

World Leaders on Facebook

Executive Summary



Source: public Facebook profiles

“I hope you’ll think of this as a place where we can have real conversations about the most important issues facing our country – a place where you can hear directly from me, and share your own thoughts and stories.” U.S. President Barack Obama

Over the past eight years, Facebook has become the channel of choice for community engagement with world leaders. Many politicians discover social media channels during election campaigns, such as the Barack Obama page, which was set up in late 2007 as an electoral tool for the former Senator of Illinois. Since then, a Facebook presence has become part and parcel of any social media political campaign and one of the best ways to engage with potential voters and citizens.

According to Facebook’s latest figures, 1.5 billion people have registered an account on the platform, of which 1 billion people are active on the social network every day. In 2015, the number of users on Facebook has become even greater than the population of China, the most populous country on earth.

Given this global audience, it comes as no surprise that governments and leaders of 87% of the 193 United Nations member countries now have a presence on the social network. The 512 pages analyzed in this study, conducted by strategic communications and global PR firm Burson-Marsteller, represent 169 governments and have a combined total of 230,489,257 likes.

- When Barack Obama opened his personal presidential POTUS Facebook page on [9 November 2015](#) he wrote in his very first post: *“This is a place where we can have real conversations about the most important issues facing our country – a place where you can hear directly from me, and share your own thoughts and stories.”*



President Obama
Hello, Facebook! I finally got my very own page. I hope you'll think of this as a place where we can have real conversations about the most important issues facing our country – a place where you can hear directly from me, and share your own thoughts and stories. (You can expect some just-for-fun stuff, too.)

Shared with: Public
5,550,450 Views
Embed Video

- When Myanmar’s opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi won the election in November 2015, President U Thein Sein took to his Facebook page to congratulate her. According to a recent report in [Foreign Policy](#) the Internet has become synonymous with Facebook in Myanmar where *“the social media network dominates all online activity (...) to a degree unimaginable anywhere else”*.
- When Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife wrote [“A letter to our daughter”](#) they stated that *“We must engage directly with the people we serve. (...) We must participate in policy and advocacy to shape debates.”*

Government use of Facebook varies from country to country. While some pages merely broadcast the daily activity of their leaders, others engage with their citizens, replying to the most salient comments and even allowing a free flow of visitor posts on their respective pages.



Much like any other Facebook user, world leaders share their private lives on the platform: Celebrating [birthdays](#), sharing pictures of their [children](#), celebrating their latest [offspring](#) or grieving the passing of their [parents](#). And these personal posts are generally the most popular.

The most popular post of all world leaders was posted on the White House page, a family picture of the Obamas wishing their fans a [Happy Easter](#), with 2.9 million likes, comments and shares. The second most popular is Narendra Modi [welcoming Barack Obama](#) to India and the third most popular post was posted by the White House showing Barack Obama hugging Michelle Obama on their [wedding anniversary](#).



Family pictures posted by the royal families in the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands are especially appreciated by their fans. Pictures of world leaders which perform well on Facebook often show a lighter side of their personality such as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [riding a bicycle](#), HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Ruler of Dubai [barbequing in the woods](#) and Cambodia’s Prime Minister Hun Sen enjoying [the beach](#).

Posts on religious holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Eid al-Fitr and Thanksgiving are generally appreciated such as Argentinian President Mauricio Macri [decorating the Christmas](#) tree with his daughter and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [trick or treating](#) with his children at Halloween.

Sadly the terrorist attacks in Paris were the most 'liked' posts on the pages of [French leaders](#) in 2015 as were the messages of sympathy to the French people from other foreign leaders including [David Cameron](#), [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) and [Justin Trudeau](#). The most popular political statement posted on Facebook by far was the decision on marriage equality in the US, with Barack Obama's post "[Love just won](#)" receiving 1.8 million interactions on his campaign page.

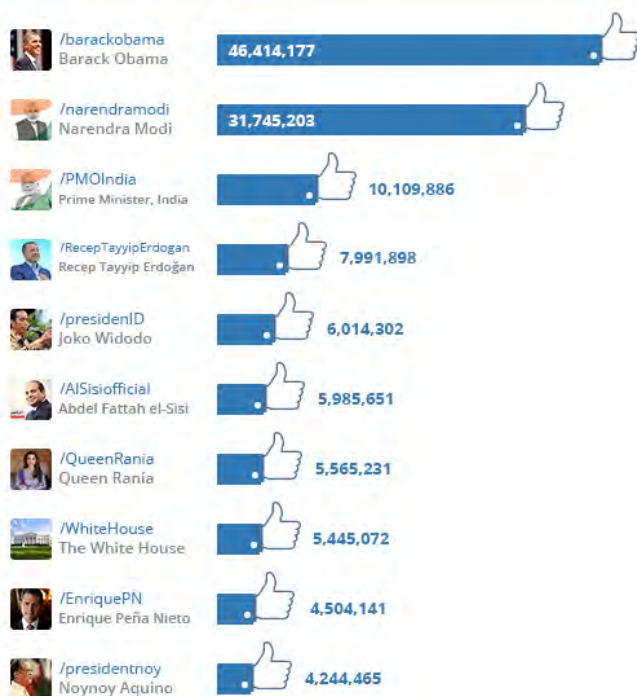
A look at the mission statements on these pages gives an interesting insight into the objectives of the governmental Facebook use: While the Indian Foreign Ministry aims to "*Advance India's conversations with the world,*" the Prime Minister's Office of Brunei seeks to "*enhance the effectiveness of executive decision-making.*"

Facebook has become the place where leaders can reach out to their citizens and have conversations in more than the 140-character limit allowed on Twitter. With their publications on Facebook, world leaders can now reach an audience of millions of users worldwide, regardless of the number of likes on their respective pages. Engaging Facebook posts often make headlines in mainstream media and have long become more powerful and effective than traditional press releases.

Most Liked World Leaders

Most Liked World Leaders In 2015

NUMBER OF PAGE LIKES



Minister of India page, which is in third position. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Indonesian President Joko Widodo and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi complete the top 5 list of the most popular leaders with more than 5 million likes each. 36 world leaders can boast more than a million likes on their respective pages. However, not everyone has such large communities and the median average of the 512 pages analyzed stands at 30,954 likes.

Indian government figures, including the President, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, dominate the ranking in the Asia Pacific region. The size of the country is clearly a decisive factor for these large audiences, however Facebook has been making inroads in other Asian countries and has become the platform of choice for Asian leaders. Philippine President Noynoy Aquino, Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak, Myanmar's new leader Aung San Suu Kyi and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen all have sizeable audiences, each with more than one million likes.

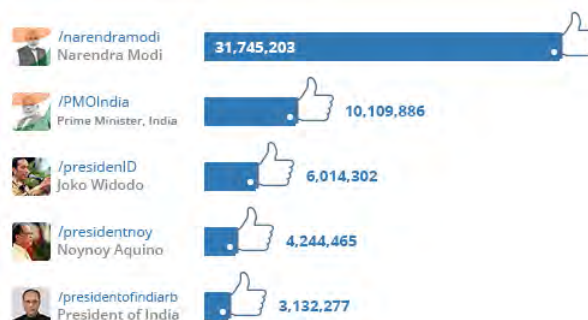
According to the Burson-Marsteller study conducted in early January 2016, 87 heads of state, 82 prime ministers and 51 foreign ministers maintain personal pages on Facebook. Barack Obama was the first world leader to set up a Facebook page in late 2007, while still a Senator in Illinois. He is still the most popular world leader with more than 46 million likes on his 'campaign page', which is not managed by the White House administration or the U.S. president himself.

In November 2015, the U.S. administration created an official institutional page for the President of the United States (POTUS) which has attracted 1.3 million likes in less than two months and is now among the 30 most popular pages of world leaders.

Barack Obama is closely followed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with more than 31 million likes on his personal page and 10.1 million likes on his institutional Prime

Most Liked Asian Leaders

NUMBER OF PAGE LIKES



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi leads the rankings in the Middle East and North Africa with close to 6 million likes, ahead of Jordan's Queen Rania, an early adopter with 5.5 million likes, and well ahead of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, with 3 million likes, and Jordan's Royal Hashemite Court with 1.6 million likes.

Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto is the most popular leader in Latin America with 4.5 million likes, ahead of the new Argentinian President, Mauricio Macri, with 3.5 million likes, and Brazil's Dilma Rousseff with 2.6 million likes.

Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta is the most popular leader in Sub-Saharan Africa with 2 million likes, ahead of John Dramani Mahama, the President of Ghana, and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the foreign minister of Ethiopia, with more than 600,000 likes each.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the British Monarchy, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russia's Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev and Albania's Edi Rama are Europe's most popular leaders on Facebook.

The governments of only 24 countries have not yet set up a presence on Facebook, including China, where the social network is banned, and Switzerland, where the former president briefly set up a personal page in 2013 before deactivating it only four months later.

Most Liked MENA Leaders

NUMBER OF PAGE LIKES



Most Liked Latin American Leaders

NUMBER OF PAGE LIKES



Most Liked Sub-Saharan African Leaders

NUMBER OF PAGE LIKES



Most Liked European Leaders

NUMBER OF PAGE LIKES



Does Size Really Matter?

While size does matter, it doesn't necessarily translate into increased engagement. To establish a 'ranking of engagement' relative to the number of page likes, the study added the post likes, comments and shares of each page in 2015 and then divided this figure by the number of page likes.

Using this index, Argentina's newly-elected President Mauricio Macri is the undisputed 'Facebook president' with a double digit engagement rate of almost 12%. He is followed by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, the Iraqi Prime Minister's office, Brazil's Dilma Rousseff and the White House, who all enjoy engagement rates relative to their fans of more than 7%.

India's Prime Minister makes a strong showing among the Top 10 most engaged leaders with an engagement rate of 6.7% despite his massive fan count. However, the Barack Obama page, the most liked page, is at the bottom of the list with an engagement rate per follower of only 0.89%.

Most Engaged World Leaders 2015

ENGAGEMENT RATE: INTERACTIONS/FANS IN 2015



How Often Do They Post?

The Facebook page of the Presidency of the Dominican Republic is the most prolific page, with an average of more than 27 posts per day in 2015. The governments of Botswana and the Philippines are almost as active, with more than 20 posts per day, making their pages much like a governmental news service. However, the posting frenzy doesn't necessarily translate into greater engagement, or more likes on their respective pages, and the median average posting rate stands at one post per day.

Post Interactions: Likes, Comments & Shares

Most Active World Leaders 2015

NUMBER OF POSTS AND POSTS/DAY IN 2015



Large Facebook pages clearly translate into large interactions (the sum total of likes, comments and shares). Here, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the undisputed champion, with more than 215 million interactions on his Facebook posts in 2015, more than 5 times as many as the more popular Barack Obama campaign page. A closer look at the type of interactions shows that Narendra Modi leads in post likes and post comments, however the White House posts are shared slightly more frequently than those of Modi, while having only a fifth of Modi's likes. Argentina's President Mauricio Macri makes it into second position in terms of interactions on his posts, despite having far fewer (three million) likes on his page.

Who is the most effective world leader?

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is undoubtedly the most effective world leader on Facebook, with an average of 186,000 interactions on each post in 2015. The Turkish President is second, followed by the institutional page of the Indian prime minister. Interestingly the 2-month-old POTUS page has almost as many interactions per average post as the much older and much larger Barack Obama campaign page. The POTUS page is characterized by having only a few posts, all 11 of which had a massive impact with his community in 2015.

Most Effective World Leaders 2015

AVERAGE INTERACTIONS/POST (LIKES, COMMENTS AND SHARES)



What Type of Content Do They Post?

A closer look at the type of content posted shows that the Presidency of the Dominican Republic also leads the rankings in terms of number of pictures posted, publishing more than 5,100 pictures in 2015. This is 1,000 more than the government of the Philippines, which is in second place. The total number of photos being shared is far greater than for simple status updates, clearly demonstrating the visual nature of communications on Facebook.

Whereas video count is not as high as overall photo count, they are being increasingly used on the pages studied in this report. Three quarters of the pages reviewed have posted videos natively to Facebook. The Prime of Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, leads the way, having transformed his Facebook page into an official video channel with more than 1,000 broadcasts of his official duties. In second place is the Presidency of the Dominican Republic, which posted 566 videos to its Facebook page in 2015.

A number of world leaders, in particular Argentina's President [Mauricio Macri](#), Brazil's President [Dilma Rousseff](#), Cambodia's Prime Minister [Hun Sen](#), Canada's Prime Minister [Justin Trudeau](#), Poland's President [Andrzej Duda](#) and the [White House](#) have already trialed Facebook's new live streaming feature, broadcasting their speeches and press conference live on Facebook.

A Picture Says More than 1000 Words

Because it is a visual social media platform, the majority of pages studied have a profile picture and cover photo – and several organizations regularly change their Facebook cover photos to promote special events. At the end of 2015, for example, the French government and the foreign ministry used their cover and profile pictures to promote the COP21 climate conference.



Others, such as the French Prime Minister, have used their cover photo to express their mourning following the terrorist attacks in Paris.



The most liked post on the institutional page of the Indian Prime Minister is the new profile picture of Narendra Modi who overlaid his profile with an Indian flag to support the *Digital India* campaign.



One of the highlights of Narendra Modi's social media engagement in 2015 was the 'town hall' meeting at Facebook's headquarters in September with Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, which was live-streamed on the platform. During the 50-minute interview, Modi described in detail his vision of a digital government: *"Social media means daily voting, there is no scope for a gap in communication with the government like before. The governments now get an opportunity to correct themselves every five minutes and not every five years*

like before. A good government is one with many information channels, those that give real time information.”

Nevertheless, our study found eight pages which had not uploaded a cover picture, including the very popular page of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Ruler of Dubai.

Creating Events

A useful feature of Facebook pages is the ability to create ‘events’ and invite fans to attend, either in person or online. The two pages of the Indian Foreign Ministry are trailblazers in the use of Facebook events, inviting their fans to a variety of public lectures, live broadcasts of press conferences and symposia. A number of foreign ministries including the Lithuanian, Swedish and French foreign ministries regularly organize events and promote them on their respective pages to engage their fans.

Another overlooked, but useful, feature on Facebook pages is the ability to post long-form content also called ‘Notes.’ Only 139 of the 512 pages analyzed have used notes. Tunisia’s Prime Minister Habib Essid has posted 36 notes and the Haitian government often posts notes containing the full text of official speeches or press releases. These blog-style notes work very well if a picture is added on top of the document.

Public Reviews, Ratings & Posts

91 of the pages surveyed allow for public reviews and ratings and 29,589 users have attributed stars to these pages. The page of the Indian President has received more than 12,000 reviews with a stellar 4.5 rating out of possible five stars. The Turkish presidency has been reviewed by 4,300 Facebook users giving it 4.6 stars and the presidency of the Dominican Republic is third with 3,700 reviews and a 4.4 star rating. The average rating of all pages is 4.17 out of 5.

The Indian presidential administration and the Indian prime minister’s office are also among the 176 pages which freely allow visitors to post on the page. Their suggestions, praise and criticisms are publically displayed on the left-hand column on each page. While these public posts are unmoderated and often prone to spam messages, their public display shows a very high level of openness to engage with fans and foes.



The screenshot shows the Facebook page for the President of India, categorized as a Government Organisation. The page has a 4.5 star rating based on 12,000 reviews. A public review by Siddhartha Ghosh, dated 15 December 2015, is visible, praising the page for providing information about the President's activities and India as a country.

Star Rating	Count
5 stars	9,811
4 stars	1.4k
3 stars	653
2 stars	317
1 star	529

The Most Visited Institutions

136 pages of the pages surveyed are 'place pages,' where Facebook users can check in with their mobile devices. According to this measure, the Foreign Ministry of Thailand is the most popular location of any government institution with 23,448 people who have checked in at the foreign ministry in Bangkok. The Indian presidency is second with 23,264 mobile check-ins at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the 130-hectar presidential estate in New Delhi. The presidential pages of Turkey, South Africa and Ivory Coast complete the Top 5 list with more than 11,000 mobile check-ins each.

Most Visited Institutions 2015

MOBILE CHECK-INS BY FACEBOOK USERS IN 2015 (WERE HERE)



Do World Leaders Like Each Other?

Liking other Facebook pages is essentially an act of courtesy. While a like does not allow these pages to message each other privately, it makes it easier to follow the posts published on those pages. Almost three quarters of the 512 pages analyzed have liked at least one other Facebook page. Politicians tend to like their respective political party, governments sometimes like all their ministries on Facebook and foreign ministries often like the pages of their embassies worldwide. A few foreign ministries also like the Facebook pages of embassies accredited in their respective capitals. Page owners can feature selected pages in the 'Liked by This Page'-box on their profiles, which at times can be the only place where you can find a list of a Facebook pages belonging to a country's diplomatic missions.



In terms of peer connections, the campaign page of Barack Obama is the most popular page, liked by 21 of his peers and the White House is liked by 19 others. The European Commission is second and the European External Action Service is in third place, on a par with the White House, ahead of the French President and the French Foreign Ministry in fourth place. The Council of the European Union and the State Department share the fifth position. The UN is by far the most popular page with all world leaders, liked by 36 other pages, ahead of the European Parliament (25 likes) and NATO (15 likes).

World Leaders' Peer Connections 2015

WORLD LEADERS' PAGES MOST LIKED BY PEERS



Other Pages Liked By World Leaders 2015

OTHER PAGES LIKED BY WORLD LEADERS

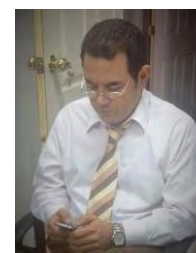


When did they set up their Page?

Barack Obama was the first world leader to set up his personal Facebook page, posting his first post on 26 September 2007, when he was still a Senator in Illinois. The UK government under Gordon Brown started to post on the 10 Downing Street page on 24 November 2007, shortly before U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, whose first post dates back to 17 December of the same year. John Kerry's page, which is a personal campaign page, is currently dormant and not managed by the State Department. The Government Information Service of Grenada was the last to join the platform on 27 August 2015.

Who Manages the Page?

Very few world leaders manage their Facebook pages themselves. India's Prime Minister is regularly dipping into his Facebook page according to the [Times of India](#). Guatemala's President Jimmy Morales' most liked picture shows him on an iPhone, with the caption *"trying to answer every comment"*. The post has been shared more than 3,000 times and received more than 17,000 comments; while he has replied to the most salient comments, no one expects him to answer every single one of them.



The German government's social media team in Berlin aims to acknowledge every single comment on the government page which was set up on 20 February 2015. The Croatian government's social media team recently indicated that they posted more than 8,300 replies to comments on their page in 2015. The seven-strong team follows the social media feed daily from 9am to 10pm. The Obama administration has a team of more than 20 staff to manage the official administration channels. And finally, the page of the Foreign Minister of Guyana, is *"managed by his children"* as indicated in the profile of Moses Nagamootoo.

Another Asian leader who is an avid user of Facebook is Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Lee is also one of the few world leaders who manages his social media accounts himself. Lee also took part in a live chat on Facebook, in January 2015, at the Facebook offices in the city-state. After a meeting with some of his Facebook fans he posted a picture stressing that: *"They encouraged me to do more on social media, to reach those not following the mainstream media. I asked who had read the newspapers this morning; only 3 raised their hands. Then I asked if they had checked FB; all said yes! ;)"*

Former Swiss President Ueli Maurer opened a Facebook page at the beginning of 2013 when he took over the rotating Swiss presidency, but he quickly became disillusioned *"expecting more substance and political content"* according to his spokesperson and deleted his page less than four months later.

Other Findings

- 444 pages have a custom Facebook user name, shortening their URL.
- 463 pages link a website, 202 list an email and 191 provide a telephone contact.
- 203 pages installed apps, mainly to aggregate their Instagram, YouTube and Twitter feeds
- 139 pages have published Notes, long format news items and often the page's rules of engagement
- 36 pages display a box called “*People also Like*”, displaying a random selection of similar pages.

About this Study

World Leaders on Facebook is Burson-Marsteller's latest research into how world leaders, governments and international organizations communicate via social media. The research builds on Burson-Marsteller's highly acclaimed annual *Twiplomacy* study. Initially focused solely on Twitter, the 2016 study is being expanded to other social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Google+ and more niche digital diplomacy platforms such as Snapchat and Vine.

Burson-Marsteller has identified a total of 512 Facebook pages, 228 of which have been verified by Facebook and carry a blue verification mark. The 284 remaining pages are not verified, but we believe that they can be considered as official pages. We also discovered 10 personal profiles of world leaders including the personal page of Japan's Prime Minister [Shinzō Abe](#), which we did not include in this analysis despite having half a million followers and 4,773 friends.

We have not included fan pages set up by private individuals such as the page of Russian President Vladimir Putin, which boasts 1.7 million likes. And finally we have not included inactive pages as it was virtually impossible to ascertain their authenticity or since they have been dormant for more than a year, such as the page of Peru's President [Ollanta Humala Tasso](#).

Data was collected on 4 January 2016, using Burson-Marsteller's proprietary Burson Tools to analyze the 512 world leaders' pages. More than 50 variables were considered, including: likes, check-ins, were here count, location, Liked by Page, Reviews, Ratings, Visitor Posts, Apps, Notes, People Also Like, Posts/Day, Most Liked Post et al.

Thank you to study author Matthias Lüfkens for his ongoing strategic guidance on *Twiplomacy* and the *World Leaders on Social Media* series.

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