

Communication about pain: a comparative analysis between the Twitter profiles of the *Sociedad Española del Dolor* (Spanish Pain Society) and the American Pain Society

PW 2363

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INTRODUCTION

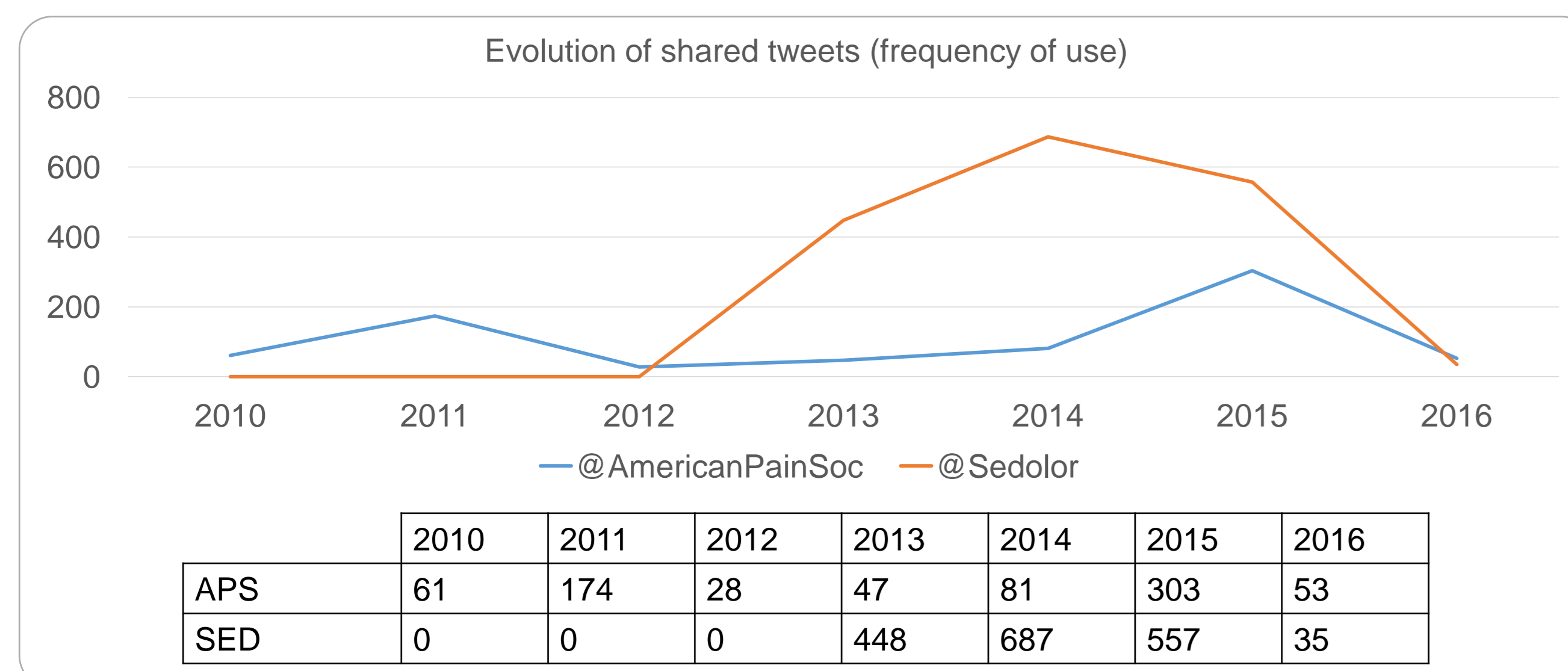
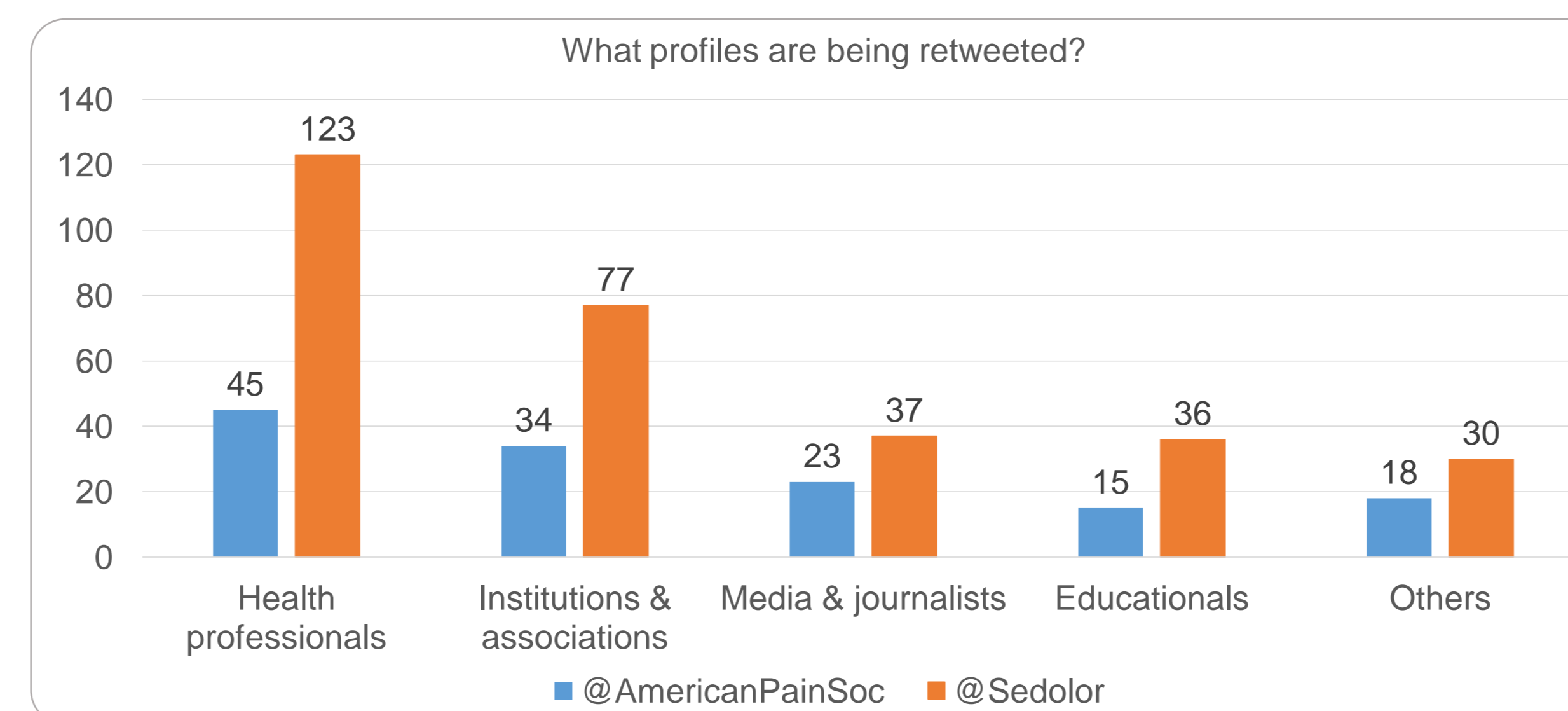
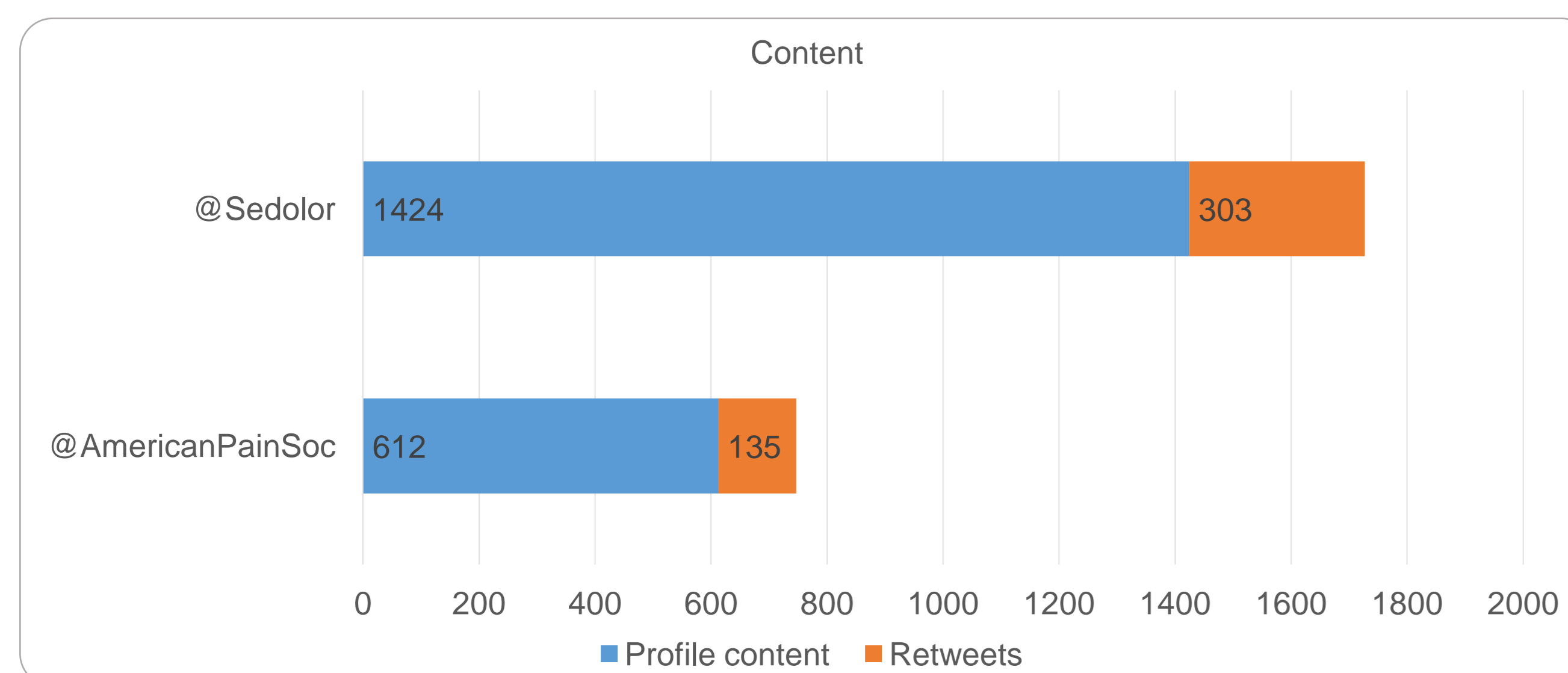
In a world increasingly digitized, the way in which we are taking care of our health is changing rapidly, and this includes the use of social media. The aim of this study was to analyze how two organizations of pain specialists **create messages and communicate about pain**, by looking into the content that they share in their Twitter profiles: the *Sociedad Española del Dolor* (SED; Spanish Pain Society (@Sedolor)) and the American Pain Society (APS; (@AmericanPainSoc)). Specifically, the objectives of this work were to study: **(1)** the type of contents that they share; **(2)** the target of those messages; **(3)** the most recurrent topics; **(4)** if the content engages users or not; and **(5)** the frequency with which the profiles are being used.

METHODS

A procedure based on **comparative analysis** was used in this study. 2,474 tweets were analyzed (1,727 tweets from the Spanish Pain Society account (@Sedolor) and 747 tweets from the American Pain Society account (@AmericanPainSoc)); published over the period ranging from the inception of both profiles (the American Pain Society (APS) profile started on July 2010 whereas the Spanish Pain Society (SED) profile started on March 2013) until February 2016.

RESULTS

2,474 tweets were analyzed, of those **1,981 were pain-related** (80%). The results were as follows:



ENGAGEMENT AVERAGE		
	RETWEETS	LIKES
@AmericanPainSoc	1,5 RT/tweet	1,1 likes/tweet
@Sedolor	2,3 RT/tweet	0,8 likes/tweet

PUBLICS		
	GENERAL	PROFESSIONAL
@AmericanPainSoc	551 tweets	196 tweets
@Sedolor	1347 tweets	380 tweets

5 MOST USED HASHTAGS	
@AmericanPainSoc	548 hashtags used, of which the most used are: #ampainsoc (125), #pain (86), #APS15 (60), #pain101 (38), #ASAPainUpdate (25)
@Sedolor	512 hashtags used, of which the most used are: #ReadByQxMD (241), #sedolor (92), #DiaMundialDolor (41), #dolor (28), #dolorescorial (24)

INTERACTIVE CONTENT AVERAGE				
	HASHTAGS	USE OF URL	IMAGES	VIDEOS
@AmericanPainSoc	0,9 hashtags/tweet	0,6 URL/tweet	0,0 images/tweet	0,0 videos/tweet
@Sedolor	0,4 hashtags/tweet	0,8 URL/tweet	0,1 images/tweet	0,0 videos/tweet

User interaction (UI) average: @AmericanPainSoc (0,2 UI/tweet), @Sedolor (0,1 UI/tweet).

CONCLUSIONS

- The use of social media is **progressively increasing**. However, **there is still a lot to do and improve**. The results of the study indicate that neither the APS nor the SED interact with users, and the engagement with them is low, as shown by the low number of likes and RT.
- Furthermore, although topics are diverse, both the APS and the SED give a higher priority to the **news-related** content and **institutional** tweets. Educational content is lower in both cases.
- Moreover, the use of interactive content (the kind of content that allows users to understand better [1] what they are reading) is **almost nonexistent**, except for the use of URL to external sources. Still, most used hashtags are all pain-related.
- As expected, **most of the content is pain-related**, created by the profile and is addressed to general audiences. Yet, both the APS and the SED do not share information on a daily basis.
- To summarize, these organizations would benefit from developing a **social media strategy** [2], in order to improve their communication. Further research is needed to study the use of social media by pain organizations, and to look for the best alternatives to improve and extend its use among professional and research associations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was partly funded by the grant **2016FI_B 00212** and the URV-Repsol International Chair for Excellence in Communication. JM's work is supported by Obra Social La Caixa, the Spanish Ministry of Science and Competitiveness (MINECO; PSI2015-70966-P), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Universitat Rovira i Virgili (PFR Program), Fundació Grünenthal and ICREA-Acadèmia. The authors would also like to thank the ASTERISC Communication Research Group, and the Department of Communication Studies of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV).

