

**BN is master of the Twitter-verse**  
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BN leaders are well ahead in the Twitter race, achieving a combined 2.8 times more followers on Twitter than Pakatan Rakyat leaders, said independent research firm PoliTweet.

According to Politweet's latest report released on its Facebook page yesterday, BN leaders have 876,138 followers as of Aug 2, while Pakatan leaders have 314,302 followers.

It added that BN also has far more exclusive followers, defined as followers who only follow BN leaders on Twitter.

"BN is doing quite well for itself. One area that could use improvement is the number of active followers," PoliTweet concluded in its analysis. (Graphic shows BN in blue, while Pakatan is in red).

It noted that of BN's many followers, only about 58 percent are active users, slightly lower to Pakatan's 60 percent. An active follower is defined as a person who has used Twitter in the past one or two months.

"Both coalitions need to acquire more active followers who will help spread their message through retweets," PoliTweet wrote.

In addition, only 48.3 percent of Pakatan's followers follow its leaders exclusively, compared to BN's 82.1 percent. The remaining Twitter users follow both BN and Pakatan leaders.

The think-tank monitors Malaysian's socio-political trends on Twitter, a popular micro-blogging website. The tweeting habits of over a million users were tracked for the purpose of this study.

#### PM looms large

The study also found BN's influence in the Twitter-verse is mostly attributed to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and his 784,477 followers - almost 90 percent of all BN followers - of which 57 percent of whom are active.

Once those who exclusively follow Najib are taken out of the equation, BN is left with only 374,563 followers, or only 19 percent more followers than Pakatan.

"Najib gets retweeted often by a large number of users, so the influence of the account during the next general election cannot be discounted.

"A detailed analysis of Najib's followers is definitely something worth exploring in (the) future," said PoliTweet.

However, PoliTweet's report have garnered some criticism from netizens who pointed out that Najib's overwhelming influence on Twitter could have been artificially inflated.

According to PoliTweet's reply to some of these critics, dummy accounts do exist to inflate numbers but it doubts that this was the case with Najib's large number of followers.

"Dummy accounts make it look like the social media (consulting) companies ... are hitting their target so they can earn their commission.

"But creating over 100,000 dummy accounts does not seem practical. You need an email for each sign-up on Twitter, then click the verification email, login, (and) follow Najib - it's a lot of work," read the rebuttal.

BN followers less open

The analysis also tracked the rate at which the exclusive followers of each group started following both coalitions, or switched allegiance altogether.

It found that few users, between 19 to 59 users a month, switch allegiance. Meanwhile, 1,935 Pakatan's exclusive followers and 929 of BN's exclusive followers become non-exclusive each month.

In addition, since March, it noted that the number of Pakatan's followers grew by about 16 percent, compared to BN's 41 percent.

"BN has a high follower growth rate and a lower migration rate of exclusive followers to non-exclusive status. This indicates that BN followers are less open to receiving messages from Pakatan," the study concluded, noting that the opposite is true for Pakatan and its followers.

PoliTweet concluded that Pakatan faces two challenges in the war for influence on Twitter: Ensuring that their followers don't become BN-exclusive followers, and encourage BN followers to follow Pakatan, whether exclusively or not.

"This will help expose users to Pakatan policies and ideologies. If they can repeat the Pakatan message to BN-exclusive users, that will help improve the migration rate and encourage even more users to follow," the study concluded.