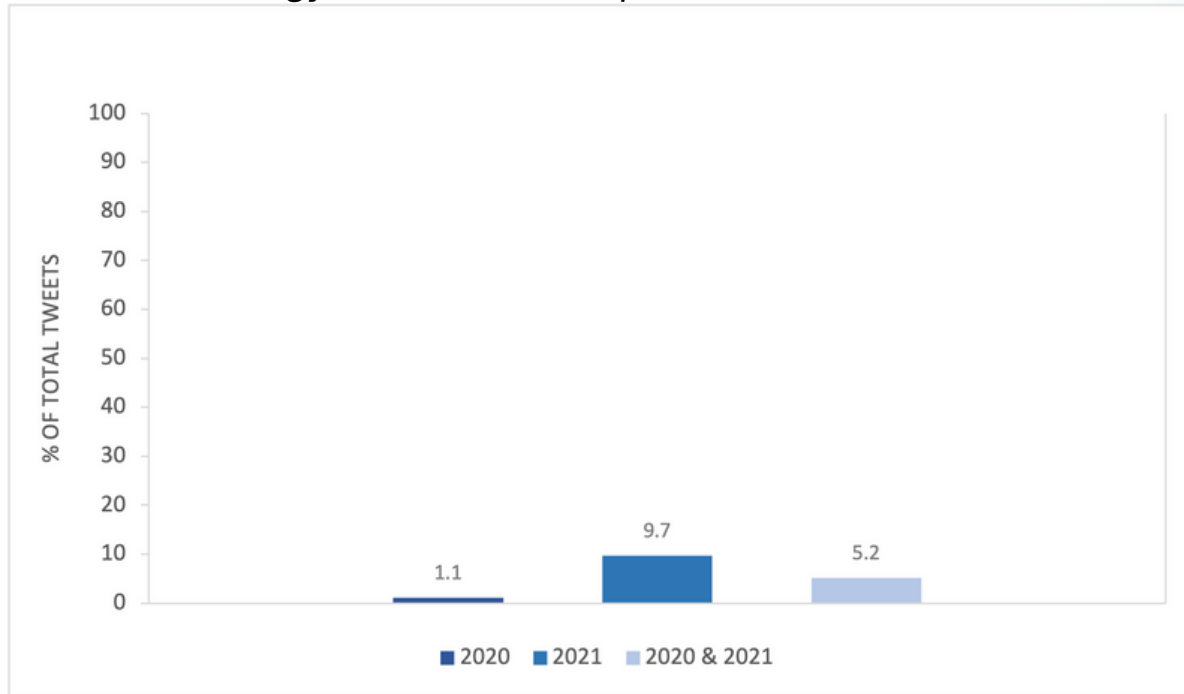
This variable was coded if the tweet mentioned political issues as the cause for the call to boycott. This would include boycotts related to political donations by corporations, or boycotts for providing support to, or refusing to support, government rules, policy, or directions. In 2020, about 13% of tweets referenced political issues as the cause for the call to boycott, and in 2021, this number decreased slightly to around 10% (Figure 6).



# Business Strategy Decisions & Corporate Failure

**Figure 7.**

*Business strategy decisions & corporate failure*



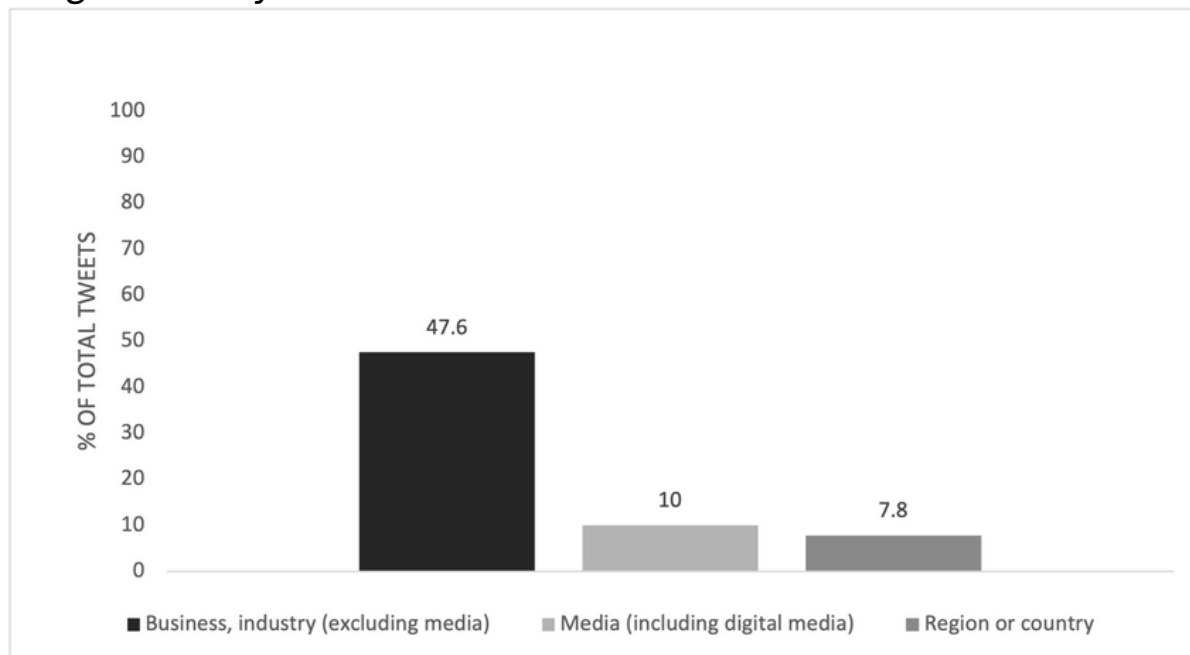
This variable was coded if the tweet mentioned business strategy decisions or corporate failure as the cause for the call to boycott. These tweets would typically criticize businesses for failing to pay their taxes to the government, providing bad customer service, unfair pricing, or data breaches, to name a few examples. In 2020, about 1% of tweets called for a boycott because of business strategy decisions or corporate failure. This number increased in 2021, with almost 10% of tweets citing this cause (Figure 7).



# Targets of Boycotts

In this portion of the coding, we determined the target for the call to boycott. A single post could mention more than one target for the boycott. Overall, businesses, industries, or for-profit entities providing goods and services were mentioned most often as a target for the boycott. Figure 8 documents the most popular targets for the boycotts in the pooled results (combining 2020 and 2021 posts). In Figures 9 to 11, we compare the reasons across the two years of data collection.

**Figure 8.**  
*Targets of Boycotts*



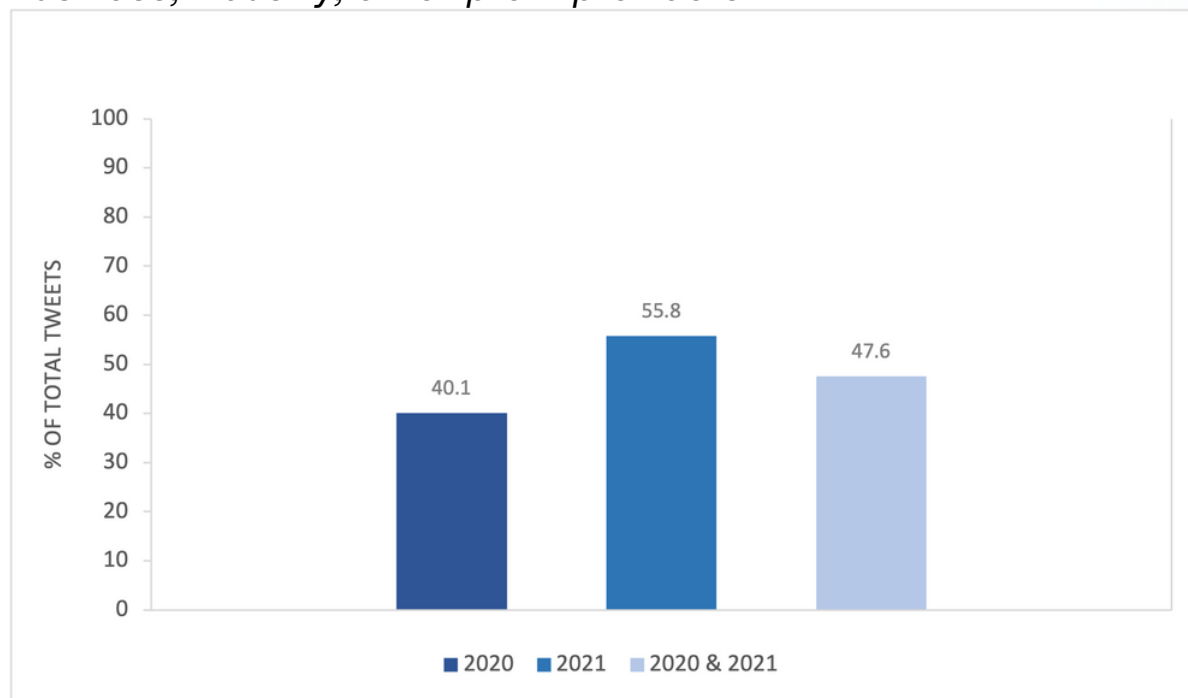
**Note:** a single tweet could reference multiple targets to boycott



# Business, Industry, or For-Profit Providers

**Figure 9.**

*Business, industry, or for-profit providers*



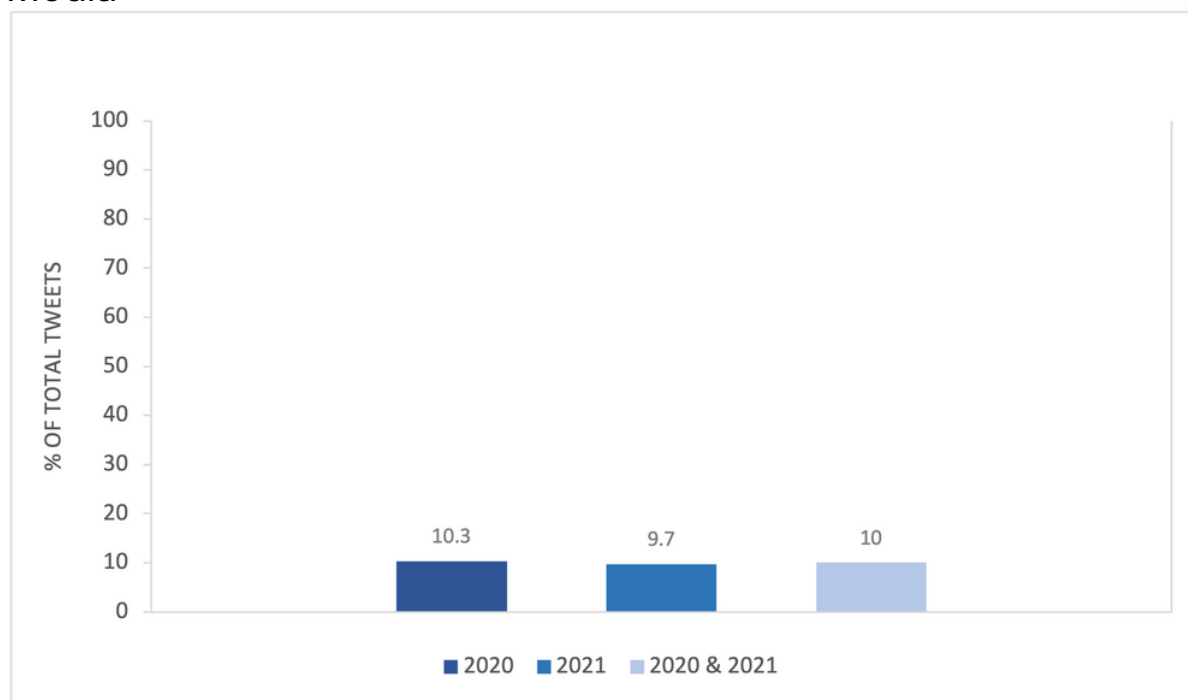
This variable was coded if the tweet targeted a business, industry, or for-profit provider of goods and services. This would include the boycotting of a business, a type of product, or an industry. This would include manufacturers, retail or wholesale, airlines, restaurants, amusement, recreation, Bollywood, finance, insurance, real estate, etc. In 2020 and 2021, approximately 40% and 56% of boycott tweets, respectively, were targeted towards a business, industry, or for-profit provider of goods and services (Figure 9).





**Figure 10.**

*Media*

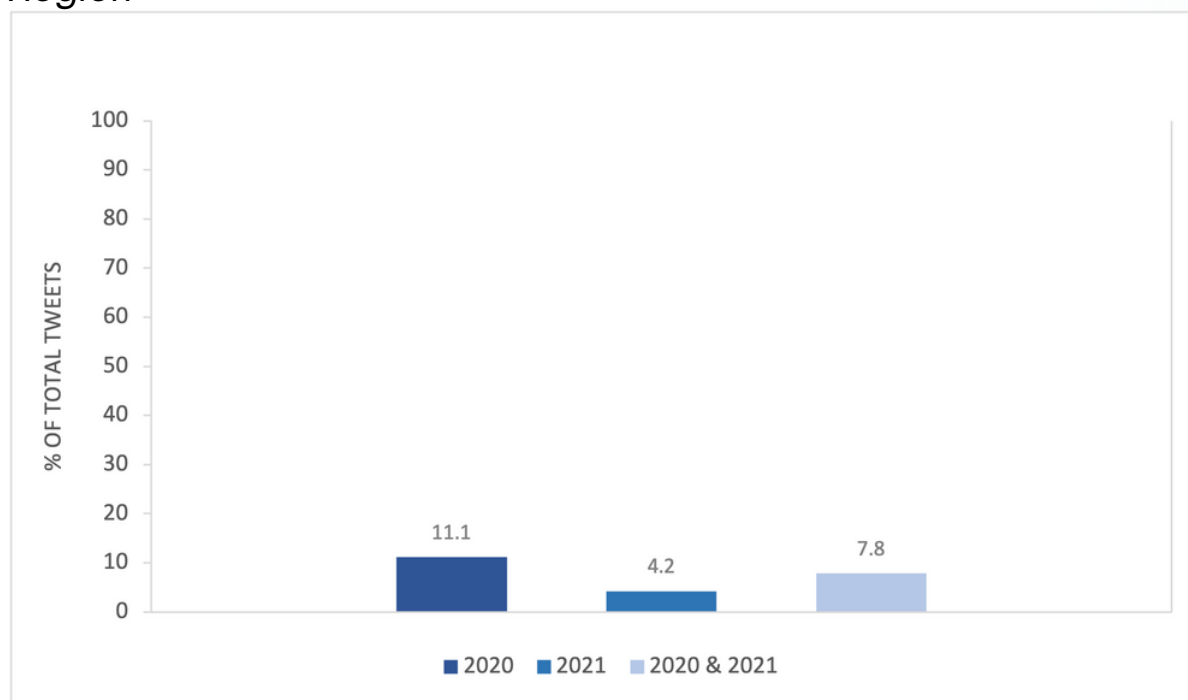


This variable was coded if the tweet targeted media and/or media companies. This would include for-profit, non-profit, or government funded media, as well as digital media. This variable would be coded if the tweet targeted radio or television broadcasters, magazines, newspapers, social media, or search engines, to name a few examples. In 2020, media was a target of a boycott in 10.3% of tweets, and in 2021, media was targeted 9.7% of the time (Figure 10).



**Figure 11.**

*Region*



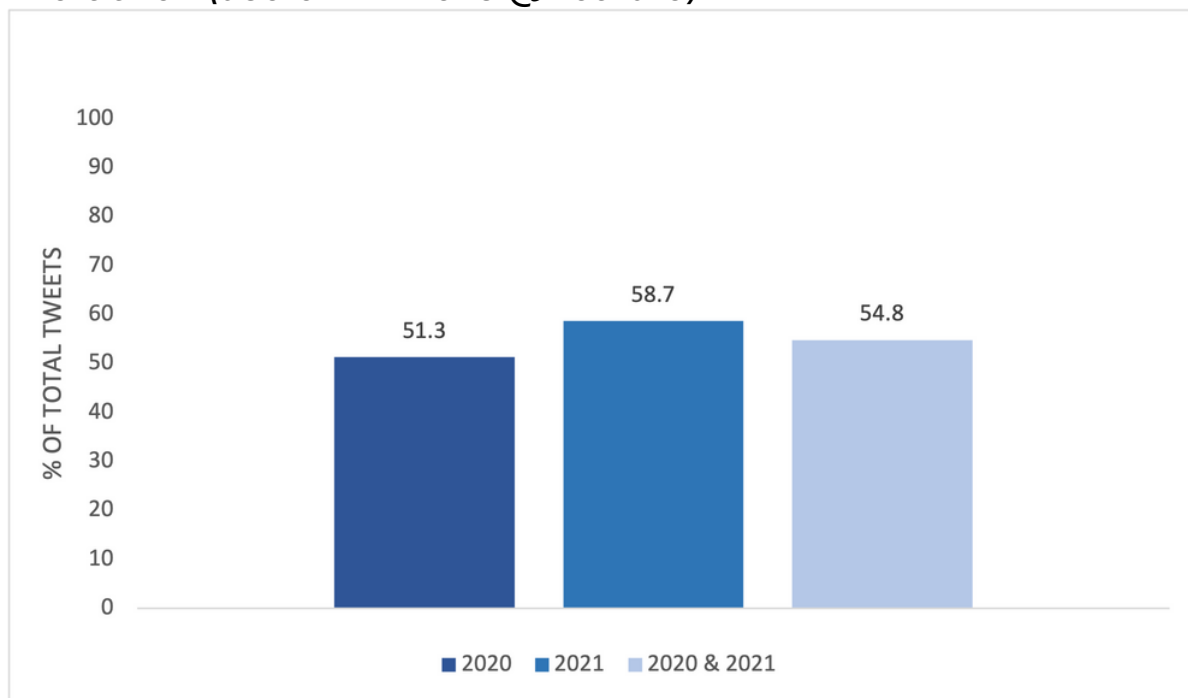
This variable was coded if the target of a boycott was a geographic region. This would include the targeting of a country, state, or city. In 2020, about 11% of boycott tweets targeted a geographic region, and this number dropped to around 4% in 2021 (Figure 11).

# Other Characteristics of the Boycott Tweets

In this section, we coded characteristics of the tweet that signify interaction or the expression of emotion. This included coding for the presence of a tag in the tweet, the use of expressive punctuation, and the use of capitalized words. Whether the tweet tagged another account was determined by the use of the @ feature, which could be used to measure social interaction on Twitter. More than half of the tweets included a tagged account (Figure 12). We also coded whether or not the tweet contained words in all capital letters, which could be used to signify anger, emotion, or urgency. Approximately 20% of the tweets included words in all capital letters (Figure 13). Additionally, we coded for the presence of expressive punctuation, including question marks (?) and exclamation marks (!). The use of expressive punctuation could also be a measure of or a request for social interaction. Approximately one quarter of the tweets included expressive punctuation (Figure 14).

**Figure 12.**

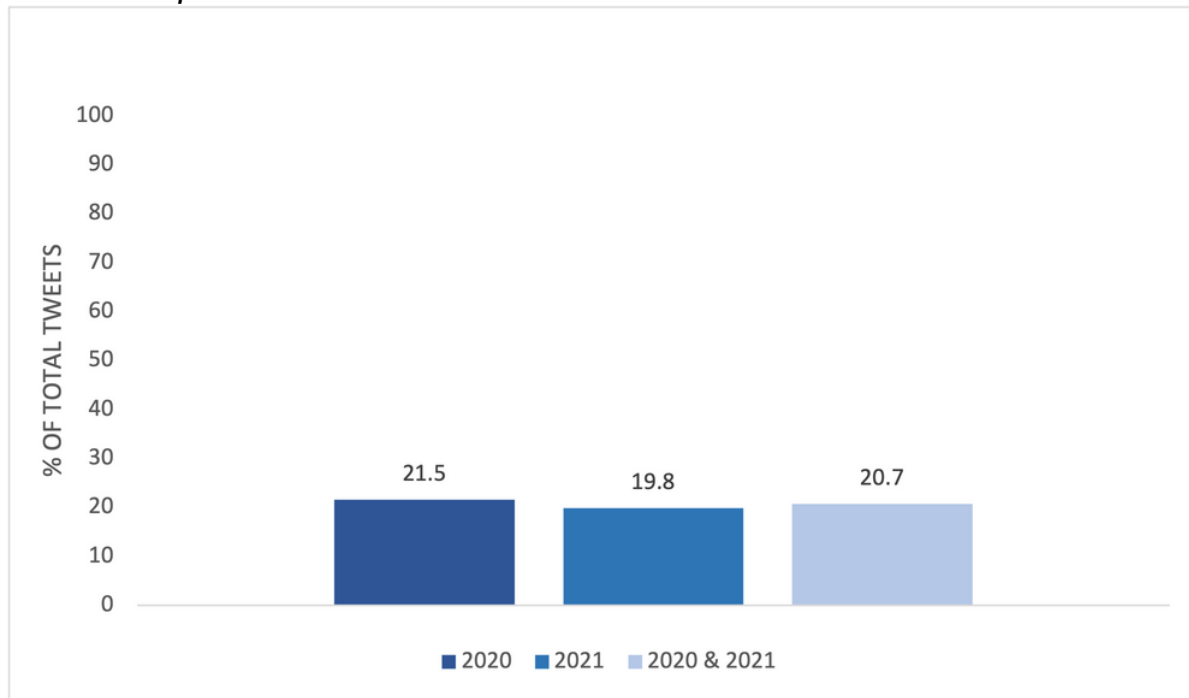
*Interaction (use of Twitter's @ feature)*



# Other Characteristics of the Boycott Tweets

**Figure 13.**

*Use of capitals*



**Figure 14.**

*Use of expressive punctuation*

