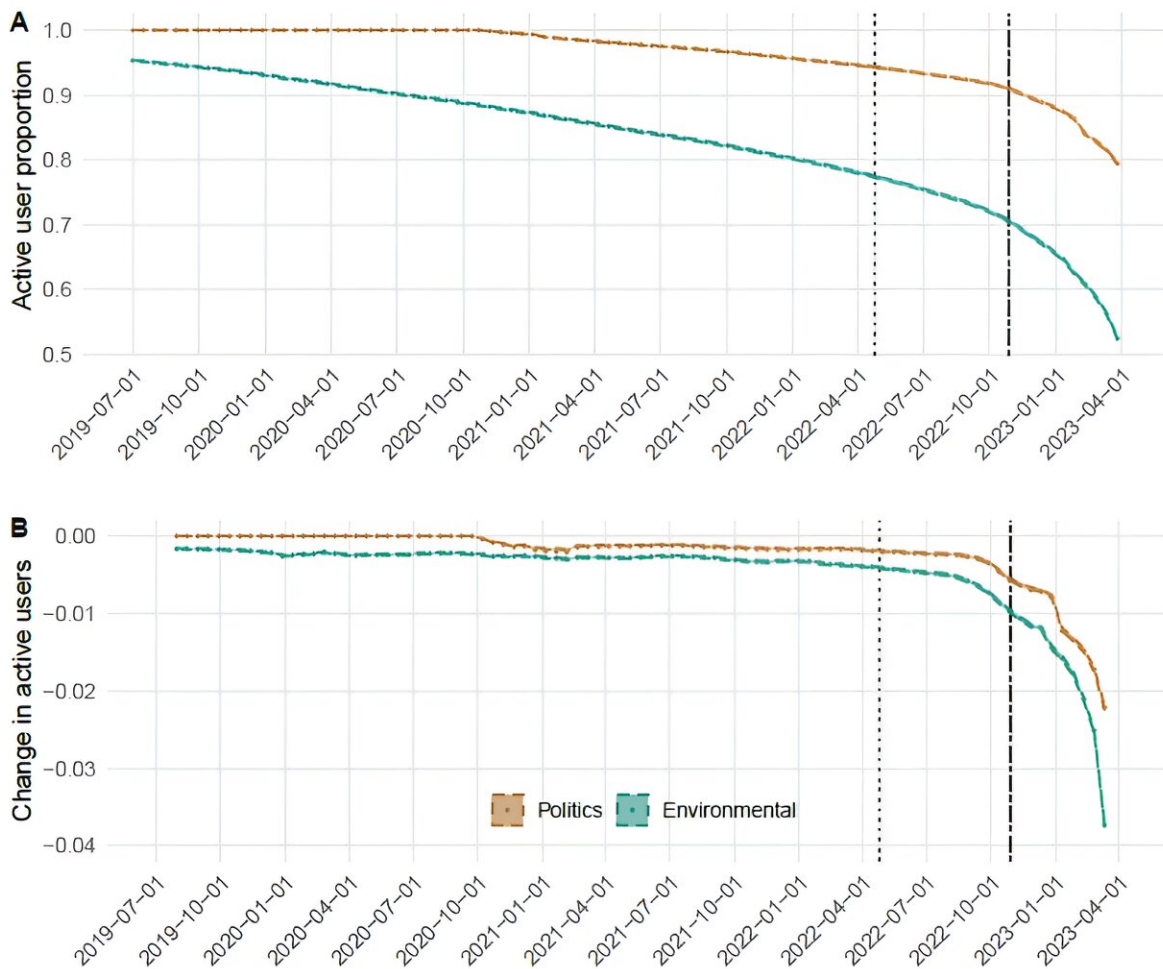


Nearly 50% of environmentalists abandoned Twitter following Musk's takeover

August 15 2023



Tracking changes among Environmental and Politics Twitter users. (A) displays the proportion of users that were active in each 15-day window. In (B), the rate of change in the proportion of active users for both samples is shown. In both plots, the points depict the observed data while the color band with a dashed line

shows the 99% confidence interval based on a bootstrap sample of the data. The dotted vertical line corresponds to April 25, 2023, when the Twitter board accepted Musk's initial purchase offer, and the heavier dashed line corresponds to October 28, 2022 when Musk's takeover was finalized. Credit: *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, Chang et al.

In October 2022, Elon Musk purchased Twitter (recently renamed X), which had previously served as the leading social media platform for environmental discourse. Since then, reports a team of researchers in the journal *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* on August 15, there has been a mass exodus of environmental users on the platform—a phenomenon that could have serious implications for public communication surrounding topics like biodiversity, climate change, and natural disaster recovery.

"Twitter has been the dominant social media platform for diverse environmental interests to communicate and organize around advocacy goals, exchange ideas and research, and new opportunities for collaboration," writes the US-based research team of biologists and environmental consultants.

The team studied a group of 380,000 "environmentally-oriented users," which included a wide range of people from the conservation community who had actively participated in pro-environmental discussions surrounding topics like [climate change](#) and biodiversity on Twitter. Users were considered "active" if they posted on the platform at least once within a 15-day period.

The researchers found that in the 6-month period after Musk took over Twitter, only 52.5% of these environmental users were still actively using Twitter—a substantially larger drop-off rate than other

"comparable online communities," including users who discuss general politics on the platform.

"There is currently no platform equivalent to Twitter," the team writes. "Thus, any changes in engagement by environmentally-minded users raises serious questions about where to track discourse about environmental conservation and how to mobilize pro-environmental segments of the public."

Going forward, the authors call upon researchers to take an active role in the transition towards different modes of environmental communication—whether that be advocating for change within Twitter to help make it a useful platform for environmentalists again or collectively switching to another platform like Mastodon or Threads. They also point to resources like the Coalition for Independent Technology Research, which bring people together to voice concerns to Twitter representatives and policymakers.

"The future of Twitter as a platform for outreach and research is uncertain," write the authors. "We need to create collaborations across industry, the non-profit sector, and academia to track [public engagement](#) with the environment across [social media platforms](#) for the benefit of primary research, applied [environmental conservation](#), and climate mitigation."

More information: Environmental users abandoned Twitter after Musk takeover, *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.tree.2023.07.002](#)

Provided by Cell Press

Citation: Nearly 50% of environmentalists abandoned Twitter following Musk's takeover (2023, August 15) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-08-environmentalists-abandoned-twitter-musk-takeover.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.