

# THE CONVERSATION AFRICA

## A unique partnership between universities and media

The Conversation (theconversation.com) is an independent source of informed commentary and analysis, written by the academic and research community and edited by journalists for the general public.

Access to independent, high quality, authenticated, explanatory journalism underpins a functioning democracy. Our aim is to promote a better understanding of current affairs and complex issues. All articles are authored by scholars who write on their area of expertise. They work with our professional editors to ensure that their knowledge is conveyed in language accessible to the widest possible audience.

We have protocols and controls in place designed to help rebuild trust in journalism. These include an Editorial Charter that protects our independence as well as the requirement that authors disclose funding and potential conflicts of interest.

We believe in open access and the free flow of information which is why we publish under Creative Commons licence. All our articles are available for republication at no cost. Open access which allows knowledge to travel widely: our content is republished by media across Africa and internationally, from the Mail & Guardian and News 24, to the Daily Nation and the Standard in Kenya, to Quartz, CNBC Africa and the Guardian.

We are a not-for-profit organisation funded by foundation, corporate and government donors and universities. The Conversation Africa is independent and has no advertisers to answer to.

The Conversation Africa forms part of a global network with operations in Australia, UK, US, Canada, France and Indonesia.

## How we do it

Academics work with a dedicated editor – a journalist who can find the best angle, direct and advise them on how to approach writing so as to reach as wide an audience as possible. Working together, we cover everything from the hard sciences to politics, business, arts and culture; from breaking news to the latest research and topics of interest.

The editing process is highly collaborative, and the academic has the final say on what is published.

Our editors also provide public engagement training in their editing process. Introductory talks, interactive workshops, and intensive one-on-one sessions put academics on the right path to publication.

We help academics put their research on a pathway to having an impact by taking it to an intelligent, curious worldwide readership. After publishing on The Conversation, our authors have been contacted by policy and decision-makers in government and business, informing debate and shaping policy. We reach a global audience through our sister sites and their republishing networks.

Our analytics help track readership, reach and engagement. All authors and institutions that collaborate with us are provided with detailed analytics. Readership on-site and through republishing, engagement via comments and social media, and readers' worldwide location are all recorded and permanently kept for use. All this data can be used in support of bids for funding as well as evidence of impact and reach.

## Added value for universities and research institutions

The need to demonstrate public engagement is increasingly important to universities and research funders as people seek to extract more "value" from their institutions. Publicly funded institutions are more and more aware that it is their duty to share their knowledge with the wider public.

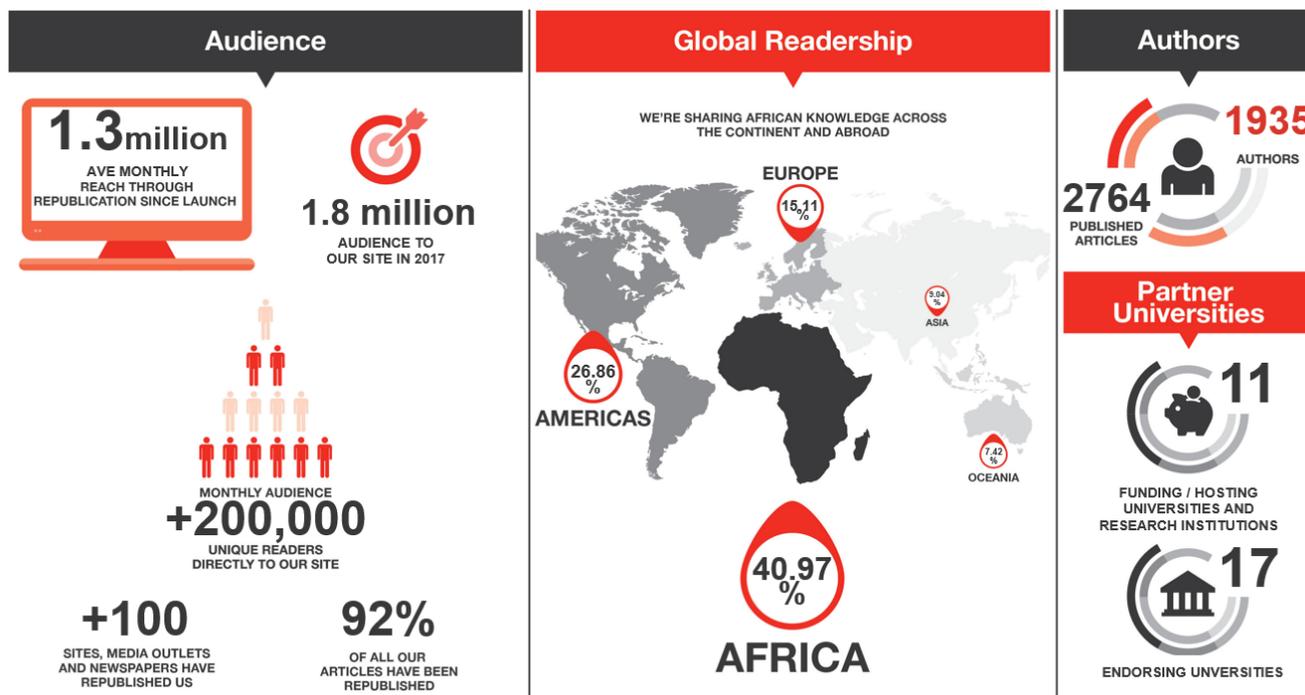
The Conversation is unique because its content is commissioned entirely from academic experts, yet its focused on the same things as other mainstream news media: the new, the important, the interesting, the unusual, and the insightful. That means there is considerable overlap with what university communications and media teams are already doing as part of their media-facing role.

### Benefits to partner universities

- **Editorial support** for academics who write articles for the site
- The opportunity for authors to be **republished in mainstream publications worldwide through Creative Commons**
- **Training sessions** that guide academics through the process of writing for the public
- Access to **readership and publication analytics**, for universities and for authors
- Inclusion in **regular expert requests**, which offers a priority opportunity for press teams to suggest academics for comment and analysis pieces.
- **Monthly reports** detailing the university's publishing rate, top authors, and most read articles

### Author benefits

- **Dedicated editorial support** to translate academic writing to easy to read articles
- Access to an **author dashboard** that provides insight on the readership of articles, including location of readers, republication outlets, social media usage and comments
- The potential for authors to shape public discourse and policy
- Access to **significant global readership**



KEY REPUBLISHERS



### What we publish

We are looking for **short, punchy pieces of around 800 words**, written by the academic. Crucially, and uniquely, the academic authors must approve the piece before publication. Except for specific occasions when we may want to run a Q&A on a topic, we are always looking to commission written articles from experts, not to interview them.

### Who can write for us

Authors must be currently affiliated with a university or an approved research institution and have either a PhD or be a recognised expert teaching in the subject on which they are writing. We don't publish undergraduate students, and only use PhD candidates where they have done research. In this case, we often require a supervisor or another senior as a co-author.

### Sourcing content

Articles are sourced in the following ways:

1. **As direct commissions from editors**, who contact academics with the right expertise to write an article.
2. **Pitches** from academics or university press teams. Academics are invited to pitch through the website at <http://theconversation.com/africa/pitches>. The pitch process requires them to first set up a short profile (name, position, university, brief research interests and photo), and then walks them through explaining the content of the pitch. This is sent to the relevant section editor or editors, who should respond within 48 hours.
3. Via the **expert request**, a weekly call-out for experts to write specific stories, sent to university communications, media and research teams.

### Get in touch

For further information on university / institutional partnerships, please contact:

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