

# Twitter accounts of candidates in the German federal election 2021

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<sup>3</sup>*Digital Society Project*

GERMANY CANDIDATE DATASET 2021, VERSION 2.0

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## Background

GESIS has been collecting the social media accounts of election candidates and their posts on Facebook and Twitter for the German federal elections since 2013 (Kaczmarek et al., 2014; Stier et al., 2018). In 2021, GESIS and the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES)<sup>1</sup> are conducting the same effort in collaboration with the Digital Society Project<sup>2</sup> and Twitter. With this pre-release, we are publishing data for all candidates of the seven major German parties (AfD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, CDU, CSU, Die Linke, FDP, SPD) and their Twitter accounts. The candidate information was collected already since the start of 2021 but validated against the official candidate data published by the Federal Returning Officer (*Bundeswahlleiter*).<sup>3</sup> If users encounter errors in the data, we would appreciate a notification to [gles\(at\)gesis\(dot\)org](mailto:gles(at)gesis(dot)org).

The data should be valuable for researchers who want to collect candidate tweets in real time during the hot phase of the 2021 German election campaign. Thanks to Twitter’s new Academic Research Product Track, researchers can even retrospectively collect historical tweets sent by election candidates.<sup>4</sup> We hope that the released data and newly available tools for data collection open up new avenues for reproducible research with social media data.

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<sup>1</sup><https://gles.eu>

<sup>2</sup><http://digitalsocietyproject.org>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/dam/jcr/a15985ef-8772-48ca-8a72-f518bf6bca81/btw21-sonderheft-online.pdf>

<sup>4</sup><https://developer.twitter.com/en/products/twitter-api/academic-research>

## Verification of Twitter accounts

A team of 11 coders was researching the candidates and their Twitter accounts while the nomination process of state parties was unfolding over the course of 2021. Table 1 shows the decision process for searching Twitter accounts and verifying that they belong to the actual candidates.

Table 1: Verification process

Information source	Verification steps	Coding
1. Recent (local) news articles or candidate sections on websites of parties	Does the homepage link to an account that can be linked to the candidate based on their name?	yes → enter account no → skip no clear reference to the person → enter account with comment
2. Websites of candidates themselves		
Search function Google/Twitter	1. Is a party reference visible? Party logo/colors, reference to the party in their description, reference to their own candidacy 2. Does the profile image match images from party sources?	2x no → skip 2x yes → enter 1x yes → enter with comment if several accounts match these conditions → choose the one with the blue verification tick

## Description of included variables

Table 2: Variables included in the dataset

Variable	Description
id	Internal candidate ID
lastname	Last name
firstname	First name
gender	Gender
state	German federal state in which the candidate is running
party	Party
district_name	Official name of the constituency if the candidate is running for a direct mandate
district_number	Official number of the constituency if the candidate is running for a direct mandate
incumbent	Is the candidate a sitting member of the federal parliament ( <i>Bundestag</i> )?
list_place	The candidate's place on the party list (if s/he is listed)
isListed	Is the candidate running on a party list?
isDC	Is the candidate a direct candidate in one of the constituencies?
screen_name1	Screen name of the first Twitter account of the candidate (if it exists)
screen_name2	Screen name of the second Twitter account of the candidate (if it exists)
user_id1	Unique Twitter user ID of the first Twitter account of the candidate (if it exists)
user_id2	Unique Twitter user ID of the second Twitter account of the candidate (if it exists)
change_v2	Variable marking candidates with changes in Twitter accounts in version 2.0

## References

- Kaczmirek, L., Mayr, P., Vatrapu, R., Bleier, A., Blumenberg, M., Gummer, T., ... others (2014). Social media monitoring of the campaigns for the 2013 German Bundestag elections on Facebook and Twitter. *GESIS – Working Papers*, 31. Retrieved from <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-381955>
- Stier, S., Bleier, A., Bonart, M., Mörsheim, F., Bohlouli, M., Nizhegorodov, M., ... Staab, S. (2018). Systematically monitoring social media: The case of the German federal election 2017. *GESIS Papers 2018/04*. Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56149-4>