

Best connected African leaders on Twitter

The latest Burson-Marsteller Twiplomacy study has revealed that Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta @UKenyatta has become Sub-Saharan Africa's most followed leader with 1.4 million followers, closely followed by Rwanda's @PaulKagame, ahead of South Africa's presidential administration @PresidencyZA with 673,000 followers.



World leaders on Twitter

The Burson-Marsteller study finds that governments use Twitter most, but have larger audiences on Facebook. Over the past five years, Twitter has become the ultimate channel for digital diplomacy for world leaders and governments.

It is the prime social network used by heads of state and government in 173 countries, representing 90% of all United Nations (UN) member states, according to Burson-Marsteller's [Twiplomacy](#) study, an annual global survey of world leaders on social media. Facebook is the second-most used social platform by world leaders, with 169 governments having set up official pages.

YouTube ranks third among social sharing platforms, used by 78% of all UN member states, ahead of Instagram which is used by 70%. While Twitter communication is mainly text-based, including visuals, Instagram is picture-driven with minimal text and more behind-the-scenes pictures. Governments with larger social media teams also have been exploring more visual communications with Vine and Snapchat, both of which target a younger audience of Millennials. Governments that do not have full broadcasting capabilities, mainly in Latin America, are embracing Periscope and Facebook Live to broadcast their press conferences.

Figures for African leaders showed the most engaging leaders on social media on the continent.

Most conversational world leaders 2016 (with five African leaders in the top six spots), measured by the percentage of @replies they gave to followers:

@PaulKagame, Rwanda president, 81% replies.
@Mapori_Matata, DR Congo prime minister, 77% replies
@DonaldTusk, EU Council president, 59% replies.
@LMushikiwabo, Rwanda foreign minister, 55% replies
@HannaTetteh, Ghana foreign minister, 55% replies

Most followed sub-Saharan African Leaders 2016:

@UKenyatta, Kenya president 1.444,730m
@PaulKagame, Rwanda president 1.402,258m
@PresidencyZA, South Africa presidency 678,249
@MBuhari, Nigeria president 531,563
@SAPresident, South Africa president 403,673
@StateHouseKenya, Kenya presidency 321,895
@NGRPresident, Nigeria president 245,051
@AMB_A_Mohammed, Kenya foreign minister 239,632
@JDMahama, Ghana president 217,470

Best connected sub-Saharan African Leaders 2016, measured by number of mutual peer connections:

@PresidenceMali, Mali presidency
@RwandaMFA, Rwanda foreign ministry
@MfaEthiopia, Ethiopian diplomacy
@SeychellesMFA, Seychelles foreign ministry
@HannaTetteh, Ghana foreign minister
@UgandaMFA, Uganda foreign ministry
@DrTedros, Ethiopia foreign minister
@AM_A_Mohammed, Kenya foreign minister
@AbdoulayeDiop8, Mali foreign minister
@RwandaGov, Rwanda government

All platforms studied

The 2016 edition of *Twiplomacy*, which previously focused solely on Twitter, has been expanded to examine the use of other social media platforms including [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and more niche digital diplomacy platforms such as [Snapchat](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Google+](#), [Periscope](#) and [Vine](#). The Twiplomacy website includes live rankings and the first ever social media atlas for each country studied.

“Our Twiplomacy study shows people in positions of power are increasingly tapping social media platforms to connect with the audiences most important to them,” said Don Baer, worldwide chair and CEO, Burson-Marsteller. “As engagement becomes one of the critical measures of social media influence, our Twiplomacy study shows which political communicators are most successful on which social platforms and what we can learn from them.”

This final installment of Twiplomacy 2016 provides lessons for communicators on creating successful social media accounts and driving online engagement. Based on combining data from the different profiles with an in-depth analyses of the content, the most notable findings include the importance of being visual and creative, tailoring content to the specific platform, projecting a human face and timeliness.

The world leaders using social media with the most success are: US President Barack Obama and his White House team; Mauricio Macri, Argentinian President; and Justin Trudeau, Canadian Prime Minister; among others.

Integrated approach

“This cross-platform study shows that world leaders are increasingly taking an integrated approach across several social media channels, an indication of where more and more business leaders are likely to move as well,” said Jeremy Galbraith, CEO of Burson-Marsteller Europe, Middle East and Africa and global chief strategy officer.

“We are seeing that world leaders are allowing people to ‘meet’ the personality behind the official title – and that today, much more than words, creative or personal images get messages across most powerfully, a tactic that corporate leaders can use just as effectively.”

The latest installment of the 2016 Twiplomacy study analysed 793 Twitter accounts of heads of states and governments in 173 countries with a combined total audience of 324 million followers.

The [Barack Obama](#) Twitter account following alone, numbers 74 million; well ahead of [Pope Francis](#) in second position with 28 million; and Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) in third with 19 million followers.

However, Burson-Marsteller’s Twitter study revealed that a massive following does not always translate into influence. The official presidential [@POTUS](#) Twitter account, set up in May 2015, has become the seventh most followed account with 7.6 million followers, and it is by far the most effective account considering it averages 12,350 retweets per tweet. In comparison, the tweets sent by the [@BarackObama](#) account, which has 10 times as many followers as [@POTUS](#), are only retweeted on average 1,572 times.

Diplomatic connections

Foreign ministries tend to use Twitter to establish mutual relations. In May 2015, the U.S. State Department used Twitter to re-establish ties with its Cuban counterpart, months before the official re-establishment of diplomatic relations. The State Department also tried to connect with Iran’s President [Hassan Rouhani](#) and Foreign Minister [Javad Zarif](#), but has unfollowed both men who had not reciprocated.

The [EU External Action Service](#) is the best connected foreign office, mutually connected to 122 peers; Russia’s Foreign Ministry is in second position, maintaining mutual Twitter relations with 111 other world leaders; and the [Norwegian Foreign Ministry](#) is in third place with 100 mutual connections.

The most followed non-government account is the United Nations Twitter account [@UN](#), which is followed by 296 of the 793 world leaders’ Twitter accounts; *The New York Times* ([@NYTimes](#)) is the most followed news organization; and [@UNICEF](#) is the second most followed international organisation. The [@Twiplomacy](#) Twitter account is the fourth-most followed non-governmental account by world leaders, with a following of 162 heads of state and government, ahead of *The Economist*, the BBC, Reuters and CNN, respectively.

More than 5,000 embassies and ambassadors are now active on Twitter; it has become the voice of diplomatic missions in New York, Washington, London and Brussels.

The complete collection of social media studies can be found on [bm.com](#) and [twiplomacy.com](#).