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## **Governments failing to use open data to deliver true transparency and accountability, says new Web Foundation research**

***Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee calls on Governments to honour their promises on open data as the World Wide Web Foundation unveils its annual Open Data Barometer (<http://www.opendatabarometer.org>)***

**London, UK.** A new [research report](#), backed by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the Web, has revealed that in more than 90% of countries surveyed, data that could help beat corruption and improve government services remains locked away: inaccessible or in closed formats. Despite pathbreaking pledges by the [G7](#) and [G20](#) to boost transparency by opening up government data, fewer than 8% of countries surveyed publish datasets in open formats and under open licenses on government budgets and spending, public sector contracts, and who owns or controls companies.

These are amongst the findings of the Open Data Barometer, an 86-country study produced by the World Wide Web Foundation, released today. The study reveals that just:

- 13% of the countries publish open data on government budgets;
- 8% of of the countries publish open data on government spending;
- 6% of of the countries publish open data on government contracts; and
- 3% of of the countries publish open data on the ownership of companies

The report also finds that citizens in most countries cannot freely access data on the performance of key public services such as health and education. Just 7% of the countries surveyed release open data on performance of health services, with 12% providing corresponding figures on education.

Where datasets are released openly, they are often scant on detail or infrequently updated.

Using both primary research and secondary data, the Barometer provides a country ranking, which scores nations based on readiness, implementation, and impact of open data initiatives.

**The accompanying report notes that:**

- **Most open data initiatives are not embedded in law.** Linking open data to a legal right to information or mandatory policy of proactive disclosure makes it harder for government agencies to shy away from opening up sensitive or lucrative datasets. Just 17% of the countries have a well-functioning right to information law. Laws and procedures to safeguard individual privacy also need urgent attention in most countries in the sample.
- **G7 countries are not leading by example.** In 2013, the G8 (now the G7) signed an [Open Data Charter](#), pledging to become ‘open by default’. Despite incremental progress by most of the G7 nations, ‘open by default’ remains a long way off. Almost half of these countries are still not publishing the key datasets they promised to release in 2013, with just two (UK and Canada) publishing land ownership data in open formats and under open licenses, and, amongst the G7 countries, only the UK having an open company register.
- **The UK is number one at harnessing open data for social and economic benefit.** The country retains its top spot in the global rankings, followed by the US, Sweden, France, and New Zealand. France was among the biggest climbers this year, rising six places. Among developing nations, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Brazil were all praised for strong progress.

**Best performing countries overall**

Developed countries	Emerging market countries	Developing countries
1) UK	21) Brazil	36) Indonesia (tie)
2) US	22) Mexico	39) India
3) Sweden	33) Hungary (tie)	46) Ghana (tie)
4) New Zealand (tie)	33) Peru (tie)	46) Rwanda (tie)
4) France (tie)	36) Argentina (tie)	49) Kenya

Commenting, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the Web, and founder of the World Wide Web Foundation said:

*“In our digital age, opening up raw government data to everyone, free of charge, is a great way to put power in the hands of citizens. Yet, this research indicates that governments continue to shy away from publishing the very data that can be used to enhance accountability and trust.*

*“The G7 and G20 blazed a trail when they recognised open data as a crucial tool to strengthen transparency and fight corruption. Now they need to keep their promises to make critical areas like government spending and contracts open by default. The unfair practice of charging citizens to access public information collected with their tax resources must cease.”*

José M. Alonso, Open Data Program Manager at the World Wide Web Foundation said:

*“The Open Data Barometer reveals some powerful common success factors across open data initiatives: high-level political commitment, and sustained resources for building the capacity of data users both inside and outside government. Many developing countries have the political will but not the resources or capacity to succeed. The G7 and G20, as well as stakeholders like multilateral organisations, need to increase aid and lending for well-rounded open data initiatives to ensure that the “data revolution” doesn’t leave developing countries behind.”*

The full report and all data sets are available at: [www.opendatabarometer.org](http://www.opendatabarometer.org)

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **1) About the Open Data Barometer.**

The Open Data Barometer aims to uncover the true prevalence and impact of open data initiatives around the world. It analyses global trends, and provides comparative data on countries and regions via an in-depth methodology combining contextual data, technical assessments and secondary indicators to explore multiple dimensions of open data readiness, implementation and impact. The first edition of the Open Data Barometer showed that 55% of countries surveyed have open data initiatives in place, yet less than 10% of key government datasets across the world are truly open to the public.

The full report is available to view here: [www.opendatabarometer.org](http://www.opendatabarometer.org). All the data, and methodologies, underlying this report will be available under an open license at [www.opendatabarometer.org](http://www.opendatabarometer.org) - shared to support further analysis, deeper discussion of open data research methods, and deeper exploration of the global state of open data policy and practice.

Support for the Open Data Barometer report was provided through IDRC Grant 107075 ([www.idrc.ca](http://www.idrc.ca)). The 2013 report, and much of the methodological development, was also supported by the [Open Data Institute](#).

## 2) **About Open Data.**

Open data in this report, refers to data that is:

- Accessible - by being proactively published, and being made available without charge.
- Machine-readable - by being published in file formats and structures that allow computers to extract and process the data: sorting, filtering and searching through the contents.
- Re-usable - by being made available under legal regimes or explicit terms that place a minimum of restrictions on how the data may be used. At most the publisher can specify how the source should be acknowledged.

Private data and public records:

By definition, open data should not include private data. Private data should have a limited distribution, and any restrictions on distribution go against the re-usability terms of open data. In general, this means that the records government holds on individuals should not be made available as open data unless these records are understood to be part of the public record.

## 3) **About the World Wide Web Foundation**

The [World Wide Web Foundation](#) was established in 2009 by Web inventor, Sir Tim Berners-Lee. Our mission? To advance the open Web as a public good and a basic right. Thanks to the Web, for the first time in history we can glimpse a society where everyone, everywhere has equal access to knowledge, voice and the ability to create. In this future, vital services such as health and education are delivered efficiently, access to knowledge unlocks economic value whilst access to information enhances transparency and strengthens democracy. To achieve this vision, the Web Foundation operates at the confluence of technology, research and development, targeting three key areas: Access, Rights and Participation. Our work on open data connects across these themes, working to support inclusive approaches to open data impact across the globe.

Our work on open data covers:

- Research - As part of the Open Data for Development Network, we support research and research capacity building across three continents. From 2013 – 2015 the [Open Data in Developing Countries project](#) has been exploring use and impacts of open

data, and a new phase of this project will commence in early 2015, supporting regional research agendas in Africa and Asia.

- Innovation - including building the first [Open Contracting Data Standard](#), aimed at putting the \$9 trillion that governments spend annually on procurement into the public domain. The project puts our values and research into practice, developing the standard through an open and inclusive approach, and keeping a focus on the participatory potential of open contracting data.
- Training & capacity building - The Web Foundation's [Open Data Labs](#) are experimenting with how open data can make a real difference in the Global South. By trying out new approaches, we want to accelerate progress and ensure open data rapidly becomes a vital tool to tackle practical problems in developing and emerging economies. Our first Open Data Lab is now open in Jakarta, and we will be announcing more soon.
- Engagement - To encourage and support more governments to open up their data to citizens, we are co-chairing the [Open Data Working Group](#) of the Open Government Partnership, which brings together 80 governments and 120 civil society organisations to share practical know-how and promote good practices.