First ever Web Index reveals impact of Web around the world

Sweden, US and UK top new global ranking released by World Wide Web Foundation, led by Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee

5 September 2012 — Sweden is best in the world at putting the Web to work, beating the US and UK for the top spot, according to a new global study launched by Tim Berners-Lee on behalf of the Web Foundation.

However, the Web remains a largely untapped resource in much of the world, the study shows, with only 1 in 3 people using it globally and fewer than 1 in 6 in Africa.

The Index reveals that high broadband prices and trends toward censorship are major barriers to making the Web useful to all.

Almost 30% of countries covered by the Index face moderate to severe government restrictions on access to websites, while about half of them show increasing threats to press freedom. "The Web is a global conversation. Growing suppression of free speech, both online and offline, is possibly the single biggest challenge to the future of the Web," warned Berners-Lee.

Internet access remains a luxury good in most countries, the Web Foundation said. Across the 61 countries surveyed, broadband connections still cost almost half of monthly income per capita. "The high price of connectivity is stopping billions of people from achieving their rights to knowledge and participation. Costs have got to come down dramatically," said Berners-Lee.

The growth of successful Web-based businesses remains surprisingly poor outside the OECD, showing that the Web's economic potential is also going untapped in many countries.

Positive findings from the Index include the spread of e-governance: government data and services being made available to citizens online, as well as initiatives to encourage online participation in decision-making. Middle income countries are improving their e-governance capacities faster than the West, with Korea, Singapore and Colombia among the world's top innovators in this sphere.

The Web Index is the most comprehensive and authoritative assessment to date of the Web's impact around the world. It ranks 61 countries on Web readiness and use, as well as the political, economic and social value they extract from the Web.

Web Index Top 10		Web Index Bottom 10	
Sweden	1	Nepal	52
United States	2	Cameroon	53
United Kingdom	3	Mali	54
Canada	4	Bangladesh	55
Finland	5	Namibia	56
Switzerland	6	Ethiopia	57
New Zealand	7	Benin	58
Australia	8	Burkina Faso	59
Norway	9	Zimbabwe	60
Ireland	10	Yemen	61

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Notes to Editors

The full results and findings of the Web Index can be accessed on the Web Index Website.

Country factsheets and FAQs can also be found on the Web Index Website.

The Index ranks countries on scores for seven components:

Communications Infrastructure refers to the state and availability of physical and communications infrastructure that enables access to the Web

Institutional Infrastructure refers to the state of the institutional ecosystem – including education, laws, regulation and censorship – that enable access to the Web

Web Content refers to the extent to which relevant and useful content is available on the Web

Web Use refers to the extent of Web use in a country

Political Impact refers to the Web's impact on politics and government

Economic Impact refers to the Web's impact on business and the economy

Social Impact refers to the Web's impact on health, education and social activities

More information on the structure and methodology of the Index is available on the Web Index Website.

About the Web Foundation

Established by Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the World Wide Web Foundation is a non-profit organization devoted to achieving a world in which all people can use the Web to communicate, collaborate and innovate freely, building bridges across the divides that threaten our shared future.

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