

Introduction to the Country Profiles

The country profiles that follow offer a synopsis of the findings and conclusions of OpenNet Initiative (ONI) research into the factors influencing specific countries' decisions to filter or abstain from filtering the Internet, as well as the impact, relevance, and efficacy of technical filtering in a broader context of Internet censorship.

These profiles cover the countries where ONI conducted technical testing and analysis from 2007 to 2008. Countries selected for in-depth analysis are those in which it is believed that there is the most to learn about the extent and processes of Internet filtering.

Each country profile includes the summary results of the empirical testing for filtering. The technical filtering data alone, however, do not amount to a complete picture of Internet censorship and content regulation. A wide range of policies relating to media, speech, and expression also act to restrict expression on the Internet and online community formation. Legal and regulatory frameworks, including Internet law, the state of Internet access and infrastructure, the level of economic development, and the quality of governance institutions are central to determining which countries resort to filtering and how they choose to implement Internet content controls. A brief study of each of these factors is included in each of the country profiles. Together, these sections are intended to offer a concise, accurate, and unbiased view of Internet filtering and content regulation.

Each country is given a score on a five-point scale presented in the "Results at a Glance" table. The scores reflect the observed level of filtering in each of four themes:

1. *Political*: This category is focused primarily on Web sites that express views in opposition to those of the current government. Content more broadly related to human rights, freedom of expression, minority rights, and religious movements is also considered here.
2. *Social*: This group covers material related to sexuality, gambling, and illegal drugs and alcohol, as well as other topics that may be socially sensitive or perceived as offensive.

3. *Conflict and security*: Content related to armed conflicts, border disputes, separatist movements, and militant groups is included in this category.

4. *Internet tools*: Web sites that provide e-mail, Internet hosting, search, translation, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone service, and circumvention methods are grouped in this category.

The relative magnitude of filtering for each of the four themes is defined as follows:

1. *Pervasive filtering* is characterized by both its depth—a blocking regime that blocks a large portion of the targeted content in a given category—and its breadth—a blocking regime that includes filtering in several categories in a given theme.

2. *Substantial filtering* has either depth or breadth: either a number of categories are subject to a medium level of filtering, or a low level of filtering is carried out across many categories.

3. *Selective filtering* is narrowly targeted filtering that blocks a small number of specific sites across a few categories or filtering that targets a single category or issue.

4. *Suspected filtering* is indicated when connectivity abnormalities are present that suggest the presence of filtering, although diagnostic work was unable to confirm conclusively that inaccessible Web sites are the result of deliberate tampering.

5. *No evidence of filtering*: ONI testing did not uncover any evidence of Web sites being blocked.

The “Results at a Glance” table also includes a measure (low, medium, or high) of the observed transparency and consistency of blocking patterns. The transparency score given to each country is a qualitative measure based on the level at which the country openly engages in filtering. In cases where filtering takes place without open acknowledgment, or where the practice of filtering is actively disguised to appear as network errors, the transparency score is low. In assigning the transparency score, we have also considered the presence of provisions to appeal inappropriate blocking or report instances of it. Consistency measures the variation in filtering within a country across different ISPs—in some cases the availability of specific Web pages differs significantly depending on the ISP one uses to connect to the Internet.

An aggregate view of the level of development for each country is represented by the results of the first four indexes presented in the “Key Indicators” table: gross domestic product per capita, life expectancy, literacy rates, and the human development index.

The first three measures are drawn from the World Bank development indicators data set. The GDP measure, which captures the ability to purchase a standard basket of consumer goods, is expressed in constant 2005 international dollars. Life expectancy can be seen as a proxy for general health, and literacy an imperfect but reasonable indication of the quality of education. The human development index is constructed by the United Nations Development Program to reflect overall human well-being.

Governance is widely recognized to be a key determinant of economic success and human welfare. We therefore also include two measures of governance: rule of law and voice and accountability. These indexes are defined and compiled by researchers at the World Bank using an aggregation of the best available data. The authors of the indexes define them in the following way:

Rule of law includes several indicators that measure the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society. These include perceptions of the incidence of crime, the effectiveness and predictability of the judiciary, and the enforceability of contracts.

Voice and accountability includes a number of indicators measuring various aspects of the political process, civil liberties, and political and human rights, measuring the extent to which citizens of a country are able to participate in the selection of governments.

An aggregate view of the state of democracy is provided by the Economist Intelligence Unit's index of democracy. This index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. The 165 states included in this index are placed within one of four regime type categories; full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes.

We also include two measures of Internet accessibility provided by the International Telecommunication Union: the digital opportunity index (DOI) and Internet users as a percentage of the population. The DOI is based on 11 core information and communication technology (ICT) indicators that are agreed upon by the International Telecommunication Union's Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. These are grouped in three clusters by type: opportunity, infrastructure, and utilization. The DOI therefore captures the overall potential for and context of Internet availability rather than usage alone. The measure of Internet access, the Internet penetration rate, is simply the percentage of the population identified as active Internet users. Additional Internet penetration rate indicators are drawn from the Miniwatts Marketing Group, which compiles the latest Internet usage statistics from a range of reputable international and local sources including the ITU, Gfk Group, and Nielson Online.

Internet regulation and filtering practices are often dynamic processes, subject to frequent change, though we expect that the political climate and the aggregate view of the issues reflected in these profiles will change more slowly than the specific instances of filtering. As the context for content regulation and the practice of Internet filtering evolve, updates will be made to the country profiles, and new countries may be added. These updates will be available at <http://www.opennet.net>.

Sources for Key Indicators

GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2005 international dollars)

World Bank, "World Development Indicators Online," 2009, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20398986~menuPK:64133163~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html>.

Life expectancy at birth (years)

World Bank, "Key Development Data and Statistics," 2009, <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html>.

Literacy rate

World Bank, "Key Development Data and Statistics," 2009, <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html>.

Human development index (value and ranking)

United Nations Development Program (UNDP). "2008 Statistical Update", 2008, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>.

Rule of law

World Bank. "Worldwide Governance Indicators 1996–2008", 2009, <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>.

Voice and accountability

World Bank. "Worldwide Governance Indicators 1996–2008", 2009, <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>.

Democracy index

Economist Intelligence Unit. "Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index, 2008", 2008, http://www.eiu.com/site_info.asp?info_name=sovereign_ratings.

Digital opportunity index (value and ranking)

International Telecommunication Union (ITU), "World Information Society Report, 2007: Beyond WSIS", 2007, <http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/worldinformationsociety/2007/>.

Internet penetration

International Telecommunication Union (ITU), "Internet Indicators: Subscribers, Users, and Broadband Subscribers," 2008, http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/icteye/Reporting/ShowReportFrame.aspx?ReportName=/WTI/InformationTechnologyPublic&RP_intYear=2008&RP_intLanguageID=1.

Miniwatts Marketing Group, "Internet World Statistics," 2009, <http://www.internetworldstats.com>.

