zencity

2021

Long Beach, CA

Yearlong Summary

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Executive Summary

The Zencity dashboard captured 5.4 million online interactions between January and December 2021, 34% of which occurred on official channels. Positive sentiment was twice as high as negative sentiment, at 30% and 15%, respectively. The mayor's social media pages accounted for over half of all official interactions, while the City's primary channels accounted for an additional 15%. Leading subtopics on official channels included Public Health, Immigration, and Business Affairs; on unofficial channels, Public Health, Violence and Crime and Police were the main subtopics. While conversations in most of these subtopics were driven by specific stories that caused the subtopic discourse to spike, the Public Health discourse—mostly focused on COVID-19—exhibited an overall decline since the start of the year.

Introduction

The following report provides an overview of the online discourse in Long Beach in the period between January 1 and December 31, 2021. Through an investigation of the main subject matters and sources of conversation, the report will identify specific issues that were especially prominent in residents' online discourse and highlight trends in the overall discourse.

Methodology

- The report offers an analysis of data collected from social media, news outlets, and Long Beach 311. As such, it reflects the interests—and, in the case of social media sources, sentiment—expressed by residents using these platforms. Additionally, in order to focus on discourse from local residents, posts pulled into the Zencity dashboard through Twitter keywords have been excluded, as they normally reflect more regional or national discourse.

- The analysis does not include sentiment and opinions expressed on private social media discussion boards and groups, only those expressed in fully public forums.

- The interaction count consists of all captured social media engagements (posts, tweets, likes, comments, shares, retweets, etc.) in addition to communications drawn from city hotline sources. Therefore, the number of interactions reflects the volume of discourse and the level of interest among residents expressing their views online.

- Our machine-learning algorithm classifies large amounts of interactions according to topic and sentiment— positive, negative, or neutral— which indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction levels with particular issues. This model enables us to measure the attention or interest that specific issues attract and understand the ways in which community members perceived these issues.
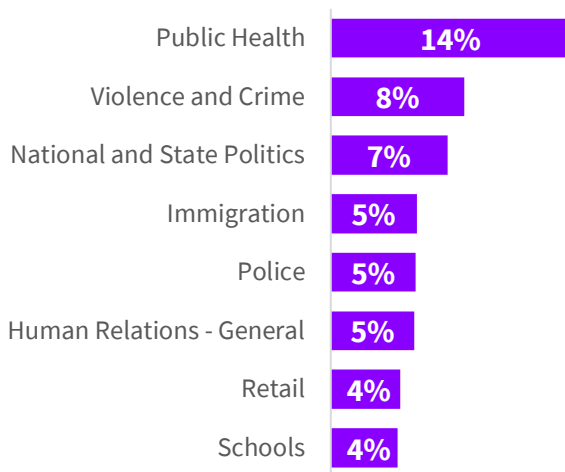
Total Interaction Count

5,357,884

| Social Media	Local Media Websites	City Hotlines
98%	1%	1%

Discourse Summary

As seen below, almost a third of the discourse came from the top three subtopics: Public Health (14%), Violence and Crime (8%), and National and State Politics (7%). Notably, out of a comparison cohort of 5 other major U.S. cities*, the subtopics Public Health and Violence and Crime were among the top three leading subtopics in each city.

Public Health	**14%**
Violence and Crime	**8%**
National and State Politics	**7%**
Immigration	**5%**
Police	**5%**
Human Relations - General	**5%**
Retail	**4%**
Schools	**4%**

Compared to the cohort average*, total positive sentiment in Long Beach was 10 percentage points higher (30% compared to 20%) and negative sentiment was 1 percentage point lower (15% compared to 16%).

Comparison cities included Austin, TX; Houston, TX; Los Angeles, CA; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA.

In the **overall online discourse**, positive sentiment was twice as high as negative sentiment (30% vs. 15%, respectively).


15%   30%   55%
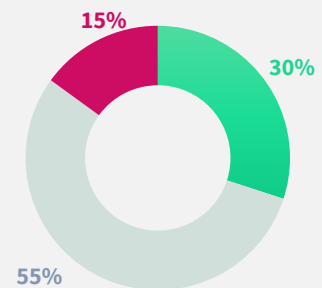
Official discourse, by comparison, was more positive (35%) and less negative (6%) than the overall discourse (above).
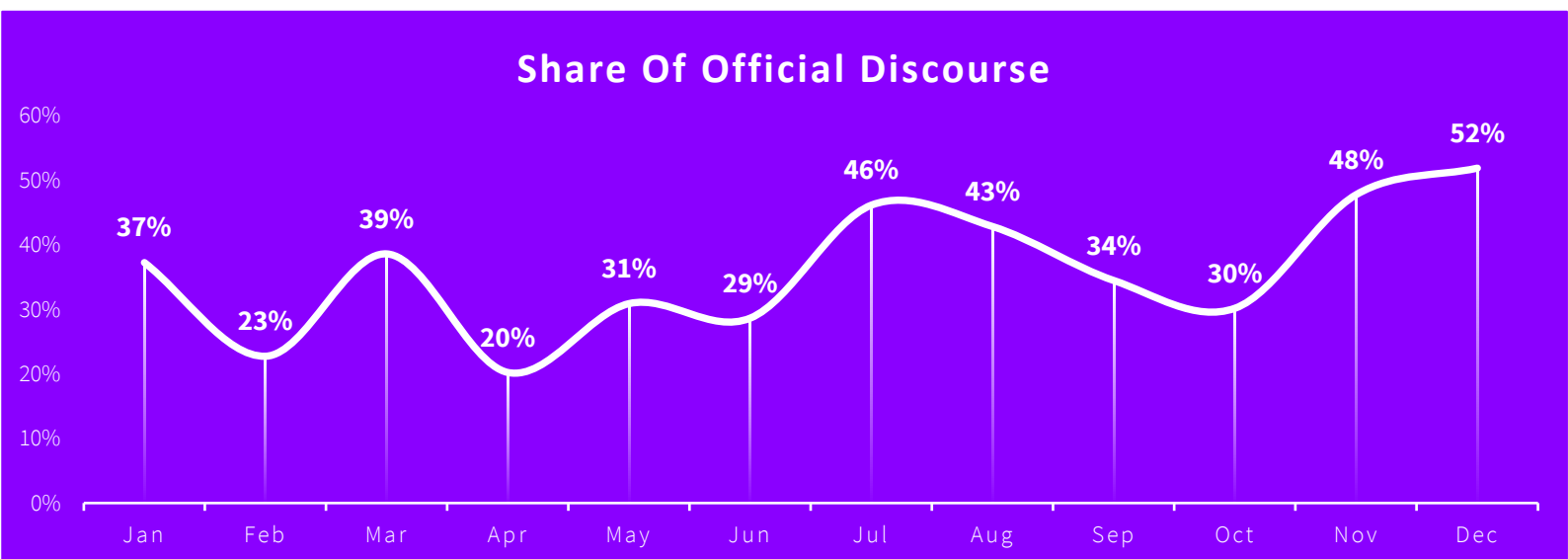

6%   35%   59%
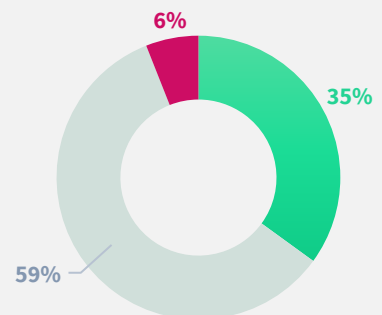
Discourse Over Time

Online discourse averaged about 446K monthly interactions between January and December 2021. The discourse peaked at 687K interactions in April following a viral video of a LBPD officer helping a man in a wheelchair cross a busy intersection.
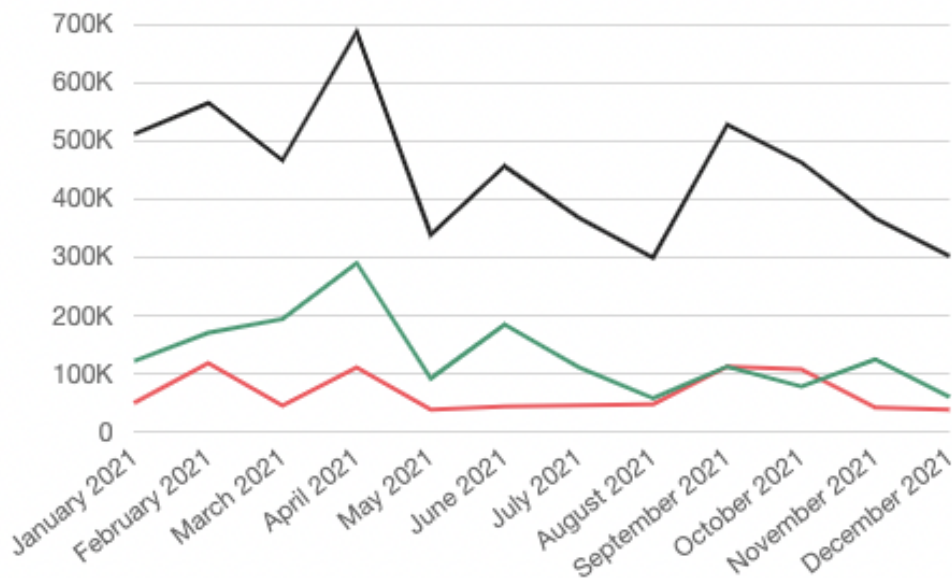

Official Discourse Trends

Between January and December, official channels drove 34% of the discourse, reaching a high of 52% in December and a low of 20% in April. Over half of all interactions on official channels stemmed from the mayor's social media pages (Twitter – 51%, Facebook – 3%). The City's primary pages generated an additional 15% (Facebook – 8%, Instagram – 4%, Twitter – 3%).

Share Of Official Discourse

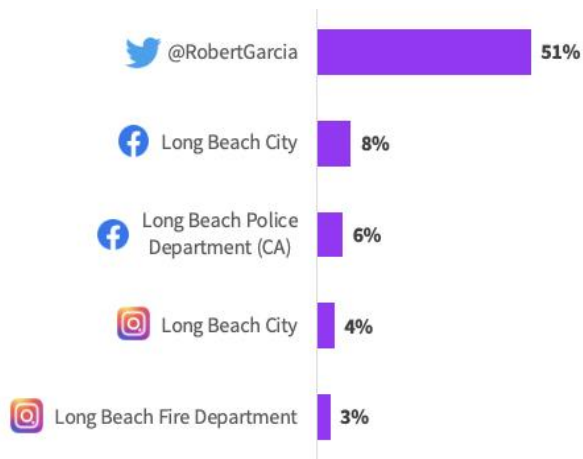| Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
37%	23%	39%	20%	31%	29%	46%	43%	34%	30%	48%	52%

Top Sources

Over 80% of all interactions stemmed from one of the top three data source categories: news outlets (53%), the mayor's pages (19%), and local government and department pages (11%). Citizen groups (5%), and law enforcement agencies (2%) rounded out the top five.

Share Of Total Discourse

News Outlets	Mayor	Local Government & Department Pages	Citizen Groups	Law Enforcement Agencies
53%	19%	11%	5%	2%
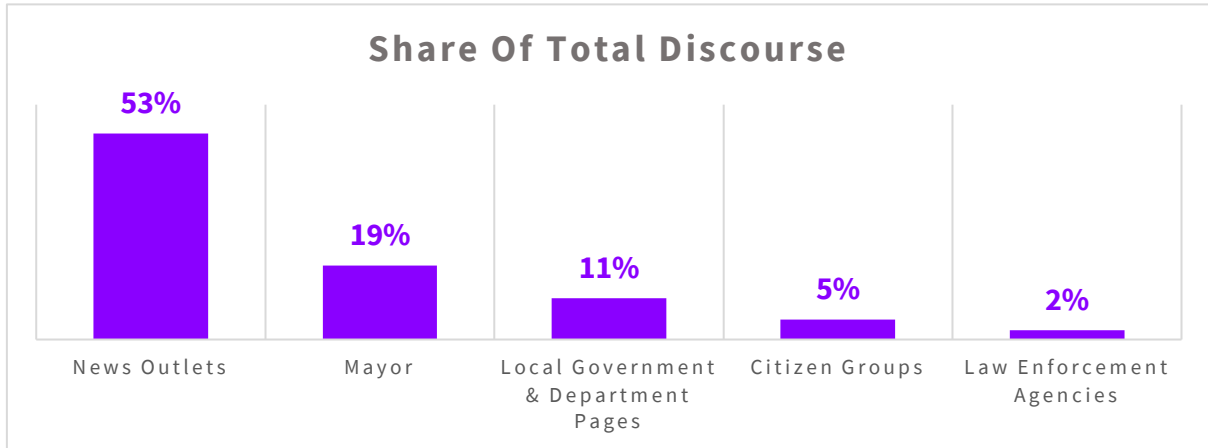
Out of the top data source categories, the mayor's pages had the highest share of positive sentiment (39%) and the lowest share of negative sentiment (6%). Law enforcement agencies had the highest share of negative sentiment (43%) and the lowest share of positive sentiment (10%).

Official Channels

Channel	Share
@RobertGarcia	51%
Long Beach City	8%
Long Beach Police Department (CA)	6%
Long Beach City	4%
Long Beach Fire Department	3%

As pictured, the mayor's Twitter page generated over half of the official discourse. The mayor's Twitter page was the only Twitter source that generated a significant share of official discourse, as the next two largest drivers of official discourse were both Facebook pages (Long Beach City – 8% and Long Beach Police Department (CA) – 6%), followed by two Instagram pages (Long beach City – 4% and Long Beach Fire Department – 3%).

Unofficial Channels

The top five unofficial channels accounted for almost two-thirds (62%) of all unofficial interactions, led by the Facebook pages Long Beach Post (19%) and ABC7 (17%). The pages Long Beach Local News and Long Beach Press-Telegram each accounted for 9%, followed by Fox 11 Los Angeles (8%).

- Long Beach Post — 19%
- ABC7 — 17%
- Long Beach Local News — 9%
- Long Beach Press-Telegram — 9%
- Fox 11 Los Angeles — 8%
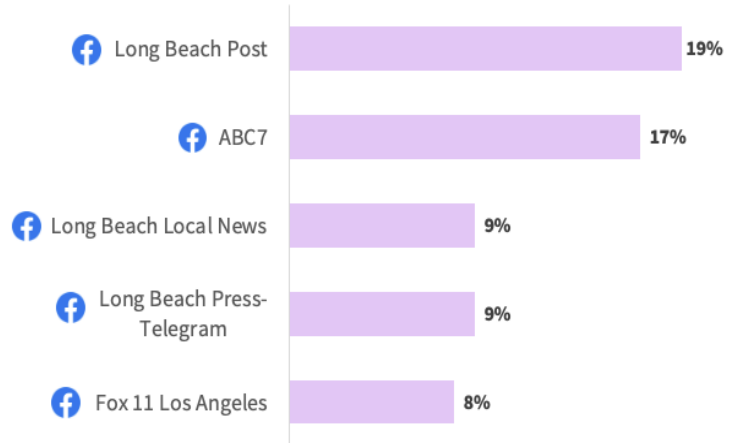
Leading Subtopics

The Zencity machine-learning model classifies online posts and articles into topics and subtopics according to the content's subject matter. While topics are general thematic areas (e.g, Public Safety), subtopics break down topics into more specific issues (e.g. Violence and Crime, Police, etc.).

It is important to note that the subtopics National and Sate Politics *and* Municipal Politics *elicited 283K and 83.3K interactions, respectively. However, in order to only focus on the most relevant local discourse, the breakdown below excludes these subtopics.*

Official Channels

01. Public Health
392,548 interactions

The Public Health discourse was at its highest peak in January, driven by posts about the early stages of the vaccine rollout. The discourse peaked again in August, driven by the mayor's posts about the implications for the pandemic if Governor Newsom is recalled.
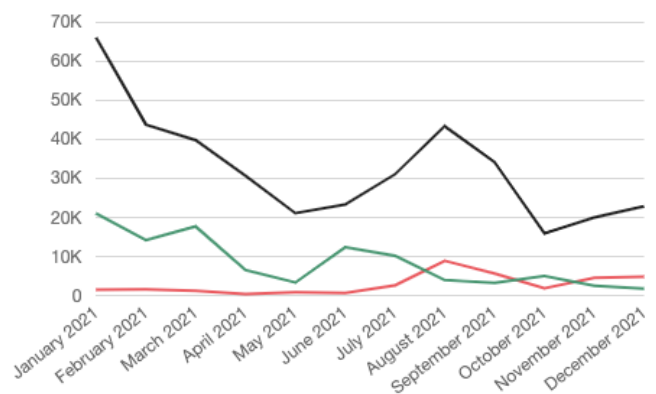

02. Immigration
101,437 interactions

The majority of the immigration discourse occurred in July, driven by a post providing updates about the Long Beach Migrant Center.
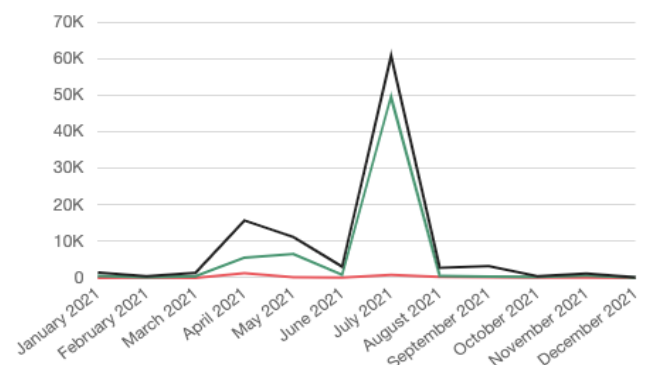
03. Business Affairs
60,834 interactions

The Business Affairs discourse increased substantially in October, driven by the mayor's tweets about the surge in incoming cargo to the Long Beach port and the resulting temporary change to the permissible height limit of stacked containers. Additionally, posts about the Queen Mary (the bankruptcy of the operating company and subsequent news that the City will take control of the vessel) and news that SpaceX is moving to Long Beach both attracted significant attention.
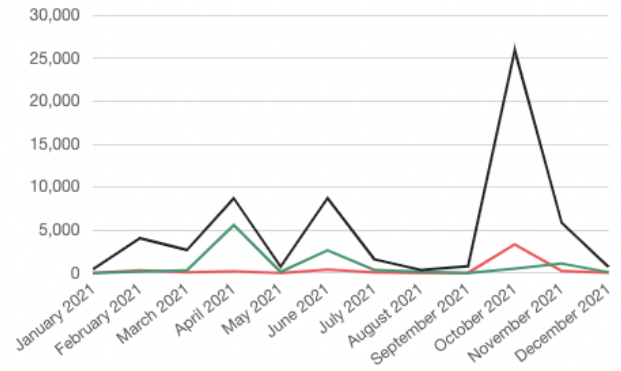
Leading Subtopics

Unofficial Channels

01. Public Health
376,115 interactions

Unofficial sources generated almost as much Public Health discourse as official channels, and followed a similar volume trend over the year; discourse was highest in January, driven by posts about the vaccine rollout as well as the reopening of Community Hospital Long Beach to help alleviate overburdened local hospitals.
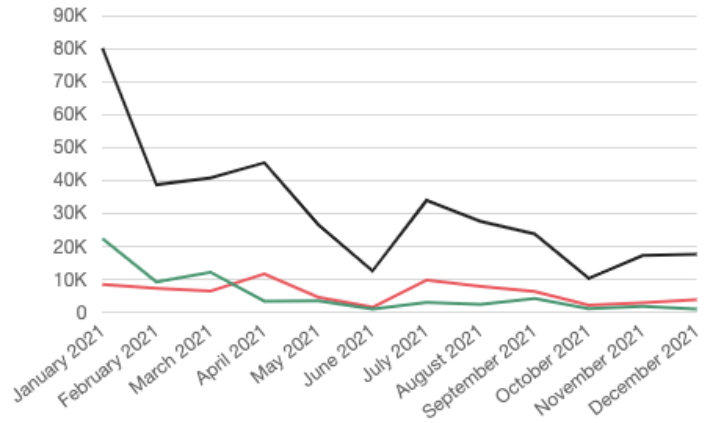

02. Violence and Crime
362,345 interactions

The Violence and Crime discourse spiked in September and October: September's discourse was driven by the stories of a father and son shot at a fruit stand and the attack of 12-year-old boy on a bus; October's discourse was driven by posts reporting on a school safety officer who was arrested and charged for the murder of an 18-year-old mother.
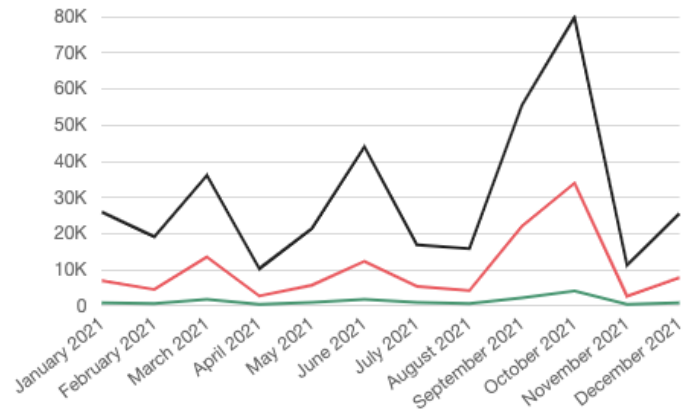
03. Police
215,288 interactions

More than 80% of the Police discourse stemmed from one viral video showing a LBPD officer helping a man in a wheelchair cross a busy intersection. News coverage about officer-involved shootings also garnered some online attention.
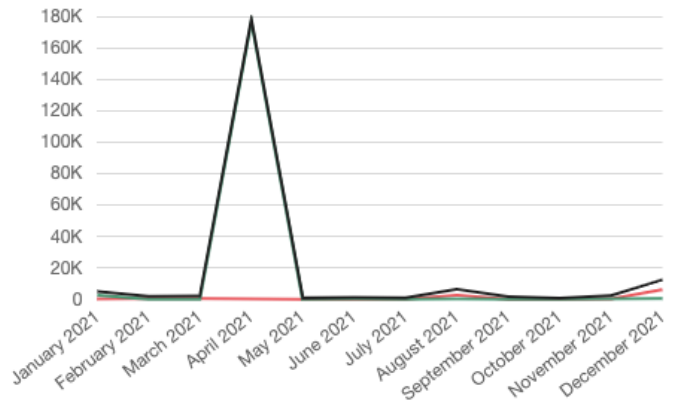
Notably, the fourth leading subtopic on unofficial channels was Retail, almost entirely driven by the story of a grocery store chain closing multiple locations due to the city's ordinance requiring a $4 "hero pay" salary boost for workers.

Conclusion and Takeaways

- Residents' general satisfaction in 2021 was evidenced by 30% positive sentiment and 15% negative sentiment in the overall discourse, with even higher positive sentiment (35%) and lower negative sentiment (6%) occurring on official channels. Compared to the previous year, the total share of positive sentiment doubled (15% in 2020), while the negative sentiment remained constant (15% in 2020).

- Official channels accounted for about a third (34%) of interactions this year, on par with the share of official discourse in 2020 (35%).

- The mayor's social media channels accounted for the majority (54%) of official-channel interactions; the City's primary social media pages accounted for 15%.

- News outlets have played the largest role in shaping the online discourse, generating over half (53%) of all interactions.

- Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Public Health was the leading subtopic on both official and unofficial channels. The Public Health discourse was highest in January due to the early stages of the vaccine rollout and the reopening of Community Hospital Long Beach.

- The discourse in most of the leading subtopics was driven by specific, high-profile incidents that caused spikes in the discourse rather than ongoing conversations. Also notable was the steady decrease in the Public Health discourse as interest in the COVID-19 pandemic waned (with some bumps attributed to various COVID-19 mandates and discussions of COVID-19 in relation to the recall election).

- The top three leading subtopics were the same in 2021 and 2020, albeit in a different order. Whereas Immigration was the fourth leading subtopic in 2021, Retail owned this spot in 2020.

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