WORLD WIDE WEB
FOUNDATION

WEBINDEX

Press release

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Scandinavian countries top annual Web Index rankings, USA and UK criticised for inadequate privacy protections

Web innovators, experts and policy-makers including Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Jimmy Wales gather in London to assess the World Wide Web Foundation's independent annual measure of the Web's impact

London, UK. Sweden tops the annual Web Index (thewebindex.org) country rankings for 2013 ahead of Norway, but along with many other countries including the UK and USA, Sweden's leading record in Web innovation could be at risk from excessive state surveillance. The Philippines has emerged as the highest placed developing country overall. These results are being unveiled today as part of the World Wide Web Foundation's annual Web Index, the world's first measure of the Web's contribution to social, economic and political development in 81 countries.

The Web Index Report reveals that beyond the digital divide, the world faces a growing participation divide, as unequal access to knowledge and speech online denies millions the necessary tools for free and informed participation in democracy. Wealthier groups in most countries are increasingly using the Web and social media to gain knowledge and amplify their voice in public debate, the research suggests. However, groups such as low-paid workers, smallholder farmers, and women in the developing world are much less likely to be able to access vital information online. Democratisation of information and communication flows is further constrained by a global trend towards greater online censorship and surveillance, the report warns.

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

"One of the most encouraging findings of this year's Web Index is how the Web and social media are increasingly spurring people to organise, take action and try to expose wrongdoing in every region of the world. But some governments are threatened by this, and a growing tide of surveillance and censorship now threatens the future of democracy. Bold steps are needed now to protect our fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of opinion and association online."

Key findings from the Web Index 2013 include:

- **Targeted censorship of Web content by governments is widespread across the globe**. Moderate to extensive blocking or filtering of politically sensitive content was reported in over 30 percent of Web Index countries during the past year.

- **Legal limits on government snooping online urgently need review.** 94% of countries in the Web Index do not meet best practice standards for checks and balances on government interception of electronic communications.

- **The Web and social media are leading to real-world change.** In 80 percent of the countries studied, the Web and social media had played a role in public mobilisation in the past year, and in half of these cases, had been a major catalyst.

- **Rich countries do not necessarily rank highly in the Web Index.** The Philippines, with a per capita income of $4,410 per year, is more than 10 places ahead of Qatar, the world's richest country, with an average income over 20 times greater than the Philippines. Saudi Arabia is outperformed by 10 of the sub-Saharan African countries in the Index. Switzerland, the world's third wealthiest nation, is only one place ahead of Estonia. The study shows that once countries surpass a GDP threshold of US$12,000 per capita, the link between wealth and Web Index rank weakens significantly.

- **The rights and priorities of women are poorly served by the Web in the majority of countries researched**. Locally relevant information on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, domestic violence, and inheritance remain largely absent from the Web in most countries. Only 56 percent of Web Index countries were assessed as allocating 'significant' resources to ICT training programmes targeting women and men equally.

Anne Jellema, Chief Executive Officer of the World Wide Web Foundation added:

"Ten years after world leaders committed to harnessing technology to build an inclusive information society, parents in 48% of countries can't use the Web to compare school performance and budgets, women in over 60% of countries can't use the Web to help them make informed choices about their bodies, and over half the population in developing countries can't use the Web at all. Countries should accelerate action to make the Web affordable, accessible and relevant to all groups in society, as they promised at the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003."

Detailed Country Analysis

Developed Countries		Emerging Market Countries		Developing Countries	
Country	Rank	Country	Rank	Country	Rank
Sweden	1	Mexico	30	Philippines	38
Norway	2	Colombia	32	Indonesia	48
United Kingdom	3	Brazil	33	Kenya	53
United States	4	Costa Rica	34	Morocco	54
New Zealand	5	South Africa	35	Ghana	55

First-placed Sweden has achieved the highest penetration of broadband among OECD countries, and near universal wireless adoption. It is now reaping the benefits of policy decisions taken as early as 2000, when its pathbreaking "Information Society for All" law established that broadband service should be considered a utility and every citizen should have access to it.

Norway, where 95% of people are online, is placed second in the 2013 Index driven by strong achievement across all dimensions of the Index and its top-scoring performance on measures of freedom and openness. The United Kingdom, despite falling down on privacy rights, is placed third overall in the Index, propelled by its high scores on availability of relevant content and political impact. The USA, the best performer in 2013 on use of the Web for social, political, environmental and economic empowerment through the Web, received mediocre scores on internet access, communications infrastructure, and lack of adequate safeguards to protect users' privacy from extensive electronic surveillance. New Zealand breaks into the top five following improvements to its communications infrastructure and the availability of relevant content.

Amongst emerging nations, Mexico achieved the highest overall position in the Web Index 2013, followed by Colombia, Brazil, Costa Rica and South Africa. The Philippines was the developing country that achieved the highest overall ranking in the Web Index 2013, with high scores on Web use and measurements of people using the internet and social networks compared to other developing countries. However, except for Morocco (ranked 54th overall in the Index), none of the developing countries in the Web Index have achieved the UN World Summit on the Information Society target of connecting at least 50 percent of their populations, and in Africa, fewer than one in five people are using the internet.

The World Wide Web Foundation's full data, report and policy recommendations for how governments and people can be empowered by the Web to deliver socio-economic impact are being unveiled to an audience in London on 22 November by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web; Lily Cole, the actor and founder of the social network, Impossible; Anne Jellema, Chief Executive Officer

of the World Wide Web Foundation; Bright Simons, the founder of the mPedigree Network; Jimmy Wales, the founder of Wikipedia and Rebecca MacKinnon, the co–founder of Global Voices Online.

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Notes to Editors

1) Taking the format of an 81 country ranking, the Web Index is the world's first measure of the World Wide Web's contribution to development and human rights globally. First released in 2012, the 2013 Index has been expanded and refined to include 20 new countries and features an enhanced data set, particularly in the areas of gender, Open Data, surveillance and security. It provides an objective and robust evidence base to inform public dialogue on the steps needed for societies to leverage greater value from the Web. The Index combines existing secondary data with new primary data derived from an evidence-based expert assessment survey. Scores are given in the areas of access; freedom and openness; relevant content; and empowerment. The full results and findings of the Web Index can be accessed on the Web Index Website at http://thewebindex.org. Country factsheets and FAQs can also be found on the Web Index Website.

2) The full Web Index 2013 is being unveiled and assessed at a launch event on 22 November 2013 in London. Speakers at the launch event include Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Lily Cole, Jimmy Wales, Bright Simons, Rebecca Mackinnon and Anne Jellema. The launch event will take place at 10:15 – 12:00 GMT. A press conference will take place straight after this at 12:00 - 12:30 GMT.

3) About the World Wide Web Foundation
Established by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the World Wide Web Foundation (webfoundation.org) 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.

4) The Web Index is supported by UK Aid from the UK government.

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Launch event hashtag: #WebIndex