

# **Tweet this: Study finds limits to new 'Twiplomacy'**

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President Barack Obama addresses the National Urban League convention at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Wednesday, July 25, 2012. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

(AP) — The governments of almost two-thirds of the 193 U.N. member nations have joined the Twitterverse where President Barack Obama and his tweet on gay marriage are the most popular to date, says a new study Thursday.

But the rise in so-called "Twiplomacy" among world leaders resembles something of an echo chamber, according to an analysis of Twitter accounts belonging to 264 heads of state and government and their institutions in 125 countries. The analysis was carried out by PR firm Burson-Marsteller, which describes it as the first-ever global study of world leaders on Twitter.

The researchers believe that just 30 of them have ever done their own tweeting — while even fewer do it on a regular basis — but altogether the Twittering leaders have sent more than 350,000 tweets to almost 52 million followers, the study shows.

About a third of them don't follow each other, and dozens of them — like Russian President Vladimir Putin, Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte — don't follow any other Twitterers.

Still, some converse. More than nine of every 10 tweets by Kagame and Ugandan Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi are replies, the study says.

World leaders tweet in 43 languages, with English favored by 90 of the accounts. Spanish is the next most-used, with 41 accounts, French is third with 25 accounts and Arabic fourth with 17.

"Sixteen of the G-20 leaders are actively using Twitter for public diplomacy, but it is sad to see that the heads of state and government in China, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Italy still have not joined the Twittersverse," said Matthias Luefkens of Burson-Marteller in Geneva. "What is really interesting is how the world is divided into English and Spanish tweets."

The data, gathered in July, looked at more than 30 variables such as tweets, retweets and hashtags. Luefkens said Twitter was not involved in any way in the study.

The most-followed account is (at)BarackObama, which is run by the Obama campaign and has 17.8 million followers. Of those followers 76 are the president's peers and other governments. Obama rarely sends his own tweets, but when he does he signs them, as he did in one to the first lady on Valentine's Day.

His campaign account mutually follows only Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

A May 9 tweet sent by the campaign team quoting Obama as saying "same-sex couples should be able to get married" is the most re-tweeted to date — more than 62,000 times.

Re-tweeted 4,444 times was Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak's warning: "To my tweeter friends, It is very costly to the nation to have a public holiday. We must not overdo it. We need to work hard."

Twitter is often used by politicians during election campaigns whose accounts go silent once they are elected, the study says, citing Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and French President Francois Hollande as examples.

But some clearly have a bit of fun with it.

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves tweeted for the first time on May 15, saying: "Help! I'm being followed;-),"

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