



Regional Open Data

Barometer

Latin America and the

Caribbean 2020

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About the Regional Open Data Barometer for Latin America and the Caribbean

The tragic situation that the world is currently experiencing due to COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of governments' use of digital tools and, in particular, of having high-quality data to manage the pandemic. Unfortunately, few governments have risen to meet these challenges, as several cases in Latin America and the world have shown. Transparency in crisis management requires open data about the pandemic, but also about contracts, public budgets and the possibility of creating value for citizens with these data. Transparency is crucial in an increasingly polarized world threatened by misinformation. At ILDA, we believe that democracies cannot survive without high-quality data and that governments' responses to their crises they face must be transparent, open and accountable.

This edition of the Open Data Barometer in Latin America and the Caribbean is a snapshot taken a few moments prior to the pandemic and reveals the vulnerabilities of our region, as well as the progress made since the last measurement, more than four years ago. This evaluation is based on the hard work of a very professional team led by Silvana Fumega and coordinated by David Zamora. This work has also benefited from the invaluable collaboration of Maurice McNaughton of the Caribbean Open Institute. The team has endeavored to replicate and improve upon the work started by the Foundation for the Web (Web Foundation), led by José María Alonso and Carlos Iglesias, which established a benchmark for these measurement instruments. Carlos Iglesias has generously given much of his time and offered valuable advice to support this edition of the Barometer, for which we are grateful. This undertaking would not have been possible without the vision of Fernando Perini, of the Development Research Center (IDRC), who generously provided resources for its implementation, and support from Arturo Munte of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Enrique Zapata from the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) and Craig Hammer from the World Bank. Similarly, we are grateful for the flexibility the Luminate Foundation and, in particular, Gabriela Hadid, provided by enabling the use of institutional funds for this purpose.

At ILDA, we believe that this type of work offers unique value to researchers, civil society, the private sector and governments. The open data agenda that promises greater transparency, participation and economic value is here to stay. However, ten years after the effort's inception, it shows signs of stagnation or, in some cases, regression. New challenges have also emerged in the field of data management, such as those resulting from the abuse of personal data by corporations and governments, as well as from the need to expand our conception of data use beyond mere publication.

There are structural factors that the open data agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean needs to address. The lack of government capacity and infrastructure and increasing hostility to transparency and evidence-based public policies underscore the contemporary relevance and importance of these efforts. We hope this work will help inform policy-makers' decisions and will help Latin America and the Caribbean achieve greater openness, transparency and equity in our data-driven era.

Fabrizio Scrollini
Executive Director
ILDA

.00 Executive Summary

Pag / 05

.01 Introduction

Pag / 07

.02 Methodology

Pag / 10

.03 Results

Pag / 13

.04 Marginal improvements in a stagnant region

Pag / 22

Big jumps and marginal improvements / Pag.24

A region in the middle of the table / Pag.30

Living on income without a clear future / Pag.32

The focus of the agenda / Pag.33

A region at different speeds / Pag.36

.05 Recommendations

Pag / 39

Opening is not optional: Avoid risk of stagnation / Pag.40

International cooperation can continue to operate as a catalyst for the open data agenda / Pag.41

Data teams require more investment and support / Pag.41

Supporting the private sector and society can improve impact / Pag.42

Quality and Inclusion: Two great challenges for the open data agenda / Pag.42

Towards a more inclusive and mature openness agenda / Pag.43

00

Since the last measurement, four years ago, Latin American and Caribbean countries have made progress in making public data more open and accessible, but these advances have not been transformative. The region risks stagnation that would undermine the contribution of the open data agenda to better democracies, services and sustainable development. In the digital age, sustaining democracy and an informed citizenry in the region depends on open data.

The leading countries in the region have stagnated in their progress toward greater openness, or have dropped in the rankings, while a few countries have made significant advances in their policies. The barometer measures three dimensions: readiness, implementation, and the impact of open data in the region. In terms of readiness, most governments explicitly committed to release open data and to create national open data portals. However, the best scores in the region lie in the implementation area, although countries differ in their speed of implementation. Regarding the impact dimension, the region still does not seem to have reaped the expected benefits.

Multilateral organizations and development banks have been instrumental in advancing this agenda in the region by strengthening the capacities of the public sector in many cases. Similarly, regional cooperation networks, at the public sector and civil society levels, continue to play a role in sustaining this agenda. The work has also become more complex because of new challenges related to data privacy and data use by the private sector, which has forced countries to rethink their data strategies more comprehensively.

The barometer makes four core recommendations:

Governments must consistently and sustainably invest in teams that guide and implement open data policies at all levels of government.

Governments should holistically consider the different aspects of the production and use of data from the public and private sectors, including regulatory aspects regarding privacy, use of data for the common good and emerging technologies and should focus on including the most vulnerable people in society.

Governments must redouble their efforts to include the private sector and civil society in the open data ecosystem in order to advance the agenda and generate more and better uses of data to produce benefits for various groups in society.

Governments should improve the quality of their data, taking special care to consider gender dimensions as well as other relevant variables, so that data include all people in their societies.

Policies of openness remain crucial in this digital age, both to generate economic and social value and to promote more transparent governments that can cope with misinformation and societal complexities. It is time to properly invest in this agenda.

.01

Open data policies need reference for analysis and comparison. For years, those working in academia, civil society and multilateral organizations have sought to evaluate the status and progress of different open data initiatives, as well as to learn from the improvements made by various governments and regions. Latin America and the Caribbean have been implementing these types of policies at the national and local levels, with different degrees of maturity and intensity, for approximately ten years. The perception of various actors and organizations in the field of open data is that, since its inception (in approximately 2010), this agenda has had its ups and downs. The situation of the open data agenda is complex. At the level of public discourse, it is almost impossible, today, for a Latin American or Caribbean democracy to oppose opening data. However, as the COVID-19 crisis and the data collected in this study have shown, more than half of the governments of this region, on several occasions, have made exceptions to this general principle and have not published or shared certain data. In addition, governments' turnover in the region has brought to power alternative views regarding transparency and the use of technology (or the absence of it), in many cases leaving a vacuum and eroding the consensus that existed in early 2010.

Open data currently supports important efforts to monitor public purchases, budgets and sectors such as health or education, but much work remains to be done in many sectors. The political and social climate has also changed in the region and phenomena such as disinformation, combined with governments' inadequate efforts to inform the public about their actions in a timely manner, have led citizens to question the value of public data. Although the countries of the region have policies, agencies or entities in charge of this issue, their capacities are, in many cases, limited.

On the other hand, the open data agenda faces new challenges due, for example, to emerging scandals regarding the use of personal data by companies and governments. Likewise, the need to think beyond openness and to pursue data policies that promote inclusive development of the region is evident. However, expanding the open data agenda should not be at the cost of neglecting its original goals, which would put at risk all the progress made to date.

In this context, ILDA has committed to implementing a regional edition¹ of the Open Data Barometer (ODB)², which will evaluate different open data initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to 1) provide a clearer picture of how the region is doing in this field; 2) learn from government improvements that could strengthen horizontal collaboration; and 3) reflect on open data policies and their results.

¹ <https://opendatabarometer.org/>

² The Open Data Barometer is a research project that has been produced by the World Wide Web Foundation with the support of the Omidyar Network. It aims to understand the prevalence and impact of open data initiatives around the world, analyze global trends, and provide comparative data on governments and regions through a detailed methodology that combines context data, technical assessments, and global reports.

Given that the last global evaluation was carried out in 2016,³ that in 2017 a special edition⁴ was carried out only for leading countries, and that, at present, there are no concrete plans for carrying out another global assessment, the regional edition for Latin America and the Caribbean that ILDA has developed is vitally important for understanding the current situation in the region.

The objective of the regional edition of the Open Data Barometer was to apply the methodology⁵ of previous editions to a total of 24 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Specifically, the countries participating in the process are:

Latin America		Caribbean
Argentina	Guatemala	Trinidad and Tobago
Bolivia	Honduras	Bahamas
Brazil	México	Belice
Chile	Nicaragua	Guyana
Colombia	Panama	Haiti
Costa Rica	Paraguay	Jamaica
Ecuador	Peru	Dominican Republic
El Salvador	Uruguay	Saint Lucia

The Latin American countries were selected by ILDA, including those with open data initiatives. The Caribbean countries were selected by the Caribbean Open Institute based on the same considerations.⁶ It should be noted that, in both regions, this new edition incorporates countries that were not included in previous measurements namely the Bahamas, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guyana.

This Barometer comprised a period of 15 months, in accordance with the practice of previous editions, and specifically covered events in the region from January 2019 to March 2020. Data collection was carried out between April and May 2020. Thus, due to the need to maintain consistency in the duration of the assessment period and to complete the investigation in a timely manner, the effects of COVID-19 could not be reflected in the study.

This report is divided into four sections. First, we present a brief introduction to the subject, followed by a brief explanation of the methodology we employed. Second, we present the main results of the Barometer for the entire region. Third, the report analyzes the results, identifying the most prominent trends in recent years. Finally, we offer a series of recommendations for the region's open data ecosystem and the way forward.

³ <https://opendatabarometer.org/4thedition/>

⁴ <https://opendatabarometer.org/leadersedition/report/>

⁵ <https://opendatabarometer.org/leadersedition/methodology/>

⁶ The exclusion of Venezuela from this study is due to the country's political situation, which prevents ILDA from deploying the Barometer methodology properly.

02

The assessment⁷ carried out within the framework of the Barometer 2020 project is based on the collection of data from three instruments:

1. **Expert survey:** This instrument asks researchers to answer a series of detailed questions about the status of open data in their country. Each question is answered by selecting a value on a scale ranging from 0 to 10, according to a scoring guide that details the ranges and conditions. Each score is accompanied by a justification that contains evidence and sources to support the assigned score. Each score and justification is then reviewed by a peer and by the project coordinator to ensure consistency and quality of work. These actors iteratively exchange the survey responses until a satisfactory quality level is achieved.
2. **Dataset evaluation survey:** Researchers assess how well each of 15 key datasets meets 10 criteria of data openness. The presence of each criterion is evaluated on a binary scale (“Yes” or “No”), and the responses are accompanied by qualitative data that explains the context and justifies the evaluation given. As with the Expert Survey, all responses are reviewed by a peer and by the project coordinator and are subject to the same quality control process.
3. **Secondary data:** To complement the data collected from the two instruments described above, five secondary sources are used, each selected on the basis of theory and on its ability to measure important aspects that are not covered in the primary data collection instruments. These sources are:
 - a. World Economic Forum Global Information Technology Report of the, 2016
 - b. United Nations E-Government Survey, 2020
 - c. World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index, 2019
 - d. Freedom House Political Freedoms and Civil Liberties Index, 2020
 - e. International Telecommunication Union Internet usage statistics, 2017-18

The Open Data Barometer structure comprises three levels. At the highest level are the subindexes, at the middle level are the components and at the bottom level are the variables. A set of variables make up a component and a set of components make up a subindex. The weights of the variables within a component are equal to each other and the weights of the components within the subscripts are also equal to each other. In addition, the subindexes all have equal weight. The subindexes and their components are described below:

⁷ To explore other aspects of the methodology used, consult the [methodology documents](#) and [research manual](#).

1. **Readiness:** This sub-index evaluates the willingness of governments, citizens and businessmen to ensure the openness of data and is evaluated based on primary and secondary data. Its components are:
 - a. **Government policies:** Assesses the existence of policies and protocols to ensure the long-term availability of open data
 - b. **Government action:** Assesses the availability of open data at all levels of government;
 - c. **Citizens and Civil Rights:** Evaluates the degree to which citizens and civil society are empowered to participate in government decision-making using open data;
 - d. **Entrepreneurs and companies:** Evaluates the degree to which companies and entrepreneurs can take advantage of the economic opportunities afforded by open data.

2. **Implementation:** This sub-index assesses the degree to which governments publish key data sets in an accessible, timely and open fashion and is evaluated based on primary data. Its components are:
 - a. **Innovation:** Evaluates the production of data commonly used by entrepreneurs in open data applications, or data that provide significant value
 - b. to the private sector;
 - Social Policy:** Evaluates the production of data useful for planning, delivering and evaluating social policies, as well as data that have the potential to contribute to greater inclusion and empowerment;
 - c. **Accountability:** Evaluates the production of data that enable governments and their institutions to be held accountable.

3. **Impact:** This sub-index evaluates the extent to which the publication of open government data has had a positive impact on a variety of sectors in the country. It is evaluated based on primary data and its components are:
 - a. **Political Impact:** Evaluates the impact of open government data on transparency and accountability, as well as on the efficiency and effectiveness of government;
 - b. **Social Impact:** Evaluates the impact of open government data on the environmental sector and its contributions to greater inclusion of marginalized groups;
 - c. **Economic impact:** Evaluates the impact of open government data on entrepreneurs, as well as on new and existing businesses.

The methodology we employed was designed by the Web Foundation and has received minor adjustments over the years. Although this methodology is very useful for understanding the state of data openness in a given country and comparing data openness across countries, it covers only a few topics⁸ and does so in limited depth. While this restricted scope helps strengthen the validity of the cross-country comparison, in the context of an increasingly diverse agenda, the methodological limits may cause us to miss many nuances and variants.

⁸ Likewise, the criterion for selecting some data sets to evaluate components of the Implementation sub-index gives the researcher some discretion and this may affect the outcome, albeit slightly. Also, while items composing the have thresholds or scales for assigning points, the design of these items leaves the researcher some discretion. Although we made a great effort in this project to standardize criteria among the research team throughout the data collection process and the researchers, coordinators, colleagues and outside experts reviewed the methods and data numerous times, we recognize that in this type of research it is difficult to eliminate biases entirely.

.03

The region comprising Latin America and the Caribbean is more transparent today than it was in 2016, the last year during which this measurement was carried out⁹. Most of the countries in the region show improvements, albeit marginal, in their data openness scores, with the exception of Mexico. However, the rate of improvement has been significantly lower than it should have been from a historical perspective. The region should have improved at a faster rate in the period since the first measurement. In other words, while there have been improvements in the region, they have not been transformative. (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

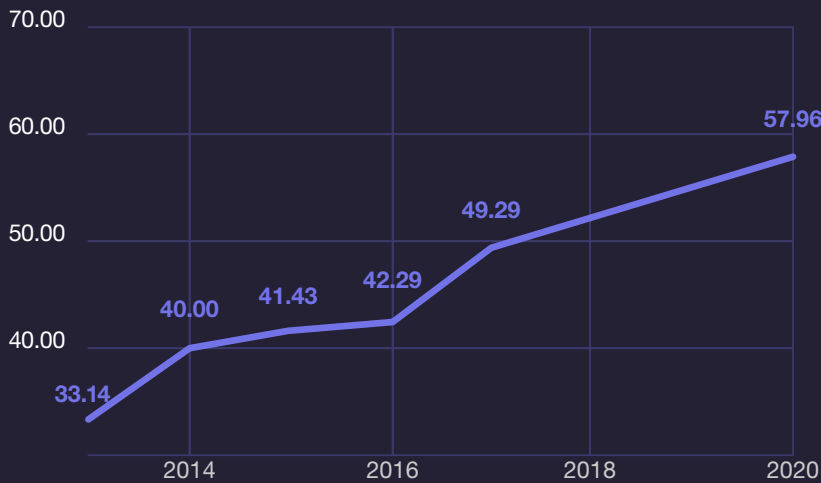


Figure 1

Average openness rating of the seven countries—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Uruguay—that participated in all four biennial measurement waves, by year.

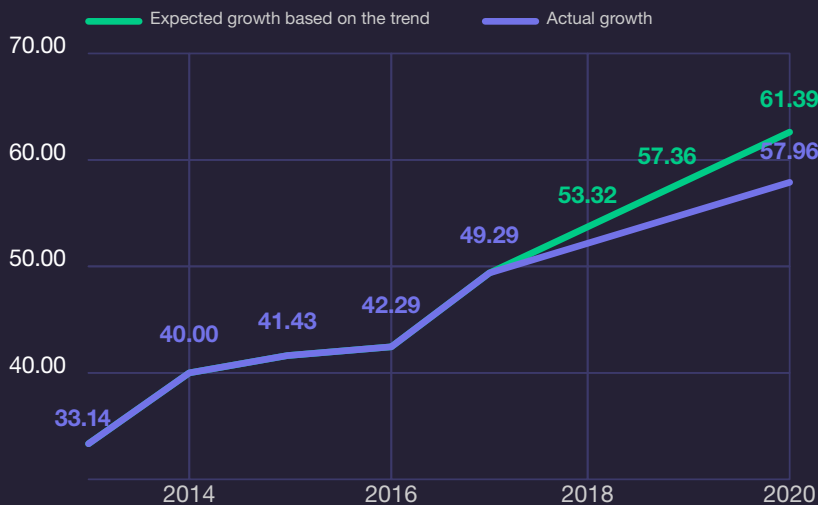


Figure 2

Average openness rating of the seven countries—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Uruguay—that participated in all four biennial measurement waves versus the average rating expected for the same countries according to their historical trend, by year.

⁹ In 2017, only a few countries in the region were included in the leaders edition.

The general results of the 2020 edition of the Barometer (ODB) show an average score of 40.38 points for the 24 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, out of a total of 100 possible points. There thus remains much room for improvement for the region as a whole. While the availability of open data in several key sectors (such as census, budget, international trade, crime, public procurement, etc.) obtained high ratings on the Readiness and Implementation sub-indexes. By contrast, the region received a relatively low score on the sub-index measuring the Impact of open data (see Figure 3).

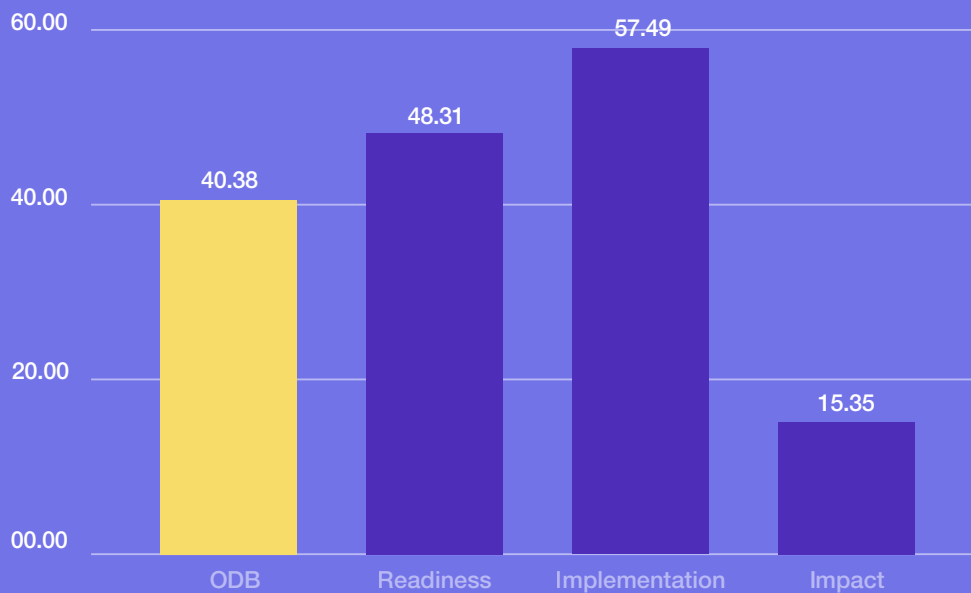


Figure 3

Average scores on the Barometer and on its sub-indexes.

By examining the general results in greater detail, and considering the historical data of the countries that have participated in all editions of the Barometer, we can identify what aspects of data openness have improved and what areas have fallen short of expectations (see Figure 4). This analysis shows that progress in the areas of readiness (understood as the drive by governments to improve their policies, infrastructure and open data initiatives) and impact has slowed. In other words, although governments have provided access to more and higher-quality data sets, the decline in governments' support for national open data initiatives has weakened the impact of these changes, such that the impact has been less than expected.

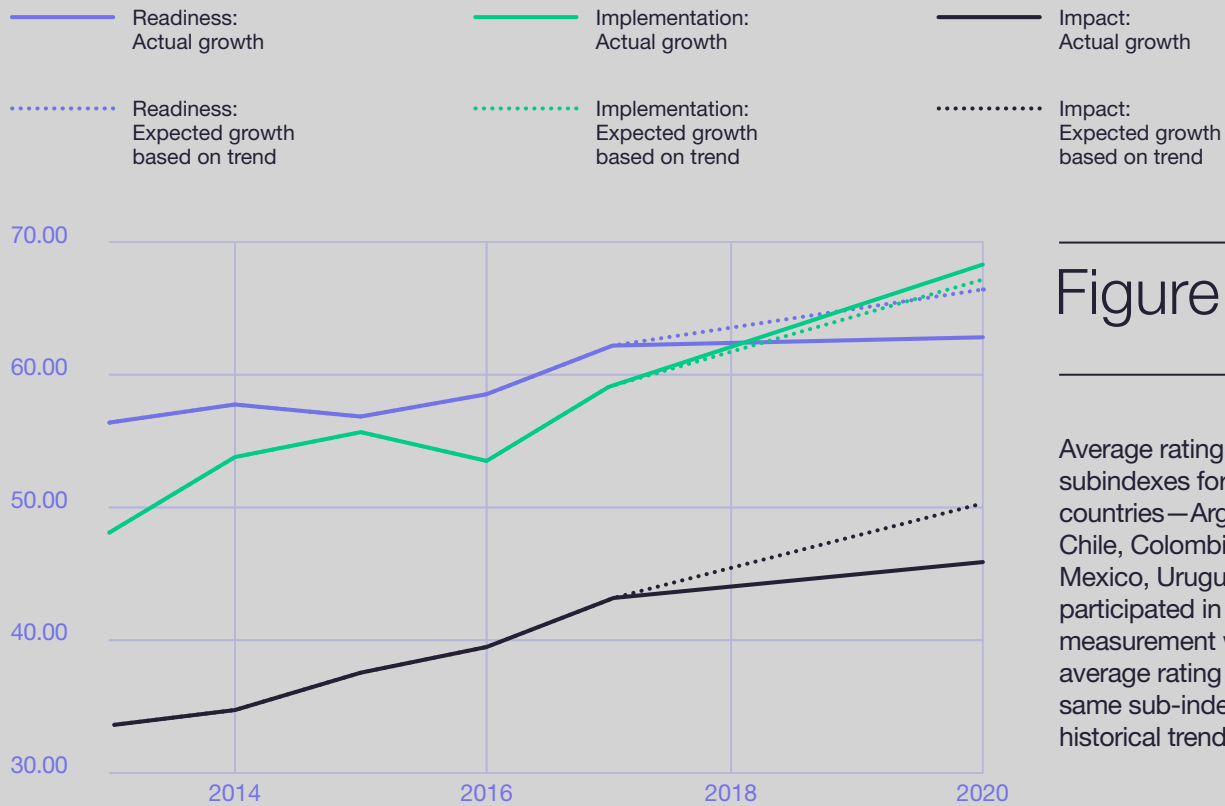


Figure 4

Average rating of the three subindexes for the seven countries—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Uruguay— that participated in all four biennial measurement waves versus the average rating expected for those same sub-indexes based on historical trends, by year.

In this evaluation, Uruguay leads the region, followed closely by, in order, Argentina, Colombia and Brazil. Ecuador and Argentina are the two countries that show the greatest improvement since the last measurement wave in which they participated (see Figure 5). In the Argentine case, this improvement is explained by the strong investment made in promoting open data by the past administration, as well as by current administration's decision to continue this policy. In Ecuador, the open data agenda has been promoted in recent years, as demonstrated by the adoption of the action plans of the Open Government Partnership and the country's co-organization of the annual Abrelatam/Condatos event in 2019. Likewise, most Caribbean countries have improved their scores, with the Dominican Republic leading the way. Also, several countries in Central America show improvements.

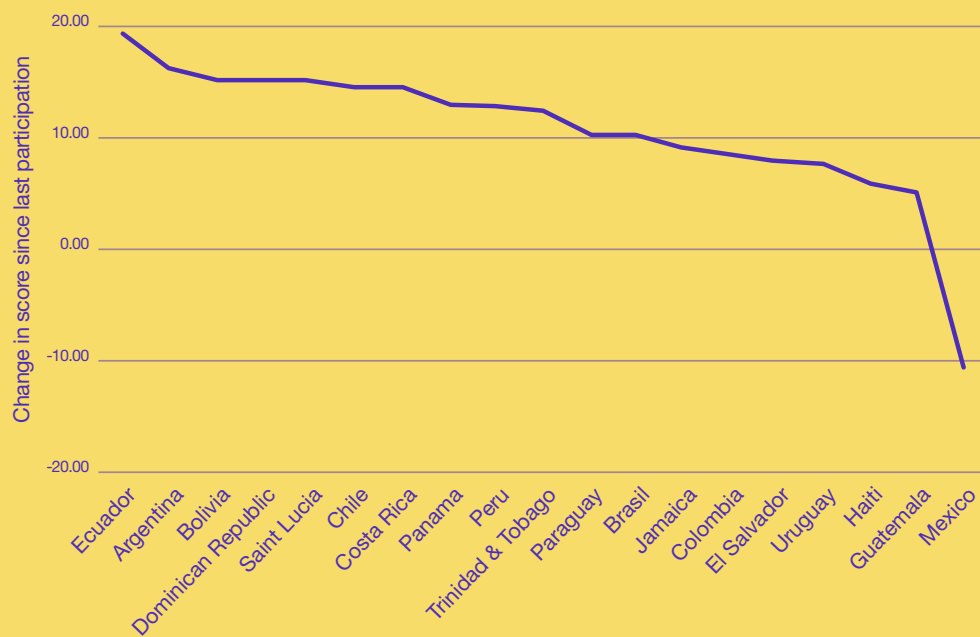


Figure 5

Change, in ODB score, by country, between the current measurement wave and the most recent wave in which a country participated.

Table 1 shows the country ranking based on the current Barometer score and the scores each country received in previous measurement waves.

Ranking 2020	Country	2020	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
1	Uruguay	63.55	56.00	50.00	51.00	44.00	33.00
2	Argentina	63.14	47.00	36.00	26.00	34.00	33.00
3	Colombia	60.47	52.00	44.00	41.00	31.00	27.00
4	Brazil	60.20	50.00	47.00	52.00	46.00	35.00
5	Mexico	58.48	69.00	58.00	51.00	44.00	36.00
6	Chile	54.44	40.00	41.00	40.00	51.00	38.00
7	Costa Rica	45.44	31.00	20.00	29.00	30.00	30.00
8	Dominican Republic	45.10	Nd	30.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
9	Peru	44.81	Nd	32.00	29.00	35.00	23.00
10	Paraguay	44.24	34.00	27.00	19.00	Nd	Nd

Table 1

Country ranking (2020) and Barometer ratings by country and measurement year¹⁰

¹⁰ The acronym "Nd" means "Not Available," and indicates cases in which a particular country did not participate in a particular measurement wave of the Barometer.

Ranking 2020	Country	2020	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
11	Panama	42.99	30.00	20.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
12	Ecuador	42.31	Nd	23.00	30.00	32.00	23.00
13	Bolivia	41.17	Nd	26.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
14	Jamaica	41.09	Nd	32.00	22.00	25.00	23.00
15	Honduras	37.28	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
16	Trinidad & Tobago	33.33	Nd	21.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
17	Guatemala	31.06	26.00	24.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
18	Saint Lucia	29.04	Nd	14.00	14.00	Nd	Nd
19	Guyana	25.02	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
20	El Salvador	24.84	Nd	17.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
21	Bahamas	24.26	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
22	Belice	22.24	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
23	Haiti	17.83	Nd	12.00	7.00	6.00	Nd
24	Nicaragua	16.79	Nd	Ndt	Nd	Nd	Nd

Table 1

Country ranking (2020) and Barometer ratings by country and measurement year¹⁰

As indicated in the methodology, the Barometer measures the **readiness**, **implementation** and **impact** of open data. Figure 6 shows, for the seven countries that have participated in all Barometer measurements, the historical results for the region for each subindex. The slow improvement in readiness since 2017 is notable, especially as compared with the more marked improvement in the implementation dimension.

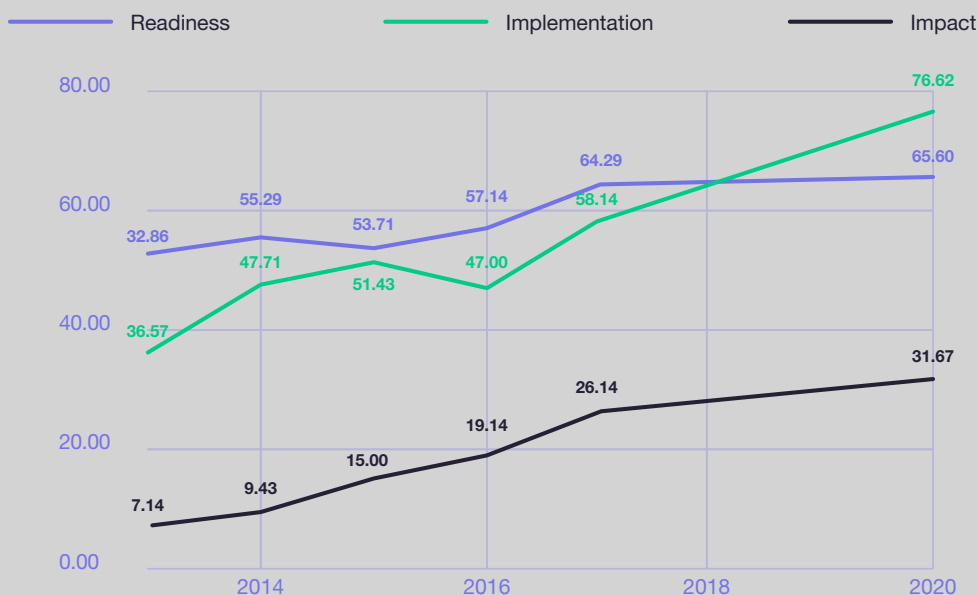


Figure 6

Regional historical results for the three Barometer sub-indexes.

In the **Readiness** sub-index, three of the four components all have scores of approximately 46 points. Only the “Citizens and Civil Rights” component differs from the others, with a higher rating of approximately 55 points. Figure 7 shows the average score (based on all countries in the study) for the four readiness components. Thus, the aspects of readiness that most require leadership on the part of governments are the weakest in this dimension.

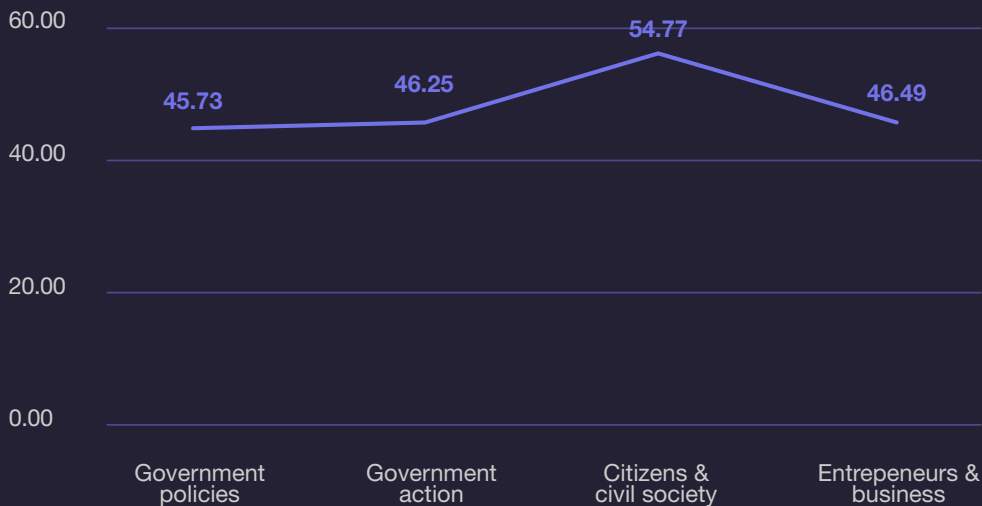


Figure 7

Regional performance on the components of the Readiness subindex.

The **Implementation** exhibits the highest average score of the three sub-indexes. However, implementation has advanced further for some categories than for others. For example, implementation has been weaker for data on land ownership, company registration and transportation (Figure 8). In addition, the implementation score for the cluster of datasets associated with social policy, i.e., those that are useful for planning, delivering and evaluating social policies, as well as for promoting greater inclusion and empowerment, is considerably lower than the score for the innovation and accountability clusters.

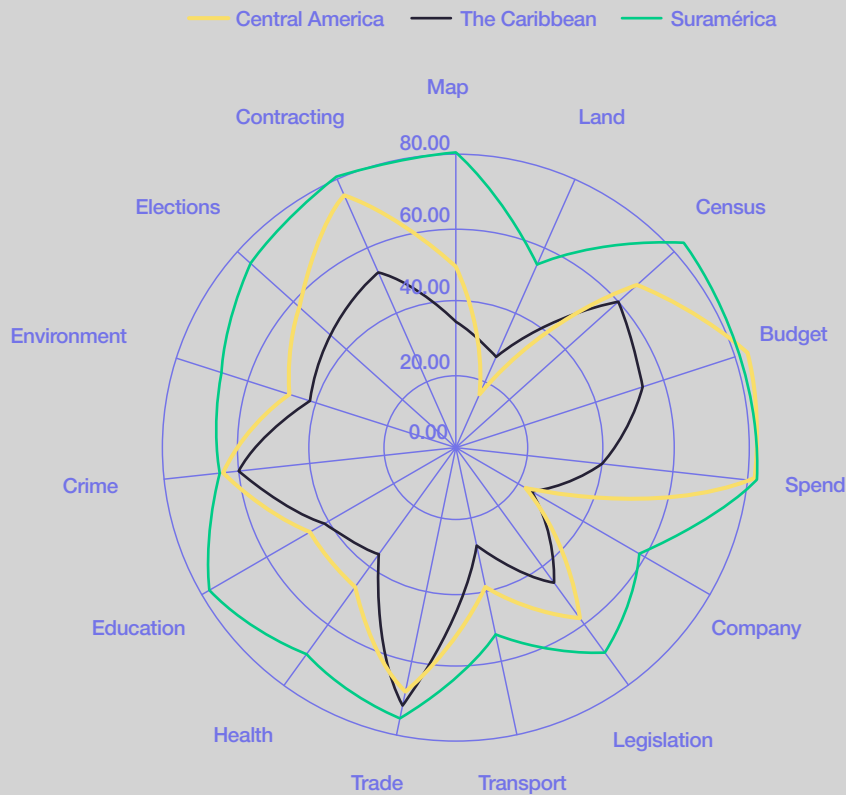


Figure 8

Regional scores for each category of data in the Implementation sub-index.

Finally, while ratings on the **Impact** sub-index have steadily increased for those countries that lead on this dimension of openness, the progress, in general, has been disappointing. In other words, despite some specific increases in this measurement, overall results on the Barometer scale are poor. Evidence of impact in Latin America remains limited, as shown in Figure 9.

Furthermore, one of the methodological limitations of the current study is the omission of measures related to inclusion and diversity; the low levels of social impact nonetheless suggest how little progress has been made toward the goal of including marginalized groups.

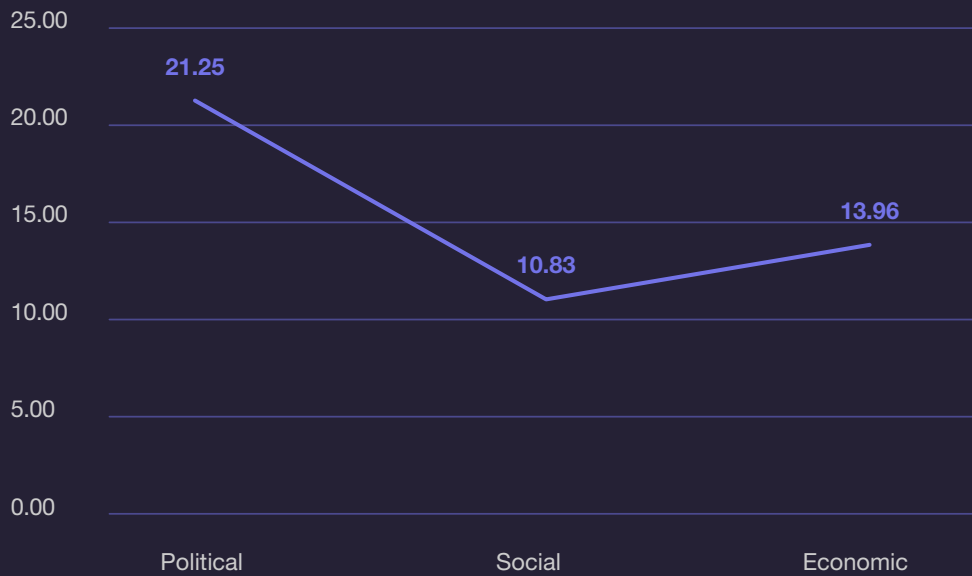


Figure 9

Regional performance on the components of the Impact sub-index.

In summary, the region has improved marginally in most areas measured by the Open Data Barometer. That is, with the exception of Mexico, the region has suffered no major setbacks, but neither has it made substantial progress.

Marginal improvements in a stagnant region

.04

The results presented in the previous section allow us to analyze the situation in Latin America in greater depth and to identify certain trends in the region.

It is necessary to rethink the data opening policy

Jorge Florez

The Open Data Barometer 2020 shows that Colombia has made progress in consolidating public open data policies and in strengthening the implementation of these policies. Likewise, it shows that the country still faces significant challenges implementing among government agencies, civil society and the private sector the use of data to generate political, social and economic impact. These results recognize the efforts of the Colombian government and provide an opportunity to reflect on the need for adjustments in policy priorities and regulation to generate greater impact through the use of data.

In terms of achievements, Colombia maintains a leadership position, reaching third place in the region thanks to a broad improvement in the implementation of open data and to minor improvements in readiness and impact. The country has consolidated its preparation for the opening by promoting the use of data by entrepreneurs, maintaining guarantees for the participation of civil society and increasing data initiatives led by subnational governments.

Likewise, the publication of data sets for social policy and innovation has improved. The data sets in these categories show greatest progress in environmental statistics (60 points) and crime data (30 points) and less progress in the areas of government procurement, international trade, maps, and land ownership (20 points in each). The data sets in these areas attain scores above 80, limited, however, by the low availability of data on public transport.

These results show that the Colombian government has the capacity to improve the openness of its data, promote their use, and generate guarantees for their reuse by the private sector and civil society. However, some results in the Barometer raise alarms about the opening of useful data for accountability and call for rethinking government strategies to provide the support and conditions necessary for the reuse of data to generate positive impacts on the development of the country.

The publication of data for accountability experienced significant setbacks. Although the country improved the openness of information on public spending by 90 points, this is an exception. The other sets in this area saw only minor gains or, worse, significant setbacks. For example, the data on legislation and elections attain only medium levels of openness (65 and 70 points, respectively), while the data on company registration and public budget have fallen significantly in their openness levels (35 and 40 points, respectively). Despite the fact that information on budgets and company registration is key to fighting corruption and to providing opportunities for citizen advocacy in the distribution and effective use of public resources, the Barometer finds that, in 2020, this data is not available in open formats, lack open licenses and are difficult to find even for expert audiences.

The slight progress and regression in the data sets for accountability raises questions about the government's political will to fight corruption and provide opportunities for citizen participation in public affairs. It is notable that, despite Colombia's regional leadership, the country has the lowest level of openness in its budget and ranks 15th out of 24 in the publication of company registries.

Finally, in 2020, the government's openness policy receded and there has been little improvement in the area of impact despite progress in the areas of implementation and preparation. It is relevant that the prioritization of data opening for innovation and social policy has not led to a greater social and economic impact, while civil society and the media have found ways to achieve political impact despite setbacks in the opening of data for accountability.

These results invite a broad dialogue on the successes, failures and lessons learned regarding the opening and reuse of data in the country, with an emphasis on the actions necessary to advance further and avoid setbacks. Some important issues to consider in this policy and regulation review are:

- What factors have allowed for political impact despite the limitations in the openness of data? How can these factors be used to advance economic and social impact?
 - What factors limit data reuse and what strategies can be most effective to address them?
 - What strategies can be used to sustain and increase political will regarding the publication and reuse of open data?
- How can existing dialogue and collaboration processes, such as the Open Government Partnership action plans and participation in the Global Initiative for Budget Transparency, be leveraged to identify and address specific challenges in policy and legislation?

Big jumps and marginal improvements

In general, the region's leading countries have improved their scores, notably in implementation and, to a lesser extent, in Readiness and Impact (see Table 2). This is probably due to the fact that, in terms of preparation, many countries, especially those that lead the ranking, had already made progress years ago. Despite this, the scores obtained in the Impact dimension show that there remains a very wide margin for improvement.

Even in the Implementation and Impact dimensions, the improvements have been marginal and reveal the limited attention and investment that the open data agenda has received in recent years. Most of the programs or projects in the region are supported by small teams who have other roles to fulfill and, in general, perform difficult tasks within the administration. On the one hand, some teams have to deal with citizen demands, procure the data within the administration, clean it up, and then make it available. In other words, in many cases, they must exercise leadership over the processes that other organizations carry out, with few resources. In other cases, the weakness of the entities in charge of this agenda creates additional difficulties, especially when the required activities are not centralized.

On the other hand, some countries that have recently invested in upgrading their data policies have improved their positioning in the Barometer. This is the case of Argentina, which, in the last 4 years, has made significant improvements in all three measurement dimensions. In any case, it is important to note that this exercise managed to capture what was done until the beginning of 2020, rather than the current situation or what may happen in the future. The same happens with countries like Ecuador, which as noted above, is the country that has registered the greatest improvement in its position. In general, these improvements can also be partially explained by the work of international cooperation entities and development banks that have contributed technical expertise and resources to promote progress in these countries.

Ranking 2020	Country	2020	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
1	Colombia	74.08	69.00	64.00	57.00	50.00	46.00
2	Uruguay	73.32	71.00	67.00	61.00	61.00	55.00
3	Argentina	69.10	66.00	55.00	44.00	48.00	51.00
4	Mexico	62.12	79.00	73.00	62.00	60.00	49.00
5	Ecuador	61.61	Nd	37.00	38.00	40.00	42.00
6	Brazil	61.61	63.00	60.00	55.00	58.00	61.00
7	Chile	61.00	54.00	56.00	56.00	60.00	60.00
8	Panama	59.65	47.00	40.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
9	Peru	59.44	Nd	46.00	42.00	43.00	42.00
10	Costa Rica	58.00	48.00	25.00	41.00	50.00	48.00
11	Dominican Republic	55.31	Nd	43.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
12	Bolivia	46.51	Nd	35.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
13	Paraguay	45.72	41.00	37.00	32.00	Nd	Nd
14	Honduras	45.16	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
15	Guatemala	44.17	36.00	34.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
16	Jamaica	41.94	Nd	41.00	35.00	39.00	37.00
17	Saint Lucia	39.80	Nd	26.00	20.00	Nd	Nd
18	Trinidad & Tobago	39.64	Nd	37.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
19	Bahamas	32.44	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
20	Guyana	30.72	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
21	El Salvador	27.86	Nd	24.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
22	Belize	27.37	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
23	Haiti	23.16	Nd	22.00	12.00	12.00	Nd
24	Nicaragua	19.72	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd

Table 2

Ranking by sub-indexes and historical ratings for each sub-index.

Readiness

Ranking 2020	Country	2020	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
1	Brazil	87.33	56.00	52.00	76.00	61.00	32.00
2	Uruguay	82.33	70.00	60.00	64.00	50.00	35.00
3	Chile	75.67	55.00	54.00	51.00	70.00	40.00
4	Colombia	75.67	60.00	42.00	48.00	31.00	31.00
5	Argentina	75.33	56.00	36.00	25.00	37.00	37.00
6	Mexico	73.33	67.00	55.00	56.00	52.00	45.00
7	Peru	68.33	Nd	38.00	42.00	48.00	24.00
8	Panama	67.67	42.00	18.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
9	Costa Rica	66.67	43.00	30.00	40.00	33.00	36.00
10	Paraguay	60.33	45.00	34.00	21.00	Nd	Nd
11	Ecuador	60.33	Nd	29.00	43.00	43.00	24.00
12	Bolivia	58.67	Nd	36.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
13	Dominican Republic	58.33	Nd	33.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
14	Jamaica	54.67	Nd	36.00	19.00	28.00	27.00
15	Honduras	50.00	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
16	Guatemala	49.00	37.00	31.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
17	Trinidad & Tobago	48.67	Nd	16.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
18	El Salvador	46.67	Nd	23.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
19	Guyana	42.67	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
20	Saint Lucia	42.33	Nd	15.00	19.00	Nd	Nd
21	Belice	37.67	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
22	Bahamas	37.00	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
23	Nicaragua	30.67	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
24	Haiti	30.33	Nd	11.00	7.00	7.00	Nd

Table 2

Ranking by sub-indexes and historical ratings for each sub-index.

Implementation

Ranking 2020	Country	2020	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
1	Argentina	45.00	20.00	13.00	7.00	13.00	8.00
2	Mexico	40.00	62.00	43.00	33.00	13.00	5.00
3	Uruguay	35.00	28.00	18.00	23.00	15.00	8.00
4	Colombia	31.67	28.00	22.00	13.00	12.00	2.00
5	Brazil	31.67	30.00	27.00	20.00	5.00	15.00
6	Chile	26.67	12.00	8.00	7.00	5.00	12.00
7	Paraguay	26.67	15.00	8.00	3.00	Nd	Nd
8	Jamaica	26.67	Nd	17.00	12.00	5.00	2.00
9	Dominican Republic	21.67	Nd	12.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
10	Bolivia	18.33	Nd	5.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
11	Honduras	16.67	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
12	Costa Rica	11.67	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	0.00
13	Trinidad & Tobago	11.67	Nd	7.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
14	Peru	6.67	Nd	7.00	0.00	0.00	3.00
15	Ecuador	5.00	Nd	0.00	5.00	3.00	2.00
16	Saint Lucia	5.00	Nd	0.00	2.00	Nd	Nd
17	Bahamas	3.33	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
18	Panama	1.67	0.00	0.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
19	Guyana	1.67	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
20	Belize	1.67	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd
21	Guatemala	0.00	5.00	5.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
22	El Salvador	0.00	Nd	2.00	Nd	Nd	Nd
23	Haiti	0.00	Nd	0.00	0.00	0.00	Nd
24	Nicaragua	0.00	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd	Nd

Table 2

Ranking by sub-indexes and historical ratings for each sub-index.

Impact

Argentina: Achievements, alarms and a long way to go

Romina Colman

"Much was done, but the open data policy must be deepened." This sentence could be a good summary of the results that Argentina obtained in the first Latin American edition of the Open Data Barometer. The country placed second in the region and this is, without a doubt, very encouraging news and something to celebrate.

As in 2017, for the 15 thematic areas evaluated, there are government data that allow civil society organizations, activists, journalists and the general public, access information on the national budget, public purchases, and health and education, among other aspects. However a detailed look at the results also raises some red flags, i.e., alerts that should concern us, but that could also serve as input for designing a strategic work agenda that helps meet the challenges.

One area that needs improvement is updating the datasets. While it is true that the country has improved in relation to some sets evaluated in 2017, almost half of the datasets do not provide clear information indicating the frequency of their publication or are outdated. This is the case for key datasets such as those related to the performance of the health sector, education and public contracts.

Having data that is out of date is almost as useless as not having it at all. Those who use them need the data sets to be up to date in order to identify and analyze what is problematic today and what requires quick and/or concrete actions. In simpler words: how can we influence or make decisions on school dropout or environmental issues if the information is processed late or is too old to capture the current landscape?

The update problems already appeared as a challenge in 2017, but their presence in this measurement shows that the problem persists. Also, some data sets that were up to date are no longer up to date. This could be an indicator that the open data policy is not yet consolidated and is sensitive to changes in government and movements of officials. For this reason, political will alone must never be assumed sufficient: the work of committed officials must be accompanied by regulations that ensure and sustain the processes over time.

The results also reflect a consolidation of the aspects that were already encouraging in the previous edition of the Barometer. With the exception of 3 cases, the evaluated datasets were easily located through internet searches, which could be an indication that open data is being published using a more colloquial language more accessible to the citizen. It is no longer necessary to perform a large number of clicks or a large number of searches to find the information in open formats. For example, when writing "Argentine budget," the "open budget" page appears among the top-ranked search results. This easier access has a positive impact on the open data ecosystem. If datasets are found easily and quickly, requests for access to information decrease.

However, when we read the Barometer, we must not forget that the evaluation is a snapshot of a particular moment that reflects a series of efforts - or lack thereof - taken in previous stages. All of these efforts have both short and medium term effects. Therefore, the 16-point improvement in Argentina's rating in the ranking is closely related to the measures that were taken during the preceding years (2018 and 2019) and to implement decree 117/2016, which established Argentina's Open Data Policy. For example, to help State agencies with the opening processes, several guides were written that explained in detail, step by step, how to publish the information and make it more accessible. In addition, Argentina assumed commitments in action plans of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and in meetings with the data community that provided feedback and suggestions to improve the policies.

These elements had a significant impact that is reflected in Argentina's performance on the Barometer. An example of this is the implementation of standards and common elements that allow the interoperability of the published data sets. This is a key enhancement that reduces development costs and facilitates cross-agency collaboration and the work of the data community. In this sense, while, in 2017, none of the data sets analyzed had elements that would allow them to be compared with each other, in this edition only public contracts and data on land ownership lack these identifiers.

Nonetheless, there remain disturbing patterns. Environmental information and land ownership are two areas of concern. In both cases, although there is data, it is not up-to-date, it is not easy to find and it is not in a format that allows for monitoring and analysis. Work is also needed to heighten the impact of data openness and use. To that end, work and collaboration with the private sector must be strengthened.

Argentina's score is a great cause for celebration, but we must not forget that the country's results may be different in the next evaluation if the effort to advance the agenda slackens. It is a key moment for governments and officials to transform openness into a State policy and to make it sustainable over time. Ultimately, continued progress requires defining strategic and concrete actions that show that Argentina's open data agenda is here to stay.

It should be noted that one of the clearest findings in this evaluation of the region is related to the low scores received, albeit in different ranges, on the variables related to the impact of open data (see Figure 10). This category is divided into Political Impact, Social Impact, and Economic Impact. The latter assesses the extent to which open data has had a notable positive influence on the economy and to what extent there are entrepreneurs who successfully use open data to build new businesses in the country. There is a clear difference on this issue, previously noted in the [State of Open Data](#), between the Caribbean and Latin America. In the Caribbean, the private sector most influences the generation of value from data, while in Latin America public data are used primarily to advance the agendas of transparency and accountability.

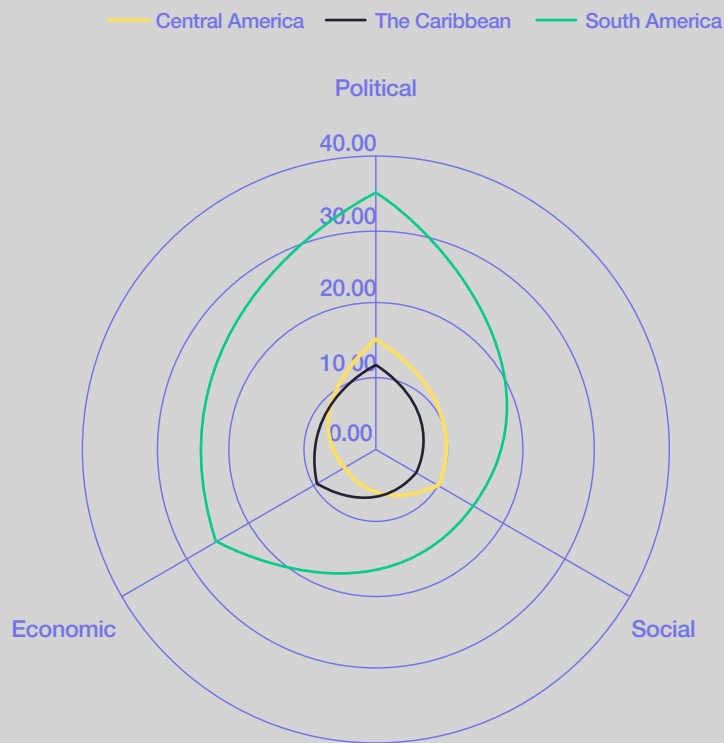


Figure 10

Scores on the three impact components, by subregion.

A region in the middle of the table

Although the region has generally improved its performance, its results fall mostly in the middle range. (See Table 3). Considering that the ODB scale ranges from 0 to 100 points, the average score of 40.38 for Latin American and Caribbean countries (36.7 for Central America, which includes Mexico; 52.71 for South America and 29.74 for the Caribbean), positions the region far from the global leaders in the previous measurement wave, i.e., Canada and the United Kingdom, who both scored 76 points. Furthermore, regional leaders do not exceed 64 points (Uruguay, for example, scored 63.55), which indicates that investment in the agenda has been, at best, limited.

Ranking	Central America	ODB 2020	Ranking	The Caribbean	ODB 2020	Ranking	South America	ODB 2020
1	Mexico	58.48	1	Dominican Republic	45.10	1	Uruguay	63.55
2	Costa Rica	45.44	2	Jamaica	41.09	2	Argentina	63.14
3	Panama	42.99	3	Trinidad & Tobago	33.33	3	Colombia	60.47
4	Honduras	37.28	4	Saint Lucia	29.04	4	Brazil	60.20
5	Guatemala	31.06	5	Guyana	25.02	5	Chile	54.44
6	El Salvador	24.84	6	Bahamas	24.26	6	Peru	44.81
7	Nicaragua	16.79	7	Belize	22.24	7	Paraguay	44.24
			8	Haiti	17.83	8	Ecuador	42.31
						9	Bolivia	41.17

Table 3

Ranking by subregions

On the other hand, countries that were perceived as leaders have forfeited that leadership due to the discontinuity of their policies or by reduced investment in them, as has been the case of Mexico, a country that has experienced a drop in the Barometer score, mainly when compared with the Leaders' Edition of 2017. The margins between the leaders and those in the lowest-ranked positions are narrowing and the positions seem, more and more, to move towards the center of the table. That is, those at the bottom improved (along with an increase in the popularity of the field of open data) and those leading the ranking are not reaching very high positions in the table (64 out of 100 is the highest score of any country in the region). In general, while the region exhibits potential for growth, there are structural or political obstacles to progress in this area (see Table 1).

Mexico: Opening at a critical moment

Juan Manuel Casanueva

Mexico is one of the Latin American countries that has continuously evolved in its data opening agenda. Since 2010, community groups from civil society, technology and journalism have been permanent promoters of the openness and use of public data. Starting in 2014, with the start of the National Open Data Policy, the agenda created a national open data portal, datos.gob.mx, and promoted coordination between agencies for the publication of open data in strategic sectors. Over the years, public institutions such as INEGI, CONEVAL and the Ministry of Finance have made institutional efforts to establish digital spaces for open data as an outlet for national public information.

The 2020 Barometer describes with concern the lack of continuity of the national open data agenda derived from the government transition of 2018, specifically, in the areas of government policies and actions of the Federal government. The national open data policy of the government of Mexico in 2020 is at risk due to the change of approach by [the Coordination of National Digital Strategy](#), whose programs were narrowly focused and put aside the opening of data to prioritize the ICT purchasing policy and the use of the technological infrastructure and electronic government. Despite the absence of a national agenda, there is institutional continuity in the opening of national statistical data and budget transparency, among other key institutions at the national level that maintain openness on essential issues in the country.

Within the current administration, some government agencies have launched ambitious initiatives to open up and use data as a basis for defining public policies. The DataMéxico initiatives of the Ministry of Economy and the open data portal on COVID of the Ministry of Health and CONACYT stand out. [DataMéxico](#) is a platform for the exploration, visualization and downloading of data on the Mexican economy. For its part, [the national monitoring platform](#) for tracking the pandemic caused by COVID19 in Mexico has sections for opening data on cases and hospital occupancy.

At the local level, there remain a few governments with open data agendas, with the municipal level being the most closed public space in terms of transparency of public information. Although there are few cities with ambitious agendas concerning data openness, the publication of open data as well as the development of evidence-based public policies is not yet a priority for local authorities. However, there is growing demand and interest in strengthening the capacities of public officials in the use and opening of data.

Despite the variability in public open data policies, data user communities are increasingly active and diverse. In civil society, journalism and data science, there are more and more ambitious projects based on open data that seek to generate social impact. Technical communities have also diversified as more specialists become involved in the open data agenda. Furthermore, in matters of national interest, data specialists are critical of the lack of openness and quality of public data, maintaining a continuous civic demand. Examples include is the public health data in the context of COVID as well as data on public contracting, human rights, security and violence against women.

The open data agenda in Mexico in 2020 is at a critical moment where the federal government has the opportunity to leverage past institutional advances and the maturity of the user communities if it assumes openness as a priority and implements a coordinated agenda among the government agencies. Recommitting to this agenda could be key to sustaining actions on priority needs for the country such as health, security, gender equality, human rights, poverty and anti-corruption. Otherwise, outside of select institutional efforts and leadership from the public administration, future Barometer evaluations will continue to regress and the potential of open data to generate social and economic impact will be wasted.

Living on income without a clear future

In general, the region is in a position where it can sustain its current situation based on its previous efforts. Many of the results evident in this edition of the Barometer reflect years of investment in infrastructure and data policies, especially in the leading countries in the region, rather than current emphases. With investments that sustain the current data infrastructure, it is possible that a future measurement wave will show relative stability. But such an outcome will be disappointing if what is intended is a region leading in or advancing toward greater openness. This current and possible future situation has strong implications for transparency and for the social or economic value of the data. If the States do not provide quality public data, various sectors of the economy and society will not be able to create value from it.

What does the Barometer tell us about Brazil?

Gisele Craveiro

The evolution of Brazil in the Open Data Barometer is a reflection of progress in the legal framework and in the implementation of the open data policy in the country. In this sense, it is important to highlight the approval of the General Law on Protection of Personal Data (LGPD), the existence of data opening commitments or the promotion in the latest action plans of the country in the Open Government Partnership. According to what was observed until April of this year (2020), the offer of government data in open format on various topics should be highlighted.

Despite this progress, the country's situation could be much better had it not stagnated since 2018, while, in other aspects, there was a setback that affected the maintenance and expansion of efforts. The main points refer to the resources dedicated to the maintenance of the open data portal and to the governance of the national open data policy in relation to social participation.

The National Open Data Infrastructure (INDA) was created in 2012 by the now-defunct Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, which led the implementation in the Brazilian federal government until 2018. In 2019, Decree 9,903 gave this responsibility to the General Comptroller of the Union (CGU), which has been a proponent of open government policy, in addition to being the government's main interlocutor with the Open Government Partnership, which has undoubtedly been an aspect a very positive development. However, it is questionable whether the technological capacity of the CGU suffices to carry out the maintenance of the data opening initiatives within the public administrations, and whether sufficient resources are being allocated for the implementation of the open data policy. For example, the open data portal is at times unavailable or temporarily suspended.

In the 2020 edition of the Barometer, the country significantly addressed the implementation dimension in a pre-pandemic scenario. The country is expected to continue advancing in this regard, despite the serious problems presented with the lack of data due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this sense, it is important to point out the need for the Brazilian federal government's open data portal to be consolidated. It is possible to visualize a dispersion of published data publications among the pages of other agencies, which indicates that the implementation of the open data policy has not yet managed to present a centralized and single catalog for the federal public administration. Not having standardized publication schemes can lead to future difficulties in maintaining, using and reusing available resources. This is why the country can and should move forward with a consistent approach to data management and publication. The country is expected to keep its open data initiative active, and to have adequate resources, including contributions from other sectors of society, which brings us to the next point.

One of the outstanding aspects of the National Open Data Initiative (INDA) has been its level of collaboration. Despite this, since 2018, there have been no meetings of the INDA Management Committee, although the different sectors, such as public bodies, academia and civil society, continue to work together, but the strategic planning is not being evaluated. Unfortunately, this situation worsened with the extinction of the Management Committee through Decree 9759/2019. To date, an equivalent participatory and collaborative body has not been established. This serious setback in politics and in the implementation of the opening of government data in Brazil reflects the position of a government that has significantly reduced the spaces for members of society to participate in the councils. This policy has been denounced by human rights organizations in multilateral organizations.

So far, Brazil has not advanced sufficiently in the area of Impact, although there has been great progress in supporting local

governments' open data policies. Although autonomy among the entities of the Brazilian federation has been a barrier, mechanisms should be promoted to establish alliances and increase training. Furthermore, the economic and social impact could be exploited with greater interaction between data consumers based in universities, companies, and civil society organizations.

Measures that could be adopted include publicizing what already exists, publicizing the tools available to request data, identifying problems and opportunities to improve existing data, connecting ecosystem actors and offering financing. Such efforts need to be consistent and sustained over extended periods because the impacts from these actions often only occur in the long term.

Studying and evaluating the economic impact of open data and the role it can play in the economic recovery from the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic should be priority activities to provide evidence to inform Brazilian public policies and to strengthen its open data initiative.

The focus of the agenda

Beyond the methodological limitations mentioned above, the moderate improvements in many of the cases and the movement towards the middle rankings can be explained, to a great extent, by the expansion of the agenda to include areas that go beyond the opening and use of data.

The paradoxes of the Chilean case

Alvaro Ramírez-Alujas

For the measurement of the Open Data Barometer 2020, Chile ranks number 6 out of 24 countries in the region. This result can be seen as positive and encouraging, because the country not only maintained and improved its relative position on the subindexes (readiness, implementation and impact) that compose the ODB, but did so during a period when open data policy has been relegated to a low priority on the government agenda and there have been few visible efforts to advance the open data agenda in an integrated manner.

In recent years, although Chile has sustained momentum toward greater data openness, it has progressively lost prominence in the comparative regional context. It is striking that, on the 2020 ODB measures, Chile improved its scores on all the components that make up the Barometer: it obtained a total score of 54.44 (considerably higher than the score (40 points) it received in 2017). On the subindexes it received a Readiness score of 61 points (54 in 2017), an Implementation score of 75.67 points (compared to 55 in 2017), and an Impact score of 26.67 points (compared to 12 in 2017). In summary and from a longitudinal perspective, Chile's performance has fluctuated during the 2013-2020 period but now stands at its highest level since the beginning of the ODB project. : 38 points in 2013; 51 in 2014; 40 in 2015, 41 in 2016; 40 in 2017; and 54 points in 2020.

The jump in the score between the previous edition of the Barometer (2017) and the current one (2020) surprises and invites a deeper reflection. Chile was ranked 20th in the 2017 measurement, out of a total of 30 countries in the sample. Looking back, the generic conclusions of the prior measurement continue to be valid for the Chilean case: partial compliance with the basic principles of the International Open Data Charter (despite having led the drafting and approval of the Charter in 2015); lack of an institutional framework that articulates the norms of access to public information (i.e., opening by default and publication with a purpose) with means of implementation; absence of a dynamic ecosystem, among other issues.

The fact that data continues to be managed from an insular and isolated logic, from a fragmented institutional space, inhibits the possibility of strengthening a (currently weak) ecosystem of actors, which requires a minimal architecture, visible data governance, and an adequate regulatory and technological infrastructure. With few exceptions, and in a context of pressure from civil society organizations or specific interest groups, data that are socially valued or that respond to a logic of demand from citizens (beyond the institutional supply) are not being published. Exceptions to this generalization include the [open budget platform](#), which responds to a desire to strengthen budget transparency, and the [datachile](#) initiative which, in the absence of proper management and updating of the [government data portal](#), replaced - at least partially - the need to count with quality data. In this context, we note that public organizations have been promoting their own initiatives, as part of open

government commitments or out of self-interest, seeing in open data an opportunity to create public value, as is the case of Chilecompra, the Civil Service the National Energy Commission, Comptroller's Office, or the National Board of School Aid and Scholarships (JUNAEB), among others.

However, one element that can explain Chile's sustained progress during the 2017-2020 period lies in the 2020 Digital Agenda and in the recent creation of the Digital Government Division in the Ministry General Secretariat of the Presidency. Since 2016, Chile has been working on an ambitious agenda to strengthen the institutional and governance framework for digital transformation in the public sector, with support from the OECD. However, one of Chile's main challenges is to consolidate a data-driven public sector. According to the OECD, a national strategy and robust data governance framework are urgently needed.

Finally, Chile must advance in strengthening an integrated open data infrastructure, which includes technical standards, policy guidelines and capacity development, and also promote the development of a vigorous ecosystem of actors and spaces for collaboration that allow the country not only to advance towards an evidence-based approach to public policy, but also to promote a society-wide culture of open data.

On the road to openness, during the last decade, aspects that were not in the foreground at the beginning of the development of this agenda began to gain importance. The issues of privacy and care of data, protection of human rights in the development of technological interventions, development of techniques and tools for machine learning (AI), digital security, inclusion in the production of data and algorithms, data governance structures, all can no longer be ignored and complicate the initial agenda whose principal, and almost exclusive, concern was to increase the accessibility of public data. This broadening and increased complexity of the agenda is at best, only partially reflected in current measurements. This speaks to the need for updates, both methodological and of the map of actors and issues involved in this ecosystem.

On the situation of Uruguay in the Open Data Barometer 2020

Javier Baliosian y Lorena Etcheverry

The Open Data Barometer 2020 for Latin America and the Caribbean has been published and, comparatively, Uruguay appears again in a very good position; with 64 points in the regional indicator, the smallest country in the southern cone is at the head of the entire region.

Thus, there are cases of evident success that benefit from the open data platform available in the country, such as A tu Servicio, where the government itself makes metrics available on health providers that the population can then use to make informed decisions about whom to trust with their health, or real-time data on the movements of public transport vehicles in Montevideo that have been made available to travelers both by applications created by the local government and by independently-produced applications.

However, the single number with which the Barometer tries to communicate the experts' assessment of the country's open data status summarizes a multidimensional and diverse situation that, even in a positive case such as Uruguay, benefits from more fine-grained analysis.

For example, the availability of data has been useful for the country's research teams during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for several groups of independent researchers, from the most diverse and not always obvious areas of knowledge, who used various models and tools to predict the evolution of the epidemic and support decision makers. The 2020 Barometer shows high levels of implementation in terms of opening detailed census data (85 points), performance of the health sector (70 points), and even public transport schedules (100 points), and geographical data (95 points), which are related to key aspects of an epidemic such as the mobility of people. Progress has been remarkable in terms of what counts as "implementation" for the Barometer: in 2013 Uruguay obtained slightly more than 34 points; in 2017, the experts assigned it a score of 70. In 2020, the country's implementation score reached 82.33 points.

There are, however, some worrying signs among all these positive data, signs that were evident during the work that was carried out on the pandemic by the research groups. After initial work based on data made available prior to 2020, independent researchers in Uruguay encountered severe difficulties in accessing the new data that were being generated specifically about the epidemic.

It is possible that this situation had to do with an aspect that the 2020 Barometer makes clear: Uruguay ranks only third in the region on the dimension of Impact, despite having increased its Impact score from 8 points in 2013 to 28 in 2017 and 35 in 2020. Uruguay, thus trails countries in the region with worse scores on the Readiness and Implementation indexes as well as those outside the region that score similarly to Uruguay on these two dimensions. This aspect is curious and perhaps suggests a progress characterized by a large gap between, on the one hand, a readiness on the part of technically-skilled government or civil society actors to work with open data and, on the other hand, a general population that does not seem to be proportionally benefiting from the dramatic advance in the other aspects that the Barometer measures. While the political impact of the country's open data status reaches a reasonable 44 points, the social and economic impact remain, in 2020, at just 30 points, which still represents considerable progress when compared to the 5-point score on economic and social impact in 2013 and the 20 points that the country received on these two components in 2017. Is this relative lack of impact related to the fact that the authorities, who had barely assumed office when the first cases of COVID-19 arrived in the country, delayed in considering the usefulness of opening the new data on the epidemic so that the entire network of local researchers could work on them?

Perhaps the gap between, on the one hand, the country's readiness and level of implementation, and, on the other, the impact open data are having is inevitable and is attributable to the speed with which the first two aspects have improved. Perhaps it is only a matter of time before the open data platform that is beginning to be consolidated in the country, going from a global score of 33 in 2013 to 63.55 this year, is perceived and used as an infrastructure on which agents of all kinds—within the government, in the academy, in the business system and in civil society— help each other contribute to challenges as diverse as the pandemic, the mobility of citizens, or health care.

A region at different speeds

Underlying the average scores for Latin America and the Caribbean is a diverse region in terms of capacities, actors and results. The interventions planned to advance open data policies in the region must be correspondingly diverse. Central America and the Caribbean generally have a lot of work still to do to advance the open data agenda at the most basic level, while the region's leaders may consider taking a quality leap. This diversity requires differentiated strategies that recognize the value of national and local ecosystems.

Although the scores of each of the countries have improved, when we look closely at the different sub-regions (see Figure 11), there is a clear difference between, on one hand, the countries of Central America and the Caribbean and, on the other hand, those of South America. The pattern of performance of the three regions is quite similar—the curves in the Figure 11 are essentially parallel—the South American subregion performs consistently better on each dimension than do the other two subregions. Similarly, the Central American subregion outperforms the Caribbean subregion. For example, although there is room for the countries of South America to improve Implementation, the dimension on which they score highest, the Caribbean region barely achieves basic performance levels in this area. All governments must improve in all aspects of the open data agenda, but many governments in Central America and the Caribbean, in particular, must make even greater efforts to at least achieve basic levels of readiness and implementation, bearing in mind that all three subregions show a deficit in the generation of value, as reflected in the low scores on the Impact subindex.

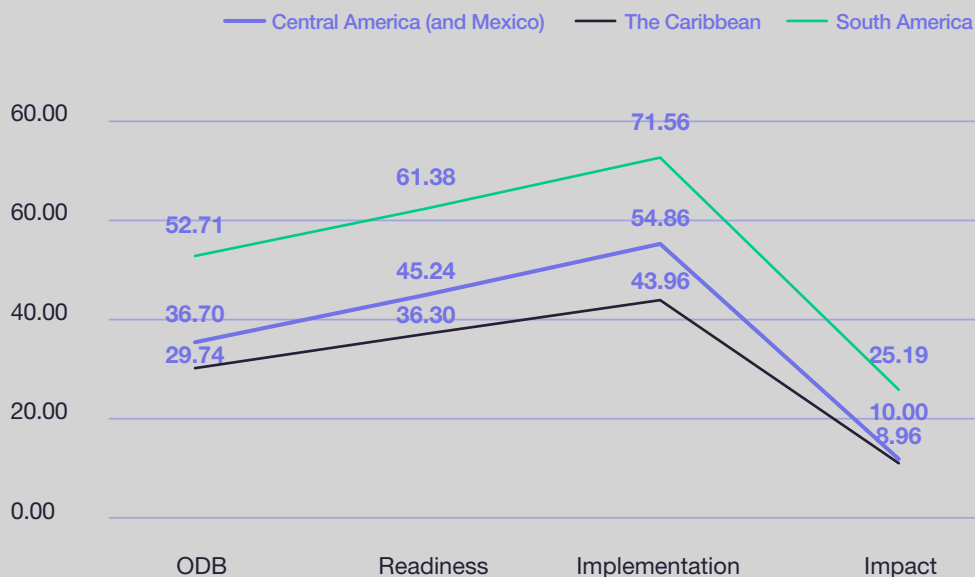


Figure 11

Barometer results and sub-index scores by subregion.

Central America: A Critical Reflection on the Open Data Movement

Marielos Chang

In 2007, Barack Obama first raised the idea of a “Google for government,” an accessible platform that would allow the ordering and classifying of data for public use. From that speech, data.gov was born along with a movement that would soon reach all parts of the world.

It seems strange to call the frenzy that caused the opening of data a “movement,” but if we look closely, the simple idea that opening data would improve government transparency and motivate people to become more involved in decision-making provoked the creation of hundreds of new civil society organizations, spaces for citizen collaboration and international events. The phenomenon is similar to that of the environmental movement, which grew from a few scientists’ observation that the world was warming to a mass of people believing the evidence demanding that their governments do something to prevent it. In the case of the Open Government Partnership, civil society began to demand more transparency, and, as a consequence, governments began to create public policies for data openness. Several years later, thanks to the multiple editions of the Open Data Barometer for Latin America and the Caribbean, we can measure how successful—or not—the movement has been.

According to the latest edition of the Open Data Barometer, the Central American region has slightly improved in its data policies. For example, Guatemala went from having a score of 24 points in 2016 to having 31 points in 2020. Costa Rica, for its part, has consistently progressed, as it not only is the country that has most increased its overall score, but is also the country that has the best rating on the Implementation subindex, and the second-best rating (behind Honduras) on the Impact subindex. Among the success stories, the other country in the region that rivals Costa Rica for its leadership in the application of open data policies is Panama. Comparing the results of previous ODB editions, we can see that, like Costa Rica, Panama has managed to improve its overall rating, and has focused its efforts on making data availability an added value for citizens, and especially for entrepreneurs. We see this with the indicators that reflect an improvement in the support that the government has given to entrepreneurs through training in the correct use of data and making available maps and information related to land tenure.

If we were to stick with that data, we could easily conclude that all those Saturday morning hackathons were worth it. But the peculiarity of the Open Data Barometer is that it allows us to evaluate other variables in greater depth.

Examining the Barometer more closely, we realize that none of these “advances” has translated into an improvement in the life of the citizen, or in the transparency of the government. Referring to the latter, according to ODB data, in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua the open data policy has had no impact on increasing the transparency or accountability of the country’s government. And when I say no impact, I mean the score is 0. Although to be fair, Honduras (40) and Costa Rica (50) slightly save the region in that regard. Now, if we discuss whether there has been an increase in government effectiveness based on the use of data, all Central American countries, without exception, have completely failed in this regard.

The same happens when we analyze the availability of data that can improve the quality of life of citizens. While it is true that all countries have succeeded in making data on the general budget and public spending more available, they have fallen short of making available data that: (1) matter to citizens; and (2) can help them make better decisions. Data on transportation, health services, education or crime are data that can have a direct impact on a person’s well-being. Transit, for example, has important economic consequences. A [study by the Open Data Institute](#) in London shows a savings of up to 58 million pounds in passenger time. On the other hand, a [study from Umea University](#) in Sweden found that if one of the two members of a couple spent 45 minutes or more commuting to work, their probability of divorce increased by 40%. Who knows how many divorces could have been avoided if the transportation data had been available.

The data related to economic impact tell more or less the same story. Although the Central American countries—except Nicaragua—have scores above 60 points in the availability of foreign trade data, efforts by companies and entrepreneurs to use these resources remain scarce. As a consequence, open data has had little or no positive impact on the economy.

Although this latest edition of the Barometer shows that there remains much to be done, it also helps us explain why the Open Data movement no longer has the momentum it had a couple of years ago. When the movement began, one of the strongest premises was that, once the data began to be opened, citizens were going to start using it. This is similar to the urban movement’s idea that, once cycleways are built, people start using them. Although for urban planning this assumption has proved correct, for open data it has been only partially true. Citizens are going to start using data when it helps them make better decisions. The data that need to be released include that which helps people decide which transport to use, which school to enroll their children in, which health center to visit, or what to invest in.

And this is where you see an opportunity for a second wave of the movement. The efforts of the previous years have taught us lessons and strategies. The fact that today several of the countries of the region have devoted efforts to open data policy and its implementation shows that the strategy was the correct one. Civil society can lobby, coordinate and collaborate with “public champions” so that demands become national public policies. To paraphrase Micah White, the political activist and co-creator of the Occupy Wall Street movement, efforts must be redirected so that the open data revolution does not remain just a movement, but becomes the new permanent social order.

The Caribbean in the Open Data Barometer

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This regional edition of the Open Data Barometer (ODB) features seven (7) Caribbean countries: Bahamas*, Belize*, Dominican Republic, Guyana*, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad & Tobago. Three of these countries, those marked with an asterisk, are 1st time entrants in the ODB index. We take a closer look at the performance of the Caribbean to interpret the region's progress since the 2016 edition, the readiness of Caribbean governments to implement open data practices, and suggest policy guidelines for realizing the potential of open data to impact the lives of citizens.

Main highlights for the Caribbean

- Although most countries have shown modest progress in terms of their assessment since the 2016 edition, Caribbean countries have lost ground relative to their Latin America counterparts;
- The Dominican Republic has replaced Jamaica as the leading Caribbean country, and has improved its position to 8th in the Latin America and Caribbean region, buoyed by increased availability of open datasets leading to significant gains in the implementation index;
- Jamaica has fallen from 7th to 14th in the Latin America and Caribbean region, as Government initiatives such as the Open Data portal and Open Data policy formulation have stagnated;
- Saint Lucia has shown the most significant relative improvement since the 2016 edition, and benefits from being the only Caribbean country to have a cabinet-approved open data policy that embraces the "open by default" principle;
- Of the new countries that have entered the ODB rankings, the progress of Belize is one to watch, as they currently have an active, emerging Open Government Partnership that shows strong consultative participation by both the private sector and civil society actors.

Policy considerations

- Several Caribbean countries have benefited from the funding support and political impetus derived from World Bank ODRA programs, as well as the demand and capacity-building activities of the Open Data for Development (OD4D) initiatives conducted by the Caribbean Open Institute in the region. This underscores the importance of external financial and technical support to provide a catalyst for open data activities in small island developing states, where it competes with a range of other socio-economic policy demands for scarce resources and political attention;
- The fledgling but promising Open Government Partnership program in Belize, supported by the Organization of American States (OAS)/Trust for Americas, is a current example that demonstrates the importance of this kind of external stimulus;
- Sustaining momentum and scalability of open data initiatives across changes in political administration is challenging, absent a commitment to formulating open data policies that adhere to the principles and practices of "open by default";
- Businesses and entrepreneurs in countries such as Jamaica demonstrate the capacity and readiness to take advantage of the economic opportunity offered by open data, but this is not sufficiently matched by a commensurate commitment and action on the part of governments in terms of appropriate initiatives and policies;
- Systematic investment in broad-based education and capacity-building initiatives has to be addressed at 3 levels: awareness in the public and private sectors; widespread digital and data literacy; and specialized Data and AI skills. This is critical to long-term sustainability of the open data ecosystem in the Caribbean. The active role of academia in this endeavor cannot be overstated.

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As noted above, the findings from the ODB 2020 regional survey are limited both by methodological constraints and by the fact that the data were collected prior to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (future ODB measurement waves may be strongly affected by the context of the pandemic that has not been fully reflected in the current report). With these limitations in mind, this report makes six recommendations to advance the opening of data in the region.

Opening is not optional: Avoid risk of stagnation

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are now at a crossroads. Simply persisting in the status quo will lead to stagnation and continued mediocre performance, substantially limiting the impact of this agenda. Under this scenario, the countries of the region will lose the opportunity to reap the benefits of this agenda in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and economic and social value. To date, many countries have failed to realize these benefits, as the Impact subindex scores indicate.

The open data agenda is today an essential part of several programs to fight corruption, address climate change and improve public services. If the countries of the region do not put investment and political commitment at the center of the data opening agenda, they risk failing to carry out the transformations that the region needs to advance along the path of inclusive development.

Finally, keeping openness at the center is a message, albeit aspirational, about the role of states in democratic societies in the digital age. There are multiple ways to approach digital governance, but only those that prioritize openness are compatible with democratic governance models that promote and accept the principle of accountability. As the governments of the world and the region advance in the implementation of digital platforms, openness can play a role in reinforcing the values of a democratic, free and inclusive society. These types of decisions have a potential impact on regulatory quality, investment, and the population's quality of life.

We recommend that the governments of the region articulate commitments, messages and resources at the center of their data strategies to improve their open policies at all levels of government.

International cooperation can continue to operate as a catalyst for the open data agenda

International cooperation and, in particular, the support of development banks has been important so that several of the countries included in this report could initiate their open data policies and take a necessary first step in their implementation. It is possible that without this type of support, the countries of the region would not have been able to progress in terms of implementation. This support is even more important for countries that were further behind or were just beginning to adopt this agenda. Similarly, cooperation between peers through the different government and civil society networks, such as the GEALC Network, CONDATOS/Abrelatam, Open Data for Development and the International Open Data Charter continue to provide important spaces for catalyzing and consolidating advances in open data ecosystems.

As the first steps are taken, it is necessary for international cooperation to focus its efforts on the areas that are relevant within the national development strategies of each country. Although the focus of the strategies depends on each country, areas such as the fight against corruption, climate change, gender, natural resources and government transparency continue to be relevant work spaces.

We recommend that the countries enlist help from international cooperation agencies in accordance with their national priorities and that the development banks operating in the region provide comprehensive support to develop and implement open data policies.

Data teams require more investment and support

The teams that work on the open data agenda from the government are generally small, have limited capacity and do not necessarily have a mandate to cover all levels of government. The recent COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the limitations that government teams have had in providing quality data that inform decision-making, as well as in providing quality information to the public. Coordination between different actors within the government has been necessary to produce, validate and eventually share data. Thus, we have noted the weak support that teams working with open data in the region have received, both centrally and locally. That is why governments need to hire more teams, provide better infrastructure and consider focusing their actions on strategic areas.

We recommend that governments invest steadily and sustainably in teams that guide and implement open data policies at all levels of government.

Supporting the private sector and society can improve impact

It is clear that the impact dimension has received low scores, even in the leading countries. Furthermore, when you look at the economic impact, in relation to the value that the data generate for new and existing businesses, the need to promote the inclusion of the private sector in the agenda is evident. As mentioned previously, the Caribbean demonstrates, albeit in a limited way, how the private sector can be an agent of value generation and can be key to advancing this agenda in areas such as tourism and agriculture.

We recommend redoubling efforts to include the private sector and civil society in the open data ecosystem in order to advance the agenda and generate better and greater uses of data to produce benefits for the various groups in society.

Quality and inclusion: Two great challenges for the open data agenda

The availability of the data does not necessarily match the quality of the data, as most of those who use open data already know. Governments need to invest in improving the quality of their data, particularly in formats, metadata and publication times. The improvement of quality not only allows an improvement in the use, but in the internal processes of the government itself, which, in turn, helps to improve decision-making.

The Open Data Barometer does not currently measure aspects related to inclusion and diversity in government data. A [recent study](#) by Data 2x and Open Data Watch, which included 93 statistical indicators in six countries in the region, reveals that, in the best of cases, 68% of data sets include a variable that allows the gender associated with the data to be used, generally in addition in a binary expression, not counting other groups. Similarly, our work on the femicide standard reveals the difficulties of considering the production and use of data with gender variables.

We recommend that governments improve the quality of their data, taking special care to consider gender dimensions, as well as other relevant variables, so that it includes all people in their societies.

Towards a more inclusive and mature openness agenda

The open data agenda has meant progress in terms of accountability, transparency and innovation in governments and societies. But its benefits have not yet reached the entire population and particularly not the excluded groups within those societies. This has multiple explanations, among them being structural factors in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean such as inequality and lack of infrastructure. Ensuring that the actors who work to reduce various forms of inequality and to generate economic and social value benefits from this agenda requires greater commitment and research on the part of governments.

On the other hand, many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean still lack privacy regulations, as well as national strategies regarding data use. It is necessary, therefore, to place the data opening agenda in a general context of data governance for the development of countries. This implies working on regulation, infrastructure, capacity-building and human rights in the digital age.

We recommend that governments consider holistically the different aspects of the production and use of data in the public and private sectors, including regulatory aspects regarding privacy, use of data for the common good and emerging technologies, focusing on the inclusion of society's most vulnerable individuals and groups.

Ten years after the advent of the open data movement, Latin America and the Caribbean have the opportunity to enlist it in service of their development priorities. Political will, collaboration and adequate investment is required to take advantage of the efforts made in the last decade.