



Third Edition

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Regional Report



Latin America



**WORLD WIDE WEB
FOUNDATION**



Open Data Barometer – Third Edition

Regional Report: Latin America – June 2016

The World Wide Web Foundation

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Note on the selection of countries in this report:

This report focuses exclusively on the Latin American countries in the 3rd Edition of the Open Data Barometer: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. When the report mentions region, this means the Latin American countries specifically covered in this report.



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Overview

The 3rd Edition of the **World Wide Web Foundation's Open Data Barometer** (ODB), released in April 2016 and covering 92 countries, ranks nations on three open data criteria:

- Readiness: How prepared are governments for open data initiatives? What policies are in place?
- Implementation: Are governments putting their commitments into practice?
- Impact: Is open government data being used in ways that bring practical benefit?

In this regional report we dig deeper into the Barometer's results to take a closer look at the performance of the 11 countries in the Latin America region featured in the latest edition. The purpose of this regional analysis is to use the rich data to assess the state of play of open data across the region, evaluating the readiness of governments to implement open data practice and realise its potential to impact positively on the lives of citizens.

The 2015 Barometer results indicate that Latin America is doing relatively well compared to the global average. This is the first edition that sees three countries from the region in the top 20 and four in the top 30.

» The results highlight Mexico and Uruguay as new challengers with a high jump in the ranking thanks to new policies aiming at delivering impact for citizens through improved public services.

However, with the exception of regional leaders Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay and Colombia, **most of the countries in the region have seen their scores decline**. In particular, the results highlight Mexico and Uruguay as new challengers with a high jump in the ranking thanks to new policies aiming at delivering impact for citizens through improved public services. In contrast, the region also presents two of the most dramatic drops in the global ranking: Chile (-15) and Argentina (-16).

Analysis of the global results suggests that having more economic resources may help countries to perform better in open data, with most of the top positions awarded to high income OECD members. Evidence from Latin America questions this assumption with **regional upper middle income countries like Mexico, Brazil and Colombia showing better results than high income countries like Chile or Argentina**¹. Other upper middle income countries like Peru, Ecuador and Costa Rica also stand out among peers with similar income level.

In most of the countries, civil society coalitions are delivering the greatest long-term **open data impact, while governments seem to focus more on temporary measures than sustainable long-term policies**, with decreasing levels of data quality and availability. Political support for open data initiatives is still insufficient, as well as resources for government staff and further support for civil society. While most of the countries present positive legal frameworks for open data, such as data protection or right to information laws, **governments have not been able to translate these into positive outcomes for citizens**.

¹ Income group = **World Bank Country and Lending Groups**, 2016.



Governments should refocus on their objectives for open data, with an emphasis on the ultimate beneficiaries: citizens. This could include further support, training and capacity-building for civil servants and advocates to develop citizen-centric open data initiatives to promote development and democracy (good examples from the region include ‘**A Tu Servicio**’ in Uruguay, ‘**Mejora tu Escuela**’ in Mexico, or ‘**QEdu**’ in Brazil).

The relevance of data for development is gaining political momentum; the **data revolution** is here. Governments, international organisations, and civil societies, among others, are joining forces to create benefits from open data for the development of nations. **Higher quality and more open data will be relevant for both monitoring and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), and thus help tackle poverty, climate change and inequality. Other initiatives like the **Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data** and the **International Open Data Charter** bring to light the relevance of better policies for the success of the SDGs. **Latin America still presents significant data-related constraints for the development of its societies.** There is still a lot of work to do in the region.



Sir Tim Berners-Lee
commenting on the
findings of the
3rd Edition of the
Open Data Barometer

“

*Inequality and poverty are about more than income — they are also about **information**. Seven years after I first demanded that governments open up their data to all, **open data initiatives** are now in place in more than half of countries we track. Yet their quality is variable, and benefits are concentrated in rich countries. Now is the time to resource and implement open data throughout the world, through projects such as the **International Open Data Charter**.*

Key Findings

This report reflects on the relevant trends apparent in Latin America from the Barometer data. While some of the observations may be generalised to the regional level, we encourage each Latin American

country to reflect on its own performance in unlocking the potential of open data for the development of the continent. Looking at global and regional results, we have identified five key findings.

1. With more Latin American countries challenging top global adopters, the region performs slightly better than the global average

As figure 1 shows, the region performs just above the global average, and continues showing positive results among regions in the Global South. However, after a significant increase in overall performance from the 1st edition to the 2nd edition (from 29.69 to 39.48), **the region shows a decline**

in progress on open data in this new edition and scores 36.7 on average, with countries performing quite diversely across the ranking (see table 1a). After handing over the top of the regional ranking to Chile last year, Mexico leads again with an outstanding jump of 8 positions in the global ranking.

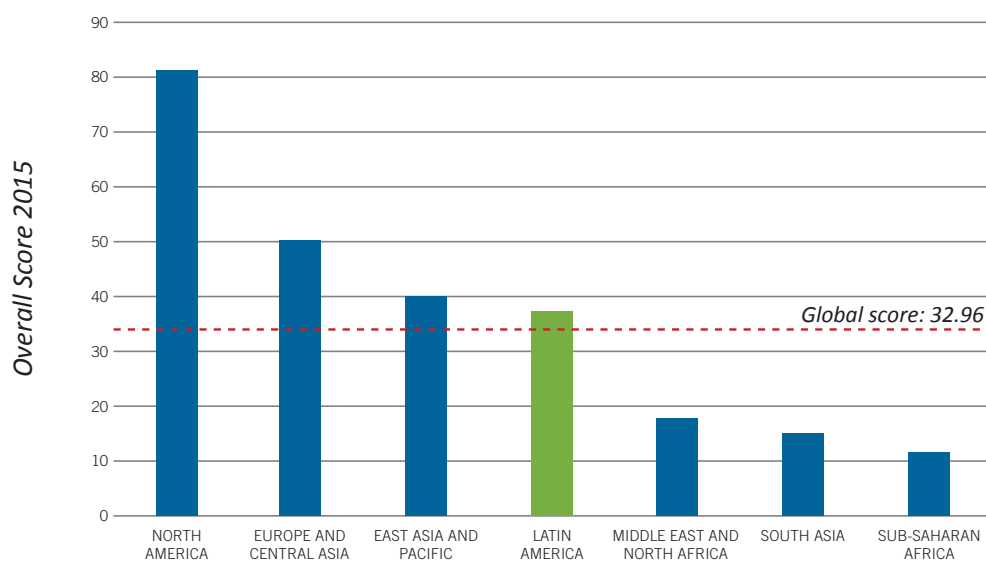


Figure 1: Overall regional scores for the 3rd Edition of the Barometer

In this edition, Latin America incorporates more countries in the top 20 than ever before, with Mexico (16th), Brazil (17th) and Uruguay (19th) achieving a top 20 position for the first time. Indeed, **this Barometer's edition highlights Mexico and Uruguay as new challengers to traditional regional and global leaders**. These countries have undertaken a leadership role in Latin America, and demonstrate that well-balanced open data capacities and implementation efforts can lead to positive impact. By contrast, Chile, a traditional open data leader in the region which was the only Latin American country in the top 20 last year (in 2013's edition there were no countries from the region among the best 20) fell to 30th position due to a predominance of short-term activities over sustainable long-term open data policies (see Box 3 on page 13).

The regional results also show that open data is not just about economic resources but about political commitment and capacity-building, cooperation between stakeholders, and long-term impact-oriented policies. Similar to **Africa's regional report**, in Latin America higher economic resources are not reflected in a better open data performance. Overall, **Latin American upper-middle-income countries perform better than high-income ones**. Among the global top 30, Mexico, Brazil and Colombia are the only three upper-middle-income countries in the list. And if we focus only on upper-middle economies, six countries from Latin America are present in the top 8 (see table 1b), which shows the region is performing relatively well among peers with similar income levels.

Position	Country	Income group*	Score
16	Mexico	Upper middle income	61.76
17	Brazil	Upper middle income	61.16
19	Uruguay	High income	58.12
28	Colombia	Upper middle income	45.39
30	Chile	High income	42.97
42	Ecuador	Upper middle income	30.29
44	Peru	Upper middle income	28.93
44	Costa Rica	Upper middle income	28.52
52	Argentina	High income	23.78
62	Paraguay	Upper middle income	15.99
78	Venezuela	High income	6.79

Table 1a: Latin America country rankings for the 3rd Edition of the Barometer

Position	Country	Score
16	Mexico	61.76
17	Brazil	61.16
28	Colombia	45.39
33	Macedonia	38.13
39	Tunisia	33.47
42	Ecuador	30.29
44	Peru	28.93
44	Costa Rica	28.52

Table 1b: Top 8 upper-middle-income* countries for the 3rd Edition of the Barometer (Latin American Countries in bold)

* Income group = **World Bank Country and Lending Groups**, 2016.

2. While Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay and Colombia make systematic progress, the rest of the region shows an alarming regression compared to the last edition

Although Latin America stands out positively overall compared to their peers in this edition, **progress in open data is concentrated in only four countries**. As seen in figure 2, we can identify two groups in the region: *the top 4 countries* – Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay and Colombia (regional ranking leaders in that order) – which are making sustained and balanced progress on open data across the three editions of this report; and *the rest of the region* – Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Argentina and Venezuela² – which all saw a decline in their scores compared to the last edition.

The results show that while efforts were made in the past, **open data initiatives lack long-term, sustainable resources and policies**. Open data is still not fully embedded to date in these countries, and is vulnerable to short-term changes in political will and priorities. There may also be a low level of commitment or understanding of open data implications and benefits from governments, or a lack of integration with key open data stakeholders such as intermediaries, users, or donors. In contrast, positive results come from governments balancing policies and actions, data release, and impact-oriented initiatives, and with further cooperation and coordination between open data public agencies and multiple actors (see the cases of Mexico and Uruguay).

² Paraguay has been omitted in this analysis since it has only been included in this Barometer's edition

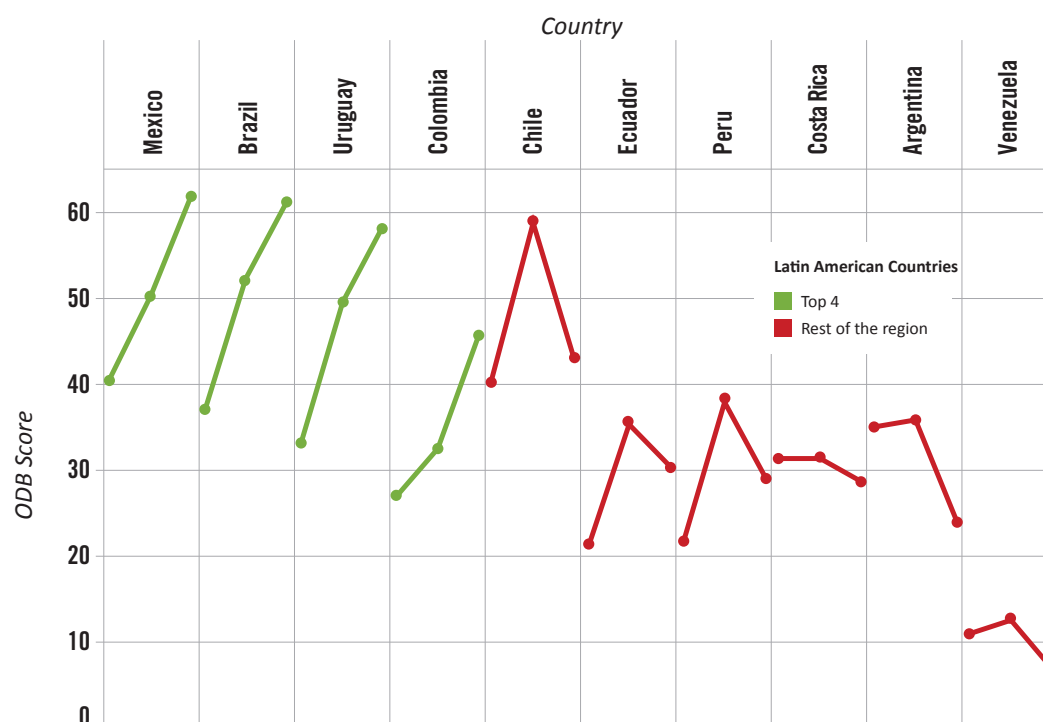


Figure 2: Trends in ODB scores for Latin American countries, 2013-2015 (sorted by overall scores in the 3rd Edition of the ODB)

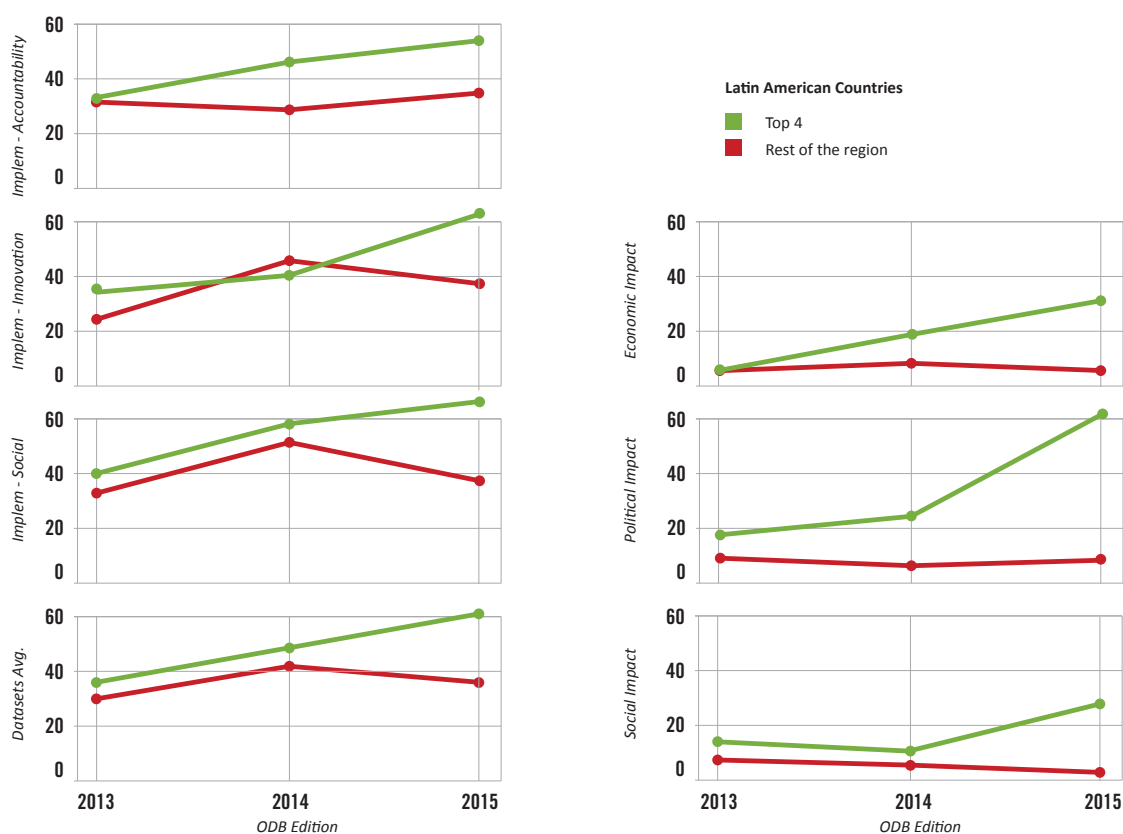


Figure 3: Trends in (a) Implementation and (b) Impact factors of top 4 countries vs. rest of the region, 2013-2015

Differences between these two groups become clearer when we analyse implementation and impact factors³. Trend analysis in figure 3 shows that gaps between top 4 and the rest of the region are becoming higher. **Top 4 countries are systematically releasing more and better data, which is also reflected in higher impact across all assessed factors**, with an emphasis on the delivery of political benefits (see also table 2b).

» Top 4 countries are systematically releasing more and better data, which is also reflected in higher impact across all assessed factors.

³ This edition adds a new section in readiness – government policies – and thus historical trend analysis in this factor cannot be provided this year.

3. Civil society is leading the way in unlocking open data potential

Readiness data shows that the weakness of the region is government policies, while its strengths is relatively balanced civil society organisations and rights to data protection and access to public information (see table 2a). In terms of government policies, **countries in the region show more emphasis on short-term activities than long-term policy changes that embed open data practice**. In the absence of long-term official commitments, open data initiatives become more vulnerable to ruling political ideologies or programmatic emphasis, and directly affects to the institutionalisation of these programmes. Initiatives such as the **International Open Data Charter** can make governments aware of the relevance of systematic policies and commitments while developing concrete actions to unlock open data benefits.

» Countries in the region show more emphasis on short-term activities than long-term policy changes that embed open data practice.

64% of the countries are better prepared for open data initiatives in civil society related aspects, although there remains room for improvement. **Latin America's top performers such as Mexico and Uruguay have strong and participatory civil society organisations partnering with open data public agencies** (such as **IMCO** or **DataUY** respectively, among several others), **along with strong regulation for data protection and access to public data**. 73% of the countries in the region present some sort of functional access to public information regulation, and 64% have adequate legislation on personal data protection.

» Latin America's top performers such as Mexico and Uruguay have strong and participatory civil society organisations partnering with open data public agencies along with strong regulation for data protection and access to public data.

Position	Country	Readiness scaled (0-100)	Gov. policies scaled (0-100)	Gov. action scaled (0-100)	Civil society scaled (0-100)	Private sector scaled (0-100)
16	Mexico	69	72	68	80	58
17	Brazil	60	54	61	67	61
19	Uruguay	68	55	68	90	60
28	Colombia	64	89	63	63	44
30	Chile	64	54	61	80	62
42	Ecuador	39	54	36	47	32
44	Peru	43	33	41	69	38
44	Costa Rica	43	20	44	71	45
52	Argentina	42	18	56	62	39
62	Paraguay	30	25	23	40	41
78	Venezuela	12	1	24	17	21

Table 2a: Highest (green) and lowest (red) scores for Readiness in Latin American countries, ODB 2015



Position	Country	Impact	Gov. policies scaled (0-100)	Gov. action scaled (0-100)	Civil society scaled (0-100)
16	Mexico	63	80	60	47
17	Brazil	36	50	26	31
19	Uruguay	39	80	0	36
28	Colombia	26	40	26	11
30	Chile	12	30	0	5
42	Ecuador	7	10	0	11
44	Peru	0	0	0	0
44	Costa Rica	2	0	0	5
52	Argentina	11	10	10	13
62	Paraguay	5	10	0	5
78	Venezuela	0	0	0	0

Table 2b: Highest (green) and lowest (red) scores for Impact in Latin American countries, ODB 2015

» Regional CSOs are making efforts to empower citizens through data-driven decisions using the limited public data that is available.

Further analysis of the Barometer's data suggests that in the presence of a strong civil society countries in the region are more likely to have better open data policies, higher quality of datasets and stronger political impact. Supported by a long tradition of advocacy in transparency and data protection regulations, **regional CSOs are making efforts to empower citizens through data-driven decisions using the limited public data that is available** (such as '[A Tu Servicio](#)' in Uruguay or '[Mejora tu Escuela](#)' in Mexico).

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4. Latin American countries show significant gaps between efforts in readiness and implementation and delivery of open data impact

In the region, higher readiness and implementation figures are not necessarily reflected in better outcomes. Except Mexico, **countries in Latin America show a substantial gap between efforts in readiness and implementation versus actual impact of open data benefits**. While impact may take some time to emerge from advances in readiness and implementation, in some cases countries have just not been able to transform their progress into final open data impact.

» Countries in Latin America show a substantial gap between efforts in readiness and implementation versus actual impact of open data benefits.

Countries should acknowledge that just making information available is not enough, and government data needs to be standardised, machine-readable and visualised to be beneficial to citizens. Particularly, Brazil, Colombia and Chile have not been able to translate their preparation and implementation levels into progressive outcomes for their societies, while other countries, like Argentina, Paraguay and Venezuela, still face significant challenges in policy and implementation before they can hope see open data benefits. We are hopeful that Argentina's recent **official political commitment to carry out open data policies**.

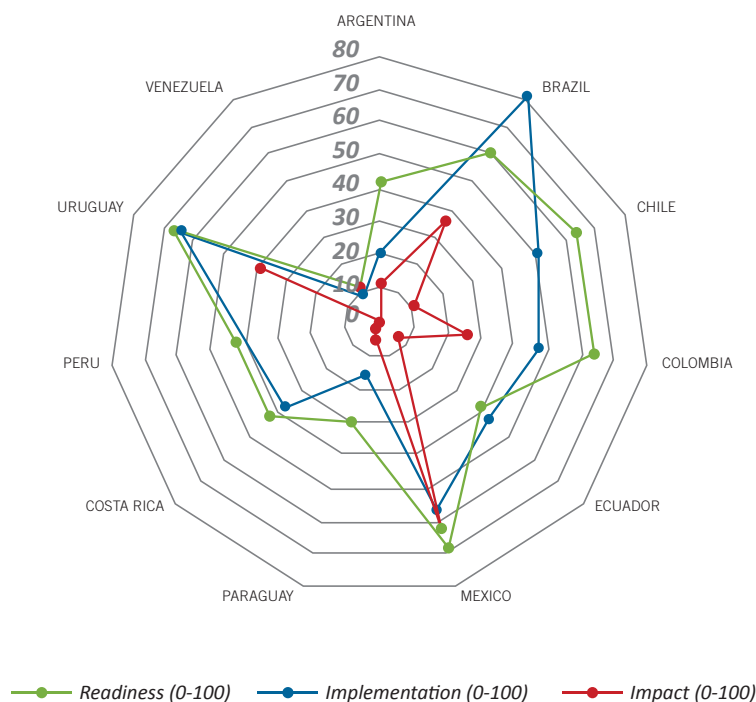


Figure 4: Readiness, Implementation and Impact scores for Latin American countries in the 3rd Edition of the Barometer

5. Open data quality is still a handicap for the regional agenda, and truly open data is concentrated among regional leaders Mexico, Brazil and Uruguay

This edition shows that **Latin American countries with better overall score are making greater efforts to release more and better open data compared to the rest of the region** (figure 3a). Although 13.3% of the regional datasets are fully open according to the Barometer's methodology (22 datasets) – and thus slightly higher than 10% global average of open data availability – 86% of them are from regional leaders Brazil (10), Uruguay (6) and Mexico (3). (Chile has two and Costa Rica has one, completing the picture).

» Latin American countries with better overall score are making greater efforts to release more and better open data compared to the rest of the region.

In contrast, the rest of the region has not increased its number of quality open datasets at all. The **results even indicate a decline in open data used for social and innovation purposes, and the overall quality of these countries' datasets has also decline since the last edition** (see figure 3). 75.2% of the regional datasets covered in the Barometer are available online in some form, but only 71.8% of them are in machine readable formats. Furthermore, only 29% are openly licensed, and 70.2%

are updated regularly. While open data may foster adoption of better governance practices, the results from this year's Barometer show that the lack of effective data management remains a major constraint for open data initiatives in the region, limiting the extent of data-driven decision making that can be undertaken by civil servants in the region.

» Results even indicate a decline in open data used for social and innovation purposes, and the overall quality of these countries' datasets has also decline since the last edition.

In particular, Chile and Argentina now have lower availability and quality of data for all the indicators than in the previous edition of the Barometer, which may help explain the dramatic drop of these two countries in this year's ranking. Costa Rica has improved its innovation and accountability factors, while Ecuador and Peru have only improved on accountability data. Finally, Venezuela and Paraguay show minimum levels of data provision across all factors.

The case of Mexico



In this edition, Mexico has made significant progress and leads the regional ranking. The special attention paid by the government to implementing the **International Open Data Charter** includes an **Executive Order** for implementing the **National Decree for Open Data** directly from the Presidency Office at national and subnational levels. **Open data by default has become the de-facto policy for open data in Mexico.** While some of these policies include training for public servants and private sector, and emphasis in data quality, special attention has been paid to partner with experts and advocates in their implementation. Policies are backed up by an Open Data Advisory Board, which includes members from academia, the private sector and CSOs such as **SocialTIC** or **Codeando México**. This integrated policy approach supports further impact delivery in a wide range of areas such as health (**maternal death data analysis**), education (**school performance monitoring**), or innovation (**new business opportunities**), among other examples.

The case of Uruguay



The increasing progress of Uruguay relies on efforts to develop long-term policies in open data and integrate other actors in this process. **AGESIC**, the public agency for digital government, has systematically promoted cross-sectoral open data initiatives as part of its core agenda. While the country still has not fully adopted open data *by default*, this agency attempts to increase open data capacity-building inside and outside the public sector by leading the **Open Data Working Group** – integrating academic experts, key public agencies, local governments and CSOs like **DataUY**. In particular, this data-driven organisation stands out as one of the leading CSOs in the region. With the support of the Ministry of Health, DataUY has been globally recognised for **'A Tu Servicio'**, a platform where citizens can hold public health services and providers accountable. However, further efforts should be invested in Uruguay to translate success on political issues to open data benefits in economic and social areas.

The case of Chile



The drop of Chile's overall score in this edition is mostly explained by a predominance of short-term activities over sustainable, long-term open data policies (despite endorsing the **International Open Data Charter**), which have influenced the poor performance in availability and quality of datasets compared to last year. While the country continues enjoying some benefits from past government-developed apps such as **iBencinas**, **iTransantiago** or **iFarmarcias**, **Chile still lacks a cross-sectoral open data policy** (with clear aims, resources, responsibilities and cooperation plans with external stakeholders) and a wider and more active intermediaries ecosystem. Apart from **Fundación Ciudadano Inteligente**, no other formal open data intermediary can be identified in the country. The Modernisation and Digital Government Unit (MDGU), the office responsible for open data in the country, is still concentrating efforts in fostering capacity-building across public agencies, but is not empowered enough to carry out binding initiatives. However, better results may be expected for next year: **MDGU is making efforts to include subnational governments within digital government policies**, including the disclosure of municipalities' datasets.

Conclusion

Open data is becoming mainstream in the region, but **some countries are adopting it as quick wins rather than under a long-term approach**. While last year's results showed a balanced and upward trend in open data progress across the region, **this 3rd edition** reveals a gap between two groups of countries. Better performing countries show long-term, impact-oriented policies, reflected in collaborative actions with open data users and intermediaries. In these countries, **efforts in open data frameworks and practices are being rewarded with impact, with Mexico and Uruguay as good examples**. In contrast, results from the rest of the region question the extent of interest and commitment of their governments in using open data for their social, political and economic development. Some countries show lower availability of datasets, or no further investments to transform data provision into greater citizen empowerment or more economic and social equality.

» The results in Latin America warn us about the fragility of open data initiatives if governments do not embed them as a long-term policy changes.

The results in Latin America warn us about the fragility of open data initiatives if governments do not embed them as a long-term policy changes, where open data policies, such as open data *by default*, challenge dominant cultures and practices. To date, **governments in Latin America have significantly relied on efforts made by civil society organisations** – and the donors who fund them – to carry out these initiatives. There is a constant risk that open data becomes *open washing* if governments continue to be reluctant to embrace the cultural shift that openness brings and do not provide enough resources and incentives at the departmental level. Governments should take advantage of the high level of civil society advocacy in the region and foster its expansion to other actors in the open data arena. So far, the region is the one that has embraced the adoption of the Charter, with successful cases of open data initiatives. However, **some countries in Latin America show alarming signals of a growing data divide**, and donors, civil society and governments need to work together to close it.

Recommendations

Findings covered in this report suggest a set of recommendations to increase the readiness, implementation and impact for open data in Latin America. These recommendations reflect on those in the [Open Data Barometer Global Report](#) in order to exploit the full potential of open data in the region.

Adopt and implement the International Open Data Charter.

To date, Latin America is the region with the most countries embracing the Charter, like Mexico, Uruguay, Chile, Guatemala and Panama⁴. More Latin American countries should adopt the Charter and, most importantly, actively implement its principles to unlock real benefits from open data. Success stories in Latin America show that open data success is not only about resources but also about governments' political commitments and actions. The Charter will help formalise and lock in political momentum for open data, and support countries in developing long-term and impact-oriented policies according to local capacities, resources and institutions.

Support and invest in capacity-building for civil society to co-develop open data initiatives with governments.

Most successful cases in Latin America demonstrate the relevance of CSOs for open data success. Civil society is strong in the region, and is driving open data progress in the absence of government

policies and actions. Governments in the region should also aim to provide the necessary mechanisms for expanding external support for other data intermediaries such as academics, private sector actors and data journalists. Especially in the most marginalised countries from open data impact, donors should provide more resources for CSOs' capacity-building and governments should make higher efforts to take CSOs on board in developing open data initiatives, both to reach ultimate open data beneficiaries: citizens. CSOs should acknowledge the relevant role they hold and look at the best strategies for both partnering with governments and expanding open data benefits to the traditionally marginalised citizens in the region.

Strengthen cross-border learning in the region.

Latin America, as other regions studied in the [Barometer](#), presents a particular set of capacities, resources, cultures and institutions. International development shows a long tradition of failure when initiatives are just imported from the developed world but without further contextualisation to local realities. Some countries in the region with similar or even lower economic resources than peers are quickly progressing on open data than others. Increased efforts to expand the current cross-border learning experiences and policy coordination should be made, like the [Open Data Working Group from the E-Government Network](#) (GEALC) and the [Fellowship on Open Government in the Americas](#) - both coordinated by the Organization of American States (OAS). Initiatives for both governments and CSOs should enhance learning from regional peers and transfer knowledge and experience that will

⁴ Guatemala and Panama are not part of the Open Data Barometer study to date.

help take advantage of open data while considering the regional context.

Open up high quality and sensitive datasets which help unlock balanced political, social and economic impact.

The region shows breaches of data provision, quality and use, which are constraining outcomes from open data policies. Governments should look at harmonising open data initiatives, data management practices and better data infrastructures to provide the foundations for long-term impact, and also consult open data users on their needs to ensure governments release the datasets they require. Attention should also be paid to bias in data availability and impact: social and economic benefits are also relevant and should be enhanced to complement the current emphasis on open data for political outcomes.



About the Open Data Barometer

Produced by the [World Wide Web Foundation](#) as a collaborative work of the [Open Data for Development network](#) (OD4D) and with the support of the [Omidyar Network](#), the Open Data Barometer (ODB) 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 using an in-depth methodology that combines contextual data, technical assessments and secondary indicators.

This is the third edition of the Barometer. After two successful pilots, this edition marks another step towards becoming a global policy-making tool with a participatory and inclusive process and a strong regional focus. For the first time, this year's ODB includes an assessment of countries against the [International Open Data Charter](#) principles.

You can also read the full [Open Data Barometer Global Report](#), or learn more about the complete Barometer methodology and research process in the [detailed methodology description](#) and the [research Handbook](#).

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Lead researcher: Carlos Iglesias - Web Foundation

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About the Web Foundation



**WORLD WIDE WEB
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Established by the inventor of the Web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the [World Wide Web Foundation](#) seeks to establish the open Web as a global public good and a basic right, creating a world where everyone, everywhere can use the Web to communicate, collaborate and innovate freely. Represented by more than a dozen nationalities working from hubs in London, Washington DC, Jakarta and Cape Town, the World Wide Web Foundation operates at the confluence of technology and human rights, targeting three key areas: *Access*, *Voice* and *Participation*.

Latin American Open Data Initiative

The **Latin American Open Data Initiative** (ILDA) is conceived as a multi-stakeholder project to foster research, use and appropriateness of open data in Latin America. ILDA carries out three main activities: support the development of open data policies; make aware and train civil servants in open government and open data; and develop of studies and fostering of use and appropriateness of open data by different social actors.



ILDA is a node where governments, international organisations, experts and activists converge for the progression of open data in the region in a responsible, informed and creative way. In specific, ILDA works on the following areas: open data for governmental transparency; open cities and open data; innovation in health and education; natural resources; and dialogues about open data public policy in Latin America.

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