

Keystone XL

A social media and online news analysis

January 2012



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This report is meant to highlight the scope and nature of social and online media coverage pertaining to the Keystone XL project, during the month of November 2011.

Using keywords, MediaMiser selected **1,275** online news articles (including syndicated articles and columns) in November along with **34,835** tweets collected from Nov. 7 to 30.

MediaMiser randomly selected **141** news articles, which were toned on a five-point scale (from -2, or very **negative**, to +2, or very **positive**) from the point of view of TransCanada Pipeline and the Keystone XL project using the following five themes:

- **Job creation**
- **Environmental impact/Concerns including potential of spills and greenhouse gases**
- **Market/profit associated with the pipeline**
- **Movement of the proposed route**
- **Delays of the pipeline**

When one of the above was presented in favour of TransCanada or the Keystone XL pipeline, a point was added. A point loss was incurred when one of the above was presented unfavourably.

For toning favourable was defined as: pleasing, encouraging or approving of TransCanada or the Keystone Pipeline. Unfavourable was defined as discouraging, disapproving, or critical of TransCanada or Keystone XL. Scores were added for each article, and translated according to MediaMiser's coding rationale to obtain final article tone.

Tweets were toned using MediaMiser's automated toning engine.



Top Twitter Influencers

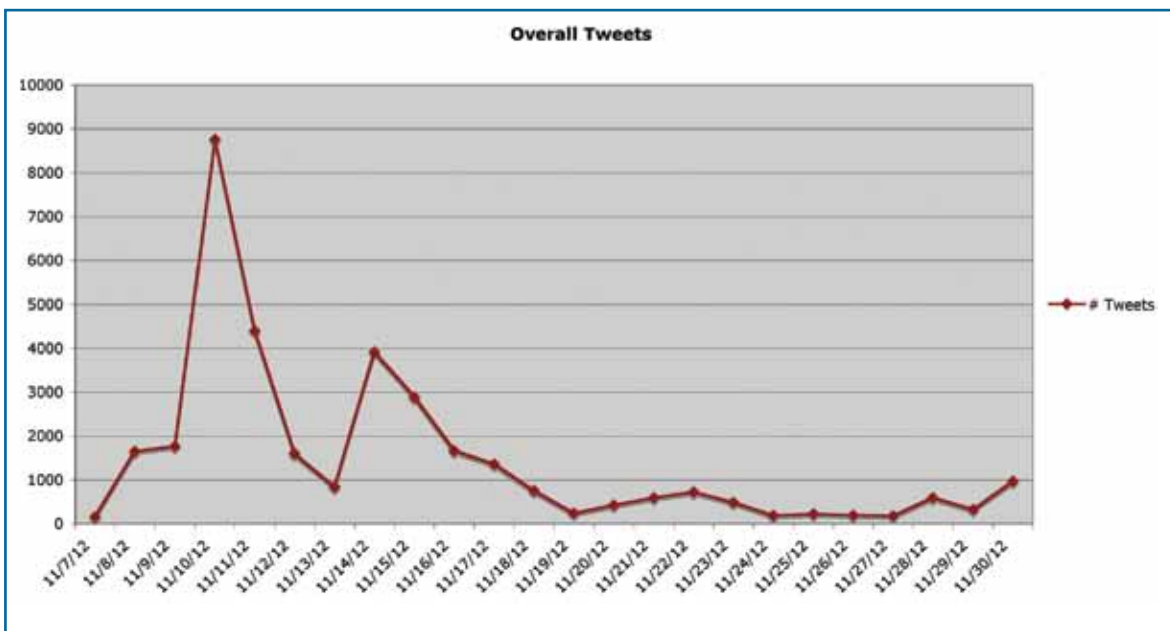
User	Influence rate
@change	249
@BreakingNews	187
@Reuters	170
@TheEconomist	152
@thinkprogress	97
@nytimes	65
@WSJ	64
@FoxNews	64
@IS_Foundation	60.5
@HuffingtonPost	54.33
@Mruff221	49.25

Twitter tone

- Positive tweets → 2%
- Neutral → 79%
- Negative → 19%

Twitter activity was highest following a large anti-Keystone XL protest at the beginning of the month and subsequent decision to delay the project (see timeline, p. 10). Tweets were overwhelmingly negative or neutral towards the Keystone XL pipeline, with very few pro-Keystone tweets overall.

The only individual in the top ten influencers was actor Mark Ruffalo (@MRuff221), whose 12 tweets were all negative from the perspective of Keystone XL.

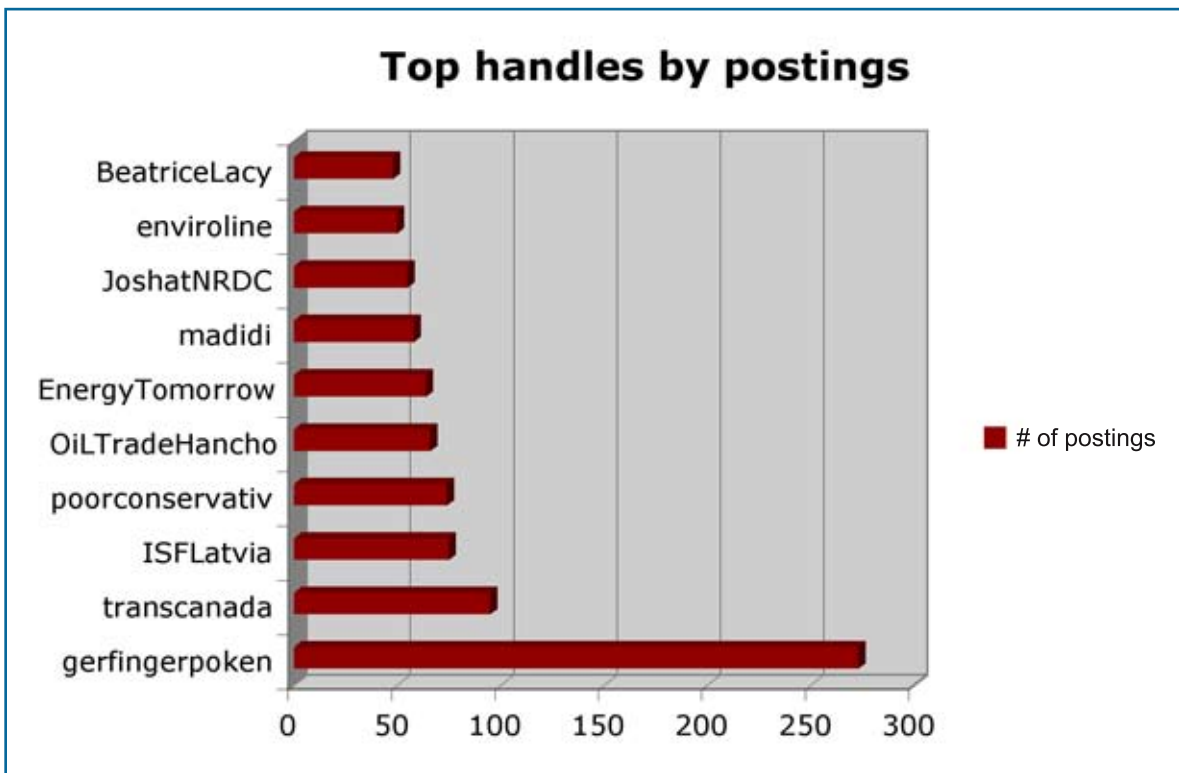


Top handles by postings

User	# of posts
@gerfingerpoken	273
@transcanada	95
@ISFLatvia	75
@poorconservativ	74
@OilTradeHancho	66
@EnergyTomorrow	64
@madidi	58
@JoshatNRDC	55
@enviroline	50
@BeatriceLacy	48

TransCanada Corp. did a good job engaging those following the issue on Twitter by tweeting relevant news that was generally favourable towards the Keystone XL pipeline.

The only other user more active on the topic was Daniel J. Sobieski (@gerfingerpoken), a conservative editorial writer at *Investor's Business Daily* who describes himself as "somewhere to the right of Attila The Hun." Most of his tweets were self-promotional and pointed toward his own articles.

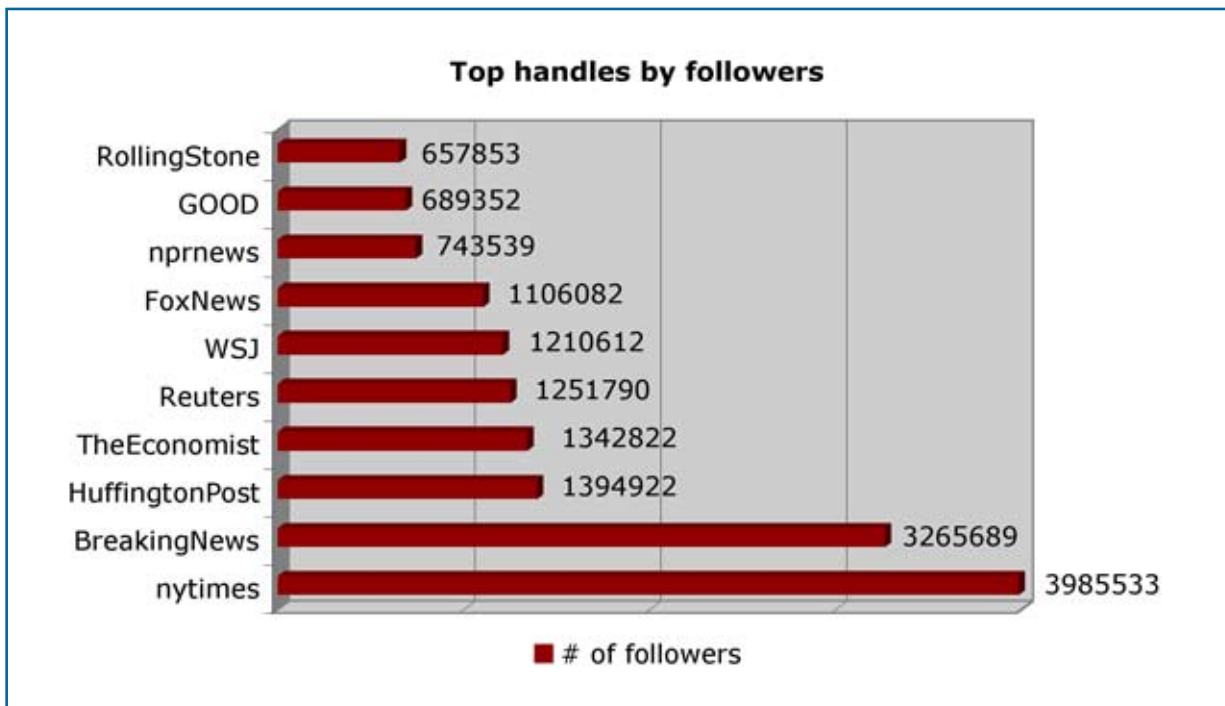


Top handles by followers

User	# of followers
@nytimes	3,985,533
@BreakingNews	3,265,689
@HuffingtonPost	1,394,922
@TheEconomist	1,342,822
@Reuters	1,251,790
@WSJ	1,210,612
@FoxNews	1,106,082
@nprnews	743,539
@GOOD	689,352
@RollingStone	657,853

Of the top handles by followers, all were media sources of some kind including magazines (*Rolling Stone* and *The Economist*), newswires (Reuters), newspapers (*The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*), or other types of media outlets such as online aggregators (BreakingNews).

@GOOD, while not a typical news outlet, is a U.S. online magazine produced by "a collaboration of individuals, businesses and nonprofits."

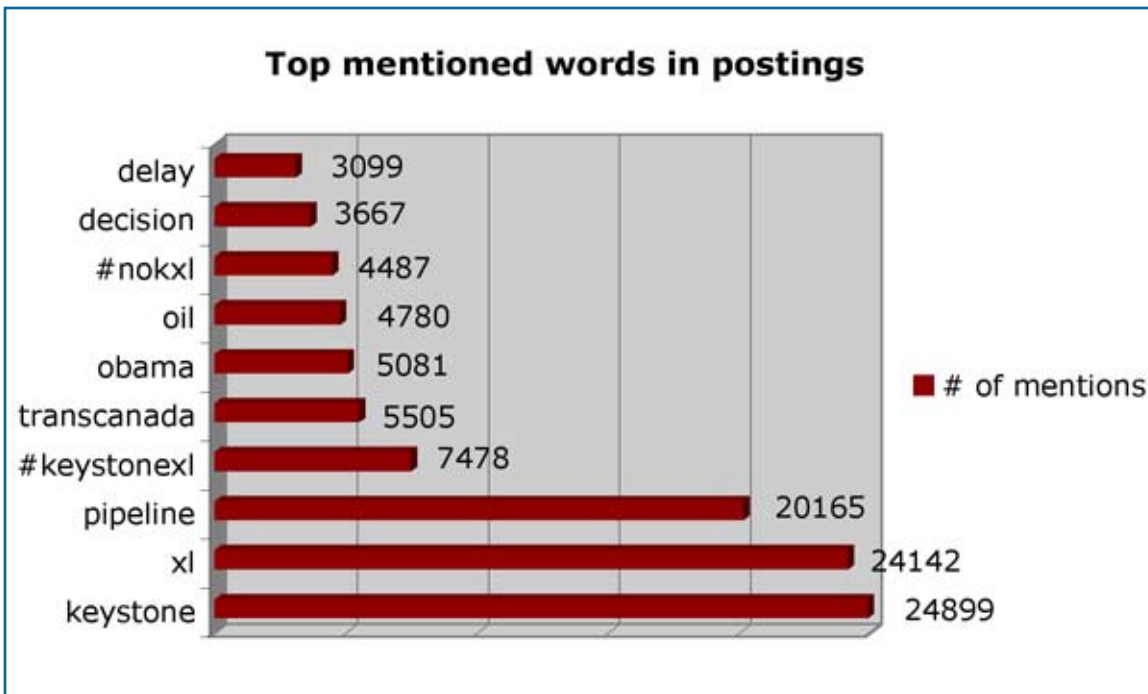


Top mentioned words in postings

Word	# of mentions
keystone	24,899
xl	24,142
pipeline	20,165
#keystonexl	7,478
transcanada	5,505
obama	5,081
oil	4,780
#nokxl	4,487
decision	3,667
delay	3,099

The top mentioned words are generally unsurprising, with the most popular being those associated directly with the project such as "Keystone", "XL" and "pipeline". However, Twitter opposition to the project is indicated by the popularity of words such as **"delay"** and **"#nokxl"** (a hashtag used ubiquitously by those in opposition to the project).

The U.S. government's decision to delay the project also contributed to the top ten words (ie. "decision", "delay").



Top mentioned hashtags

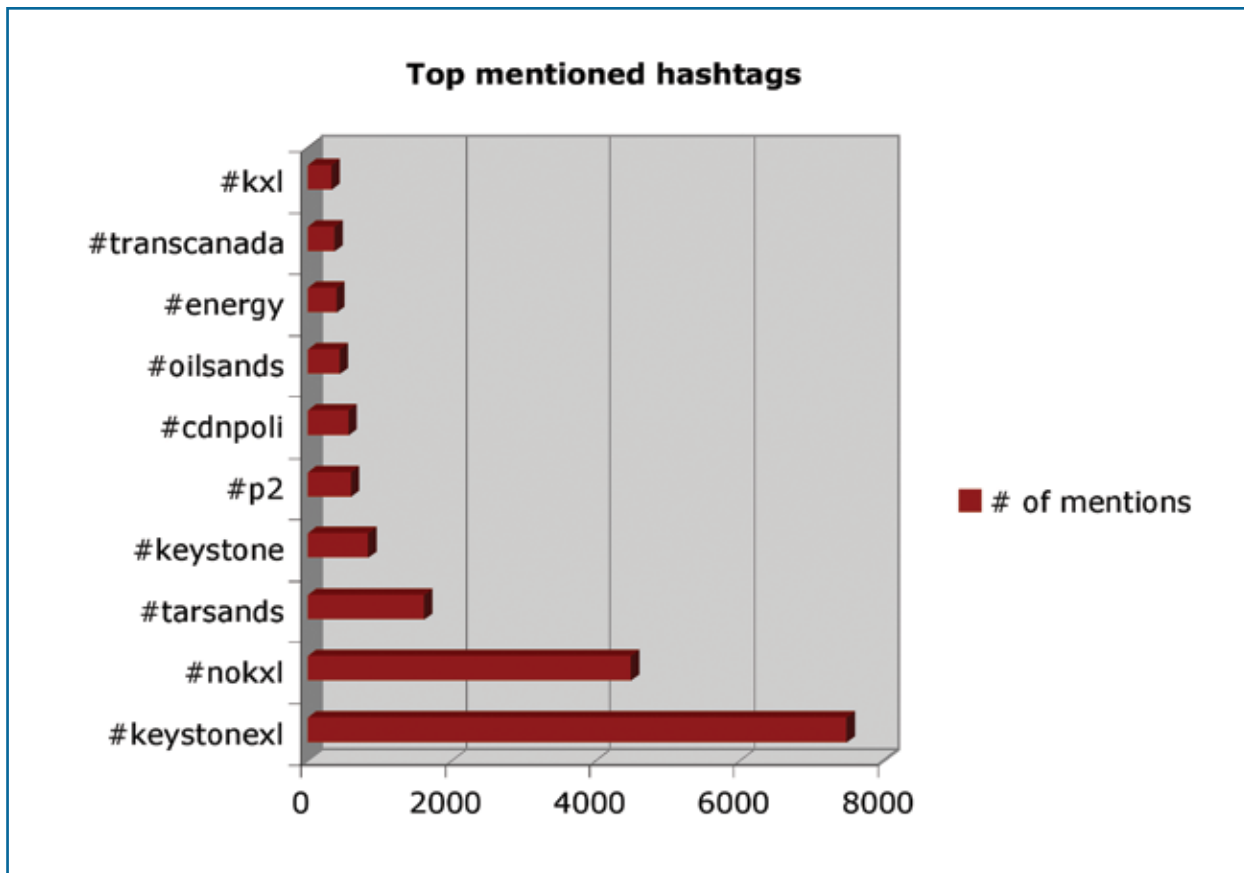
Hashtag	# of mentions
#keystonexl	7,478
#nokxl	4,487
#tarsands	1,623
#keystone	846
#p2	602
#cdnpoli	570
#oilsands	448
#energy	404
#transcanada	375
#kxl	334

Oil sands vs. tar sands

After analyzing both tweets and online media coverage of Keystone XL, it became apparent that supporters of the project or those with neutral opinions used the term **“oil sands”** when describing the energy source.


Opponents of the Keystone project, however, almost always used the term **“tar sands”** when describing the very same energy source.

This illustrates clearly the power of language on both sides, and how each attempted to frame the issue using favourable terms.




Top mentioned web links


Tell TransCanada: Stop threatening the property of landowners for your dirty, unapproved pipeline.

(online petition against Keystone XL, at act.credoaction.com)  **459 links**


Stop the Tar Sands Oil Keystone XL Pipeline

(online petition against the pipeline at change.org)  **299 links**


Keystone cop-out: Once again, Barack Obama seems to have found a way to annoy everyone

(The Economist.com, Nov. 19 2011)  **139 mentions**

60% Favor Building Keystone XL Pipeline

(rasmussenreports.com, Nov. 23 2011)  **125 links**

Big news: We won. You won.

(tarsandsaction.org, Nov. 10 2011)  **107 links**

Three of the top five most tweeted web links were anti-Keystone in nature (two online petitions, one article at tarsandaction.org).

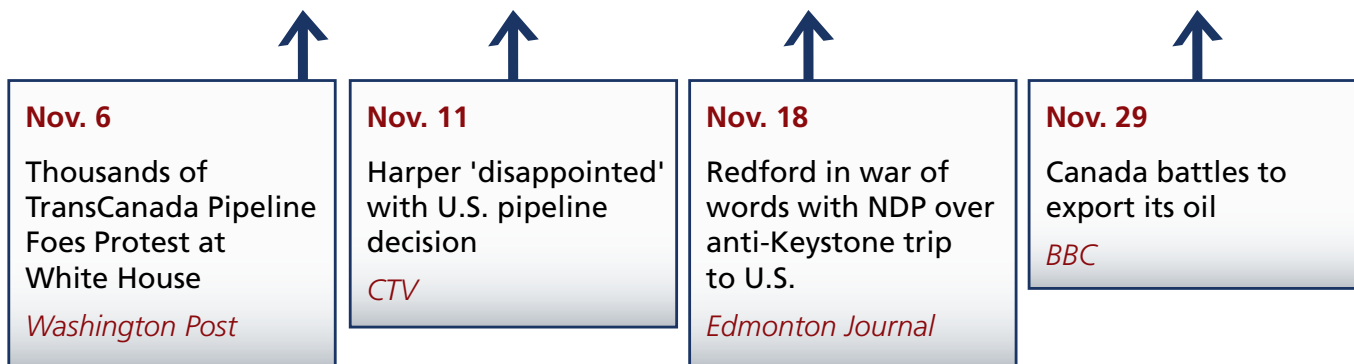
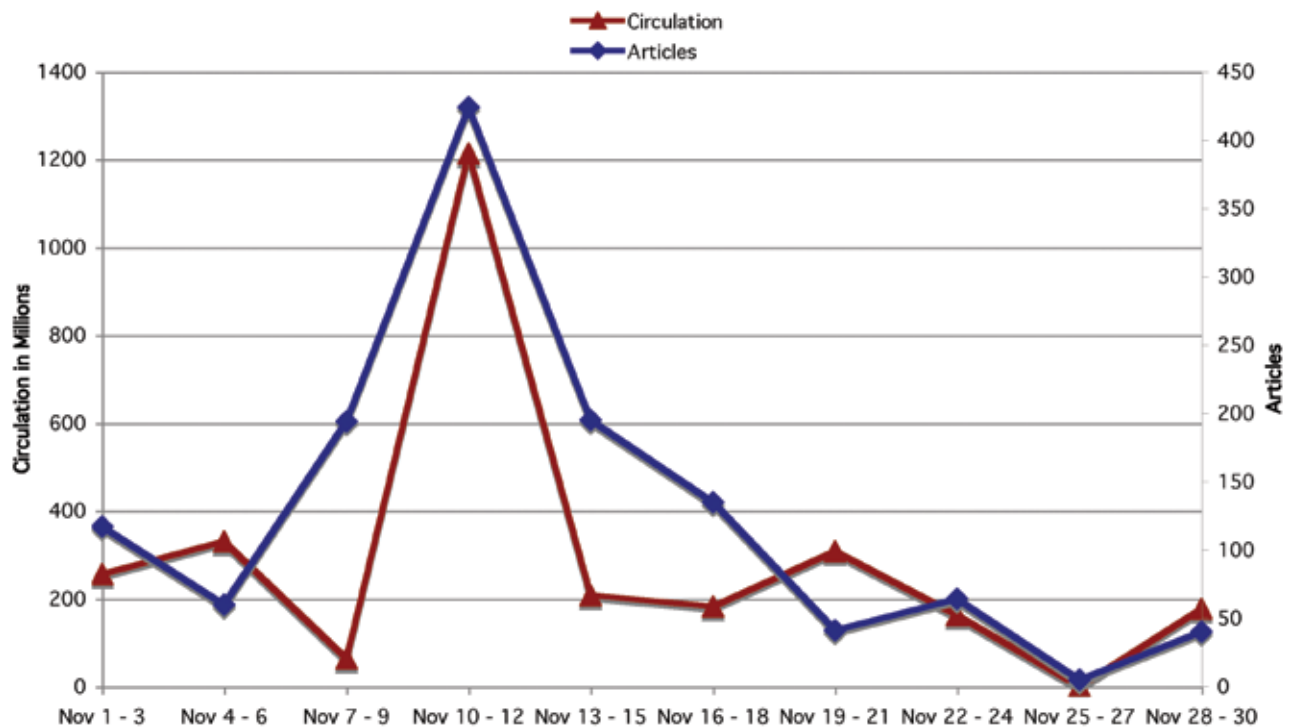
One link (rasmussenreports.com) could be considered favourable toward the Keystone XL project, while the Economist.com's story focused less on Keystone itself and instead on political issues surrounding the decision to delay.

Online news coverage

The below chart shows Keystone XL-related articles and circulation over time.

Both articles and circulation showed a large spike in volume Nov. 10 to 12, with **424** articles over three days. Many of these articles focused on the State Department's decision to explore a new route for the pipeline in order to avoid the Nebraska sand hills. This exploration was expected to delay a final decision on the pipeline by 12 to 18 months.

Outside of this spike, coverage was relatively steady.



Tone breakdown

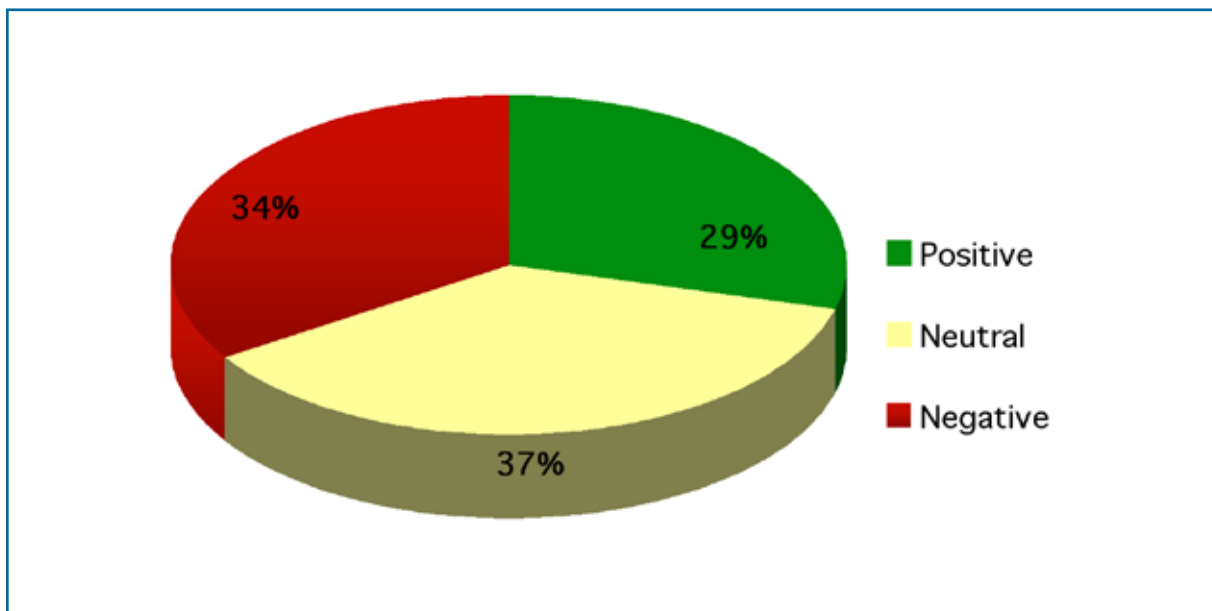
Below is the tone breakdown of Keystone XL-related online news coverage, with reference to TransCanada and the Keystone XL pipeline by share of total articles. Only toned articles were used for this analysis.

Overall the articles were balanced fairly evenly between **positive**, **neutral** and **negative** articles. The largest share of articles (**37** per cent) toned **neutral**, meaning they presented balanced information or made only passing references to TransCanada or the pipeline.

Most articles with minor references to TransCanada or the pipeline focused on the political side of the issue, particularly U.S. President Barack Obama's decision to delay the decision and the political fallout that could cause. Articles that were **negative** toward TransCanada or the pipeline outnumbered positive stories by **five** per cent.

Positive articles tended to focus on the economic benefits of the pipeline, and the potential costs of delays. **Negative** articles focused largely on environmental concerns.

Tone breakdown



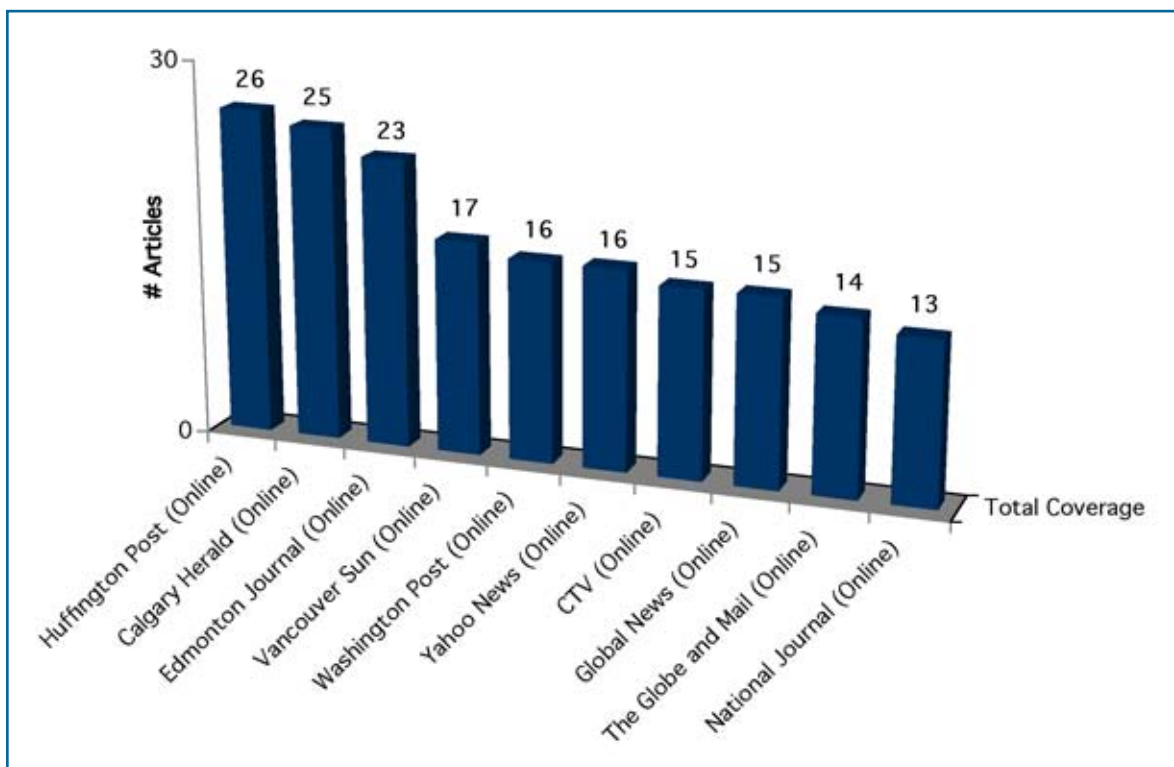
Top publications

Shown below in number of articles, the top ten publications can be split into two groups. The top three publications are grouped closely in article count, with a relatively large drop-off between third and fourth (23 articles to 17).

Of the top three publications two are the online sites of Alberta-based papers, namely the *Calgary Herald* and *Edmonton Journal*. The home of both TransCanada and the oil sands, Alberta is the area in Canada that would most be affected by decisions on the pipeline.

Overall, **six** of the top ten publications were Canadian. Canadian sources not from Alberta or B.C. were national in scope.

Top publications by articles



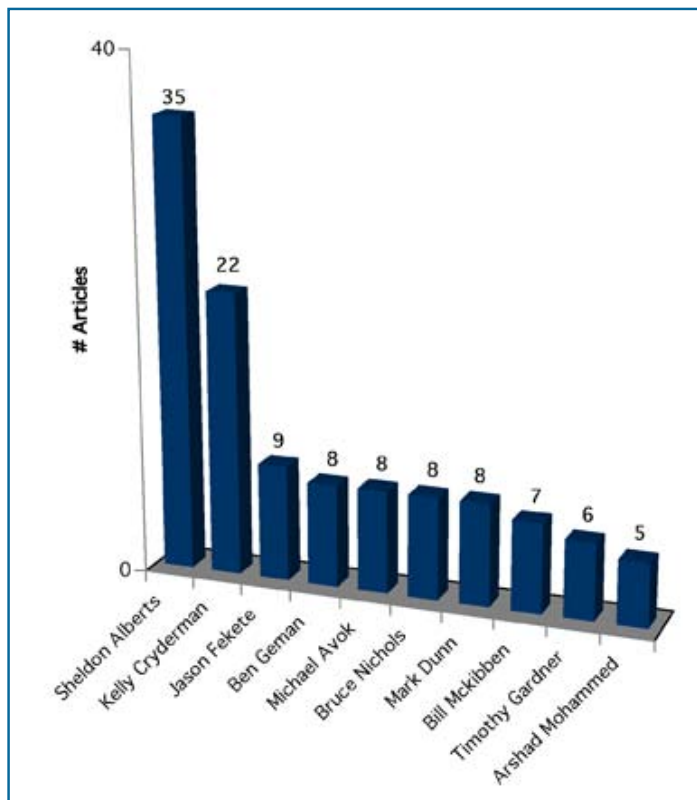
Top authors

The chart shown here displays top authors in terms of volume of articles. The table shows each author and the publication with which they are primarily associated.

Of the top ten authors six are associated with Canadian publications, and two with the newswire Reuters. Only two of the top authors, **Kelly Cryderman** and **Bruce Nichols**, were associated with publications within the top ten.

The most prolific author, **Sheldon Alberts**, published **35** articles on the topic. These were, however, comprised of four unique articles syndicated across multiple publications. **Cryderman**, who published **22** articles during the study period, wrote five unique stories of which four were syndicated across multiple publications.

Top authors by articles



Author	Publication
Sheldon Alberts	<i>Ottawa Citizen</i>
Kelly Cryderman	<i>Edmonton Journal</i>
Jason Fekete	<i>Postmedia</i>
Ben Geman	<i>The Hill</i>
Michael Avok	<i>Montreal Gazette</i>
Bruce Nichols	<i>Edmonton Journal</i>
Mark Dunn	<i>Calgary Sun</i>
Bill Mckibben	<i>Huffington Post</i>
Timothy Gardner	<i>Reuters</i>
Arshad Mohammed	<i>Reuters</i>

Issues share of voice

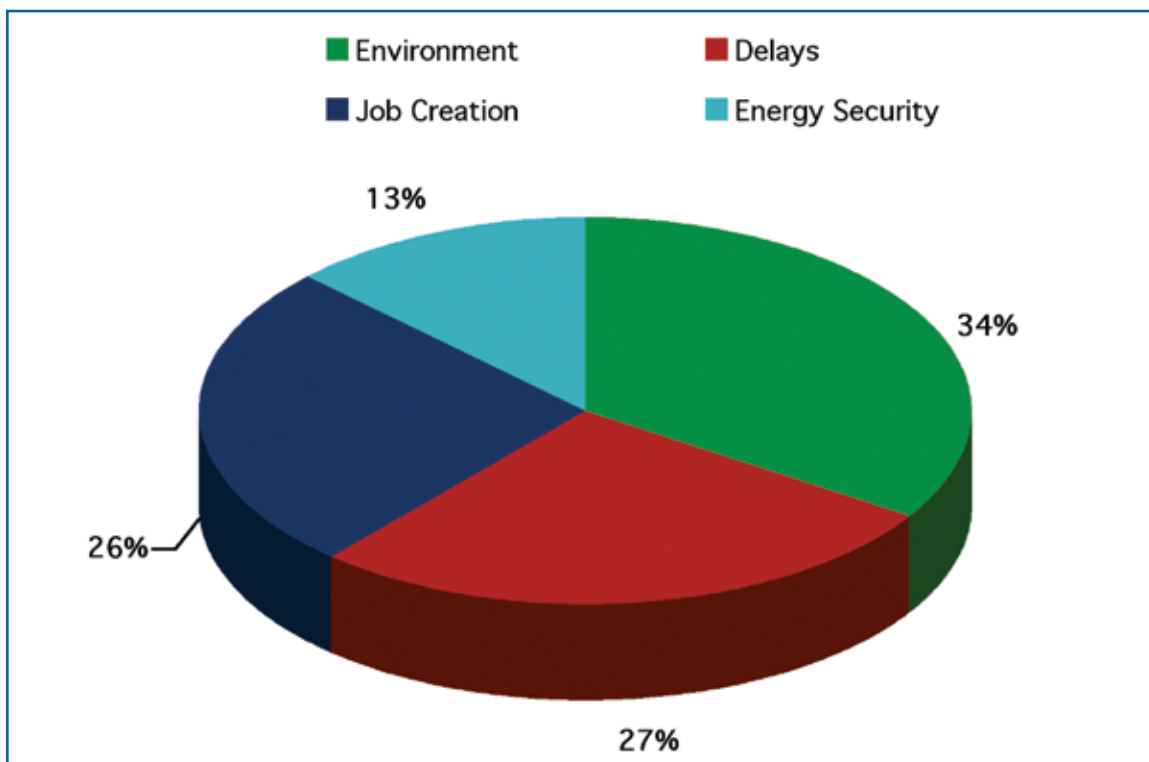
Coverage of Keystone XL was broken into four main issues:

- **The environment:** Environmental concerns surrounding the pipeline, including official reactions to them.
- **Delays:** Delays to the construction of the pipeline, due to any factor.
- **Job creation:** The possibility of the pipeline creating jobs, and estimates of the number of jobs by both company and government officials, and protesters.
- **Energy security:** Concerns surrounding future energy and oil security, and the risks and benefits of buying from a friendly source (i.e. Canada).

In the chart below, these four issues are broken down by share of voice (the number of articles mentioning an issue presented as a share of all mentions). The environment has the greatest share of voice among the four, at **34** per cent of mentions. A great deal of articles, whatever their primary focus, mentioned environmental concerns as a factor in decisions about the pipeline.

Energy security had the least share of voice at **13** per cent. This shows that most articles focused more on the pipeline's direct impact (environment and job creation), and delays to its construction, rather than energy security.

Issues share of voice



Issues tone

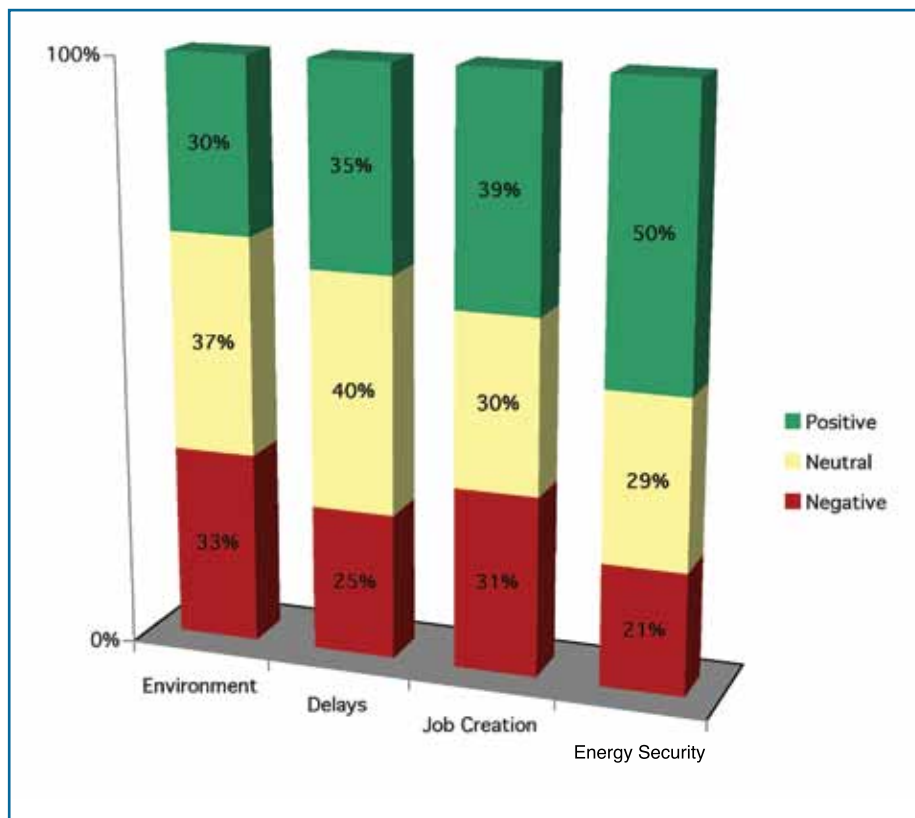
Below displays tone distribution for each issue, shown as the share of **positive**, **neutral**, and **negative** articles among all toned articles associated with an issue.

Energy security had the most **positive** articles from the point of view of TransCanada. Mentions of energy security were mostly concerned with the potential benefit of obtaining oil supplies from a country such as Canada, rather than less stable sources.

The most polarized of the four issues was **job creation**. It supplied both the second-highest percentage of **positive** and second-highest percentage of **negative** articles: Job creation was presented as a positive spinoff of construction, while opponents claimed the estimated number of jobs was inflated and that job creation wasn't worth the environmental impact.

The most **negative** issue was the **environment**. Environmental concerns are an ongoing issue when it comes to oil, and the destructive effect a potential spill might have on a major aquifer in Nebraska was a rallying point for protesters.

Tone distribution by issue



Stakeholder share of voice

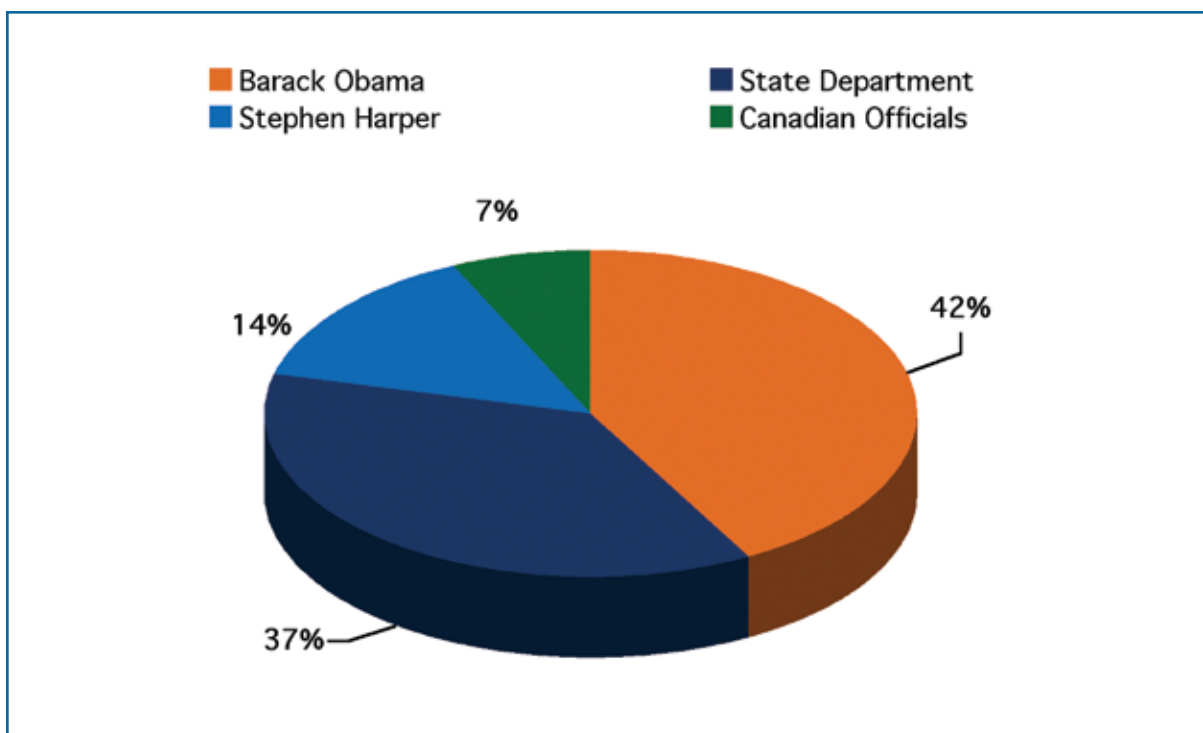
Coverage of Keystone XL was sorted by four major stakeholders:

- **U.S. President Barack Obama**
- **U.S. State Department**
- **Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper**
- **Other Canadian officials**

Below, stakeholders are categorized by share of voice (the number of articles mentioning a stakeholder, presented as a share of all mentions). Canadian officials, including Stephen Harper, received a small share of voice at **21** per cent. Perhaps predictably, the majority of these mentions were in Canadian publications.

U.S. President Barack Obama had the greatest share of voice at **42** per cent of mentions. A number of stories, including many of those in the Nov. 10 to 12 spike, mentioned his role in the project's delay well as the possibility of him courting the environmental vote.

Stakeholder share of voice



Tone

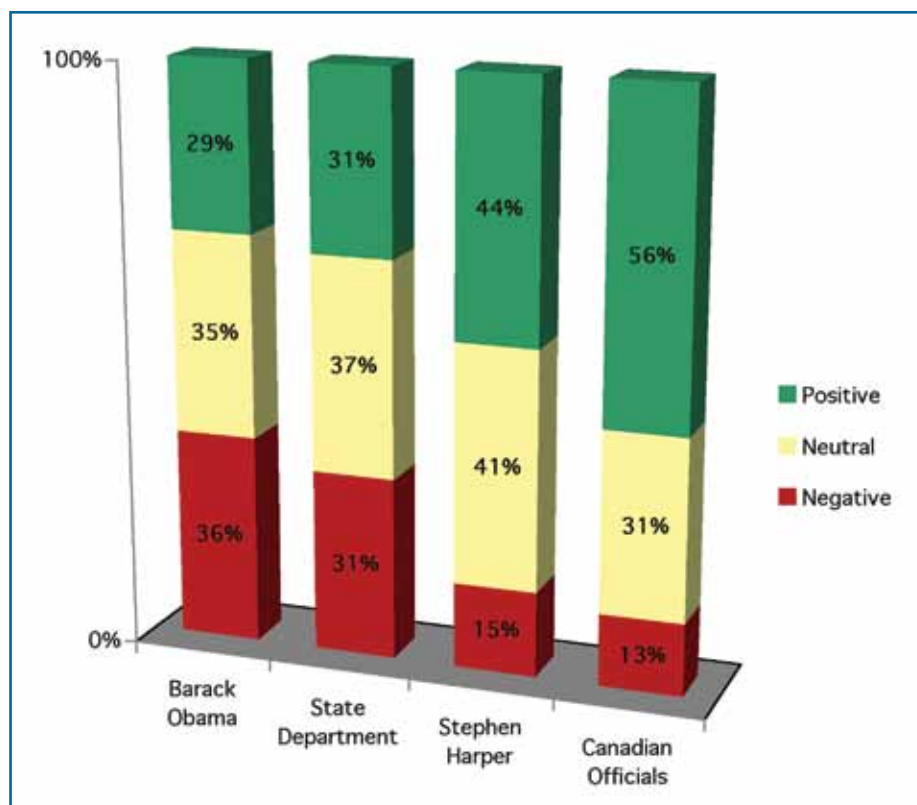
Below shows tone distribution for each stakeholder shown as the share of **positive**, **neutral**, and **negative** articles associated with that stakeholder.

Canadian officials had the most **positive** articles, at **56** per cent. This was followed by Stephen Harper at **44** per cent. These two stakeholders also had the least and second-least percentage of **negative** articles, respectively – perhaps an indication of a lack of negative coverage within Canadian publications.

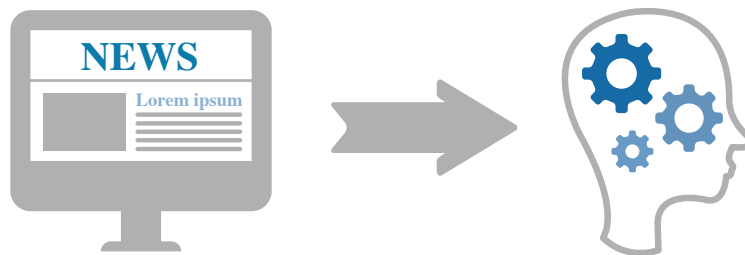
Canadian officials include Alberta Premier Alison Redford, a vocal proponent of the pipeline. Stephen Harper was also supportive of the pipeline, and many articles about these two focused on the positive effects of the proposed project.

Barack Obama and the State Department were each featured in relatively even levels of **positive**, **neutral** and **negative** stories.

Tone distribution by stakeholder



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