

Research Note:

World Leaders on Twitter

Updated Ranking Report

October 2010



World Leaders On Twitter

How heads of state are engaging their citizens on the World Wide Web

Governance is no longer a constant – Accelerating social change and deepening globalization have created new challenges for governments in the 21st Century. Today, enlightened governments and their leaders have turned to social media to connect with constituents at home and abroad. Governments are turning more and more to social media to put a “face” to government and to express political views and agendas. So who is leading the charge? The Digital Policy Council (DPC) research provides analyses on government leaders and institutions of government employing social media outlets to engage the populations that these individuals and government entities lead.

The increase in information velocity brought about through the use of Internet technology, and more specifically, through the use of social media websites like Twitter, Facebook, and other networking sites, provides for new opportunities for governments to rethink and reshape how they govern and the political discourse with their citizenry.

This research note provides an update to the ranking of heads of state engaged on the social media website Twitter. The DPC has been tracking this activity since 2009 and issued its first report [Real Leaders Tweet](#) in Feb 2010 that examined how heads of state around the world are using the World Wide Web to engage their citizens.

Updates To World Rankings

The Movement Towards Open Government

The DPC has recorded a strong movement towards open government as more leaders are aggressively pursuing social media channels as a new type of direct communication with their citizens and the global community. Analyses as of October 2010 reveals that 20%, or one out of five heads of state, are at present on the social media site Twitter. A total of 33 world leaders out of 163 countries have accounts on Twitter set up in their personal name or through an official government office. This represents a 50% increase in the number of countries from the last quarter of 2009.

The idea of governments to openly engage their citizens and the global community directly was brought to the forefront on December 8, 2009, when the White House issued an open government directive. President Obama signed into effect a commitment of his administration to create an unprecedented level of openness in government. The memorandum outlined three key principles that government must be transparent, participatory, and collaborative.

The effect of which was to declare Information maintained by the Federal Government a national asset to be made accessible online to the public, to offer citizens a chance to participate more directly in policymaking through the Internet, and to use innovative technologies to build new models for private-public-partnerships.

In March 22, 2010, the former U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown followed suit with his own manifesto entitled 'Building Britain's Digital Future', which declared the determination to harness the new digital technology to drive a radical reshaping of government. The direction was further reinforced under the new administration of Prime Minister David Cameron wherein The National Archives announced the Open Government License, granting individuals, entrepreneurs and application developers unlimited use of government data without having to ask permission.

The Australian Government joined in on July 16, 2010 with its much anticipated commitment to open government. Spearheaded by the former Finance Minister Lindsay Tanner, the declaration fortified citizen's rights of access to information and a pro-disclosure culture across the Australian Government - to the point where government agencies are explicitly directed to undertake social networking, crowdsourcing and online collaboration with citizens on policy and service delivery to enhance the processes of government.

The Japanese government launched its own open government portal in August of 2010 commissioned by the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry to utilize the Internet to promote Japanese citizen participation in public administration.

The simple concept behind all these initiatives is good governance; that the adoption of Internet technologies can drive considerable efficiency and innovation to the practice of government. This transformation mirrors the technology-enabled business process reengineering that has taken place in the private sector over the last decade.

Noteworthy Changes in The Top 10

The heads of state in the Top 10 list has changed dramatically since the beginning of the year seeing four new entrants from Venezuela, Mexico, Thailand and Turkey along with the exit of some key proponents of social media due to political administration changeovers.

President Obama retains the top spot with a vast 5.6 million followers having added over 1.5 million followers from the beginning of the year. However his Twitter account communication is often criticized as overly sanitized as it is being managed by the Organizing for America grassroots group sponsored by the U.S. Democratic Party.

The 10 Downing Street Twitter account retains the #2 spot despite remaining relatively static since the changeover in administration with exit of the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Notwithstanding calls from his own conservative party for a "big hitter on Twitter", U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron does not personally tweet and all communications refer to him in the third party.

Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had amassed nearly one million followers, however Australia no longer finds itself in the top ten as current Prime Minister Julia Gillard's following of 60,000 falls far short.

The ever popular Queen Rania of Jordan retains the third place continuing to actively promote and inspire humanitarian causes around the world through Twitter and many other social media outlets.

Most notable on the new list is President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, who only back in March called for restrictive government oversight of the Internet in frustration over social networking web sites like Twitter and Facebook used by Venezuela's opposition movements to organize protests against the government; he has now come about 180 degrees.

President Chavez joined Twitter in April labeling his account a secret weapon to connect to the world. "This isn't capitalist or socialist, technology depends on how you use it." "The Internet can't be just for the bourgeoisie, it's for the ideological battle as well." Chavez explained. The President quipped that he needs to place his account in a bucket of ice to cool off; he is apparently spot on as his followers are now nearing one million placing him at the number four spot globally.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama appears committed to a citizen-centric approach amassing an additional half a million followers over the last several months to gain over 700,000 followers on his Twitter account.

The UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum continues to engage his citizens and residents with open direct communication. In June of this year he held the first e-session with the public on the Prime Minister's official website. The frank dialogue covered many issues most prominent the fiscal health of Dubai. Sheikh Mohammed noted that evidence of a recovery from the global economic crisis is already in place. "I would like to point out that the symptoms of recovery have started to manifest, and the duration of recovery is expected to be much shorter than that required for other economies." he explained.

The outspoken President from Venezuela is not the only Latin leader in the top 10 as he is joined by the populist President Sebastián Piñera of Chile who with his entire cabinet have opened Twitter accounts. Another addition is President Felipe Calderón of Mexico who tweets to his Twitter account around four times a day and replies to tweets of Mexican journalists and political analysts. President Piñera and President Calderón have each accumulated about a quarter million followers.

Additional new entrants include Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva of Thailand and President Abdullah Gul of Turkey. Twitter played a key role in the civil unrest in Bangkok earlier this year. As many websites were blocked and Thailand's traditional media clearly divided into pro- and anti-government camps, Twitter was a much valued source to Bangkok residents to understand the true situation on the ground and most importantly in local neighborhoods. While in Turkey, The Turkish president is not shy on expressing his opinion on the Web having used his Twitter account to condemn his country's ban on YouTube and instructed officials to examine legal ways of reopening access.

State Fragility Remains The Determining Factor

It is interesting to note that the DPC's analyses shows that 95% of the countries on the list are considered politically stable reconfirming that leaders who are confident in their leadership role and assured of their political legitimacy are most comfortable with social media regardless of the form of government whether they serve in democracies, autocracies or monarchies. The political leadership of most fragile nations, those with a high degree of political instability, continue to view social media as a threat and adoption remains low.

One exception to this is in Africa where a new champion of social media has emerged in the form of President Goodluck Jonathan of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The President of Africa's most populous nation has aggressively embraced social media with very active public discussions on Twitter and Facebook. While his following is still growing, he does not hesitate to make controversial announcements through his Facebook site such as his decision to stand for upcoming January 2011 presidential elections. "It's a small platform perhaps, but it offers the possibility of change." expounded President Goodluck.

Next Generation Governance

Open communication from heads of state through social media channels such as Twitter is only a single dimension of a much broader transformation being driven through open government. The empowerment of public service officials with new skill sets, readiness for experimentation and innovation, and opening up the government to collaboration with its citizens are also part of this wave of change.

Now world leaders in public administration and public policy innovation, such as those spearheaded in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan, are leading a vital and wide-ranging transformation of government by attempting to create digital platforms that public citizenry and businesses can use to make themselves stronger and help improve the impact of government programs - the phenomena has been labeled Government 2.0.

The strategy behind Government 2.0 is to apply the social networking and integration advantages of Web 2.0 to the practice of government. Governments with no platforms or policy to engage their citizenry and the global community on the Net will find themselves vulnerable for 21st Century politics.



Rank	Head of State	Country	Polity Score	Regime Type	Fragility	Tweeting Since	Followers	Followers (Begin 2010)	Handle	Link
1	President Barack Obama	United States	10	DEM	2	3/5/2007	5,624,691	3,173,986	BarackObama	https://twitter.com/BarackObama
2	10 Downing Street (Prime Minister David Cameron)	United Kingdom	10	DEM	0	3/26/2008	1,754,081	1,743,365	number10gov	http://twitter.com/number10gov
3	Queen of Jordan Rania Al Abdullah	Jordan	-3	ANO	6	4/29/2009	1,365,722	1,234,923	QueenRania	http://twitter.com/QueenRania
4	President Hugo Chavez	Venezuela	5	ANO	9	4/28/2010	936,740	New	chavezcandanga	http://twitter.com/chavezcandanga
5	Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama	Japan	10	DEM	0	12/16/2009	677,566	195,644	hatoyamayukio	http://twitter.com/hatoyamayukio
6	His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum	United Arab Emirates	-8	AUT	3	6/3/2009	351,817	325,909	HHShkMohd	http://twitter.com/HHShkMohd
7	President Sebastián Piñera	Chile	10	DEM	2	2/18/2008	227,009	43,977	sebastianpinera	http://twitter.com/sebastianpinera
8	President Felipe Calderón	Mexico	8	DEM	3	4/23/2009	223,980	New	FelipeCalderon	http://twitter.com/FelipeCalderon
9	Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva	Thailand	4	ANO	7	6/6/2009	137,130	New	PM_Abhisit	http://twitter.com/PM_Abhisit
10	President Abdullah Gul	Turkey	7	DEM	10	12/9/2009	103,609	New	cbabdullahgul	http://twitter.com/cabdullahgul
11	Gabinete SEC (Ministerio de la Presidencia)	Spain	10	DEM	1	7/20/2009	97,249	New	desdelamoncloa	http://twitter.com/desdelamoncloa
12	President Dmitry Medvedev	Russia	4	ANO	8	6/23/2010	92,712	New	KremlinRussia	http://twitter.com/KremlinRussia/
13	Prime Minister Stephen Harper	Canada	10	DEM	0	7/11/2007	68,574	45,371	pmharper	http://twitter.com/pmharper
14	Prime Minister Julia Gillard	Australia	10	DEM	2	7/4/2010	59,604	New	JuliaGillard	http://twitter.com/JuliaGillard

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15	Prime Minister Najib Razak	Malaysia	6	DEM	6	9/21/2008	37,667	9,098	NajibRazak	http://twitter.com/NajibRazak
16	Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg	Norway	10	DEM	2	2/13/2009	34,859	24,100	JensStoltenberg	http://twitter.com/jensstoltenberg
17	Office of the President of the Republic of Korea (HE Cheong Wa Dae)	South Korea	8	DEM	0	4/14/2010	30,233	1,139	BlueHouseKorea	http://twitter.com/BluehouseKorea
18	Presidency of Ecuador (HE Rafael Correa)	Ecuador	5	ANO	11	1/4/2010	21,199	New	Presidencia_Ec	http://twitter.com/Presidencia_Ec
19	Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey	7	DEM	10	8/22/2009	14,971	216	RT_Erdogan	http://twitter.com/RT_Erdogan
20	Prime Minister John Key	New Zealand	10	DEM	1	11/14/2008	13,502	7,778	johnkeypm	https://twitter.com/johnkeypm
21	President Laura Chinchilla Miranda	Costa Rica	10	DEM	0	1/9/2009	10,066	New	Laura_Ch	http://twitter.com/Laura_Ch
22	Prime Minister Yves Leterme	Belgium	8	DEM	2	1/21/2010	9,938	New	YLeterme	http://twitter.com/Yleterme
23	Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu	Israel	10	DEM	8	10/30/2008	9,149	2,686	netanyahu	http://twitter.com/netanyahu
24	Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen	Denmark	10	DEM	0	3/24/2009	6,252	4,775	larsloekke	https://twitter.com/larsloekke
25	Presidency of France (HE Nicolas Sarkozy)	France	9	DEM	0	10/13/2008	6,075	New	Elysee	http://twitter.com/Elysee
26	Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis	Latvia	8	DEM	0	6/24/2009	4,404	1,401	VDombrovskis	http://twitter.com/vdombrovskis
27	President Gloria Arroyo	Philippines	8	DEM	12	4/5/2010	2,956	2,279	PresidentGMA	https://twitter.com/PresidentGMA
28	President Goodluck Jonathan	Nigeria	4	DEM	20	7/6/2010	2,416	New	JGoodlucktweets	http://twitter.com/JGoodlucktweets
29	President Bronisław Komorowski	Poland	10	DEM	0	4/28/2010	2,329	New	komorowski	http://twitter.com/komorowski
30	Prime Minister George Papandreou	Greece	10	DEM	1	1/12/2010	2,294	New	primeministergr	http://twitter.com/primeministergr
31	President Juan Manuel Santos	Colombia	7	DEM	11	5/18/2010	2,168	New	UneteaSantos_	http://twitter.com/UneteaSantos
32	President Ivo Josipović	Croatia	9	DEM	3	7/13/2009	1,970	New	ivojosipovic	http://twitter.com/ivojosipovic
33	President Paul Kagame	Rwanda	-3	ANO	20	5/4/2009	1,761	338	PaulKagame	http://twitter.com/PaulKagame

Guide To Political Scores

The Polity Spectrum of Governance

Government Types

The Polity IV Project, a well-respected research group, tracks the characteristics and transitions of regime characteristics to quantify and compare political schema over time, and on a global scale.

Begun in 1975, Polity is based on foundational research conducted by the collaborative work of Harry Eckstein in his seminal thesis, *Patterns of Authority: A Structural Basis for Political Inquiry*. Since its inception, Polity has tracked trends in governance on a worldwide scale, and has become the “most widely-used data resource for studying regime change and the effects of regime authority.”

The most recent rendition, the Polity IV Project, collates data through 2008 at the Center for Systemic Peace and George Mason University, with its main campus located in Fairfax, Virginia, U.S.

The Polity approach to analysis employs a unique methodology, examining “concomitant qualities of democratic and autocratic authority” in institutional governments, assigning a quantifiable score based on a 21-point scale that ranges from hereditary monarchies, which are scored at -10, to consolidated and stable democracies which are given a score of +10.

Polity Score:	
> -10 to -6	"Autocracy"
-5 to +5	"Anocracy"
+6 to +10	"Democracy"

The organization makes no value judgments in its scoring model. It is simply a means by which change can be measured, evaluated and assessed and data collated. It should be considered an index – a measurement used to compare the status quo over time. As governments evolve, as new regimes gain or lose power, their scores change, providing a measureable means of tracking change in the way countries govern their people.

Today, 94 of the 163 states recognized by the United Nations (54%) are considered to be fully democratic, or to put it another way, more than half the world's population lives under a consolidated democracy as free citizens with a say in the role of their governments.

In 1940, the number of autocratic nations far outweighed the number of democratic governments. When compared with today's data, there is a clear trend toward a more democratic world – a trend that continues to grow as social media expands its sphere of influence.

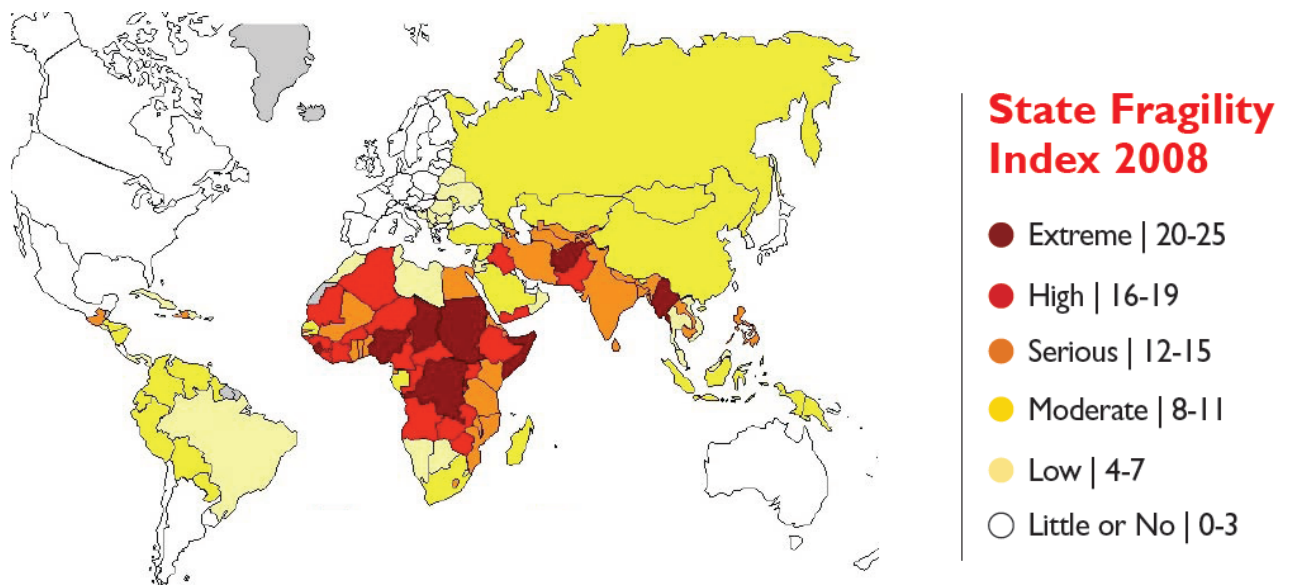
Stability of Government

The data set collated by the most recent publication of Polity covers 163 countries currently recognized by the United Nations and spans the time frame from 1800 through 2008.

In addition to the creation of a tracking index to measure change in how states are governed, Polity also develops what it calls its State Fragility Index. This index is a yardstick of how stable current regimes are – how entrenched the system of government is.

States with high fragility scores are more inclined to change than governments of countries with low fragility scores, indicating that governance around the world is in a constant state of flux.

The map below, developed by Polity, shows those countries that are most stable in terms of governance. The map indicates those countries that are most and least stable in 2008. Countries with high fragility scores are more susceptible to change, either peaceful change or revolutionary change, but change nonetheless.



Aspects of “fragility” include such elements as factionalism, important policy changes that affect broad segments of the population, autocratic “backsliding,” auto-coups and the collapse of the state government (state failure). A quick review of the map indicates that world governance is in a constant state of evolution. The State Fragility Index ranges from > 0=“Highly Stable” to 25=“Extreme Fragility” measuring the country’s Political, Economic, Social, and Security stability.

The Center for Systemic Peace and Center for Global Policy's fragility index points us toward a more stable world. Measuring each country's political, economic, social and security stability, this organization's fragility index (see map above) indicates that 36% of all countries have serious to extreme fragility.

Fragility Score:

0-11 Little to Moderate Fragility

12-25 Serious to Extreme Fragility

In other words, approximately two-thirds of the world's population live under stable or somewhat stable government structures based on the criteria employed by this respected "think tank." No one can refute that the trends toward democratization and social and economic stability are increasing.



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