South African Government Leaders on X 2023



Study by:

DECODE COMMUNICATIONS

Social media has evolved into an influential platform for human communication and many other essential activities that affect how we live, work and play.

Importantly, the extensive proliferation and influence of social media have proven to have the possibility of significantly contributing to **"open government"** by providing not only public information-sharing capabilities but also citizen engagement opportunities. Therefore, this requires government leaders, politicians and their communicators to humanise their engagement with citizens.



Over the years, Decode Communications has found that citizens want to understand how challenges facing South Africans affect government leaders and public representatives, including crime, electricity blackouts, food inflation, pothole-ridden roads, etc.

This understanding led to the launch of the annual South African Government Leaders on X **(formerly known as Twitter)** study in 2020.



4TH ANNUAL SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT LEADERS ON X

GovComms Social

The annual South African Government Leaders on X is **a benchmark tool with the purpose of reflecting on the presence and activity of cabinet members and their spokespeople on the microblogging app**, mainly how they use it for citizen engagement.

The study highlights the findings of the most influential and leading government leaders and their spokespeople, also known as Ministerial Liaison officers.

The 2023 South African Government Leaders on X Report is compiled by #GovCommsSocial.

#GovCommsSocial – an initiative of Decode Communications – is a **knowledge-sharing** platform to guide government and public sector communicators and social media professionals through the complexity and opportunities of using social media for citizen engagement.


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SOCIAL MEDIA
SUMMIT
FOR GOVERNMENT
sth
SCHOOL OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

INAUGURAL SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMIT FOR GOVERNMENT



"We need government communicators who move us beyond the arrivals of ministers. The minister has arrived, wonderful. And then what? How does it benefit my mother?"

Prof Mosa Moshabela

On World Social Media Day, 30 June 2023 – Decode Communications launched the first-ever Social Media Summit for Government.

The Summit is a knowledge exchange platform. It was hosted in partnership with the **University of Johannesburg** under the theme: **Reimagining the Future of Citizen Engagement**.

As the Summit's keynote, Professor Mosa Moshabelo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head of Research and Innovation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, thoroughly provoked the hundreds of senior public sector and government communicators who were in attendance from all across South Africa.

INAUGURAL SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMIT FOR GOVERNMENT

Powered by the Gauteng Tourism Authority and DKMS Africa – the Summit assembled a formidable line-up of speakers and experts who reflected on the impact of social media on citizen engagement and shared actionable insights and know-how of emerging tools, trends and best practices.

Gauteng Tourism Authority is an agency of the Gauteng Provincial Government that is mandated to develop and promote tourism in the province of Gauteng.

DKMS Africa is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to saving the lives of patients with blood cancer and blood disorders.

OUR METHODOLOGY



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METHODOLOGY

The 4th edition has an improved methodology, making it more qualitative than the previous reports, focusing on pillars that are not specifically about communications or social media metrics.

The new 4 pillars

ACCOUNTABILITY | **TRUST** | **HUMANISATION** | **RELEVANCE**

Data Gathering

- All the information or data (on the presence or lack thereof of the respective government leaders and their spokespeople) used in this report regarding the use of the social platform Twitter was mainly gathered through monitoring Twitter itself.
- A qualitative analysis of the **top 10 most followed accounts, top 5 ministers NOT on X** with the most mentions and **additional top 5 accounts of interest** was done. Data, analysis and insights provided by Acumen Media.
- The Twitter data was collated and analysed over one year (21 December 2022 to 31 December 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Pillar 1

ACCOUNTABILITY



As South Africa contends with loadshedding, service delivery challenges and corruption, citizens and media call for more accountability and consequences.

The accountability pillar measures how much accounts take responsibility for some of the challenges, including whether government communicators and cabinet members are responsive and perceived as providing solutions.

METHODOLOGY

Pillar 2

TRUST

Trust is built over time and can significantly impact public perception and engagement.

This measures the credibility and reliability of communicators. It examines the consistency and accuracy of their messaging, their transparency in communication, and their responsiveness to public queries and concerns.



METHODOLOGY

Pillar 3

HUMANISATION

This pillar assesses how well communicators present themselves as relatable and approachable. It looks at the extent to which they share personal stories, engage in everyday language, and share how they are affected by some of the challenges South African citizens face.

This pillar measures whether communicators are present as South African citizens or if they present as being immune to load-shedding, service delivery, corruption, and other issues that affect people.



METHODOLOGY

Pillar 4

RELEVANCE

Relevance also involves the usage of social media as a platform for various audiences, including media, citizens and other stakeholders.

This focuses on the degree to which the content shared is timely, significant, and of interest to the audience. It assesses how well these communicators address current issues and public concerns.



WHY TWITTER?

Although Facebook has the most significant number of users in South Africa, like in many other countries – Decode Communications chose to focus on X because:

- It is the most news-friendly social media platform.
- It is also by far the place where journalists are most likely to spend their social media energies.
- It remains the most influential platform for news and prompt information sharing by politicians, government leaders, public representatives, media and communication professionals, journalists, and newsrooms.
- Furthermore, its influence has been elevated by its ability to provide a platform for real-time outrage, consumer activism, and social mobilisation by brands and governments.

WHY DOES CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT MATTER?

South Africa is a participatory democracy, which dictates that citizens should always be empowered with timely and accurate information about the state, their rights, and the services due to them.

Also, in the spirit of – The People Shall Govern – citizens ought to be engaged by the state on laws, issues, programmes, services, etc., to allow them to give input and feedback as these affect their lives daily.

Importantly, when South Africa endorsed the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Declaration of Principles in September 2011, it committed itself to working with civil society towards enhancing transparency, public participation, accountability, and the fight against corruption in both the public and private spheres.

This global partnership initiative on open government aligns with the African Union's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which encourages African governments to improve good governance – including participation, openness and service delivery to their populations.



WHY DOES LEADERSHIP MATTER?

Leadership buy-in into the strategic and tactical use of social media as part of the communication mix is no longer a nice-to-have because digital is no longer a medium; it is a method – a method to create public value.

The Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS) senior managers and government leaders are responsible for critical decisions, including:

1. Budget allocation for creative campaigns, human resources, infrastructure and equipment.
2. Elevating and centralising the role of social media in planning and execution of service delivery.
3. Institutionalising social media use by government leaders, Ministerial Liaison Officers, and government communicators and spokespeople instead of leaving it to individual preference.
4. Prioritising governance, socialising the social media policies and standardising their application.
5. Ensuring compliance with the legal aspects of social media and how it affects the work of professionals.



2023 TOP NOTEWORTHY EVENTS

1. Thabo Bester and Nandipha
2. Exit of a Deputy President and a new one – Our Deputy President made headlines from when he was sworn in in March to all the coverage about his personal life and, ultimately, the bodyguards who assaulted motorists
3. Eskom and load shedding
4. AKA's murder
5. Springboks do it again - Rugby World Cup, SA becoming the first to win Rugby four times
6. Israel bombards Gaza
7. ANC Gov handling of the Israeli genocide in Gaza
8. Construction mafia's criminality
9. The exit of Busi Mkhwebane
10. Mangosuthu Buthelezi's passing
11. SA's challenge with water
12. Minister Pravin Gordhan made news several times, especially when Transnet issues came up in the media.



2023 TOP NOTEWORTHY EVENTS

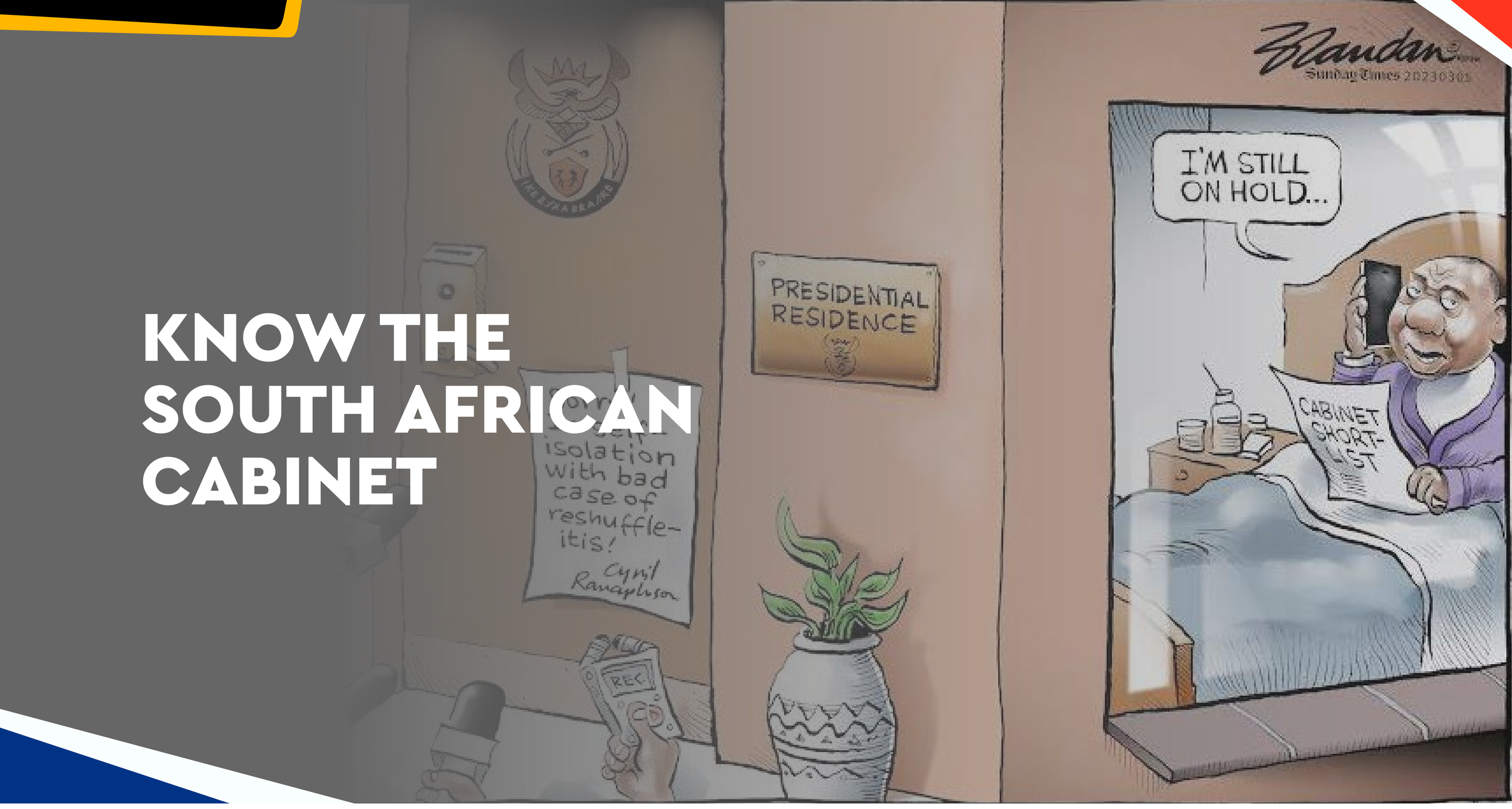
13. The Cape Town taxi strike in early August made us stop and listen.
14. The Russian Plane carrying South African journalists debacle.
15. CoT & CoJhb coalition
16. Amapanyaza
17. NSFAS issues
18. Cholera in Hammanskraal
19. Social development & delays in Grant payments
20. Zama Zamas
21. SIU lottery scandal
22. BRICS summit in Sandton
23. Zulu Kingdom dispute
24. The South African Water Crisis: Hammanskraal, Durban & Johannesburg
25. Phala Phala: Ramaphosa in the dock (Section 89 report and Parliament)
26. EFF: SONA ambush to 10th anniversary
27. Jacob Zuma: Downer vs Maughan, SANCO & MK Party
28. G4S contract and Thabo Bester case The Great Escape, Bester and Magudumana can't make that up!
29. Joburg collapse: Usindiso building fire & gas explosion



2023 TOP NOTEWORTHY EVENTS

30. NHI: Universal Healthcare at loggerheads with the private sector
31. The Collapse of COGTA: Will the district development model work for the failing infrastructure and service delivery?
32. Elections 2024: new parties, key figures and the case for independent candidates
33. Misuzulu: the legitimacy of the Zulu Monarch
34. Chapter nine: institutions, reports and lack of govt accountability
35. Ukraine Afrikan mediation efforts;
36. Busisiwe's impeachment
37. Phala phala Public Protector and SARB findings
38. Busisiwe Mkhwebane becoming the first SA Public Protector to be impeached
39. SA government recalls ambassadors in Tel Aviv and implores ICC to investigate Netanyahu for possible war crimes
40. Ramaphosa's decision to coronate Mis'Zulu as the Zulu monarch set aside
41. Deployment of the army to deal with the Zama Zama crisis
42. Joburg CBD explosion and the Marshalltown building fire
43. Moonshot pact, which could shift the country's political landscape
44. High interest rates and inflation have South Africans breathing through the wound
45. 15th BRICS Summit and Putin Warrant of Arrest;
46. Zimbabwean elections and its implication to the ZEP debates on the migration issues;

KNOW THE SOUTH AFRICAN CABINET



CABINET FACTSHEET



10 KEY FACTS ABOUT THE CABINET OF SOUTH AFRICA

1. It is the most senior level of the executive branch of government.
2. President Cyril Ramaphosa and Deputy President Paul Mashatile lead it.
3. It comprises 30 members – the president, deputy president and 28 ministers.
4. The national government has 28 departments, which 28 ministers lead.
5. The national ministries are divided into 7 clusters.
6. The provincial Executive Councils have a total of 99 members.
7. Each of the nine provinces is led by a premier and 10 Members of the Executive Council (MEC).
8. The president, deputy president, premiers, and all ministers and MECs are supported by spokespeople, also known as ministerial liaison officers (MLO), advisors and other personnel.
9. The spokespeople are based in the offices of the cabinet members, premiers and MECs, and although they are not heads of communication in the respective departments – both national and provincial – they also speak on of the departments and
10. The Chief Executive Officer of the Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS) is the spokesperson of the Cabinet.

FINDINGS – FOLLOWING

The top 5 most followed government leaders on X:



Cyril Ramaphosa
President



Gwede Mantashe
Minister of Mineral Resources And Energy



Panyaza Lesufi
Gauteng Premier



Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma
Presidency: Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities



Zizi Kodwa
Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture

KEY FINDINGS – ENGAGEMENT

Top 5 most engaged government leaders on X



Cyril Ramaphosa
President



Panyaza Lesufi
Gauteng Premier



Naledi Pandor
Minister of International Relations and Cooperation
NOT ON X



Bheki Cele
Minister of Police
– NOT ON X



Gwede Mantashe
Minister of Mineral Resources And Energy

- President Cyril Ramaphosa recorded the highest engagement, followed by Panyaza Lesufi, Naledi Pandor and Bheki Cele (both of whom are not on X), then by Gwede Mantashe.

KEY FINDINGS – SENTIMENT

Top 5 government leaders on X with the highest negative sentiment



Lindiwe Zulu
Minister of Social Development



Bheki Cele
Minister of Police
– NOT ON X



Pravin Gordhan
Minister of Public Enterprises
– NOT ON X



Khumbudzo Ntshavheni
Minister in the Presidency



Gwede Mantashe
Minister of Mineral Resources And Energy

- Zizi Kodwa delivered the highest positive sentiment followed by Patricia DeLille and Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi.
- The highest negative sentiment of almost 70% was recorded for Lindiwe Zulu followed by Bheki Cele and Pravin Gordhan (both of whom are not on X), then by Khumbudzo Ntshavheni and Gwede Mantashe.
- Zizi Kodwa delivered the highest positive sentiment, followed by Patricia DeLille and Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi.

KEY FINDINGS – MOST INFLUENTIAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

X ACCOUNT	ACCOUNTABILITY	TRUST	HUMANISATION	RELEVANCE
Cyril Ramaphosa, President	☹	🙂	☹	🙂
Gwede Mantashe, Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy	☹	😐	☹	😐
Panyaza Lesufi, Gauteng Premier	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂
Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Presidency: Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities	☹	😐	☹	😐
Zizi Kodwa, Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture	😐	🙂	😐	🙂

LEGEND:

= Rate high = Rate moderately = Rate low

KEY FINDINGS – MOST INFLUENTIAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS



1. Even without a presence on X, International Relations Minister Naledi Pandor recorded the third-highest results and engagement.

   Key drivers of this high engagement include:

   o The handling of the Russian President's attendance of the BRICS Summit

   o The Israeli fracas at the African Union Meeting and the Israel-Palestinian war

2. Although Clayson Monyela, the International Relations' Head of Diplomacy, is not within the scope of the Ministerial Liaison Officers' accounts tracked and recorded by this study, he is the most engaged spokesperson and with high positive sentiment.
3. Energy dominated the X conversations with Ministers Gwede Mantashe, Pravin Gordhan and Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa at the heart of the mentions.
4. The second most dominant conversations were on crime and safety with Minister Bkeki Cele as the key feature.

TOP 10 MOST FOLLOWED ACCOUNTS – NATIONAL CABINET



CYRIL MATAMELA RAMAPHOSA | President
@CyrilRamaphosa **2023(2022) 2,76M (2,53M)** **9,22%**



GWEDE MANTASHE | Mineral Resources and Energy
@GwedeMantashe1 **2023(2022) 535K (515K)** **3,87%**



DR. NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA | Presidency: Women, Youth and Persons With Disabilities
@DlaminiZuma **2023(2022) 437K (420K)** **4,21%**



ZIZI KODWA | Sport, Arts And Culture
@zizikodwa **2023(2022) 247 241** **X**



PATRICIA DE LILLE | Tourism
@PatriciaDeLille **2023(2022) 224K (224K)** **0,13%**



DR KGOSIENTSHO RAMOKGOPA | Presidency: Electricity
@Kgosientsho_R **2023(2022) 146 804** **X**



RONALD LAMOLA | Justice and Correctional Services
@RonaldLamola **2023(2022) 141K (109K)** **29,33%**



SIHLE ZIKALALA | Public Works and Ininfrastructure
@sziks **2023(2022) 130K (119K)** **9,15%**



STELLA NDABENI- ABRAHAMS | Small Business Development
@StellaRated **2023(2022) 84,1K (82,4K)** **2,05%**



DR BLADE NZIMANDE | Higher Education, Science and Innovation
@DrBladeNzimande **2023(2022) 67,7K (59,4K)** **13,94%**

TOP 10 MOST FOLLOWED ACCOUNTS – NATIONAL DEPARTMENTS

PRESIDENCY
@PresidencyZA **2023 (2022)** 2,46M (2,32M) 6,03%

BASIC EDUCATION
@DBE_SA **2023(2022)** 302K (292K) 3,35%

SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICES
@SAPoliceService **2023(2022)** 1,22M (1,09M) 11,96%

HOME AFFAIRS
@HomeAffairsSA **2023(2022)** 203K (176K) 15,52%

HEALTH
@HealthZA **2023(2022)** 408K (392K) 4,08%

FINANCE
@TreasuryRSA **2023(2022)** 3151K (150K) 0,53%

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR
@deptoflabour **2023(2022)** 124K (112K) 10,56%

TRADE, INDUSTRY AND COMPETITION
@the_dtic **2023(2022)** 102K (101K) 1,47%

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION
@DIRCO_ZA **2023(2022)** 112K (99,1K) 13,37%

DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS
@SANDF_ZA **2023(2022)** 91,4K (71,8K) 20,59%

TOP 10 MOST FOLLOWED ACCOUNTS – NATIONAL CABINET MEMBERS' SPOKESPEOPLE



LIRANDZU THEMBA | South African Police Services
@LirandzuThemba **2023(2022) 72,7K (69,6K)** **4,43%**



VINCENT MAGWENYA | President
@spokespersonRSA **2023(2022) 18K (9,4K)** **90,21%**



CHRISPIN PHIRI | Justice and Correctional Services
@Chrispin_JPhiri **2023(2022) 9,1K (6,8K)** **32,98%**



CORNELIUS TANANA MONAMA | Small Business Development
@cmonama **2023(2022) 9,1K (7,3K)** **23,62%**



HLENGIWE NHLABATHI | Human Settlements
@Hlengi **2023(2022) 5,3K (5,2K)** **1,38%**



NATHI DAVID SHABANGU | Mineral Resources and Energy
@DavidNathi **2023(2022) 2,8K (2,8K)** **-0,46%**



SIPHO MBELE | Presidency: Communication
@mbelesipho **2023(2022) 2,5K** **X**



VUKANI MDE | Deputy President
@VukaniMde **2023(2022) 1,3K** **X**



LUNGA NGQENGELELE | International Relations And Cooperation
@Ngqengelele **2023(2022) 1,3K (1,2K)** **5,33%**



LITHA MPONDWANA | Sport, Arts And Culture
@Mpondz **2023(2022) 1K** **X**

TOP 10 MOST FOLLOWED ACCOUNTS – PROVINCIAL CABINET



PANYAZA LESUFI | Gauteng Premier
@Lesufi (2023) 497K (400K) 24,15%



PHOPHI RAMATHUBA | Limpopo MEC for Health
@PhophiRamathuba (2023) 73,4K (58,9K) 24,62%



LEBOGANG MAILE | Gauteng MEC for Human Settlements and Infrastructure Development
@LebogangMaile1 (2023) 70,2K (65,1K) 7,81%



FAITH MAZIBUKO | Gauteng MEC For Safety and Security
@FaithMazibukoSA (2023) 60,2K (58,4K) 3,03%



ALAN WINDE | Western Cape Premier
@alanwinde (2023) 58,1K (59,9K) -2,92%



ZAMANI SAUL | Northern Cape Premier
@zsaul1 (2023) 47,9K (39,6K) 20,75%



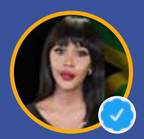
DAVID MAYNIER | Western Cape MEC for Education
@DavidMaynier (2023) 30,3K (30,2K) 0,24%



OSCAR LUBABALO MABUYANE | Eastern Cape Premier
@OscarMabuyane (2023) 19,2K (18,9K) 1,67%



TASNEEM MOTARA | Gauteng MEC For Economic Development
@TasneemMotara (2023) 17,5K (15,3K) 14,93%



MBALI HLOPHE | Gauteng MEC For Social Development, And Agriculture, Rural Development And Environment
@MbaliHlopheSA (2023) 15,3K (13K) 17,09%

NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS



NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS – PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA



Highest conversation peaks

- End of February and early March, with Mmusi Maimane laying criminal charges against the President (amongst others) in relation to Eskom looting.
- August with Elon Musk's mention of 'white genocide' in South Africa.
- October following Ramaphosa's pledge of solidarity with the people of Palestine, as well as the Rugby World Cup, win and the public holiday announcement made by the President.

Positive sentiment

- Indian President Narendra Modi's visit to South Africa when the BRICS Summit was hosted in South Africa
- The inclusion of new countries in the forum, global issues such as climate change, the G20, sustainable development, and low-carbon economies were all mentioned.
- Ramaphosa and South Africa for charging the State of Israel with War Crimes.
- Springboks winning the Rugby World Cup.

NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS – PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

Negative sentiment

- Ramaphosa tells people in Hammanskraal to boil their water
- The lack of urgency in addressing the electricity crisis
- Whistleblowers reportedly being 'on their own' under Cyril Ramaphosa's administration.



NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS – GWEDE MANTASHE



Highest conversation peaks

- February focussed on power cuts and its impact on South Africa.
- Many posts tagged Mantashe and expressed frustration and anger towards the frequent loadshedding episodes, causing harm to small businesses, people's livelihoods, and the economy.
- There were also accusations of sabotage and attempts to silence whistleblowers.
- July also saw a spike in mentions as Mantashe expressed concern regarding South Africa experiencing pressure from the West in its decision making regarding the use of coal.

Positive sentiment

- Positive mentions included Mantashe meeting the Brazilian President and posts showing support of Gwede's backing the return to coal.
- Personal opinions shared included mention that Fikile Mbalula and Gwede Mantashe were the best SG and Chairman any party president can ever dream of and that it was IMPERATIVE that Gwede Mantashe is re-elected as Chairperson as President Ramaphosa absolutely needs the tiger next to him.

NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS – GWEDE MANTASHE

Negative sentiment

- Half of the overall mentions for Gwede Mantashe were negative in sentiment. These included his controversial statements and actions, such as: .
  - His remarks about his rejection of political party proposals to train illegal miners.
  - He also refused to sign the $1 billion agreement with the Netherlands and Denmark because it was drafted without his input.
  - Mantashe's refusal to let PetroSA fail with big plans for PetroSA's revival also surfaced.



NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS – PANYAZA LESUFI



Highest conversation peaks

- February with demands for justice and accountability from government officials, who have been accused of lying and neglecting the victims of police brutality.
- May saw a small spike in mentions highlighting the crime wardens' drug bust.
- November due to the 'taverns of the future' being launched
- Electricity and transformer issues in Gauteng, the conversations around these issues

Positive sentiment

- Various government-led projects and investments in infrastructure, including the launch of new schools, libraries, and sports centres, as well as plans for a cashless economy and digital transformation.

NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS – PANYAZA LESUFI

Negative sentiment

- The opening of new taverns in communities, with some users expressing concern about the impact on society and the prioritization of such initiatives over more pressing issues like education and job creation.
- The Premier was also criticized for his proposal of a state funeral for AKA, and whether it is appropriate to spend public funds on it.
- There were also allegations of corruption in the recruitment of wardens
- The condition of Tembisa Hospital has been called into question, with a viral video showing poor conditions in one of its wards.



ABOUT GOVCOMMSSOCIAL

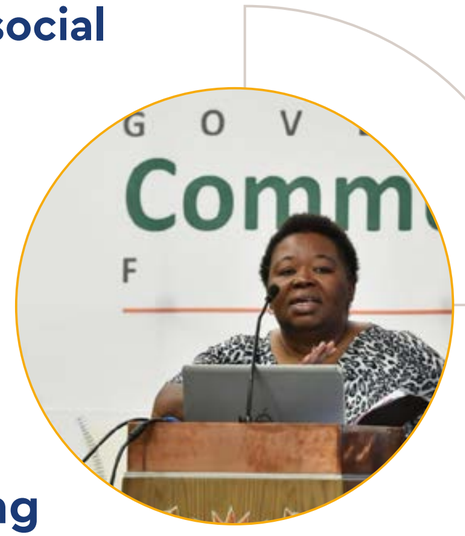
#GovCommsSocial – an initiative of Decode Communications – is a platform that supports public sector social media professionals and government communicators by:

- Facilitating **TRAINING**,
- Hosting **EVENTS** and
- Organising a **COMMUNITY** of digital marketers across Africa.

Our mission is to connect government communicators, public sector digital marketers and social media professionals with their peers, representatives from the major social networks for education and networking, and the private sector companies that can assist them through case studies and best practices.

We offer training using established social media and digital marketing best practices from the experts through:

1. Face-to-face and Online workshops
2. Keynote addresses
3. Coaching internal teams



We also provide social media crisis management support during disasters.



"Undoubtedly, technology influences how we live, work and play. This reality demands that public sector communicators adapt quickly by being on top of trends and best practices for communicating in the digital age."

Lorato Tshenkeng,
CEO of Decode Communications

ABOUT DECODE

Pan-African Reputation Management agency, headquartered in Johannesburg. Founded by Lorato Tshenkeng – Mail & Guardian Top 200 recognised communication strategist.

With our proven African experience – we help brands understand patterns of communication to tap into the psyche of their audiences by mapping ebbs and flows in trends.

Decode – We master every wave.

YOU'VE READ THE REPORT.

If you need more information or you wish to inquire about the social media training for public sector communicators – **contact us** at **hello@decode.co.za** or **lorato@decode.co.za**

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DECODE COMMUNICATIONS

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