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## Social Media

# Internet Users to Congress: We Hate SOPA

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**Alex Fitzpatrick** / Jan 19, 2012

With major websites such as [Wikipedia](#) and [Reddit](#) down Wednesday in protest of SOPA ([Stop Online Piracy Act](#)) and PIPA ([Protect IP Act](#)), millions of social media users [took to the Internet](#) to express their own opinion on the two bills. And they don't like them one bit.

In a [tweet](#) Thursday morning, [Google](#) announced it had collected over 7 million unique signatures Wednesday on its anti-SOPA/PIPA [petition](#). Google's anti-SOPA page got 13 million hits.

Wikipedia Foundation said in a press release that 162 million people logged-on during its blackout of English-language pages. And during that blackout, over 8 million American users used Wikipedia's links to find out the contact information of their elected officials to speak with them about SOPA and PIPA.

"The Wikipedia blackout is over and the public has spoken," said Sue Gardner, Wikimedia Foundation's executive director. "162 million of you saw our blackout page asking if you could imagine a world without free knowledge. You said no. You shut down the Congressional switchboards, and you melted their servers. Your voice was loud and strong."

On Wednesday, SOPA, Stop SOPA, PIPA, Tell Congress and [#factswithoutwikipedia](#) became the top Tweeted terms of the day. [Twitter](#) said that throughout the day, there were nearly [four million](#) SOPA-related tweets.

Meanwhile in the offline world, approximately 1,000 protesters hit the streets of New York outside the offices of Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) in an [anti-SOPA/PIPA rally](#).

By the Thursday, 19 senators, whose previous position was unclear, [announced](#) their opposition to PIPA. SOPA co-sponsor Rep. Ben Quayle (R-AZ) pulled his name from the bill Tuesday.

However, Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), [SOPA's author and main sponsor](#), remains steadfast in his support of the bill.

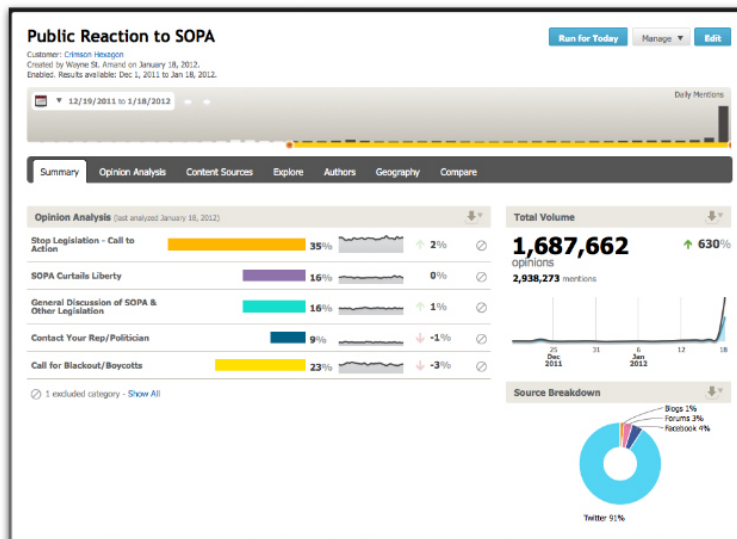
What did the overall online conversation surrounding SOPA and PIPA look like Wednesday?

According to social media analysis company [Crimson Hexagon](#), online public opinion of SOPA and PIPA was nearly universally negative. 35% of related posts included a "call to action," such

as a request to sign a petition against the bills. 23% called for a site to blackout or a boycott of a pro-SOPA/PIPA company. 16% suggested the legislation "curtails liberty." 9% of posts had a suggestion to reach out to an elected official to speak with them about the bills.

The remaining 16% included a "general discussion of SOPA and other legislation." According to Wayne St. Amand, vice president of marketing at Crimson Hexagon, these were neutral discussions of the bills, perhaps people wondering why some of their favorite sites were down.

Have a look:



The sample included over 1.5 million opinions posted to Twitter, Facebook, blogs and forums.

Crimson Hexagon's software was developed at Harvard University's Institute for Quantitative Social Science and is used by such organizations as the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism.

In order to generate a report, Crimson Hexagon's research team enters a keyword - such as "SOPA" - into the software. The program pulls over 1 million random online posts with the keyword. Then, a human researcher starts sorting some of those posts into different categories, like the ones mentioned above. The software starts to find patterns in what the researcher is doing and repeats it for the rest of the hundreds of thousands of posts.

In essence, Crimson Hexagon learns a sorting process from a team of humans and emulates it.

And the sample's source? Crimson Hexagon's team uses "everything that [they] can get," says Amand. "Twitter is overrepresented because we have a direct relationship with the company, we license the 'Twitter Firehose' which is the full stream of 250 million public tweets a day."

The rest of the data comes from social media aggregators, who take in opinions from a wide variety of social media accounts, blog posts and forum comments.

"With more than 1.5 million opinions, we would probably argue that [this data] represents people who are online, period," says Amand.

No major polling organization has yet conducted research into the overall American opinion of SOPA and PIPA, making it impossible to compare Internet users' opinions to that of the broader public.

Do these results surprise you? Let us know in the comments below.

## BONUS: A Timeline of SOPA Events

### SOPA And PIPA: A Timeline Of How We Got Here



[OPEN GALLERY](#)

#### May 12: PIPA introduced

The PROTECT IP Act (Preventing Real Online Threats to Economic Creativity and Theft of Intellectual Property Act of 2011), better known as [PIPA](#) was introduced into the Senate by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT). The act's goals were described by its sponsors as protecting intellectual property and punishing foreign sites who post copyrighted material. If a site was discovered doing so, the U.S. attorney general could order U.S. based Internet service providers, search engines, payment systems and advertising networks to suspend doing business with the website.

Photo courtesy [Mikedish](#) on Flickr

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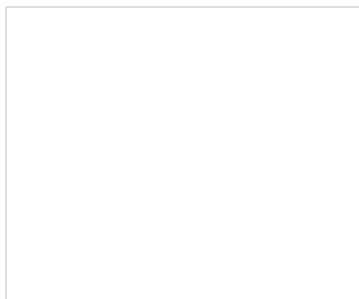
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Brian Anthony Hernandez

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Bob Al-Greene

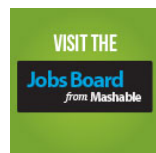
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Matt Petronzio

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Annie Colbert

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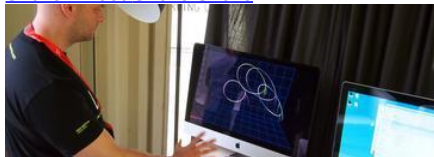
Brie Weiler Reynolds

Brie Weiler Reynolds is the content and social media director at FlexJobs, the award-winning site for telecommuting and flexible job listings, and a former career advisor. At FlexJobs, Brie offers job seekers career and work-life balance advice throu...

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Lance Ulanoff

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Anita Li

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Anita Li

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## [What Happens to Social Media After a Twitter Revolution?](#)

Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchierai



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Anita Li

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