

'Greed is good' for likes and retweets if you're a US senator, says study

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Tweet about greed.

That's what U.S. politicians ought to do if they want to gain likes and retweets on Twitter, according to new University of British Columbia research.

The work is published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

The researchers from UBC's department of [psychology](#) analyzed every [tweet](#) posted by U.S. senators from early 2013 to late 2021—a total of 861,104 tweets from 140 senators. The researchers were looking specifically for communication about greed, so they could see if it correlated with more likes and retweets.

As it turns out, it does.

Both Democratic and Republican senators got more support and traction for their tweets when tweeting about greed. The effect was stronger for Democrats, though, and stronger still if those tweets also happened to mention their [political opponents](#).

Regardless of party, senators were more likely to tweet in negative terms about greed than positive. Even if some [politicians](#) act as though "greed is good," they generally don't tweet like it.

In the U.S.'s highly partisan political system, social media matters. Politicians can boost their chances in tightly contested elections by reaching like-minded partisans and motivating them to act, the

researchers note.

The tweets in this study began in 2013 on the opening day of the 113th session of Congress—the first time all U.S. senators had Twitter accounts.

More information: Mercadante, Eric J., Greed communication predicts the approval and reach of US senators' tweets, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2023). [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2218680120](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2218680120)

Provided by University of British Columbia

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