

# The ethical challenges, and mitigating actions, to recruiting participants to a qualitative research study using the social media platform Twitter.

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## 1. Introduction

Recruitment to research studies using social media is increasing, though guidance, on the ethical implications of this method is limited (AOIR 2019). Researchers need to be cognisant of the ethical challenges and privacy implications of this recruitment method.

## 2. Benefits of using Twitter

- Capacity to 'reach' significant, heterogenous populations
- Ability to target high profile users to amplify reach (Wasilewski et al, 2019)
- Real time, discursive platform
- Flexible and cost effective



## 3. Ethical challenges

- Threat to privacy of participants and researchers
- Dynamic platforms with ease of access to sensitive data
- Disinhibition effect of online fora (Gelinas et al, 2017)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party access to shared data

## 4. Researcher mitigation

- Privacy by Design principles
- Proportionate approach to risk
- Informed consent for data collection
- Identity management
- Researcher transparency
- Reflexivity of researcher
- Abide by Terms of Service of Twitter platform

### References

- AOIR (2019) Internet Research: @ Ethical guide 3.0. Available at <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>
- Gelinas, L et al (2017) Using Social Media as a Research Recruitment Tool: Ethical Issues and Recommendations. Amer Journ Bioethics. 17(3):3-14
- Wasilewski, M et al (2018) Using Twitter to recruit participants for health research: An example from a caregiving study. Health Informatics Journal 25(4):1485-1497