

WORLD INFORMATION ACCESS PROJECT
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CIVIL SOCIETY ONLINE

Over the last ten years, nearly 10,000 civic groups in 152 countries asserted their digital presence. More than twice as many civic groups around the world created a website between 2000 and 2004 as compared to the previous five-year period.

In poor countries, the majority of civic groups are managed from more developed countries. Surprisingly, the internet is changing that. The number of domestic civic groups online is growing faster than the number of all civic groups working within each country, including international organizations. Comparing the periods 1995-1999 and 2000-2004, the number of online civic groups working in-country doubled while the number of domestically-based groups increased five-fold. This means that an increasing number of local civic groups in developing countries use the internet themselves for organizing, promoting their work, and offering services.

While this growing rate of civic engagement online is good, it unfortunately does not always match the population's internet use and information access within a country.

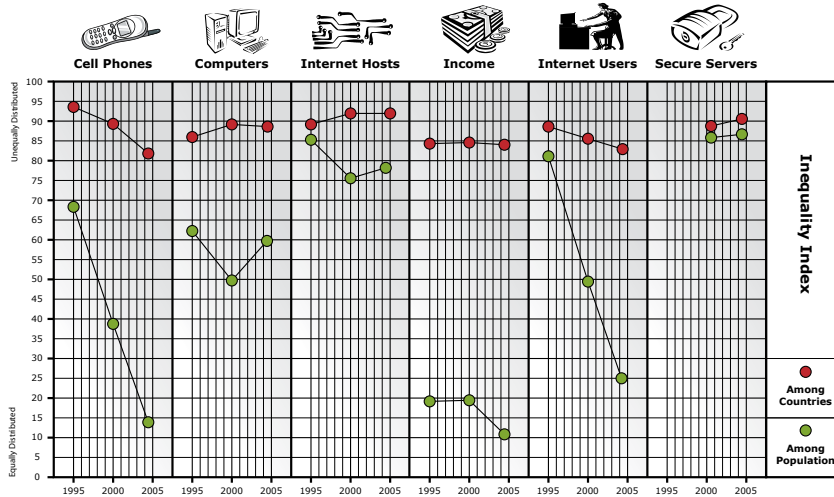
In some developing countries, online civil society is dominated by groups that are working there, but actually based in developed countries. Countries such as **Thailand, Nicaragua, Brazil, Nepal, and India** have a significant online civil society, but relatively small portion of those groups are actually from the countries they serve.

Other countries have a vibrant civil society that is online and populated by local groups. Countries such as **Honduras, Slovakia, Zambia, Martinique, and Oman** have a comparatively vibrant and local online civil society.

In some countries civil society is particularly vibrant and growing faster than the number of internet users. In **Palestine** and many small island states, the number of civic groups online has grown significantly.

Online civil society actually seemed to shrink in countries where the number of online civic groups has not kept pace with the rapid rise in the number of internet users. For **Brazil, Poland, Turkey, Taiwan and Mexico** more internet users may not necessarily mean a more vibrant civil society online.

THE CHANGING DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

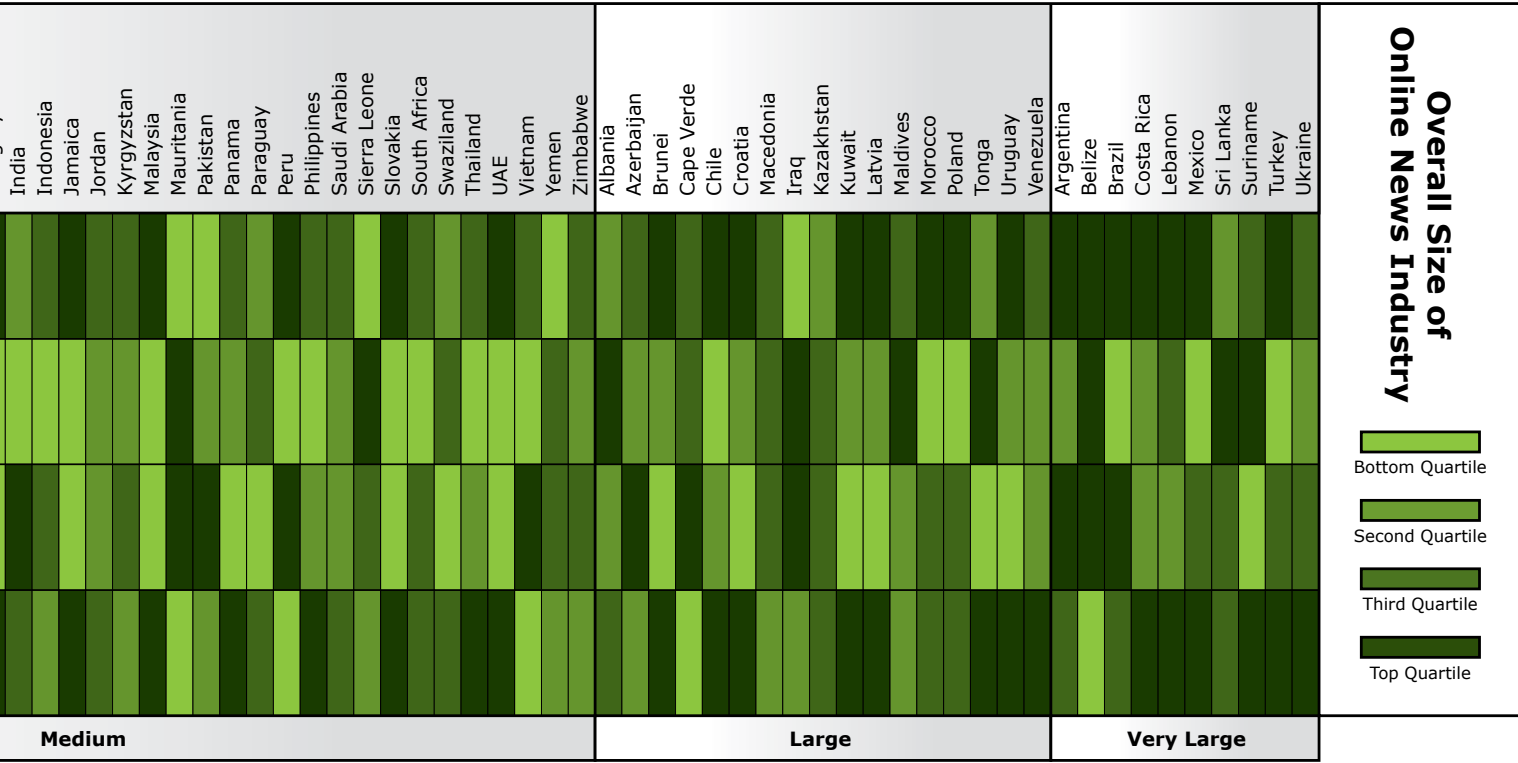


A decade into the information society, key computing and communication technologies are more concentrated in a few countries, not less.

The information society is not as pervasive as we would expect because technology resources are so unevenly distributed between the countries and peoples of the world. Access to some key information and communications technologies, such as mobile phones and the internet, has improved.

Internet access itself is more equitably distributed today than it was ten years ago. But the world's supply of computers, internet hosts, and secure servers is even more concentrated among core countries, and the distribution of these technologies among the world's populations has only marginally improved.

Which national libraries around the world offer services online and in their national language? www.wiareport.org

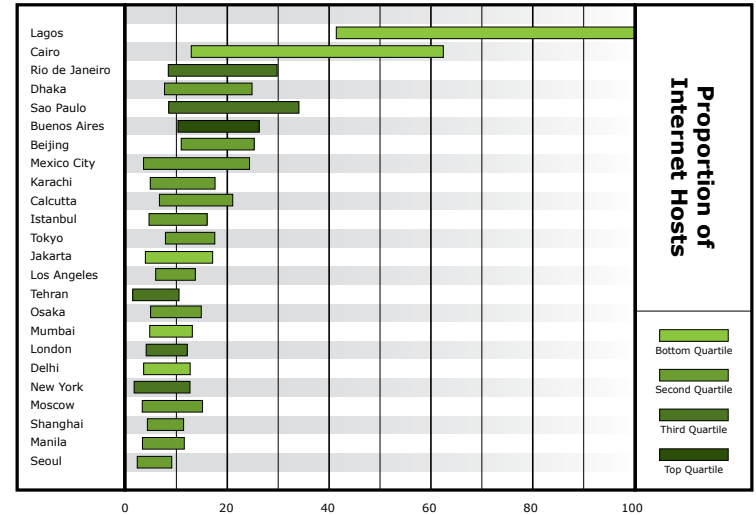


WIRED CITIES

In developed countries, many people have internet access at home, work, public libraries and school. But in many of the largest cities in the developing world, exposure to the World Wide Web comes from commercial internet access points and cybercafés.

In nine of the most populated cities, the average person spends at least ten percent of their daily income for an hour of internet access at a commercial access point.

Eight of the most populated cities are in countries with proportionally fewer website hosts. Thus, people in London or New York spend a small portion of their daily income on internet access, and find a significant amount of content in English and of cultural interest. But when people in Cairo or Jakarta spend a large portion of their daily income on internet access, they find relatively less cultural content on .eg and .id websites.



Percent of Average Daily Income Spent on One Hour of Commerical Internet Access, 2005

Which developing countries make significant investments in education, but have the most experts leaving for developed countries? www.wiareport.org

THE PROJECT

How healthy is the information society in the internet's first ten years?

We investigate the capacities and constraints that new communication and information technologies offer to people around the world. Distinct patterns of modernization, dependency and underdevelopment emerge in the information society because these capacities and constraints are unevenly distributed within and between countries.

The dialogue about the information society needs to move toward the values of economic innovation, political engagement and cultural representation in the access of information around the world. We combine original research and existing data on the sources and consequences of social inequality in the information age.

Additional findings about the world's information access is available online at www.wiareport.org.

Cybercafes around the world seem to be full of people playing games online, but is gaming more prevalent in some cities than others? www.wiareport.org

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The WIA Project disseminates the research, analysis and recommendations produced by our associates.

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