Twitter Transparency Report

Report 18 (Jul - Dec 2020)

Published on January 14, 2021

Information Requests

About this report

Insights into legal demands to produce account information from governments, law enforcement, and third parties around the world.

Government

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02. Overview
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04. Preservation Requests

01. Latest Data: Government

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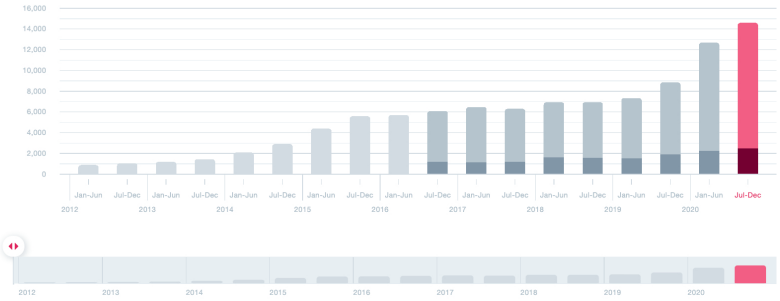


Information requests - July - December 2020

Information requests	Compliance rate	Accounts specified
14.6K	30%	51.6K

02. Overview

This section covers the latest data about government information requests for Twitter and Periscope account information from around the world. These requests include a combination of routine requests and emergency requests. There are also trends and details about the global volume of requests, accounts specified, and the corresponding compliance rates, as well as insights into our related policies and global preservation requests.

Twitter's operations were affected due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and a security incident in July 2020.

Some notable changes since the last report[1]:

Information requests

+15%

Increase in **global information requests** compared to the last reporting period.

Compliance rate

-18%

Decrease in **global compliance rate** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts specified

+102%

Increase in **global accounts specified** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Big picture

Global governments and law enforcement agencies submitted approximately 15% more information requests (combined emergency and routine requests) compared to the previous reporting period. Notably, the aggregate number of accounts specified in these requests increased by nearly 102%. The total volume of requests and specified accounts are respectively the largest we've seen to date. Twitter produced some or all of the requested information in response to 30% of these information requests.

Further analysis into these areas follow below. Additional information is available in Twitter's legal request FAQs.

Country insights

Twitter has now received government information requests from 96 different countries since 2012, including Democratic Republic of the Congo, Latvia, and Morocco, which appeared in this report for the first time.

Top requesters

India submitted the most government information requests during this reporting period, accounting for 25% of the global volume, and 15% of the global accounts specified. The second highest volume of requests originated from the United States, comprising 22% of global information requests and 60% of the global accounts specified. Notably, this is the first time since we started publishing our transparency report in 2012 where the United States is not the top global requester.

Japan (17%) and France (14%) round out the top four countries by volume. Combined, these four countries accounted for 78% of all global information requests during this reporting period. This is the third report in a row in which these countries represent the top four global requesters (in varying order).

Worldwide

Top requesting countries (routine requests)

1. **India**
2. **United States**
3. **Japan**
4. **France**

India

Twitter received **1,096 (+46%) more requests** from India, while the number of accounts specified **increased by 1,602 (+27%)** during this reporting period.

United States

Twitter received **136 (-5%) less requests** from the United States, while the number of accounts specified **increased by 21,115 (+212%)** during this reporting period.

Japan

Twitter received **711 (+55%) more requests** from Japan, while the number of accounts specified **increased by 654 (+38%)** during this reporting period.

France

Twitter received **170 (-8%) less requests** from France, while the number of accounts specified **increased by 143 (+7%)** during this reporting period.

Emergency requests

Twitter may disclose account information to law enforcement officials in response to a valid emergency request as described in our Guidelines for Law Enforcement.[a]

EDRs accounted for roughly one out of every five global information requests submitted to Twitter. Emergency requests increased by 10% during this reporting period, while the aggregate number of accounts specified in these requests increased by 9%.

The United States submitted the highest volume of global emergency requests (34%), followed by Japan (17%), and South Korea (16%).

International cooperation

The CLOUD Act

As previously noted, the Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act ("CLOUD Act"; enacted in March 2018) established a framework for the U.S. Government to enter into bilateral agreements with certain qualifying foreign governments. Once such a bilateral agreement goes into effect, U.S. providers, such as Twitter, may receive compulsory legal demands directly from foreign government entities to disclose account information and content of communications, as well as real-time surveillance orders for account information, which are akin to pen register/trap and trace and wiretap orders as described in our U.S. report.

Twitter continues to closely monitor developments related to cross-border legal requests for user data. We will update our policies as necessitated by changes in the legal landscape, in keeping with our commitment to defending and respecting the user's voice and transparency.

Periscope

The majority of government requests seek Twitter account information, but we occasionally receive requests for information about accounts on Twitter's Periscope live streaming service.

We received 19 information requests that specified 26 Periscope accounts during this reporting period. Of these information requests, five were Periscope-only requests specifying eight accounts. Twitter disclosed some information in response to 37% of these Periscope-related information requests.[a]

Request considerations

Narrowing requests

Where appropriate, Twitter will push back on requests for account information which are incomplete or improper, such as requests that are facially invalid or overbroad in scope. Depending on the circumstances, we may produce some data after working to narrow a request, or we may not disclose any data. We also may not have any responsive records to produce.

Twitter narrowed or did not disclose information in response to 70% of global government information requests, an increase of 7% during this reporting period.

User notice

We notify specified account holders of requests for their account information unless we are prohibited or the request falls into one of the exceptions to our user notice policy.

We were able to notify account holders in response to 203 global information requests during this reporting period.

04. Preservation Requests

Twitter accepts government requests to preserve account information as outlined in our Guidelines for Law Enforcement.

Government entities issue preservation requests that direct service providers like Twitter to temporarily save information pertaining to an investigation. These requests give law enforcement, prosecutors, etc. the time needed to get the valid legal process, such as a search warrant, required to lawfully obtain that saved information. Upon receipt of a valid preservation request, we will temporarily preserve, but not disclose, a snapshot of the relevant account information for 90 days pending issuance and service of valid legal process.

Global government preservation requests increased by 37%, while accounts specified decreased by 14% during this reporting period. The United States (45%) and India (40%) together accounted for 85% of all global preservation requests.

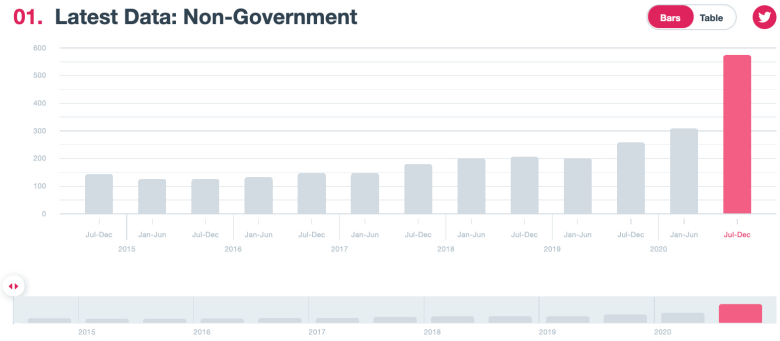
Non-Government

01. Latest Data

02. Overview

03. Analysis

01. Latest Data: Non-Government



Information requests - July - December 2020

Information requests	Compliance rate	Accounts specified	User notice
573	47.8%	1.8K	52.4%

02. Overview

Twitter receives requests for account information from non-governmental parties around the world. These typically include civil actions, such as a divorce proceeding, as well as requests made by criminal defendants, where they are typically seeking account information in support of their legal defense.

More information about non-government information requests can be found in our Help Center pages, including Accessing Your Twitter Data and Legal Request FAQ.

Information requests

+86%

Increase in **global information requests** compared to the last reporting period.

Compliance rate

+25%

Increase in **global compliance rate** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts specified

+127%

Increase in **global accounts specified** compared to the last reporting period.

User notice

+10%

Increase in **global user notice** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Twitter has now received non-government information requests from 32 different countries since 2014, including Luxembourg and Russia, which appeared in this report for the first time.

Twitter received 86% more non-government information requests during this reporting period. Notably, the number of accounts specified in these requests increased by 127%, while the compliance rate increased to 48%.[iii]

Defending free expression

Anonymous and pseudonymous speech is important to Twitter and is central to our commitment to defend and protect the voices of our users. Twitter often receives non-government information requests to disclose account information of anonymous or pseudonymous Twitter users (i.e., requests to "unmask" the identity of the user). Twitter frequently objects to such requests, particularly in the U.S.

Twitter objected to 35 U.S. civil requests for account information that sought to unmask the identities of anonymous speakers on first amendment grounds during this reporting period. We litigated eight of those requests. Twitter succeeded in convincing courts to apply the applicable First Amendment protections in five cases, and one remains pending. No information was produced on 74% of all unmasking requests.

Footnotes

Some cases received during this reporting period may be in progress and may not be closed at the time of reporting.

Government

1. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

2. U.S. numbers in the table above include requests received from U.S. Legal Attachés stationed in various international locations, who may have submitted requests under U.S. law in part to assist their local counterparts. This type of cross-border cooperation is most likely to happen in emergency circumstances (such as those following terror attacks).

3. We evaluate such requests on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is information to support a good faith belief that there is an imminent threat involving danger of death or serious physical injury to a person. In these situations, if we have information relevant to averting or mitigating the threat, we may disclose that information to law enforcement.
However, we may not disclose data in response to emergency disclosure requests for a variety of reasons. For example:

- We may not disclose data if the request fails to identify a valid Twitter and/or Periscope account, or content on those platforms.
- We may push back to narrow requests that are overbroad, and only disclose the information relevant to averting or mitigating the specified threat.

4. Requests for Periscope account information are also reflected in the figures regarding aggregate requests.

5. We may not comply with requests for a variety of reasons. For example:

- We may not comply with requests that fail to identify a Twitter and/or Periscope account or other content on those platforms.
- We may seek to narrow requests that are overly broad.
- Account holders may have challenged the requests after we've notified them.
- We may have sought additional context from the requester and did not receive a response.
- In some cases, Twitter may challenge the request formally through litigation or informally through discussion directly with government entities.

6. Details about Twitter's user notice policy are available in our Guidelines for Law Enforcement and our Legal Request FAQ, which provides account holders with more information about what happens when we receive a request for their account information or removal of their content.
Exceptions to user notice may include exigent or counterproductive circumstances, such as emergencies regarding imminent threat to life, child sexual exploitation, or terrorism.

7. We also regularly receive preservation extension requests (not reflected in the data above) from law enforcement or government requesters. If the requester submits a lawful and timely extension request, we will make reasonable attempts to continue to preserve the same snapshot of account information for an additional 90 days pending issuance and service of valid legal process.
We may process multiple extension requests if requesters represent that they are engaged in a process for international cooperation (i.e. MLAT or letters rogatory), given these processes can take several months.

Non-Government

8. This data does not include an account holder's request for their own account information.

9. We may not comply with non-government requests for a variety of reasons. For example:

- We may not comply with requests that fail to identify a Twitter and/or Periscope account or other content on those platforms.
- We may reject requests that are directed to incorrect corporate entities.
- We may seek to narrow requests that are overly broad.
- Users may have challenged the requests after we've notified them.
- In other cases, Twitter may challenge the request formally through litigation or informally through discussion directly with non-government parties (e.g., directing non-government parties to get the information they seek directly from the other parties through discovery).

Transparency

Removal Requests

About this report

Insights into legal demands to remove content from Twitter and Periscope, and other requests to remove content based on local law(s) from around the world.

Legal Demands

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04. Withheld Content
05. Un-withheld Content
06. TOS Violations
07. No Action

01. Latest Data: Legal Demands

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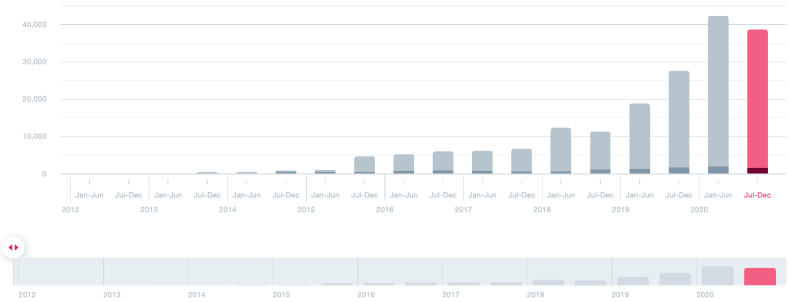

Legal demands - July - December 2020

Legal demands	Compliance rate	Accounts specified	Accounts withheld	Tweets withheld	Accounts TOS
38.5K	28.7%	131.9K	123	2.6K	26.5K

02. Overview

This section covers the latest data about third-party legal demands that compel Twitter to remove content under our Country Withheld Content ("CWC") policy.[1]

There are also details about the latest trends in global volumes of requests, accounts specified, and the total compliance rate. The total compliance rate is a simplified metric that combines all of Twitter's removal actions—accounts withheld, Tweets withheld, and accounts TOS.

Twitter's operations were affected due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and a security incident in July 2020.

Some notable changes since the last report:

Legal demands

-9%

Decrease in **global legal demands** compared to the last reporting period.

Compliance rate

-8%

Decrease in global compliance rate compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts specified

+55%

Increase in **global accounts specified** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts withheld

+50%

Increase in **global accounts withheld** compared to the last reporting period.

Tweets withheld

-16%

Decrease in **global Tweets withheld** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts TOS

+4%

Increase in **global accounts TOS** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Big picture

Twitter received 38,524 legal demands to remove content specifying 131,933 accounts. Although there was a 9% decrease in the number of legal demands received, these requests sought removal of the largest number of accounts ever in a reporting period since releasing our first transparency report in 2012. We withheld or otherwise removed some or all of the reported content in response to 29% of these global legal demands.

Country insights

This record number of legal demands originated from 53 different countries during this reporting period, including Rwanda and Uganda for the first time. Twitter has now received legal demands from 92 different countries since 2012.

Top requesters

94% of the total global volume of legal demands originated from only five countries (in decreasing order): Japan, India, Russia, Turkey, and South Korea.

Japan was still the top requester, accounting for 43% of all global requests received. The 16,649 requests from Japan were primarily related to laws regarding narcotics and psychotropics, obscenity, or money lending. The next highest volume of legal demands came from India, comprising 18% of global legal demands and representing a 152% increase from the previous reporting period. Notably, the number of accounts specified in requests from India also increased by 45% this reporting period. Russia accounted for 16% of global legal demands, showing a 29% decrease compared to the previous reporting period. 64% of those requests pertained to Russian laws prohibiting the promotion of suicide. Turkey remained the fourth highest requester with 10% of global legal demands. South Korea submitted the fifth largest number of requests, accounting for 7% of all global legal demands.

Japan

The volume of legal demands from Japan **decreased by 16%**, and the number of accounts specified decreased by 10%. Despite the lower volume, Japan still led as the biggest requester to Twitter, **accounting 43% of the total global requests** received. The vast majority of these legal demands from Japanese law enforcement consisted of allegations of illegal activities.

India

Requests from India **increased by 152%** during this reporting period, making India the second highest submitter of legal demands this reporting period.

Russia

Russian legal demands **decreased by 29%** this reporting period, but the percentage of suicide/self harm-related cases **increased to 64%** of all reported issues by Russia.

Turkey

Requests from Turkey **decreased by 13%**, while accounts specified in those requests increased by 13%.

South Korea

Legal demands from South Korea **decreased by 40%** during this reporting period, and the number of accounts specified decreased by 27%.

Verified journalists and news outlets

199 accounts of verified journalists and news outlets from around the world were subject to 361 legal demands, a 26% increase in the number of accounts since the previous reporting period. These included removal requests from India (128), Turkey (108), Pakistan (52), and Russia (28). Notably, in comparison to the previous period, Twitter also received an increase of legal demands including accounts from verified journalists and news outlets from a wider range of jurisdictions, such as Brazil (16), Mexico (9), Thailand (9), Ireland (3), France (2), Colombia (2), and Venezuela (2).

In total, 5 Tweets from verified journalists and news outlets were withheld. Four Tweets in Brazil were withheld under Article 19 Law Nº 12,965/2014, also known as Brazil's Internet Legal Framework (MCI). One Tweet was withheld in France in compliance with Article 6 LCEN and Articles 226-22 of the French Criminal Code.

Twitter filed legal objections for court orders from Turkey that involved verified journalists or news outlets, arguing that those decisions are contrary to Turkish protections of freedom of the press. None of those objections were successful during this reporting period.

Periscope and Vine

During this period, Twitter did not receive any legal demands involving Periscope-related content.

Conversely, Twitter received four legal demands from South Korean law enforcement reporting four Vines for allegations of privacy and sexual misconduct. The content was removed for violations of the Vine Rules.

04. Withheld Content

This data includes all legal demands where we employed our Country Withheld Content ("CWC") tool during this period, resulting in either Tweets or accounts being withheld. Where permitted, Twitter provided notice to identified account holders and published copies of the underlying legal demands that resulted in withheld content to Lumen for public review.[a]

We have now used CWC in 19 countries in response to legal demands: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. During this reporting period, we withheld content at the account or Tweet level in 10 of those 19 countries.

Examples (Lumen links to corresponding legal demands available below[a]):

Brazil

Twitter received a court order from the 2nd Small Claims Court of Maringá regarding defamation. There was an increase of defamation-related issues involving allegations of sexual abuse and harassment. Twitter **withheld two Tweets** in compliance with Brazilian law, Article 300 of the Civil Procedure Code.

Israel

Twitter received a legal demand from the State Attorney's Office. In response to a judicial order citing privacy protection and monitoring laws of Israel, Twitter **withheld eight Tweets** in Israel.

Italy

Twitter received a court order from the Ministry of Economy and Finance regarding defamation allegations in seven Tweets, which were in violation of the Italian Criminal Code. Twitter **withheld seven Tweets** in response to the court order, representing the first time Twitter has withheld content in Italy.

Turkey

Twitter received a court order from Turkey regarding two Tweets containing insulting language towards a high-level official of a prominent bank in Turkey for violation of personal rights. Twitter **withheld both Tweets** in Turkey in response to the court order.

05. Un-withheld Content

Content is typically un-withheld (i.e., restored to Twitter) after a successful appeal of an original court order or because a legal procedure expired. Un-withheld content may pertain to accounts or Tweets that were withheld prior to this current reporting period.

We un-withheld content in India during this reporting period.

Example (Lumen link to corresponding legal demands available below[a]):

India

Twitter received a legal demand from the Election Commission of India regarding content that according to the Commission violated electoral laws on the prohibition of public meetings. The legal demand was issued during the election silence period of the 2020 Bihar Legislative Assembly Election held at the end of October 2020. In response to this demand, Twitter **temporarily withheld one Tweet**.

06. TOS Violations

This section includes instances where, in response to legal demands identifying the specified accounts or Tweets, content was removed from Twitter after determining it violated Twitter's TOS.[8] We review all reported content for violations of Twitter's TOS before assessing it further independent of any underlying claims.

We take an objective approach to reviewing legal demands for possible violations of Twitter's TOS. The fact that the reporters in these cases may be involved in litigation, or may be government / law enforcement officials, had no bearing on whether any action was taken under Twitter's TOS. This approach is consistent with our commitment to free expression.

Examples:

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Twitter received its third legal demand from Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding allegations of impersonation of a high-ranking politician in the country. **One account was permanently suspended** under Twitter's Impersonation policy.

Bulgaria

Twitter received the first legal demand from the Bulgarian General Directoral Combating Organized Crimes agency for allegations of impersonation of the chief public prosecutor. **Two accounts were actioned** under Twitter's Impersonation policy.

Chile

Twitter received its first legal demand from the Carabineros de Chile national police for allegations of impersonation of a federal agency. The reported **account was actioned** in violation of Twitter's Impersonation policy.

Colombia

Twitter received a legal demand from the National Police of Colombia for seven accounts alleged to be inciting violent threats to national safety and security. The accounts were involved with activities related to and affiliated with the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia, and as a result, were **permanently suspended** under Twitter's Violent Organizations policy.

Israel

Twitter received a legal demand from Israel's State Attorney's Office involving content considered to be violating a judicial order. The **Tweet was actioned** under Twitter's Right to Privacy policy, due to the publication of confidential materials relating to an Israeli investigation.

New Zealand

Twitter received a legal demand in regard to alleged electoral law violations. The New Zealand Electoral Commission specified that content distributed false information about voting processes. The **content was removed** due to violations of Twitter's Civic Integrity policy.

Uganda

Twitter received the **first legal demand** from Ugandan law enforcement for allegations of impersonation of a police officer. The reported account was **permanently suspended** under Twitter's Impersonation policy.

07. Majority no action

This section includes instances where, in response to a legal demand, no action was taken on the majority of the reported content, as most accounts / Tweets were determined not to violate Twitter's TOS or to merit withholding under CWC. Generally, we do not take action on newsworthy content or political speech protected under UN-recognized principles of free expression consistent with Twitter values.

Examples:

Hong Kong

Twitter received multiple legal demands from Hong Kong police in relation to allegations of unlawful and obscene activities against members of law enforcement. **No actions were taken** as the content did not violate Twitter's TOS.

Indonesia

Twitter received a legal demand for 60,472 accounts from Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information Technology for violating their Electronic Information and Transaction Law, Number 11 Year 2008. **More than 90% of the reported content was determined not to violate Twitter's TOS.**

Malaysia

Twitter received a legal demand from the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission for alleged hate speech violations under Malaysia's Penal Code. **No action was taken as the account shared newsworthy content and remained compliant with Twitter's Parody, Newsfeed, Commentary, and Fan account policy.**

Saudi Arabia

Twitter received multiple legal demands from the Human Resources Development Fund under allegations of illegal social services. **No action was taken as the reported materials did not violate Twitter's TOS.**

Sri Lanka

Twitter received its first legal demand from the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission for alleged extremist content. **No action was taken as the content was newsworthy and represented political commentary, which was not in violation of Twitter's TOS.**

Thailand

Twitter received two court orders from the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society reporting 59 Tweets for alleged illegal activity violating the Computer-Related Crimes Act (CCA). **Some Tweets could not be located, and no action was taken on the remaining Tweets as they did not violate Twitter's TOS.**

Turkey

Twitter **received a court order** from a travel and tourism company in relation to 89 Tweets. **No action was taken as the reported content did not violate Twitter's TOS.**

Local Law(s)

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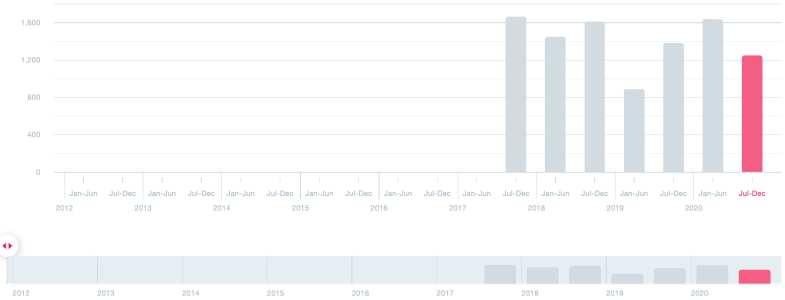
04. German Network Enforcement Act

01. Latest Data: Local Law(s)

Bars Table



Reports - July - December 2020

Reports	Compliance rate	Accounts specified	Accounts withheld	Tweets withheld
1.2K	23.9%	833		17

Accounts TOS
287

02. Overview

This section includes reports based on local law(s) from trusted reporters and non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") identified by the European Commission.

There are also details about the latest trends in global volumes of requests, accounts specified, total compliance rate, accounts withheld, Tweets withheld, and accounts TOS.

Some notable changes since the last report:

Reports

-24%

Decrease in **global reports based on local law(s)** compared to the last reporting period.

Compliance rate

+25%

Increase in **the global compliance rate** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts specified

-24%

Decrease in **global accounts specified** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts withheld

No Change

No change in **global accounts withheld** compared to the last reporting period.

Tweets withheld

-45%

Decrease in **global Tweets withheld** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts TOS

-1%

Decrease in **global accounts TOS** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

All reported content is first reviewed for potential violations of Twitter's TOS. Any content that is found to be violating is removed from the platform. Content that does not violate Twitter's TOS is then reviewed for potential withholding based on the local law(s) of the reporting jurisdiction.

Trusted reporters and NGO's

Broadly speaking, the organizations that submitted reports to us work on protecting and furthering human rights, and preventing issues such as racism, xenophobia, or homophobia. Twitter has formed partnerships with trusted reporters from Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands to date. During this transparency reporting period, we also began the implementation of a partnership program with a trusted reporter organization from Spain. In addition, the European Commission designated a number of other European NGOs to assist in evaluating industry implementation of the Code of Conduct on countering illegal online hate speech.

Twitter received 24% fewer reports based on local law(s) from trusted reporters and NGOs, impacting approximately 24% fewer accounts during this reporting period.

Examples (Lumen links to corresponding legal demands available below[5]):

Germany

One Tweet was reported by a German Trusted Reporter for using symbols of unconstitutional organizations, which is a violation of s.86a of NetzDG. The Tweet shared an image of an album cover that uses the swastika in the artwork. For this reason it was **withheld in Germany.**

Netherlands

Twitter received a request from a Dutch NGO reporting a Tweet for **hate speech against a protected category,** specifically making disparaging generalizations about African immigrants. While the Tweet did not violate our Terms of Service, it was found to be a violation under article 137C of the Dutch Criminal Law and was therefore **withheld in the Netherlands.**

Spain

One Tweet was reported by our newly-onboarded Spanish Trusted Reporter for violation of local laws, particularly incitement of hatred against immigrants. Accordingly, the **Tweet was withheld in Spain.**

04. German Network Enforcement Act

The Network Enforcement Act (Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz, aka NEA) is a German law that came into effect on January 1, 2018. We're including information about it in this section of the transparency report as any content withheld under this law uses the same local law messaging as available in other countries.

Twitter is required to publish a biannual report in German regarding our handling of complaints submitted from users or complaints bodies pursuant to the law. The most recent report was published in January 2021, covering the reporting period of July 1 to December 31, 2020, and is available to download from the Germany country report.

Footnotes

Some cases received during this reporting period may be in progress and may not be closed at the time of reporting.

Each request may identify multiple items to be removed. For example, a single request may ask us to remove individual Tweets, an entire account, or both.

We may not comply with every request or all aspects of a request for a variety of reasons. For example, we do not comply with requests that fail to identify content on Twitter.

Legal Demands

1. This section does **not** include reports submitted by government officials to review content solely under Twitter's TOS. More information about Twitter Rules enforcement is available here.

2. Court orders are often accompanied by a non-disclosure order that prevents Twitter for notifying a specified account holder.
Where permitted, Twitter has published copies of removal requests to Lumen, at times redacted, that have resulted in content being withheld. We try to redact as little information as possible. Redacted information information that we are prohibited from publishing.

3. Withheld Content corresponding legal demands Lumen links:

- Brazil
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Turkey

4. Un-withheld Content corresponding legal demands Lumen links:

- India

5. "Twitter's TOS" is made up of Twitter's Terms of Service and the Twitter Rules. More information about Twitter Rules enforcement is available here.

Local Law(s)

6. Trusted reporters

- Germany
- Netherlands
- Spain

Transparency

Copyright Notices

About this report
Insights into Digital Millennium Copyright Act ("DMCA") takedown notices and counter-notices for content on Twitter and Periscope.

DMCA Takedown Notices

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01. Latest Data: DMCA Takedown Notices

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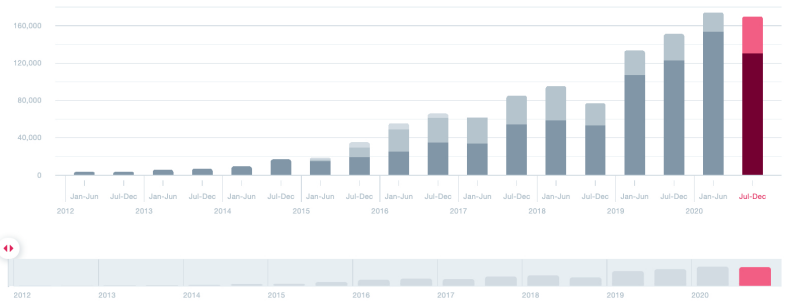
Grouped by: Biannual | Monthly



Takedown notices - July - December 2020

Takedown notices	Compliance rate	Accounts affected	Media withheld	Tweets withheld
169.7K	59.9%	684.6K	907.2K	845.2K

02. Overview

This section covers the latest data about Digital Millennium Copyright Act ("DMCA") takedown notices to remove content on Periscope and Twitter.

Twitter's operations were affected due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and a security incident in July 2020.

There are also details about the latest trends in global volumes of requests, corresponding compliance rate, accounts affected, media withheld, and Tweets withheld, as well as insights into our related policies.

Takedown notices

-3%

Decrease in **global takedown notices** compared to the last reporting period.

Compliance rate

+5%

Increase in **global compliance rate** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts affected

-44%

Decrease in **global accounts affected** compared to the last reporting period.

Media withheld

-43%

Decrease in **global media withheld** compared to the last reporting period.

Tweets withheld

-25%

Decrease in **global Tweets withheld** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Big picture

This report includes data on DMCA takedown notices submitted through our web form or otherwise sent to Twitter, such as via fax or mail. For more information, please see our Copyright Policy.

We saw a 3% decrease in DMCA takedown notices submitted, and a 44% decrease in accounts affected. Tweets withheld and media withheld also dropped by 25% and 43% respectively, as Twitter's operations were affected due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and a security incident in July 2020.

We provide affected account holders with a copy of the related DMCA takedown notice when their media or Tweets are withheld. The notification includes instructions on how to file a counter-notice (in case they believed the content was removed in error) and also how to seek a retraction from the original reporter.

No action

We do not withhold content in response to DMCA takedown notices that are incomplete, do not concern copyright issues, or that we determine to be fraudulent. We carefully review each notice, and follow up with the reporter as appropriate. In addition, there may be certain uses of copyrighted material that do not require the copyright owner's permission, such as political speech, content that is potentially newsworthy, or cases of apparent fair use. This type of speech is protected under UN-recognized principles of free expression and may not violate Twitter's Copyright Policy.

The following are examples of copyright takedown notices we determined were invalid due to misrepresentations made by the reporter or because the requests were overreaching.

Recent examples:

India

We saw an **increase in suspicious notices** from reporters targeting multiple prominent Indian government officials and public figures. We **pushed back on over 40 notices** for additional verification.

Kuwait

We **took no action on numerous DMCA takedown requests** filed by a prominent Kuwaiti blogger, targeting accounts that used the blogger's images for criticism and commentary. The content did not violate Twitter's policies.

Pakistan

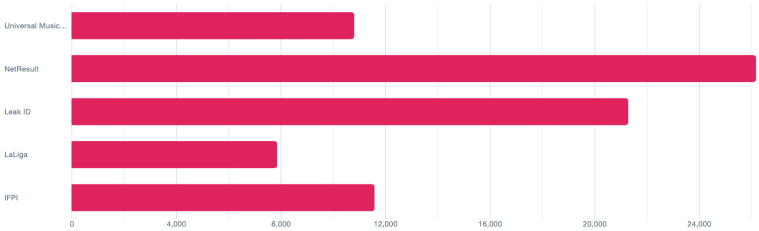
A major political party in Pakistan sent **dozens of DMCA notices** reporting Tweets from accounts of its political rivals. **No action was taken on 67% of these notices** as the content did not violate Twitter's policies.

Tanzania

We discovered a network of accounts that **filed DMCA notices** targeting various prominent Tanzanian officials and activists. As a result of our investigation, we suspended hundreds of accounts for DMCA abuse and **took no action on 1,600+ suspicious notices.**

04. Top Copyright Reporters

Bars Table



Takedown notices - July - December 2020

Takedown notices	% of all takedown notices	Materials withheld
77.7K	59.6%	655.8K

We receive copyright takedown notices from copyright owners or their authorized representatives. The entities who have submitted the most takedown requests over the past six months include: NetResult, LeakID, IFPI, Universal Music Group, and La Liga. Takedown notices from IFPI and Universal Music Group received the largest number of compliant counter notices, which results in the content being restored to our services.

You can see these takedown notices, along with all the other actionable copyright

DMCA Counter Notices

01. Latest Data

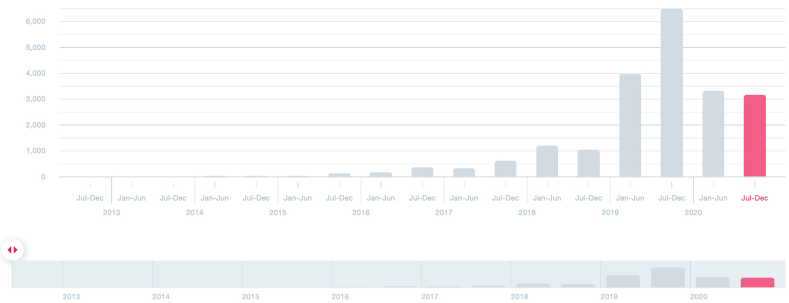
02. Overview

03. Analysis

01. Latest Data: DMCA Counter Notices

Bars | Table

Grouped by Biannual Monthly



Counter notices - July - December 2020

Counter notices	Restoration rate	Media restored	Tweets restored
3.2K	100%	124	55

02. Overview

This section covers the latest data about DMCA counter notices to restore content on Periscope and Twitter.

There are also details about the latest trends in global volumes of requests, restoration rate, media affected, and Tweets affected.

Counter notices

-4%

Decrease in **global counter notices processed** compared to the last reporting period.

Restoration rate

No change

No change in **global restoration rate** compared to the last reporting period.

Media restored

-97%

Decrease in **global media restored** compared to the last reporting period.

Tweets restored

-93%

Decrease in **global Tweets restored** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Big picture

The DMCA provides statutory instructions on how an affected party can formally appeal a copyright removal by submitting a valid counter notice.

Footnotes

Some cases received during this reporting period may be in progress and may not be closed at the time of reporting.

Trademark Notices

About this report

Insights into reports and outcomes of alleged trademark policy violations on Twitter and Periscope.

Trademark Notices

01. Latest Data

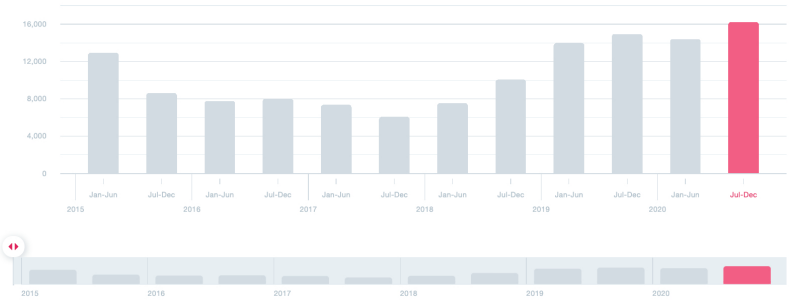
02. Overview

03. Analysis

01. Latest Data: Trademark Notices

Bars | Table

Grouped by Biannual Monthly



Trademark notices - July - December 2020

Trademark notices	Notices actioned	Compliance rate
16.2K	553	3.4%

02. Overview

This section covers the latest volume of trademark notices, accounts affected, and the corresponding compliance rates.

Twitter responds to reports of alleged trademark policy violations when we receive a complaint from the trademark owner or their authorized representative. Using another's trademark in a way that may mislead or confuse people about your affiliation may be a violation of our trademark policy.

Some notable changes since the last report:

Trademark notices

+13%

Increase in **global trademark notices** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts affected

-1%

Decrease in **global accounts affected** compared to the last reporting period.

Compliance rate

-12%

Decrease in **global compliance rate** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Big picture

Twitter received 13% more trademark notices, affecting 1% fewer accounts since our last report.[1]

25% of trademark reports were actioned for violating other Twitter Rules, including our impersonation policy.

Key factors

We carefully review each report received under our trademark policy, and follow up with the reporter as appropriate, such as in cases of apparent fair use. We may take action on reported content if it is using another's trademark in a manner that may mislead others about its business affiliation.[2]

Footnotes

Some cases received during this reporting period may be in progress and may not be closed at the time of reporting.

1. We may not take action on every request for a variety of reasons. For example, we may not take action on:

- Trademark notices filed by representatives who have not been authorized by the trademark owner.
- Trademark notices that fail to provide sufficient information for us to locate accounts or material on Twitter and Periscope.
- Misfiled, non-trademark complaints submitted through our Trademark web form.

2. Where an account is determined to violate Twitter's trademark policy, each account holder is given the opportunity to appeal an account suspension.

Rules Enforcement

About this report

Insights into how and when we enforce our policies, and reports of potential violations.

Accounts Actioned

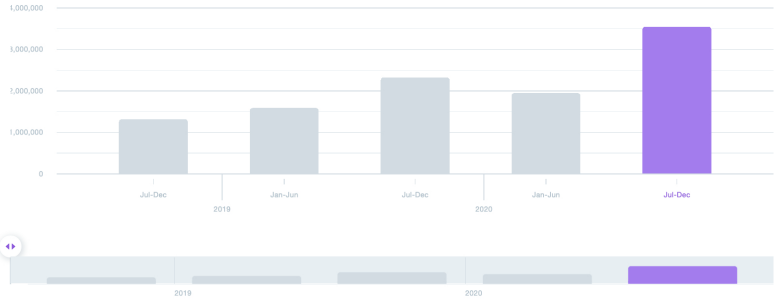
01. Latest Data

02. Overview

03. Analysis

01. Latest Data: Accounts Actioned

Bars | Table



Accounts actioned - July - December 2020

Accounts actioned	Accounts suspended	Content removed
3.5M	1.0M	4.5M

02. Overview

This section covers the latest data about instances where we've taken enforcement actions under the Twitter Rules to either require the removal of specific Tweets or to suspend accounts. These metrics are referred to as: accounts actioned, content removed, and accounts suspended. More details about our range of enforcement options are available in our Help Center.

Twitter's operations were affected by two key events in the second half of 2020: the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a security incident in July 2020. We were in the midst of recovering our operational capacity which had been significantly reduced since March 2020 due to COVID-19. The security incident in July 2020 impacted the operations recovery process that was already underway.

Throughout this, we have continued to maintain dedicated resources focused on reviewing and taking enforcement action against content most likely to cause severe offline harm (for example, child sexual exploitation and terrorism). In addition to prioritizing reports where we were able to predict a high likelihood of the content being violative, we concurrently worked on reducing backlogs in other areas. Our efforts resulted in an overall significant increase in actions taken across most policy areas for this reporting period compared to the prior reporting period.

We continue to explore ways to share more context and details about how we enforce the Twitter Rules. As such, we are introducing a new metric – impressions – for enforcement actions where we required the removal of specific Tweets. Impressions capture the number of views a Tweet received prior to removal.

From July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020, Twitter removed 3.8M Tweets that violated the Twitter Rules. Of the Tweets removed, 77% received fewer than 100 impressions, with an additional 17% receiving between 100 and 1000 impressions. Only 6% of removed Tweets had more than 1000 impressions. In total, impressions on violative Tweets accounted for less than 0.1% of all impressions for all Tweets during that time period.

Some notable changes since our last report:

Accounts actioned

+82%

Increase in **accounts actioned** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts suspended

+9%

Increase in **accounts suspended** compared to the last reporting period.

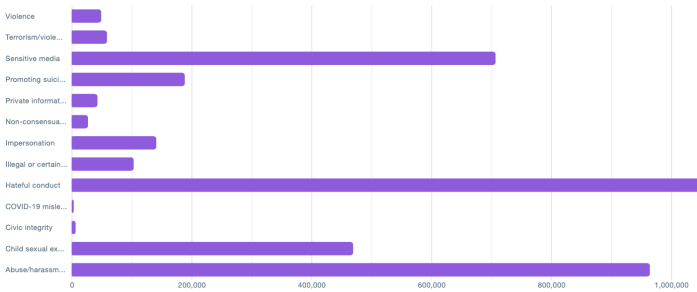
Content removed

+132%

Increase in **content removed** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Bars | Table



Accounts actioned - July - December 2020

Accounts actioned	Accounts suspended	Content removed
3.5M	1.0M	4.5M

Big picture

We have restructured and expanded this section to better align with the Twitter Rules. We are now sharing more granular data on our actions for 12 distinct policy areas and have also updated our metrics for Report 14 (Jul - Dec 2018) and Report 15 (Jan - Jun 2019) to be consistent with this approach.

We have a global team that manages enforcement of our Rules with 24/7 coverage in every supported language on Twitter. Our goal is to apply the Twitter Rules objectively and consistently. Enforcement actions are taken on content that is determined to violate the Twitter Rules.

We support the spirit of the Santa Clara Principles on Transparency and Accountability in Content Moderation, and are committed to sharing more detailed information about how we enforce the Twitter Rules in future reports.

Safety

The "Safety" section of the Twitter Rules covers violence, terrorism/violent extremism, child sexual exploitation, abuse/harassment, hateful conduct, promoting suicide or self-harm, sensitive media (including graphic violence and adult content), and illegal or certain regulated goods or services. More information about each policy can be found in the Twitter Rules.

Some notable changes since the last report:

Violence

There was a **106% increase** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our violence policies during this reporting period.

Terrorism/violent extremism

There was a **35% decrease** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our terrorism / violent extremism policy during this reporting period.

Child sexual exploitation

There was a **6% increase** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our child sexual exploitation policy during this reporting period.

Abuse/harassment

There was a **142% increase** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our abuse policy during this reporting period.

Hateful conduct

There was a **77% increase** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our hateful conduct policy during this reporting.

Promoting su

There was a **19**
number of acco
violations of our
policy during th

Other select takeaways:

Terrorism/violent extremism
The Twitter Rules prohibit the promotion of terrorism and violent extremism. Action was taken on 58,750 unique accounts under this policy during this reporting period. 96% of those accounts were proactively identified and actioned. Whilst we have been keeping the rates of our proactive enforcement high, we continue to see an overall downward trend in the number of violating accounts. This likely reflects the changing behavior patterns of bad actors and improvements in our defenses. Our current methods of surfacing potentially violating content for review include leveraging the shared industry hash database supported by the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT).

Child sexual exploitation
We do not tolerate child sexual exploitation on Twitter. When we are made aware of child sexual exploitation media, including links to images of or content promoting child exploitation, the material will be removed from the site without further notice and reported to The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children ("NCMEC"). People can report content that appears to violate the Twitter Rules regarding Child Sexual Exploitation via our web form.

464,804 unique accounts were suspended during this reporting period for violating Twitter policies prohibiting child sexual exploitation. 90% of those accounts were proactively identified by employing internal proprietary tools and industry hash sharing initiatives. These tools and initiatives support our efforts in surface potentially violative content for further review and, if appropriate, removal.

Abuse/harassment
This policy saw a significant increase in the number of actions during this reporting period. Initiatives were launched during the reporting period to better detect and take action on content that violated this policy.

Hateful conduct
The policy was updated in September 2020 to expand our enforcement approach towards content that incites fear/fearful stereotypes about protected categories, in part due to trends we noticed about the targeting of certain protected categories in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hateful conduct also expanded to include a new dehumanization policy update on 2 December 2020 to cover content that dehumanizes on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin.

Promoting suicide or self-harm
This policy saw a significant increase in the number of actions during this reporting period. Initiatives were launched to better detect and take action on content that violated our policy on suicide and self-harm. The initiatives served to mitigate concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on suicide and self-harm behavior.

Sensitive media, including graphic violence and adult content
These policies saw the largest increase in the number of accounts actioned during this reporting period. Initiatives were launched to bolster operational capacity that resulted in an increase in actioning of content in violation of our sensitive media policies.

Illegal or certain regulated goods or services
In April 2019, we elaborated on our policy on the sale of illegal or certain regulated goods or services in a dedicated Twitter Help Center page, and began associated biannual data disclosures. Since then, we've been focusing on improving our internal tools and processes to remove more violating content faster and with greater precision.

Privacy

The "Privacy" section of the Twitter Rules covers private information and non-consensual nudity. More information about each policy can be found in the Twitter Rules.

Some notable changes since the last report:

Private information

There was a **67% increase** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our private information policy during this reporting period.

Non-consensual nudity

There was a **194% increase** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our non-consensual nudity policy during this reporting period.

Other select takeaways:

Non-consensual nudity
This reporting period saw the largest increase in the number of accounts actioned under this policy. Recovery of operational capacity was the main reason for the increase in the number of accounts actioned.

Authenticity

The "Authenticity" section of the Twitter Rules covers platform manipulation and spam, civic integrity, impersonation, synthetic and manipulated media, and copyright and trademark. We have standalone report pages for platform manipulation and spam, copyright, and trademark, and cover civic integrity and impersonation enforcement actions in this section. More information about each policy can be found in the Twitter Rules.

Some notable changes since the last report:

Civic integrity

There was a **175% increase** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our civic integrity policy during this reporting period.

Impersonation

There was a **8% increase** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our impersonation policy during this reporting period.

COVID-19 misleading information

There was a **27% decrease** in the number of accounts actioned for violations of our COVID-19 misleading information policy during this reporting period. This number does not include accounts where we applied a label or warning message.

Other select takeaways:

Civic Integrity
This reporting period saw a significant increase in the number of accounts actioned under this policy. Enforcements increased during the general U.S. elections in November 2020.

Accounts Reported

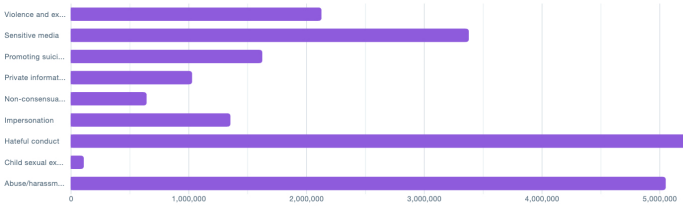
01. Latest Data

02. Overview

03. Analysis

01. Latest Data: Accounts Reported

Bars Table



Accounts reported - July - December 2020

Accounts reported

12.2M

02. Overview

Insights into accounts reported for violations of the Twitter Rules.

Accounts reported

+2%

Increase in **accounts reported** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Big picture

Reported content is reviewed to determine whether it violates any aspects of the Twitter Rules, independent of its initial report category. For example, content reported under our private information policy may be found to violate – and be actioned under – our hateful conduct policies. We may also determine that reported content does not violate the Rules at all.

The policy categories in this section do not map cleanly to the ones in the Accounts Actioned section above. This is because people typically report content for possible Twitter Rules violations through our Help Center or in-app reporting.

We support the spirit of the Santa Clara Principles on Transparency and Accountability in Content Moderation, and are committed to sharing more detailed information about how we enforce the Twitter Rules in future reports.

Footnotes

Accounts Actioned

To provide meaningful metrics, we de-duplicate accounts which were actioned multiple times for the same policy violation. This means that if we took action on a Tweet or account under multiple policies, the account would be counted separately under each policy. However, if we took action on a Tweet or account multiple times under the same policy (for example, we may have placed an account in read-only mode temporarily and then later also required media or profile edits on the basis of the same violation), the account would be counted once under the relevant policy.

Accounts Reported

To provide meaningful metrics, we de-duplicate accounts which were reported multiple times (whether multiple users reported an account for the same potential violation, or whether multiple users reported the same account for different potential violations). For the purposes of these metrics, we similarly de-duplicate reports of specific Tweets. This means that even if we received reports about multiple Tweets by a single account, we only counted these reports towards the "accounts reported" metric once.

03. Analysis

Big picture

Platform manipulation and spam can include the following behaviors:

- Commercial spam — Persistent, often automated content which puts uninvited information in front of you. The spammer tries to get you to do something you wouldn't otherwise do, such as click a link, buy something, or give up personal information.
- Artificial amplification — Actions to make an account or concept seem more popular or controversial than it actually is, through inauthentic engagements (e.g. followers, mentions, Likes, or Retweets).
- Coordinated activity — Efforts to artificially influence conversations through the use of multiple and/or fake accounts.
- Combination of any of the above — Spammers may attempt to take advantage of a popular topic in order to sell something, or ideologically-motivated actors may use spammy amplification tactics to attempt to reach more people.

For more information about how we define these behaviors, please see our Platform Manipulation and Spam policy.

Anti-spam challenges

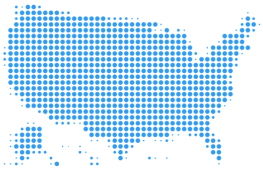
One way we fight manipulation and spam at scale is to use anti-spam challenges to confirm whether an authentic account holder is in control of accounts engaged in suspicious activity. For example, we may require the account holder to verify a phone number or email address, or to complete a reCAPTCHA test. These challenges are simple for authentic account owners to solve, but difficult (or costly) for spammers to complete. Accounts which fail to complete a challenge within a specified period of time may be suspended.

These anti-spam challenges increased by approximately 6% compared to the previous reporting period. Actions taken to counter spam tend to fluctuate for a variety of reasons, such as the volume of attempted malicious Twitter signups, as well as the volume of spam campaigns targeting our service at any point in time.

Spam reports

During the second half of 2020, we observed an approximately 14% decrease in the number of spam reports from the previous reporting period.

United States



About this report

Insights into information requests and removal requests originating from the United States.

Information Requests

01. Latest Data
02. Overview
03. Analysis
04. Breakdown by Location
05. Types of Legal Process
06. User Notice
07. National Security Requests

01. Latest Data: Information Requests

Map | Bars | Table

U.S. (52 states/territories)

0 | 1 - 36 | 37 - 138 | 139 - 769

Information requests - July - December 2020

Information requests	% Compliance	Accounts specified
3.2K	59%	7.3K

02. Overview

This data includes the number of government information requests, accounts specified, and the corresponding compliance rate for these requests originating from the United States. We also include a high-level breakdown of requests based on the U.S. state or territory they originated from (below). For more information about emergency requests and non-government requests, visit the Information Requests report.

Twitter's operations were affected due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and a security incident in July 2020.

Information requests

-5%

Decrease in **U.S. government information requests** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts specified

+212%

Increase in **U.S. government accounts specified** compared to the last reporting period.[1] This number of accounts is skewed by a single request for a large number of accounts, which Twitter publicly disclosed as associated with a state-backed information operation.

Compliance rate

+2%

Increase in the **U.S. government compliance rate** compared to the last reporting period.

03. Analysis

Government information requests originating from the U.S. made up the second highest percentage among requesting countries from around the world. This is the first time that U.S. information requests did not did not represent the largest share of total global volume in a reporting period since Twitter's first transparency report in 2012.[ii]

22% of all global requests for account information originated from the United States during this reporting period. These requests accounted for 60% of all accounts specified from around the world. Twitter complied, in whole or in part, with 60% of these U.S. information requests.

User privacy

Twitter generally requires a search warrant to disclose any contents of communications, since users have the greatest privacy interest in this type of information.

However, Twitter may disclose content in the U.S. without receiving a search warrant in rare circumstances, in accordance with applicable law. For example, if there is an emergency involving an imminent threat of death or serious bodily harm, in response to certain national security requests, or with the account-holder's lawful consent. Twitter also reports child sexual exploitation content to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) as required by U.S. law and in accordance with our zero tolerance policy.

CalECPA

Twitter also furthers our commitment to user privacy with our support for and interpretation of CalECPA, a California state law which went into effect at the beginning of 2016. CalECPA sets a higher bar for California state government entities to obtain certain user data than the floor established by federal statute, Electronic Communications Privacy Act. As a result, California state law enforcement and government entities must obtain a warrant based on probable cause to compel a provider like Twitter to disclose IP addresses, which would also generally be available with a subpoena or court order under federal law.[iii]

During this reporting period, Twitter received 252 subpoenas and court orders issued by state and local government entities outside of California which sought IP addresses, compared to 285 such requests in the prior reporting period. Requesters either withdrew their request entirely or withdrew their request for IP addresses in 115 of those requests.

04. Breakdown by Location

Twitter receives government information requests from federal, state, and local authorities. The following table outlines the distribution of these requests, which are attributed to a particular state based on the location of the requesting office.

Twitter received the greatest percentage of requests from New York, California, and Oklahoma during this reporting period.

Top Requesting Agencies

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) submitted the greatest percentage of requests during this reporting period. The FBI, DOJ, and USSS have also consistently submitted the greatest percentage of requests for the seven previous reporting periods.

Federal vs state requesters

Table

Search for a state

State / Territory	Federal requests	State / Local requests
Total	2,410	832
Alabama	4	2
Alaska	4	1
Arizona	16	20
Arkansas	5	4
California	196	111
Colorado	15	10
Connecticut	16	3
Delaware	3	4
District of Columbia	756	13
Florida	78	58
Georgia	42	16
Guam	-	1
Hawaii	7	-
Idaho	1	2
Illinois	48	20

Indiana	9	4
Iowa	1	4
Kansas	2	6
Kentucky	6	16
Louisiana	10	6
Maine	4	-
Maryland	47	35
Massachusetts	29	14
Michigan	22	11
Minnesota	15	22
Mississippi	2	5
Missouri	25	5
Montana	2	2
Nebraska	9	7
Nevada	13	16
New Hampshire	2	2
New Jersey	28	47
New Mexico	3	1
New York	292	104
North Carolina	21	17
Ohio	21	33
Oklahoma	183	6
Oregon	27	6
Pennsylvania	79	15
Puerto Rico	4	2
Rhode Island	3	2
South Carolina	10	9
South Dakota	-	2
Tennessee	15	11
Texas	67	73
US Embassies	27	-
Utah	2	3
Vermont	1	-
Virginia	100	38
Washington	50	11
West Virginia	78	23
Wisconsin	10	9

County insights

This section highlights the top requesting counties in the ten states that have submitted the most state government information requests during this reporting period. We classify the county of the requester based on the address of the requesting office.

We include this level of detail to offer additional insight into the frequency that local authorities seek user data and to help identify any possible related trends over time.

California

Los Angeles County has been the top requester since we began reporting at the county level, submitting **39% of total California state information requests** during this reporting period.

Florida

Broward County was the top county requester, submitting **31% of total Florida state information requests** in this reporting period.

Maryland

Baltimore City was the top county requester, submitting **52% of total Maryland state information requests** during this reporting period.

New Jersey

Essex was the top requester, submitting **33% of total New Jersey state information requests** during this reporting period.

New York

New York was the top county requester, submitting **80% of total New York state information requests** during this reporting period.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma County was the top county requester, submitting **98% of total Oklahoma state information requests** during this reporting period.

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia County was the top requester, submitting **62% of total Pennsylvania state information requests** during this reporting period.

Texas

Travis was the top county requester, submitting **20% of total Texas state information requests** during this reporting period.

Virginia

Manassas City was the top requester, submitting **25% of total Virginia state information requests** during this reporting period.

West Virginia

Harrison County was the top requester, submitting **96% of West Virginia state information requests** during this reporting period.

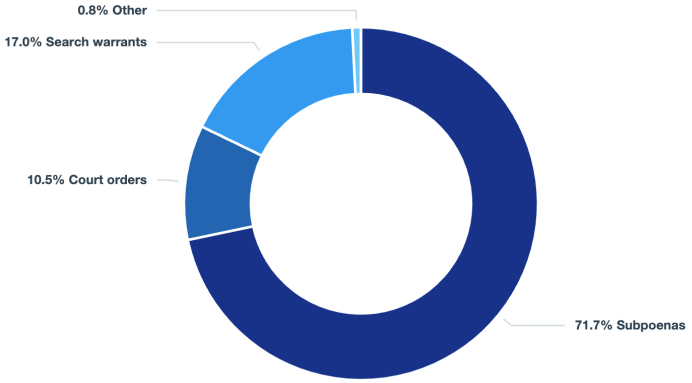
05. Types of Legal Process

Pie Bars Table

Types of legal process

July - December 2020

Subpoenas · Court orders · Search warrants · Other



Subpoenas

Subpoenas are the most common form of legal process issued under the Stored Communications Act. They do not generally require judicial review and usually seek basic subscriber information, such as the email address associated with an account and IP logs. However, as noted above, Twitter may require a search warrant from state law enforcement to disclose IP addresses, in accordance with CalECPA.

Court orders

Unlike subpoenas, court orders do require judicial review, and must be issued by an appropriate judge. The law enforcement or government entity applying for an order must make a greater showing than is required for a subpoena, and may request transactional information (i.e., the non-content portion of communications such as the "from," "to," and "date" fields of DMs) with federal "2703(d) court orders" or state law equivalents. While Twitter mostly receives "2703(d) orders," more information about other types of court orders received is available below.

Search warrants

As proscribed by the Fourth Amendment, warrants typically require the most judicial scrutiny before they are issued. To obtain a search warrant, the government must demonstrate to an independent judge or magistrate that there is probable cause to believe that certain evidence will be found in the location identified. The government has to meet the greatest burden before the judge will issue this type of legal process, and warrants must be particularized to the specific facts of the case. A valid warrant is required for Twitter to disclose the contents of communications (e.g., Tweet content, DM content, Periscope broadcasts).

Other

Requests from law enforcement that do not fall in any of the above categories. Examples include emergency disclosure requests and other requests for account information without valid legal process.[ii]

Certain types of court orders

Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty Requests

Mutual legal assistance treaty (MLAT) requests may authorize district courts within the United States to order Twitter to produce account information for use in a proceeding in a foreign or international tribunal, including criminal investigations.[ii]

Twitter may receive U.S. requests for information on behalf of foreign governments based on other forms of cross-jurisdictional assistance. For example, requests may be issued pursuant to letters rogatory, or under mutual legal assistance agreements with countries that have not yet been officially brought into force through an actual treaty. Additionally, MLAT requests may be issued under multilateral treaties which the U.S. has signed and ratified, like the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance of the Organization of American States, the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, or the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

> July 1 - Dec 31, 2020: **3%** of court orders received have been explicitly identified as having been issued as a result of MLAT requests, which originated in Argentina, Australia, Chile, Colombia, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, and Poland.

Pen Register / Trap & Trace Orders

Pen register/trap and trace ("PRTT") orders authorize the government to obtain prospective metadata of communications for the account specified for up to 60 days. This means that Twitter would be required to disclose data on an ongoing basis that did not yet exist at the time the order was signed. PRTT orders may require Twitter to disclose IP address records and transactional information (i.e., the non-content portion of communications such as the "from," "to," and "date" fields). Twitter is prohibited from notifying affected users about the existence of PRTT orders until otherwise authorized by the court, pursuant to the PRTT statute.[2]

> July 1 - Dec 31, 2020: **11%** of court orders received by Twitter were PRTT orders.

Wiretap Orders

Wiretap orders authorize the government to obtain prospective metadata and contents of communications for the specified account for up to 30 days. **To date, Twitter has not received a valid criminal wiretap order.** Twitter has received orders purporteldy requiring such real-time surveillance, but these orders were not issued in compliance with the requirements of the Wiretap Act and therefore Twitter did not comply with the wiretap request. These orders nonetheless may meet legal requirements for other types of disclosures and are therefore reflected in our figures accordingly. Like PRTT orders, wiretap orders are issued under seal and Twitter would therefore generally be prohibited from notifying affected users of the existence of such an order until otherwise ordered by the court.

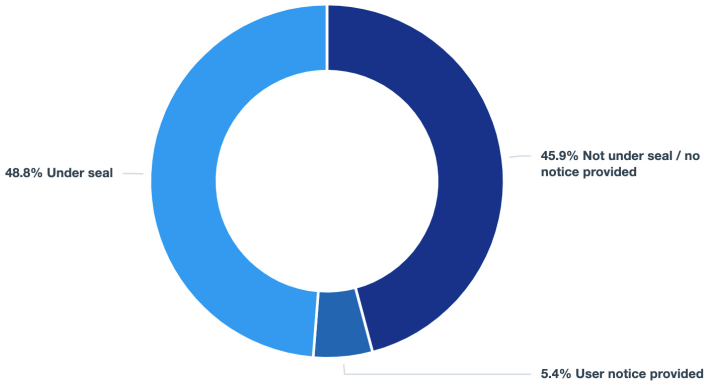
06. User Notice

Pie Bars Table

User notice

July - December 2020

- Not under seal / no notice provided
- User notice provided
- Under seal



Twitter has a longstanding policy of notifying affected account holders of requests to disclose their account information unless prohibited or on the basis of an applicable exception as outlined in our Guidelines for Law Enforcement and legal request FAQs.

Twitter sent notice to affected account holders prior to disclosure where there was no accompanying non-disclosure order, or other reasons not to provide notice.[3]

However, requests for account information are often accompanied by a binding non-disclosure order, which legally prohibits Twitter from notifying account holders of the underlying legal request.

Some non-disclosure orders do not include an explicit date when the confidentiality obligation expires. Twitter regularly seeks an amended order with specified duration for the non-disclosure requirement (e.g., 90 days) when we receive this type of indefinite order.

Twitter has also filed challenges to non-disclosure orders where there were concerns about compliance with the provisions of 18 U.S.C. § 2705(b) and/or the unlimited duration. In October 2017, the U.S. DOJ issued a guidance memorandum to federal prosecutors seeking non-disclosure orders pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 2705(b). Most notably, the guidance states that prosecutors should generally seek non-disclosure orders limited to one year or less, and applications for such orders should reflect meaningful and individualized (i.e., non-boilerplate) justifications for the non-disclosure order.

07. National Security Requests

U.S. National Security Letters

Table

Search for a year

Year received	Government initiated review	Provider requested review
Total	11	10
2020	0	0
2019	0	0
2018	4	0
2017	0	0
2016	2	0
2015	5	1
2014	0	0
2013	0	0
2012	0	0
2011	0	0
2010	0	7
2009	0	2

As in past reports, Twitter is only able to publish very limited information about national security requests, due to legal prohibitions that we continue to challenge in court (see below for an update on Twitter v. Barr, our ongoing transparency litigation).

At this time we are able to share information about the number of National Security Letters ("NSLs") received which are no longer subject to non-disclosure orders ("NDOs"). NDOs on NSLs are lifted in one of two different ways, government initiated review or provider requested review.

Three gag orders were lifted during this reporting period. As reflected in the table above, non-disclosure orders for 21 total NSLs have been lifted to date..[ii] We believe it is much more meaningful to publish these actual numbers than reporting in the bands authorized per the USA Freedom Act. (These reporting limits are not applicable for national security process, which are no longer subject to non-disclosure requirements, such as these NSLs.)

Twitter is committed to continuing to use the legal mechanism available to us to request judicial review of these gag orders. More broadly, we are also committed to arguing that indefinite non-disclosure orders are unconstitutional in both the criminal and national security contexts. We view each request for judicial review as an opportunity to strengthen the legal precedent protecting our First Amendment rights.

Twitter v. Barr

As in past reports, Twitter is not reporting on any other national security process we may have received because of limitations imposed on us by the U.S. government. We continue to litigate this issue in our case Twitter v. Barr. On April 17, 2020 the Court granted the government's motion for summary judgment and dismissed Twitter's lawsuit. Twitter filed a notice of appeal of that decision on June 15, 2020 and an opening brief on September 24, 2020. Twitter's appeal was supported by an amicus brief filed by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Electronic Frontier Foundation. The government's responsive brief was filed on March 1, 2021 and the case is being considered for oral argument later this year (date TBD).

We will continue to fight for meaningful transparency through this and other efforts, and look forward to sharing more updates here as they become available.

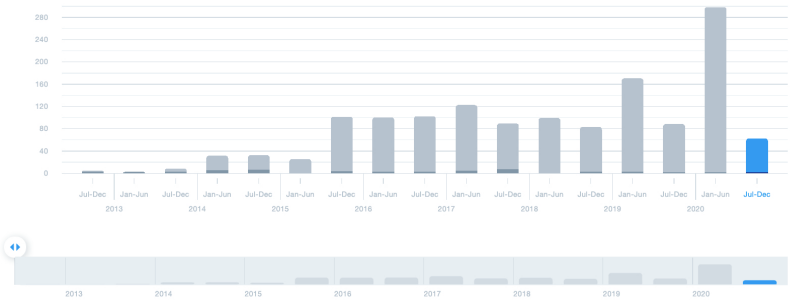
Removal Requests

01. Latest Data

02. Overview

01. Latest Data: Removal Requests

Bars Table



Legal demands - July - December 2020

Legal demands	Compliance rate	Accounts specified	Accounts withheld	Tweets withheld
62	43.5%	87		

Accounts TOS
32

02. Overview

This data includes the number of United States government (and other complaints of illegal content from authorized reporters) legal demands received to remove or withhold content, the number of accounts specified in these requests, and the compliance rate (either withheld or removed for violating the Twitter Rules). For more detailed information, read the Removal Requests report.

Legal demands

-79%

Decrease in **U.S. legal demands** compared to the last reporting period.

Compliance rate

+4%

Increase in **U.S. compliance rate** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts specified

-74%

Decrease in **U.S. accounts specified** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts withheld

No change

No change **U.S. accounts withheld** compared to the last reporting period.

Tweets withheld

No change

No change **U.S. Tweets withheld** compared to the last reporting period.

Accounts TOS

-75%

Decrease in **U.S. accounts TOS** compared to the last reporting period.

Footnotes

Some cases received during this reporting period may be in progress and may not be closed at the time of reporting.

Information Requests

Some cases received during this reporting period may be in progress and may not be closed at the time of reporting.

1. Information requests include both federal and state legal process. Requests are attributed to a particular state based on the location of the requesting office.

The data above does not include national security requests. Please refer to the "National security requests" section below for additional information on the national security letters we are now legally permitted to convey, and an update on the Twitter v. Barr (f.k.a. Twitter v. Lynch and Twitter v. Sessions) lawsuit and our commitment to fighting for greater transparency in national security request reporting.

3. Twitter, Inc.'s global headquarters is located in San Francisco, California, USA.

4. As a California-based company, Twitter generally requires state and local government entities outside of California to properly domesticate a request for IP addresses in California state court. As a result, Twitter generally will not disclose IP addresses to state/local government entities outside of California without a subpoena or court order, and a broader set of Twitter users benefit from the protections of CalECPA.

5. All Writs Act Orders - The All Writs Act is a U.S. law from 1789 which authorizes a court to issue an order which is "necessary or appropriate in aid of their respective jurisdictions and agreeable to the usages and principles of law". The government invoked this apparent authority in the context of litigation with Apple. To date, Twitter has not received an order issued pursuant to this authority.

6. Previously, we included a comprehensive list of the number of requests that were confirmed to have been made via MLAT procedures for all previous reports. We have updated our reporting layout to only include the MLAT data for the current report. To view historical data, please navigate to previous U.S. reports through the dropdown menu at the top of the page.

7. Previously, we included a running list of the percentage of PRTT orders received for all previous reports. We have updated our reporting layout to only include the PRTT order data for the current report. To view historical data, please navigate to previous U.S. reports through the dropdown menu at the top of the page.

8. Twitter generally does not notify users if no data was disclosed in response to the request (i.e. the request was withdrawn by the requester prior to disclosure or the request was defective).

Other exceptions to Twitter's user notice policy include emergency disclosure requests, requests related to child sexual exploitation or terrorism, or other circumstances where notice would be counterproductive.

9. These numbers would not reflect NSLs for which Twitter requested judicial review but a court determined there is an ongoing non-disclosure obligation at the time of this publication.

Removal Requests

Some cases received during this reporting period may be in progress and may not be closed at the time of reporting.

Each request may identify multiple items to be removed. For example, a single request may ask us to remove individual Tweets, an entire account, or both.

We may not comply with every request or all aspects of a request for a variety of reasons. For example, we do not comply with requests that fail to identify content on Twitter.

"Tweets withheld" refers to Tweets that have been withheld at the individual Tweet level, and does not count the total number of individual Tweets from the 'Accounts withheld' column.

Account Security

About this report

Statistics on how people on Twitter are protecting their accounts.

Account Security

01. Overview
02. 2FA
03. Analysis

01. Overview

Keeping your account secure is an important part of using Twitter. While we recommend a number of best practices to users to help them protect their accounts, not all users take these precautions. These challenges are not unique to Twitter -- across the Internet, individuals are subject to a range of attacks aimed at taking over individual user accounts and employ a variety of protections to repel such attacks. In order to shine a light on the challenges we all face securing our accounts online, we've begun to publish statistics on the security protections used on Twitter accounts.

Over time, we hope to see the data on this page trend toward better security practices for all accounts. We'd also like to see other organizations publish similar account security information about their services. Doing so will provide the data necessary for security researchers and professionals to continue to advance the state of account security on the Internet.

02. 2FA

Two-factor authentication (2FA) is one of our strongest protections against account compromise. Enabling 2FA ensures that even if your account password is compromised (perhaps due to the reuse of your Twitter password on other, less secure, websites), attackers will still be blocked from logging into your account without access to the additional authentication required.

Twitter supports several types of two-factor authentication. These include sending a unique code to the phone number linked to an account (Text message/SMS), using a mobile app to generate a unique code (authentication app), or using a security key. While any form of 2FA is much more secure than not having 2FA enabled at all, some forms of 2FA are more secure than others. In general, SMS-based 2FA is the least secure due to its susceptibility to both SIM-hijacking and phishing attacks. Authentication apps avoid the SIM-hijacking risk, but are still susceptible to phishing attacks. Security keys are the newest and most secure form of 2FA since they include built-in protections from phishing attacks.

Over the most recent reporting period (July 2020 through December 2020):

2FA Usage

2.3%

Percentage of active Twitter accounts with **at least one 2FA method enabled** on average over the reporting period.

Change over Period

+9.1%

Percentage change in number of active Twitter accounts with **at least one 2FA method enabled over the reporting period** from July to December 2021.

Types of 2FA

SMS: 79.6%
Auth App: 30.9%
Security Key: 0.5%

Breakdown of 2FA methods by percentage of account that have each enabled (Note: accounts can enable multiple 2FA methods)

03. Analysis

Overall 2FA adoption remains relatively low, which is an unfortunate challenge across the industry. When accounts do not enable 2FA, we are left relying on less robust mechanisms to help keep Twitter accounts secure. We are, however, encouraged to see a significant increase in 2FA usage over the reporting period since it shows that people are increasingly utilizing 2FA to protect their Twitter accounts.

Security keys, while the most secure form of 2FA, are still relatively new. Twitter has made numerous improvements to our security key support over the past year, and we hope to see the usage number grow in the next reporting interval.

Overall, these numbers illustrate the continued need to encourage broader adoption of 2FA, while also working to improve the ease with which accounts may use 2FA. Making 2FA methods simpler and more user friendly will help to encourage adoption and increase security on Twitter.