

# Twitter report on most followed leaders in SA released

The South African government has continued to grow in the use of Twitter in 2022, growing 67% in 2021 to 72% in 2022.



Source: [www.unsplash.com](https://www.unsplash.com)

This is the according to the 3rd annual *South African Government Leaders on Twitter Report*, as compiled and released by pan-African reputation management company, Decode Communications.

## An increase in following

According to the report, outgoing Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula remains the leading twitter account holder in government with 2.8 million followers, up just under 10% from 2021 when he had 2.6 million followers. Mbalula is followed closely by President Cyril Ramaphosa, whose account has a healthy following of 2.5 million, up from 2.1 million the previous year – a whopping 20.25% growth.

Although all the top 10 government twitter accounts showed growth in the year under review, all the other eight paled in numbers compared to Mbalula's and Ramaphosa's. Gwede Mantashe of mineral resources and energy came distant second at just over 500,000. Minister of Public Works, Patricia De Lille continues to experience the least growth at 224,000 followers, just up 2% from 2021.

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## Twitter brings back political ads

4 Jan 2023



Unlike in 2021, all the top 10 most followed accounts of cabinet members and the top 10 most followed national departments in 2022 were verified. On the contrary, none of the 10 most followed accounts of cabinet members' spokespeople were verified.

That said, the reports found that majority of government spokespeople do not use Twitter for policy communication and promotion of messages of their departments and principals. It also noted that it was unfortunate that social media accounts of government leaders were not institutionalised, which is a missed opportunity for ministers like Dr Joe Phaahla (health) and Bheki Cele (Police), both of whom are big newsmakers.

### Personality sells

Curiously, when it comes to departments, transport does not feature in the top 10, proving that Mbalula's followers are about the person more than the office. The presidency's account at 2.3 million followers (a 13.26% jump from 2021) pretty much mirrors that of the president.

The second most popular departmental account is that of the South African Police Service at 1000,000 followers, up from 889,000 in 2021. Yet, Police Minister Cele, a controversial newsmaker by far, is not on Twitter.

When it comes to provinces the leaders of the pack are Gauteng premier Panyaza Lesufi (400,000), former KwaZulu-Natal premier Sihle Zikalala (119,000), Gauteng Human Settlements MEC Lebogang Maile (65,000) and Limpopo Health MEC Phophi Ramathuba (53,000).

Lorato Tshenkeng, CEO of Decode Communications, previously said: "Although there was a major breakthrough in more political leaders joining the platform compared to last year, citizens still witnessed many government communication professionals blurring the lines by conflating the party and state. This is one of the things that a young democracy such ours must guard against by setting proper policies and standards to institutionalise and regulate the use of social media by government while not discouraging robust engagement."

The North West, Mpumalanga and Free State governments feature poorly on Twitter.

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