

INTRODUCTION

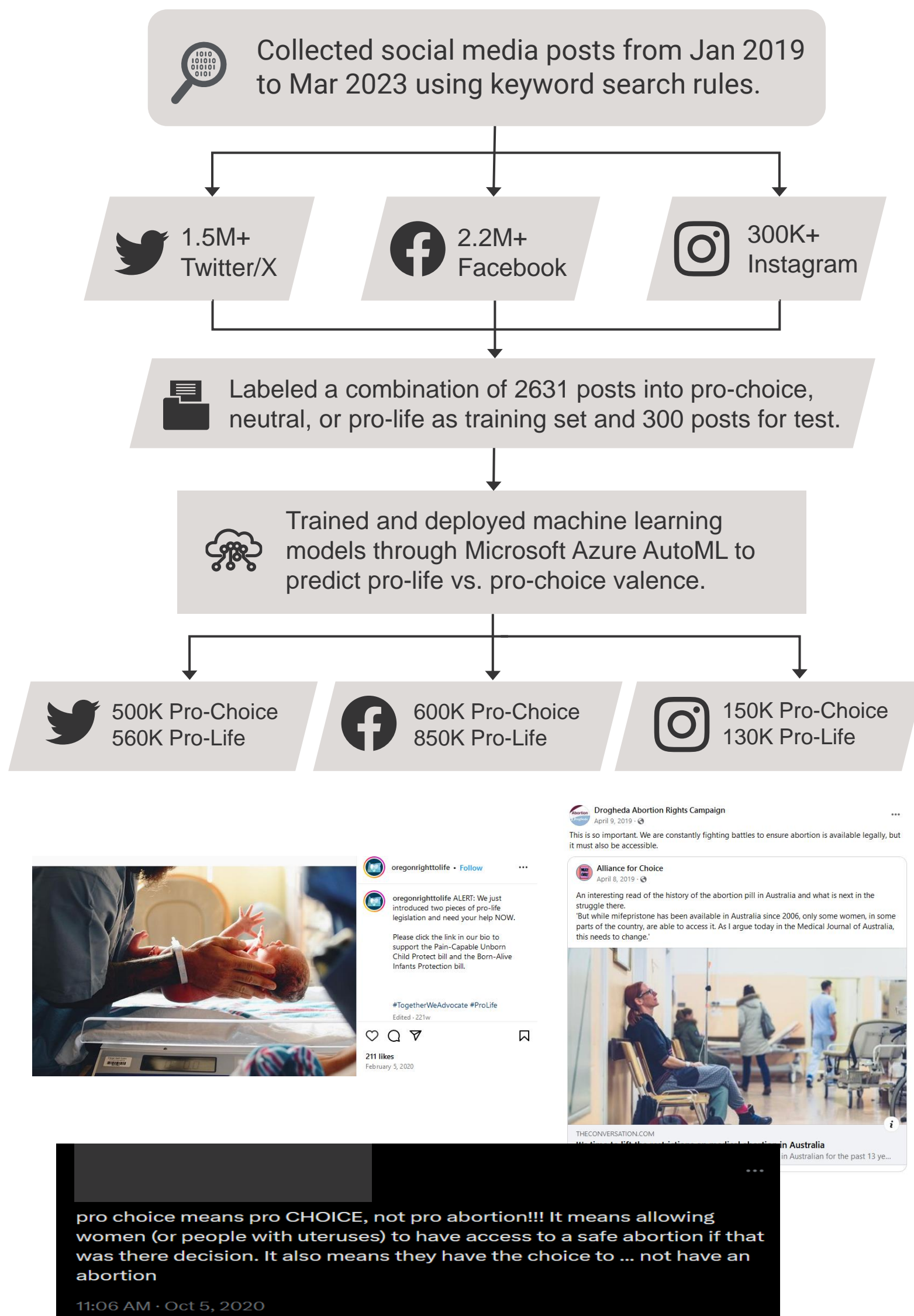
Understanding how social media (SM) data can complement traditional survey data is crucial since social both shapes and reflects public opinion.

NORC's Social Data Collaboratory introduces the General Social Media Archive (GSMA), a new data source that can provide context for public opinion research about various salient topics including abortion, gun control, gay marriage, marijuana legalization, taxation, and climate change.

Below, we focus on the pro-life versus pro-choice debate across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



METHODS



RESULTS

Pro-Life's Consistent Messaging and Proactive Strategies Shaped Policy Despite Not Reflecting Public Opinion.

Message Framing

Pro-Life messages are persistent in effort:

- Over the period of observation, pro-life content exceeded pro-choice content in the number of **posts and audiences** (reach).
- During brief outrage periods against state abortion bans and the overturn of Roe V. Wade, pro-choice posts outnumbered pro-life.

Pro-Life posts are consistent in their messaging:

- Pro-Life posts generally had a **simple and single focus** on saving the infant lives
- In contrast, pro-Choice posts represented many messages: health of the mother, bodily autonomy, safety of abortion, women's rights as human rights; and patriarchy.

Pro-Life does not just produce more volume:

- They generate more reach and engagement
- There is a sizable online population that consume and amplify these messages
- Suggesting more **dedication and coordination among accounts that post pro-life content**

Social Media and GSS

Social media may not reflect public opinion, but may represent agenda setting and policy advocacy that ultimately influences public policy

- Pro-life content likely reflected the steady efforts of grass-roots activism and policy advocacy organizations but was not salient to the general public when state and national policies were more closely aligned with public opinion.
- The higher volume of pro-choice posts during the outrage spikes more closely reflect the proportion of pro-choice opinions represented in surveys of the American public.
- Our findings suggest that public opinion may be more closely reflected on social media when an event galvanizes the public to speak out

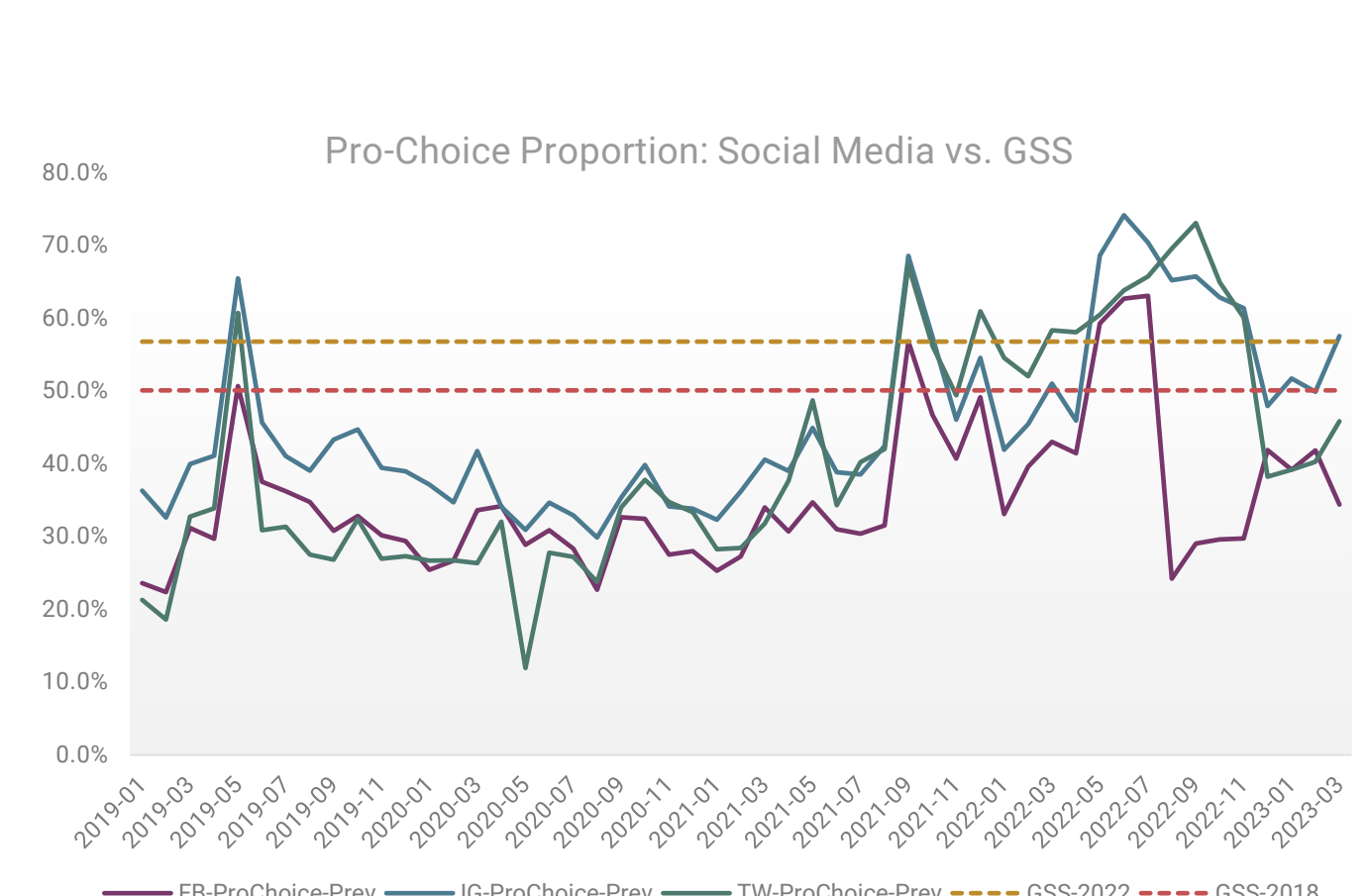
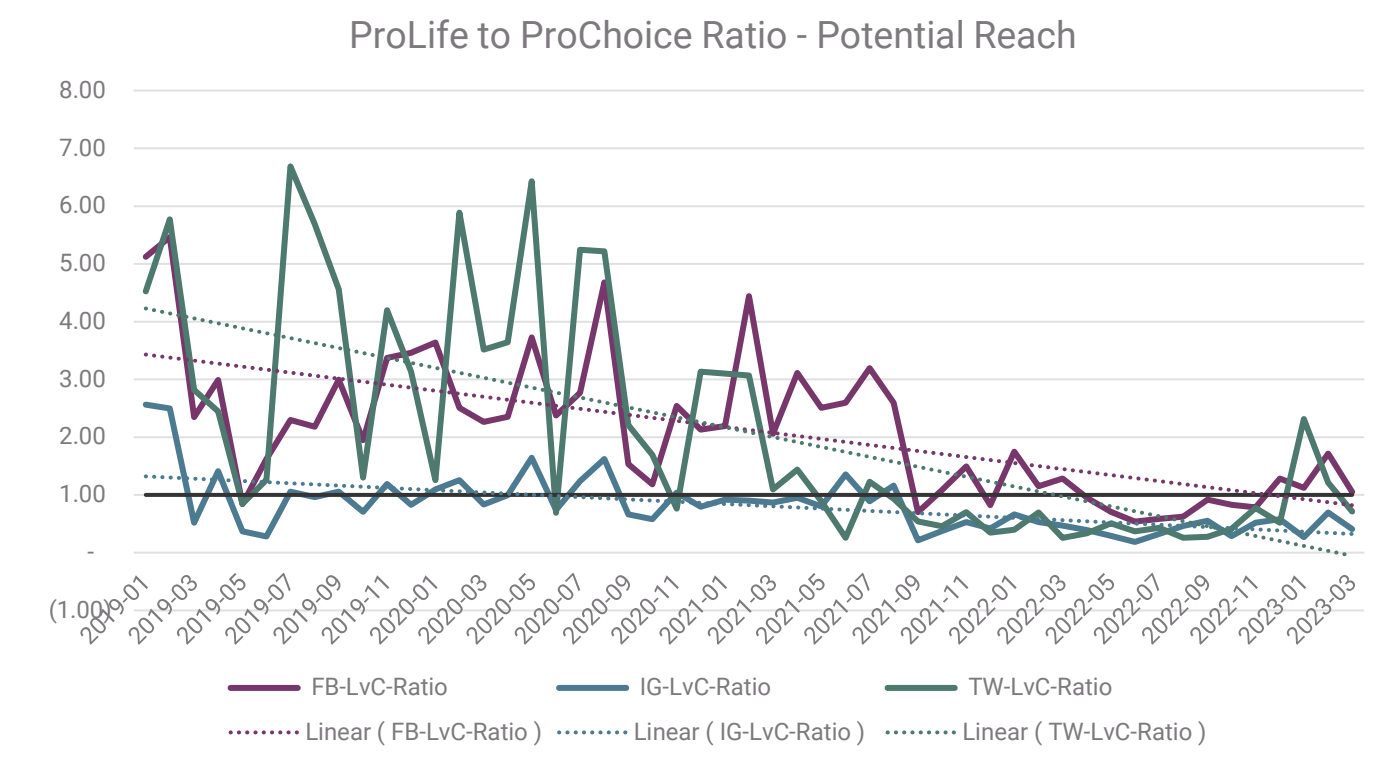
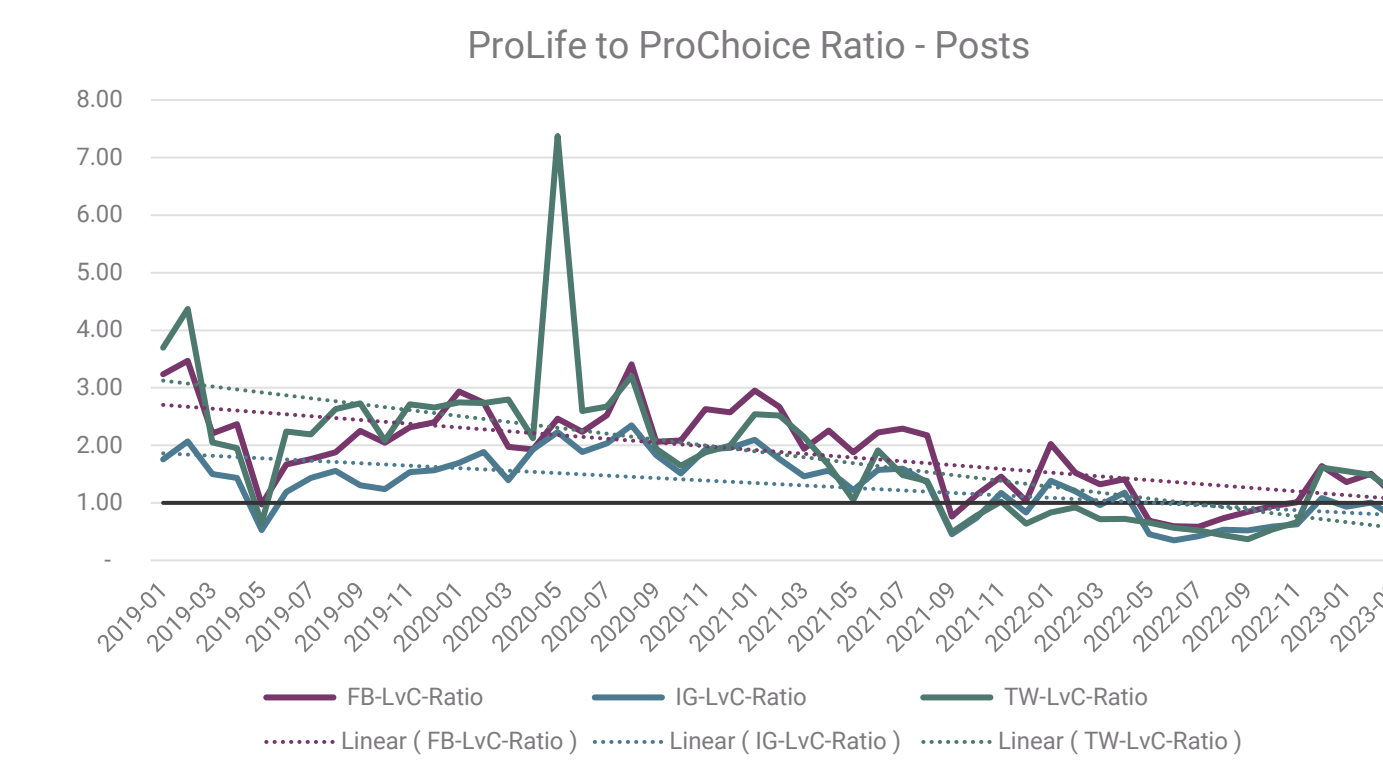
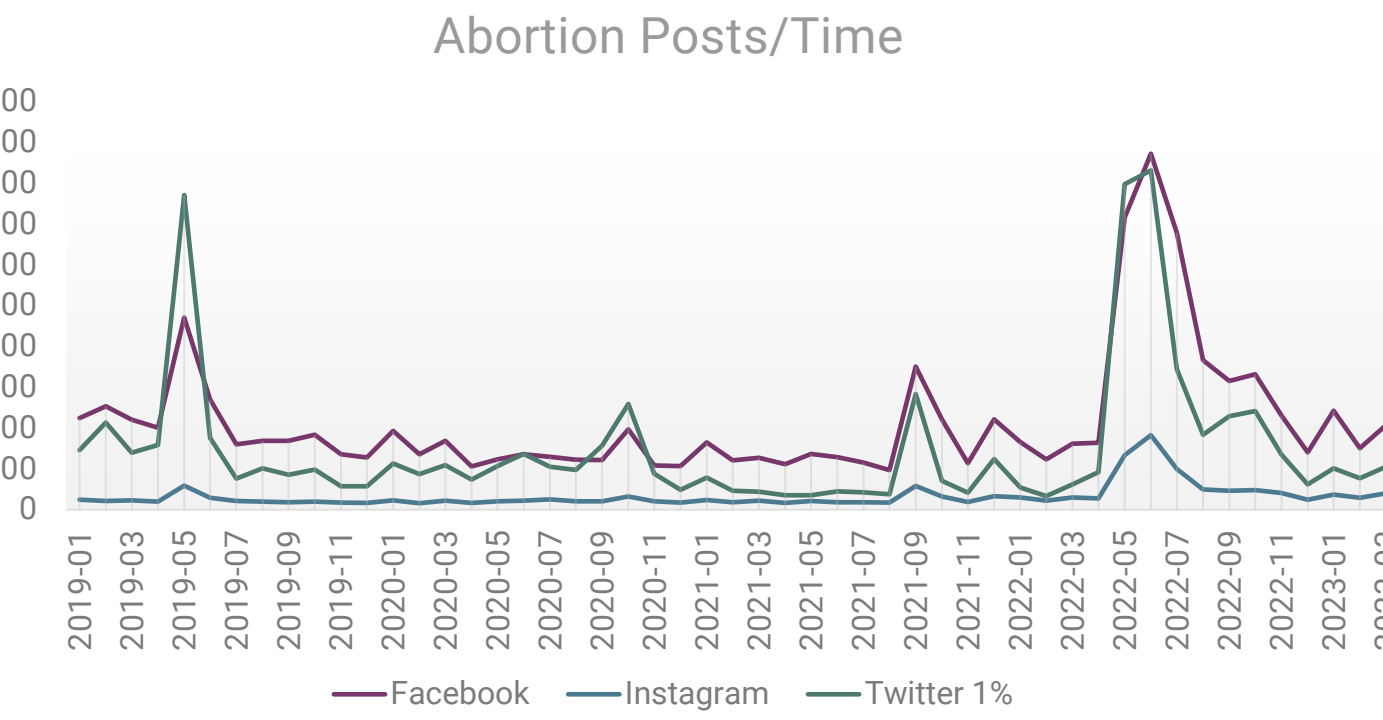
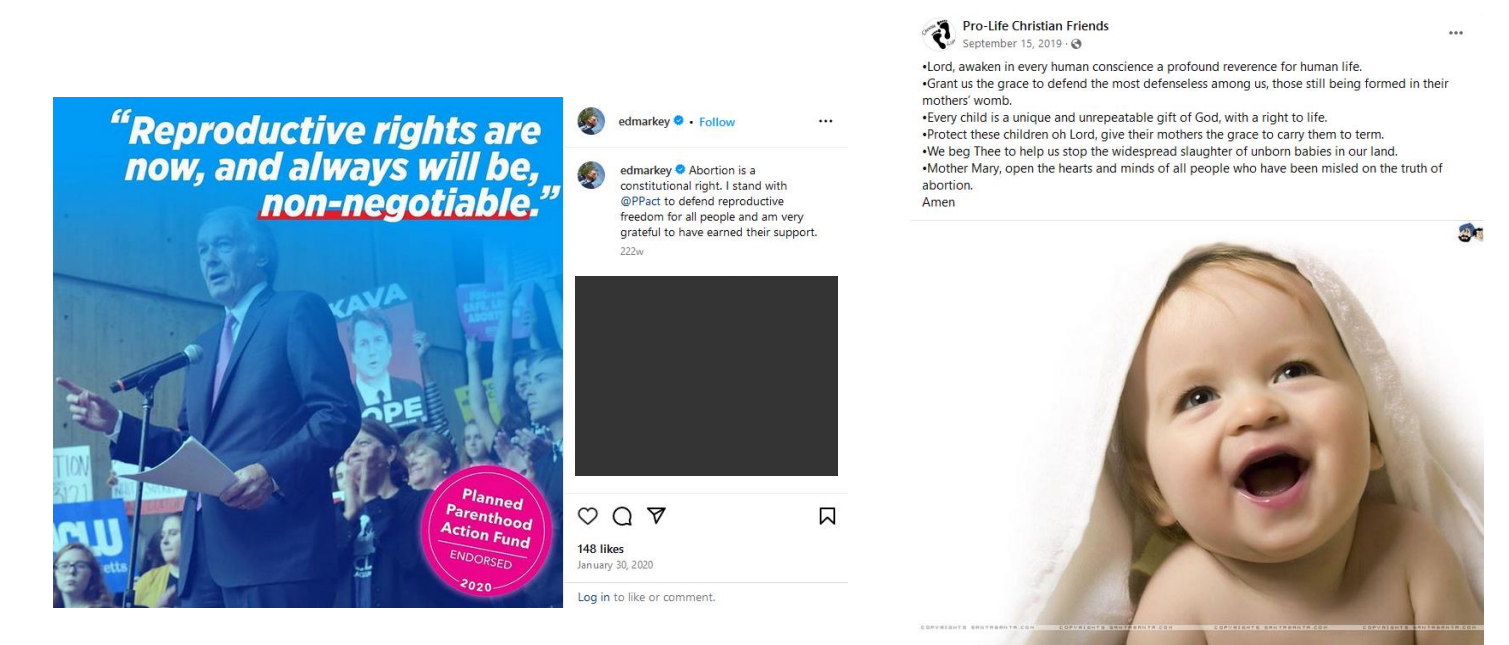
DISCUSSION

Each platform serves a different audience and communication function:

- Facebook is data consist of public pages, where there are more organization with clear agenda. These organizations are more right leaning
- Twitter/X: few users create original contents. Driven by Retweets and news coverage of policy events.
- Instagram is perhaps most organic and representative of younger generations
- It is important to consider the audience and communication functions of different platforms to understand how they reflect and influence public opinion.

Hypothesis:

- Social media opinions are more about **influence than representation**.
- Thus, despite not being the majority, Pro-Life groups effectively used social media to influence policy.



CONCLUSION

The consistent, vocal, and organized nature of pro-life discussion online presents a contrast to the majority pro-choice viewpoint in studies like the General Social Survey. Unlike periodic surveys, SM analysis offers a retrospective view of how public opinion evolved. The persistent dominance of pro-life messaging between policy events suggests that advocacy groups leverage SM to set agendas during times when the general public is less engaged with policy discourses. This research underlines the significance of SM in understanding public opinion dynamic on contentious issues like abortion.

CONTACT

Hy Tran
Senior Data Scientist
NORC at the University of Chicago
Email: tran-hy@norc.org

