

#Txlege Analysis

84TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE
JAN. 13 - FEB. 17



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#TXLEGE IS BACK IN SESSION

As the 84th Texas Legislature gets underway, Influence Opinions will be doing a semi-regular analysis of how it is manifesting on social media. This report covers the time between opening day and Governor Abbott's State of the State address, January 13 to February 17, 2015.



With an increasingly Republican legislative body consisting of 15 percent new members (four in the Senate and 24 in the House), along with a new lieutenant governor and the first new governor in 14 years, it is even harder to predict what will happen in the pink building than it has been in the past - and it has never been easy.



Using social media data, particularly data related to the Twitter hashtag #txlege and the activity of elected officials, this update provides a window into the online conversation around the new session. The Texas Legislature is an ongoing topic on social media so it is no surprise that the conversation has heated up with the legislators back in Austin.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS REPORT INCLUDE:



- An explosion in the number of people following legislators,
- #tcot prominence in the Texas legislative discussion,
- Number of legislators on Twitter, and
- Who is using #txlege the most.

While this legislative session brings much uncertainty, there is one thing we know for sure: Texans are engaged and talking about the new legislative session online, as evidenced by the dramatic spike in usage of the ubiquitous #txlege hashtag on Twitter since the start of the session.

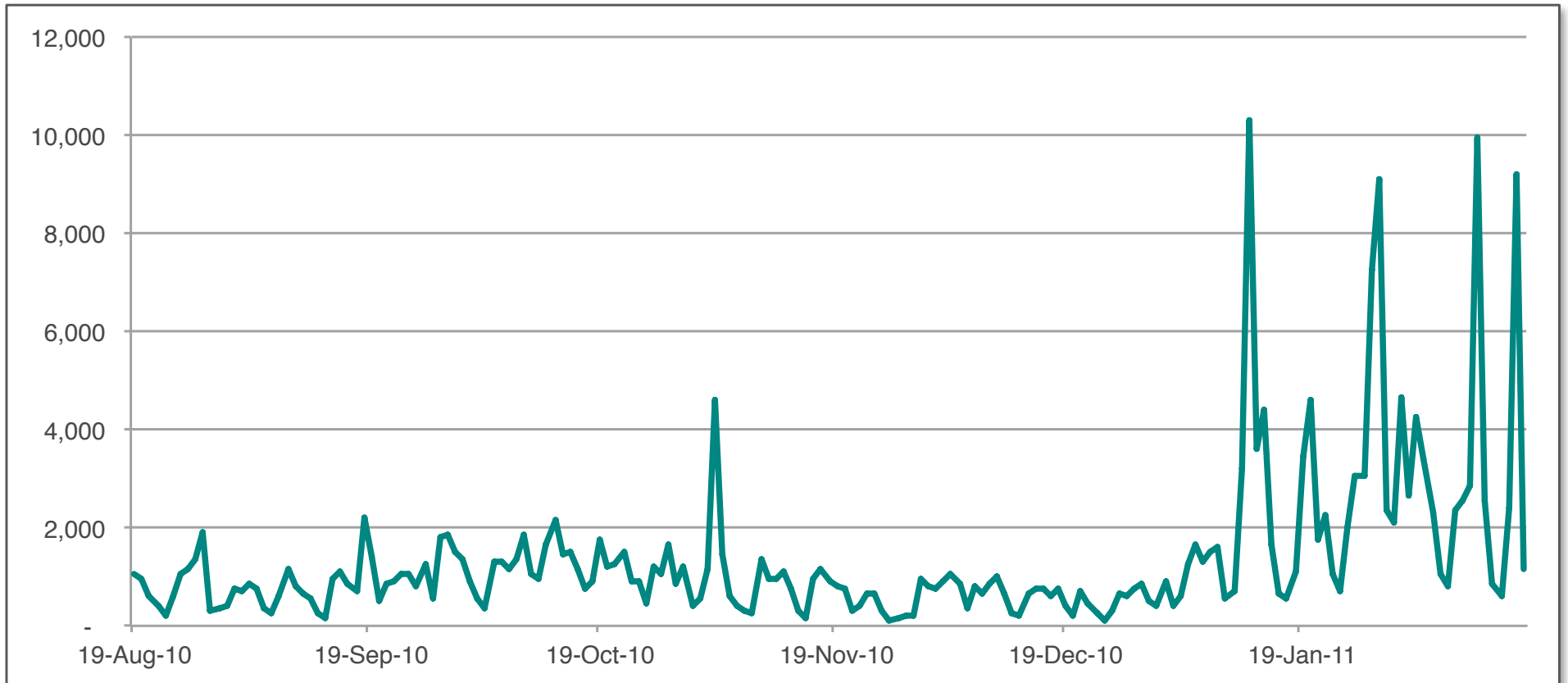


FIGURE 1: MENTIONS OF #TXLEGE IN TEXAS OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS (AUG. 20, 2014 - FEB. 18, 2015)

Not surprisingly, as constituents' online interest and activity grows, we continue to see an increasing number of legislators joining Twitter.

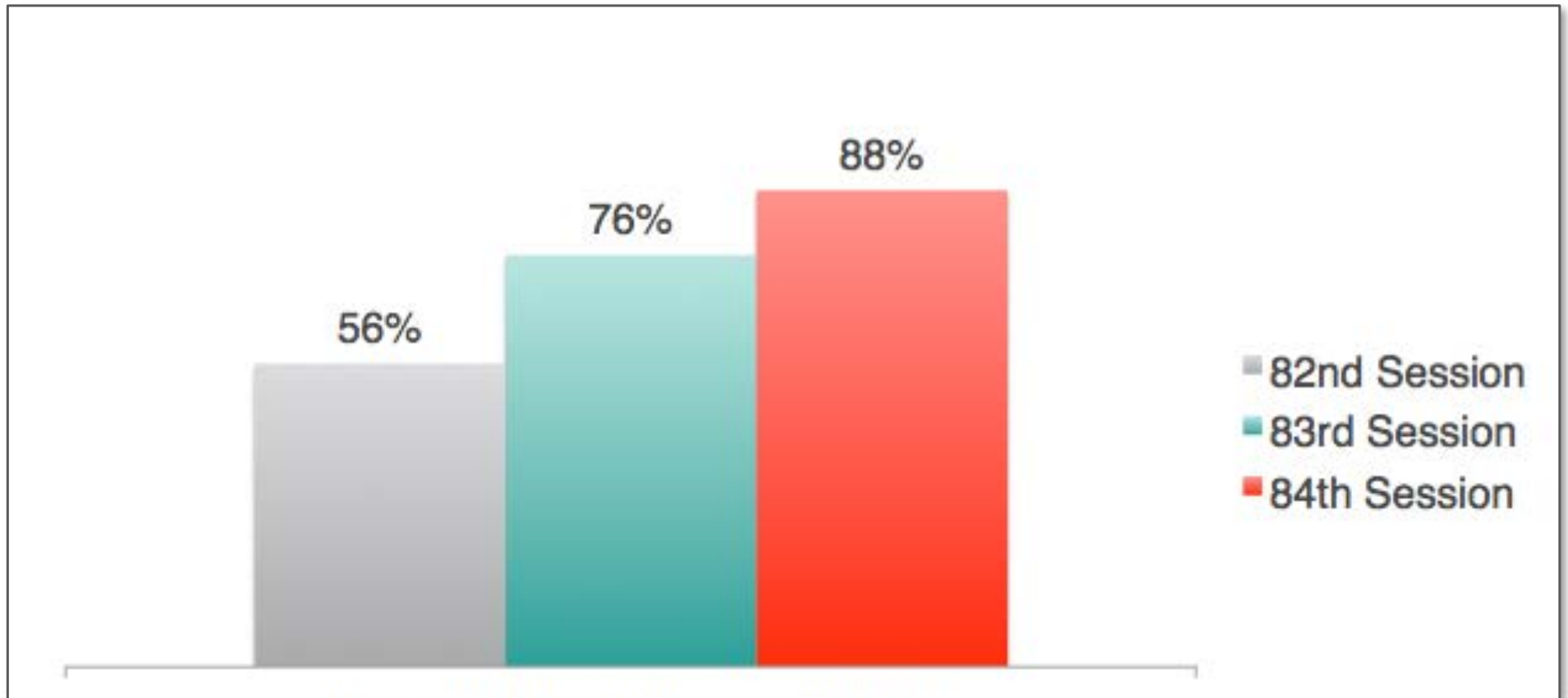
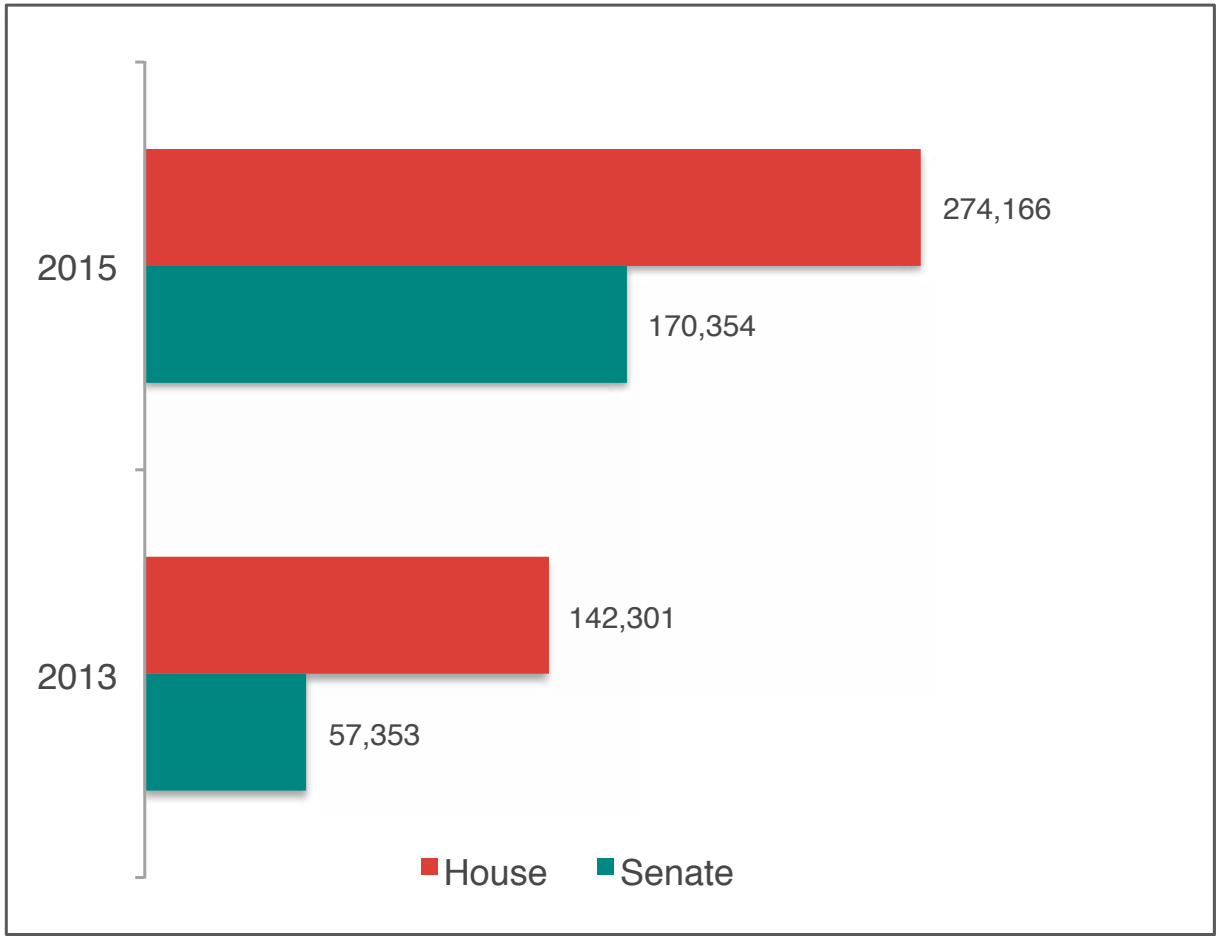


FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF LEGISLATORS ON TWITTER



Another indicator of Texans' increasing online engagement in state politics is the staggering rise in the number of people following legislators on Twitter compared to the last legislative session – an increase of almost 200 percent for Senate members and over 90 percent for House members.

FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOLLOWING HOUSE AND SENATE MEMBERS ON TWITTER

*As of January 2015:
 Senate members: 170,354 followers and 55,724 following
 House members: 274,166 followers and 83,023 following*



By party, we see a slightly higher percentage of Democrats on Twitter compared to Republicans. It seems both parties understand the importance of a strong social media presence.

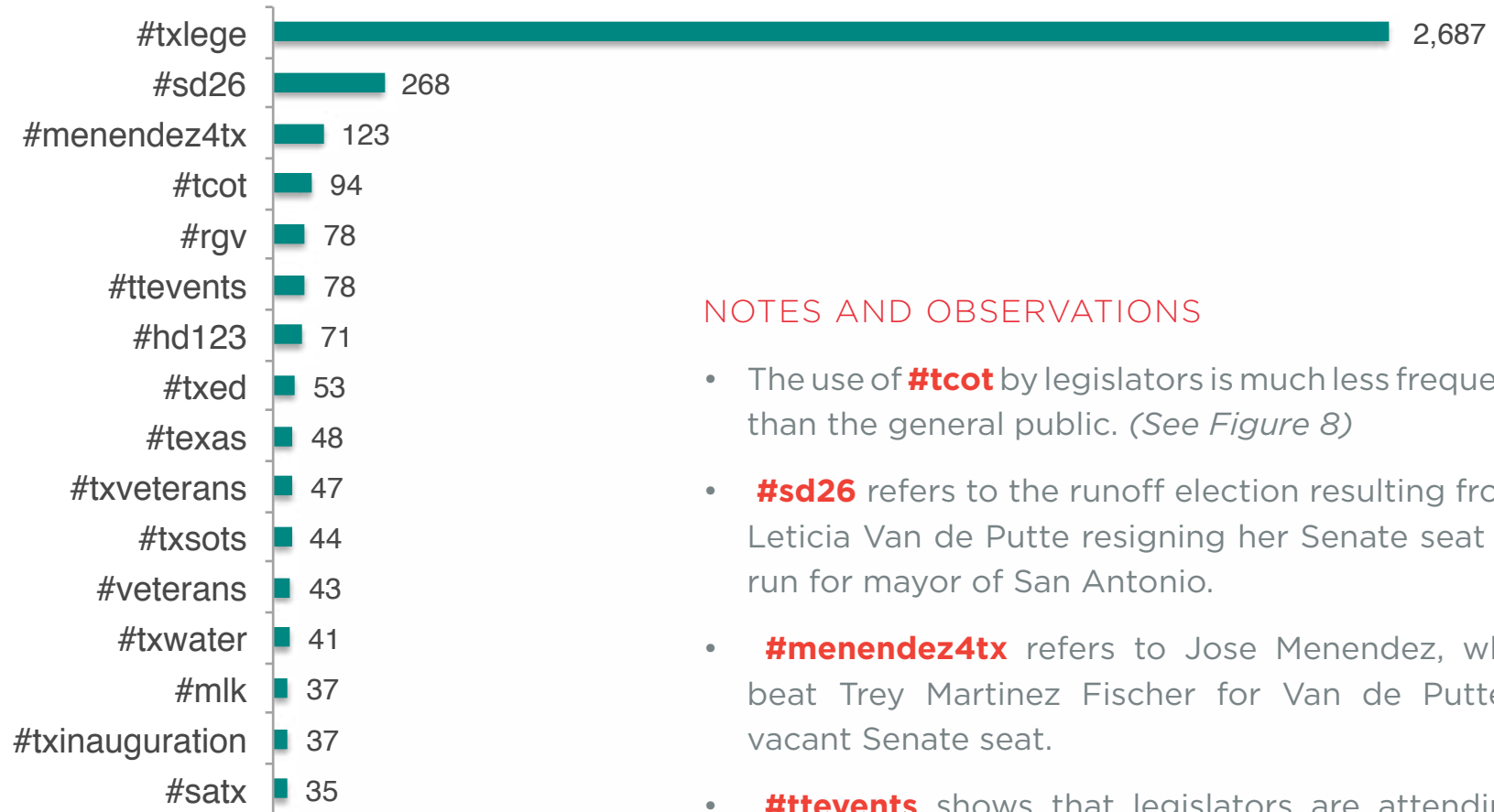
FIGURE 4: BREAKDOWN OF REPUBLICAN/DEMOCRAT MEMBERS ON TWITTER

Republicans – 101/116 on Twitter (87%)

Democrats – 58/64 on Twitter (91%)



While #txlege is by far the most used hashtag among legislators, it is useful to look at what other hashtags they are using. Not only does it show what they are interested in, it also hints at the best way to get their attention.



NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

- The use of **#tcot** by legislators is much less frequent than the general public. (See *Figure 8*)
- **#sd26** refers to the runoff election resulting from Leticia Van de Putte resigning her Senate seat to run for mayor of San Antonio.
- **#menendez4tx** refers to Jose Menendez, who beat Trey Martinez Fischer for Van de Putte's vacant Senate seat.
- **#ttevents** shows that legislators are attending Texas Tribune events and live tweeting.

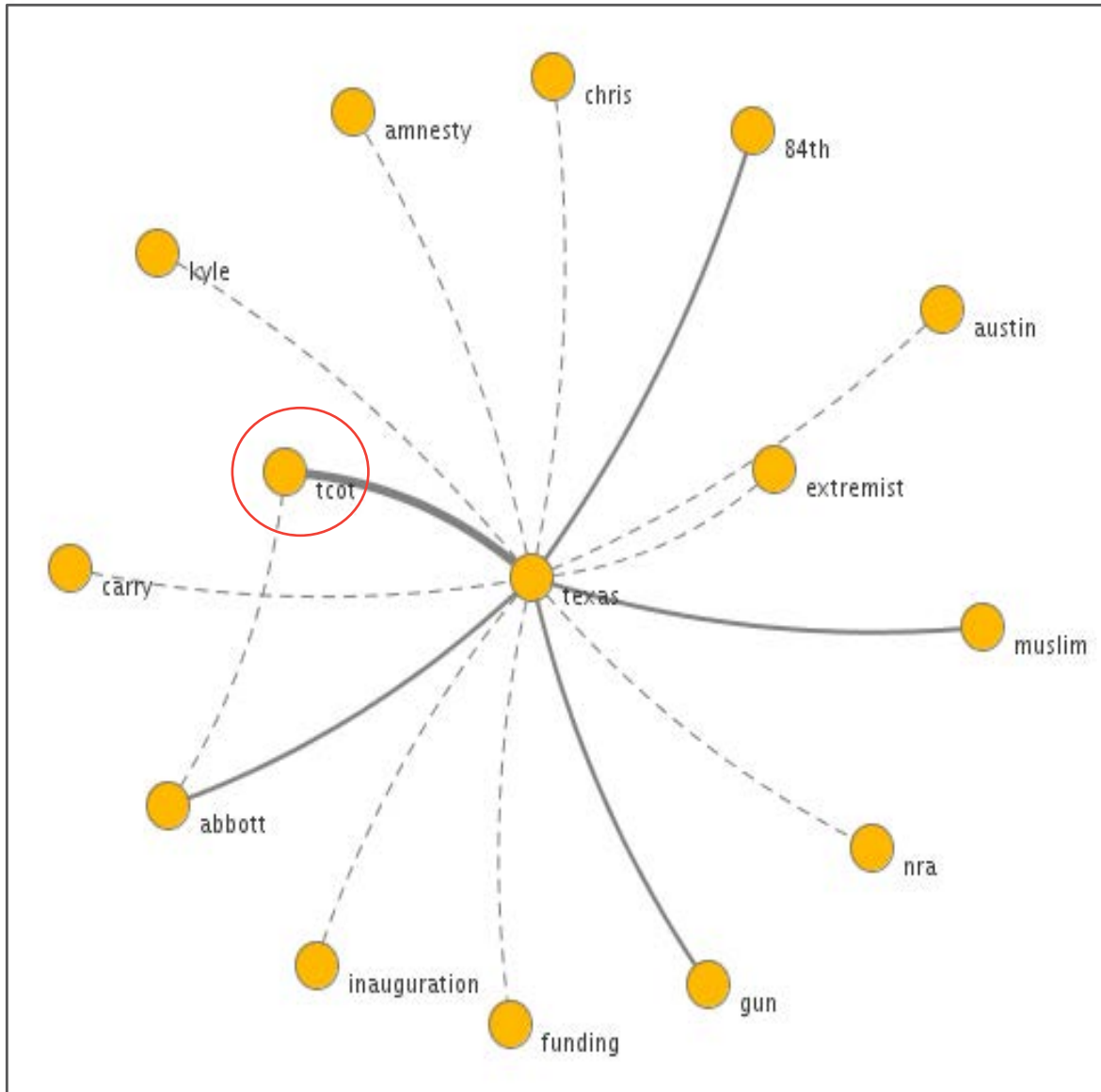
FIGURE 6: TOP HASHTAGS USED BY LEGISLATORS

HOW DOES THE CONVERSATION AROUND #TXLEGE LOOK?

In the past month in Texas, there were approximately 48,000 tweets containing #txlege. The next two graphs give an indication of the content of those tweets.

Much of the conversation in both Figure 7 and Figure 8 is around second amendment rights and limitations with topics such as NRA, #gunsense, #opencarry, #2a and more. We also see discussion around Chris Kyle (Figure 7), as well as education (Figure 8).

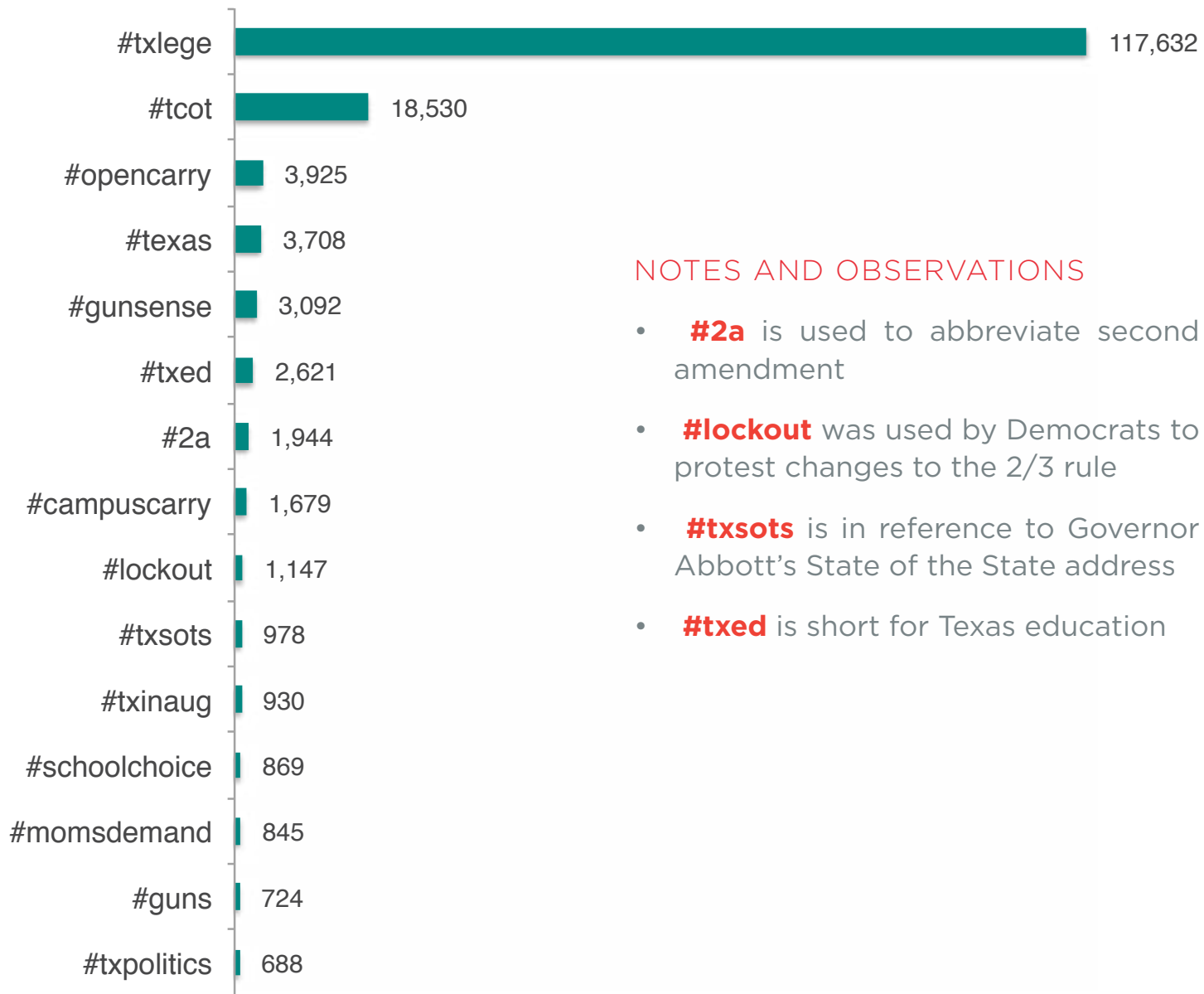




The buzzgraph shows that #tcot has a strong presence in the online conversation. We see that it is tied to “Abbott,” meaning it is often used by Abbott supporters.

A “buzzgraph” is a word-association graphic that displays the most used words in #txlege tweets. A bold line indicates a strong relationship (e.g. words often used together), a normal line indicates a moderate relationship, and a perforated line indicates a weaker relationship, but still a relationship none-the-less.

FIGURE 7: BUZZGRAPH OF TOPICS IN THE #TXLEGE DISCUSSION



NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

- **#2a** is used to abbreviate second amendment
- **#lockout** was used by Democrats to protest changes to the 2/3 rule
- **#txsots** is in reference to Governor Abbott's State of the State address
- **#txed** is short for Texas education

FIGURE 8: OTHER HASHTAGS USED ALONGSIDE #TXLEGE

This word cloud shows popular phrases that were repeatedly used in tweets containing #txlege. The results mirror the topics seen in the buzzgraph but provide more context.



FIGURE 9: POPULAR PHRASES USED IN THE #TXLEGE DISCUSSION



As in many of the legislative issues we follow, we see a strong gender gap among those using the #txlege hashtag.

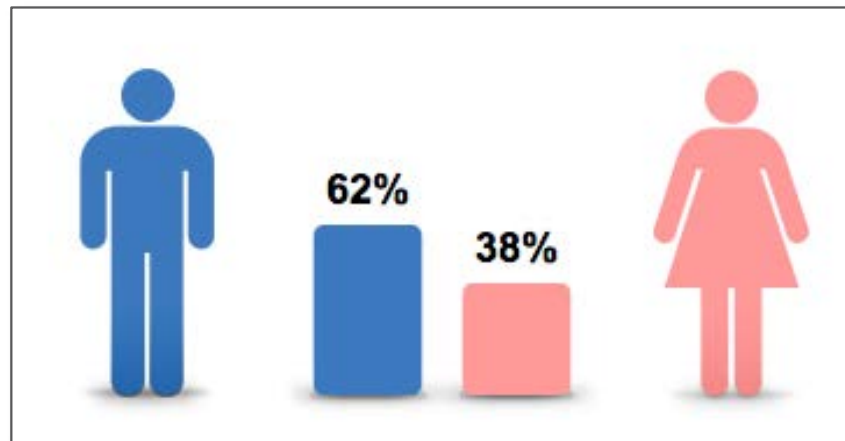


FIGURE 10: BREAKDOWN BY GENDER OF TWEETS CONTAINING #TXLEGE

The following chart shows the Twitter handles that used #txlege the most over the last 36 days and includes media outlets, reporters and activists.

Twitter User	Description
@84thlegislature	The 84 th Legislature
@lmcgaughy	Lauren McGaughy, Austin bureau reporter for Houston Chronicle
@texastribune	Texas Tribune
@kiahcollier	Kiah Collier, legislative reporter for Austin American Statesman
@cd_hooks	Christopher Hooks, politics content creator for Texas Observer
@push_junction	Push Junction, press releases
@moderatemama	Jane, activist
@shannonwatts	Shannon Watts, founder of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
@eramshaw	Emily Ramshaw, editor for Texas Tribune
@scottbraddock	Scott Braddock, Quorum Report
@morgansmith	Morgan Smith, reporter for Texas Tribune
@patricksvitek	Patrick Svitek, Austin bureau reporter for Houston Chronicle

FIGURE 11: TWITTER USERS WITH TWEETS CONTAINING #TXLEGE MOST FREQUENTLY

People all over the state are using the #txlege hashtag. Not surprisingly, most of the uses originate from the state capital, followed by the most populous cities.

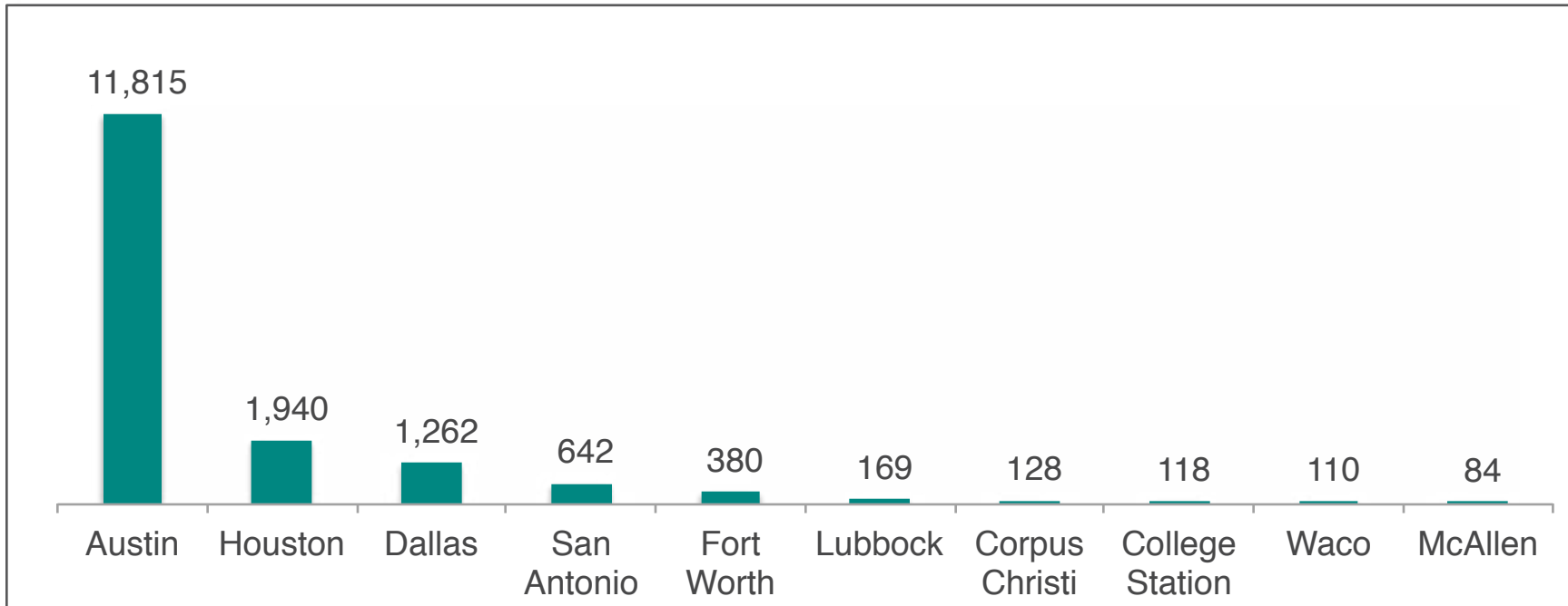


FIGURE 12: CITIES USING #TXLEGE MOST FREQUENTLY



Be sure to look for our next #txlege report in March. Each month during the session, we will uncover new insights related to the Texas legislature in social media, such as who is getting mentioned the most in #txlege tweets and who legislators are following on Twitter.

ABOUT INFLUENCE OPINIONS

Influence Opinions™ (IO) is a communications strategy firm that works at the intersection of public affairs and marketing. We build and execute winning campaigns around public initiatives – on the local, state, and national level. At the end of the day, we transform public opinion so our corporate, government agency, and cause-related clients can more quickly and effectively meet their objectives – be it educating consumers and taxpayers, framing discussions on fact-based demographic and funding realities, and expanding the dialogue to include options that elevate quality of life.

Our team brings an abundance of experience in messaging, positioning, stakeholder outreach and public affairs communications for public awareness campaigns. This experience, coupled with an expertise in digital issues mapping, provides a full view of a client's issue, which allows us to identify the best approach to transform the public conversation to ensure the debate is solution-oriented and helps build community consensus.



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