

Alt Text in Twitter Job Postings are an Underutilized Tool to Support Accessibility



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INTRODUCTION

- Public health has been criticized for lack of accessibility to disabled researchers
- Increasingly, academic jobs are publicized on Twitter and include images with descriptions or directions to apply
- Alt text is a written description of the content of an image for screen readers, braille displays, or if the image fails to load
- Alt text has been used as a metric of attitudes towards disability accessibility and is one barrier in the academic hiring process



Word cloud of words used in twitter public health job tweets from 2010-2020.

METHODS

- Used the Twitter API to access all tweets over the past 10 years advertising public health jobs and extracted alt text from all tweets with media (images or gifs)
- Coded tweets by subfield, position level, and institution type

<1% of public health job postings on Twitter include alt text

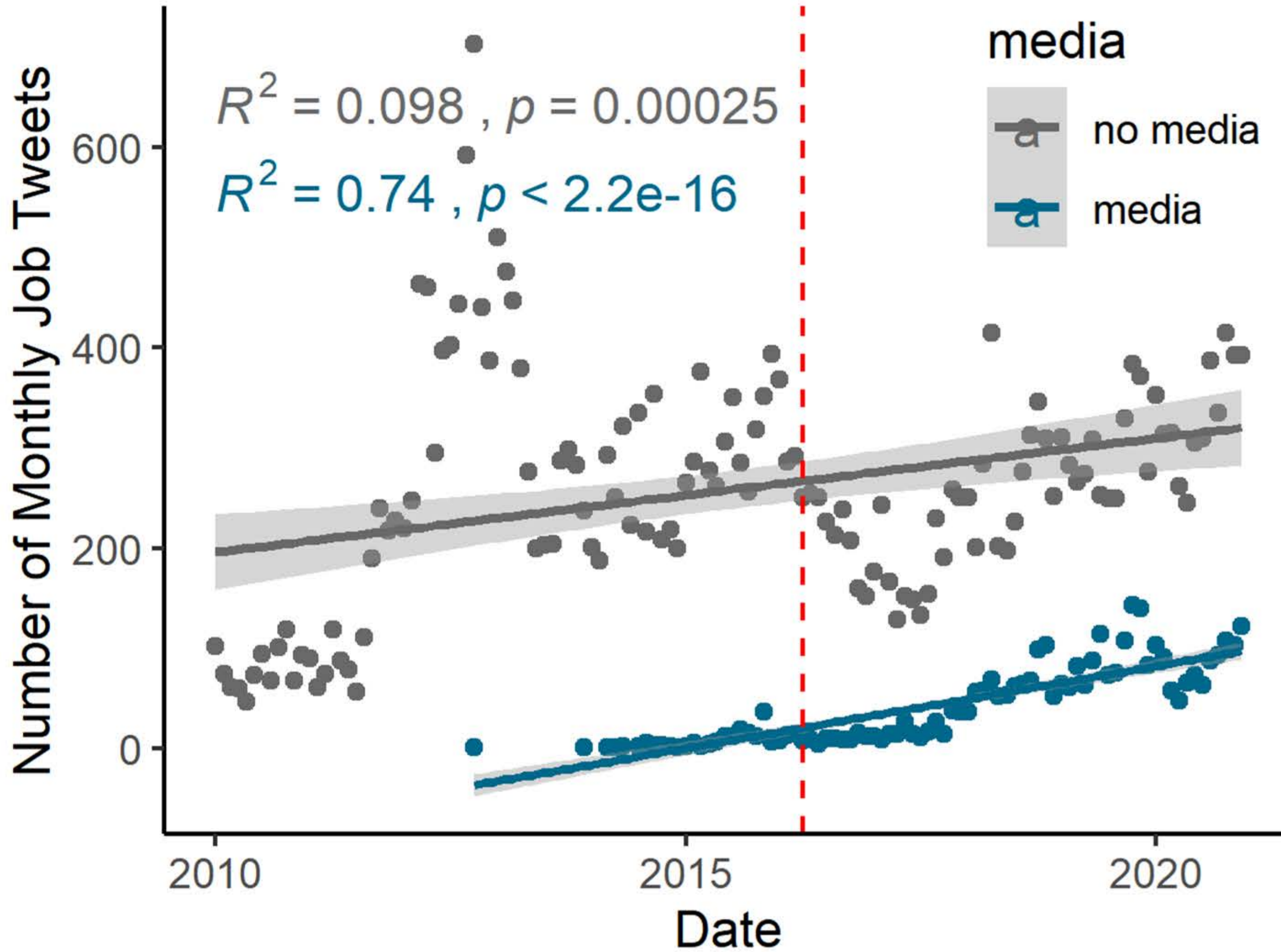
300+ public health job postings on Twitter each month

20% of job tweets in 2020 included images, often with position details or application instructions

Including alt text can make positions more accessible to disabled applicants

RESULTS

- 300+ job tweets/month in 2020 & 2021
- Increasing over time across all assessed subfields, but rates varied
- In 2020 (20.1%) of tweets included images in 2021, and 10% since 2010
- 17 tweets (0.4%) of tweets with media since Mar. 29, 2016 included alt text
- Only one tweet contained sufficiently descriptive alt text**



Number of job tweets per month 2010-2020. Red line shows Mar. 29, 2016 when Twitter alt text became available.

DISCUSSION

- Twitter job postings are not fully accessible to disabled scientists
- Adding alt text is a low impact activity that can improve accessibility
- Fostering accessibility in our fields and subdisciplines must include our digital activities and, particularly, hiring searches