

As citizens demand accountability, governments keep data locked away

The Web Foundation believes that open data must be:



*for everyone —
a right for all*



*the data
people **need***



*data people can
easily use*

In this edition of the Barometer, 1,725 datasets from 15 different sectors across 115 countries were assessed. We found that most governments are not meeting the basic [Open Data Charter principles](#). In most cases, the right policies are not in place, nor is the breadth and quality of the datasets released sufficient.



Almost all countries in the MENA region are backsliding on open data, with rankings and scores down since the previous Barometer.



There is not one truly open dataset in the region, out of the 180 datasets we analysed in our study.



Due to a lack of civil society engagement with open data, there is little pressure for governments to make data public, particularly in relation to social issues.

What is Open Data and why is it important?

Open data is data which is freely available and shareable online, without charge or any other restrictions. Without good data, it is impossible to hold governments to account for the decisions that they make, the policies they pass, and the money they budget and spend.



General regional highlights and findings

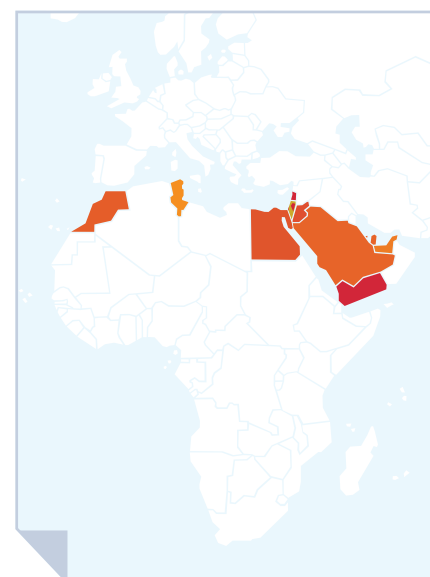
Climbing one place, Israel is the only country in the MENA region to improve its ranking in the fourth edition, and remains the only country in the top 50 of the global ranking. In general, countries in the region have made no progress on open data implementation and barely improved on open data readiness. The momentum the region had when most countries began their initiatives a few years ago appears to have faded.

No government in the region publishes data, open or closed, in some areas usually considered essential to improve social policy or government accountability. While some do recognise the potential of open data to drive economic development, the general absence of political leadership in this area has led to a lack of open data awareness, capacity and legal frameworks.



Open Data Barometer 4th Edition Regional Ranking

Global Rank	Score	Country	Readiness	Implementation	Impact
28	46	Israel	66	37	42
50	32	Tunisia	45	32	22
59	26	United Arab Emirates	47	23	12
74	19	Qatar	41	18	2
74	19	Bahrain	33	20	7
74	19	Saudi Arabia	37	15	12
79	17	Morocco	38	12	7
85	14	Egypt	27	14	6
87	13	Jordan	28	11	6
100	8	Palestine	23	7	2
104	6	Lebanon	17	7	0
114	0	Yemen	0	6	0

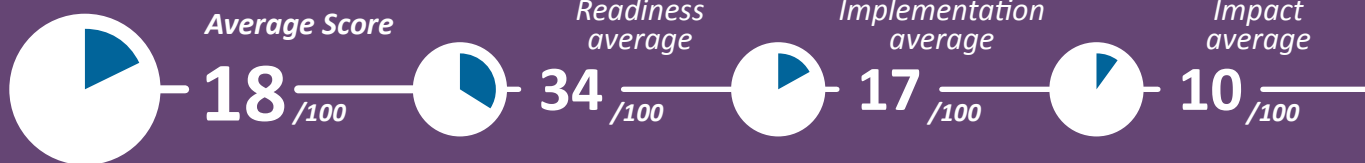


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FOUNDATION**

opendatabarometer.org



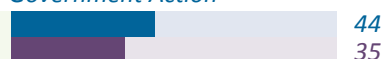
Readiness for open data initiatives

Government Policies



Some countries, including Israel and Saudi Arabia, have recently started working to improve their open data strategies.

Government Action



Countries have shown no, or very little, progress on their respective open government data agendas. No government has adopted the [Open Data Charter](#), making the region one of only two in our analysis (alongside the Caribbean) with no Charter adoptees.

Citizens and Civil Rights



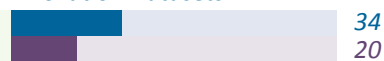
Entrepreneurs and Business



Egypt advanced slightly at the regional level, with efforts to improve its open data readiness and advancement at the implementation and impact levels. There was increased interest in open data from civil society (through [urban planning](#) and [transport](#) initiatives) and from academia (e.g. the [access to knowledge](#) initiative). The country hosted several [data-driven innovation events and activities](#) in the past two years, illustrating this increased engagement. However, with no sustainable process and with inadequate political commitment, this open data progress may fizzle. Datasets are frequently outdated and face licensing, quality and discoverability issues, often making them useless.

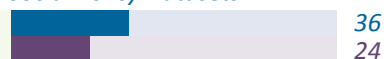
Implementation of open data programmes

Innovation Datasets



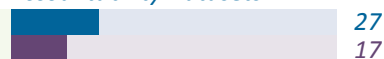
Some datasets in the region are frequently available — such as national census, government budget and international trade data — although not as truly open data.

Social Policy Datasets



Only 66% of data in our analysis was available online. Most data in the MENA region is locked with legal or technical restrictions. Land ownership, government spending and company registers are the least accessible datasets in the region.

Accountability Datasets



Impact that open data is having

Political Impact



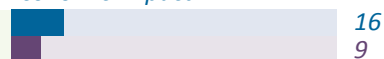
While social impact has been non-existent in the past, the region showed the first signs of impact in this edition. For example, an Israeli startup is using [available air quality data to combat pollution](#).

Social Impact

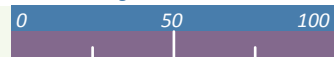


With the exception of some limited examples in Israel, the region is failing to harness the impact of open data. It is even missing out on the kind of economic impacts that are commonplace in the rest of the world.

Economic Impact



Global average scores



Regional average scores

As a regional economic hub with heavy investment in ICT infrastructure and state of the art technology, the **UAE** is well-placed to progress its open data efforts. While it understands the potential of open data for economic development and social well-being, it seems less interested in open data as a tool for citizen empowerment and government accountability. Some of the Emirates have become fairly advanced in their provision and use of data, such as Dubai with the [Smart Dubai initiative](#) and the [Dubai Data Law](#), even if these are not strictly open data initiatives. Others have made more modest efforts.