Fifth Annual Global E-Government Study

Asian Countries Lead U.S. in Online Government

A study of digital government finds that the 198 nations around the world are making steady progress at putting services and information online, but movement forward has been slowed because of budget, bureaucratic, and institutional factors. The United States ranks third behind Taiwan and Singapore, and is just ahead of Hong Kong and China.

Providence, RI—Asian countries took four of the five top spots in a new study of global e-government undertaken by researchers at Brown University. For the second year in a row, the countries of Taiwan and Singapore lead the United States in overall e-government performance. The study also shows that 19 percent of government agencies around the world are offering online services, compared to 21 percent in 2004.

The fifth annual survey conducted by Professor Darrell M. West of the Taubman Center for Public Policy at Brown University and a team of researchers evaluated each country's on-line presence. The researchers evaluated government websites on two dozen different criteria, including the availability of publications, databases, disability access, privacy, security, and the number of online services. Previous studies of global e-government were released in 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004.

This year's study reviews 1,797 government websites in 198 countries during June and July 2005. A variety of different sites were analyzed, including executive offices, legislative offices, judicial offices, Cabinet offices, and major agencies serving crucial functions of government, such as health, human services, taxation, education, interior, economic development, administration, natural resources, foreign affairs, foreign investment, transportation, military, tourism, and business regulation.

Researchers find that 89 percent of websites have online publications and 53 percent have links to databases. Only 18 percent (up from 14 percent in 2004) show privacy policies and 10 percent present security policies (up from 8 percent in 2004). According to automated software provided by the company Watchfire, Inc., government websites are also lagging on disability access. Only 19 percent of sites provide some form of disability access, such as assistance for the vision- or hearing-impaired. This represents a slight improvement since last year, when 14 percent were accessible.

In addition to analyzing particular features, researchers also rated countries for overall e-government performance. Using an evaluation of the number of available e-services, as well as ease of access to information, disability access, privacy, security, and foreign language translation, each country is rated on a 0 to 100 point scale. The highest ranked country is Taiwan, followed by Singapore, the United States, Hong Kong, China, Canada, Germany, Australia, and Ireland, respectively. Some countries had moves up from last year based on new features added to their websites; others moved down because of inadequate site maintenance. The following table illustrates the rankings of the 198 countries, based on e-government performance.

Fifth Annual Global e-Government Rankings
(Previous year's rank and score are in parentheses)

Rank	Country	Score	Rank	Country	Score
1 (1)	Taiwan	57.2 (44.3)	26 (12)	New Zealand	30.4 (33.6)
2 (2)	Singapore	54.5 (43.8)	27 (109)	Arab Emirates	30.1 (24.0)
3 (3)	United States	50.5 (41.9)	27 (49)	Qatar	30.1 (28.3)
4 (11)	Hong Kong	46.2 (33.7)	29 (160)	Syria	30.0 (20.0)
5 (6)	China	44.3 (37.3)	30 (31)	Denmark	29.7 (30.6)
6 (4)	Canada	43.3 (40.3)	30 (37)	Mexico	29.7 (29.6)
7 (9)	Germany	35.3 (35.0)	32 (160)	Benin	29.3 (20.0)
8 (7)	Australia	35.1 (36.7)	32 (52)	Iceland	29.3 (28.1)
9 (34)	Ireland	34.6 (29.9)	34 (71)	Norway	29.2 (27.0)
10 (86)	Vatican	34.5 (26.0)	35 (83)	Andorra	29.0 (26.2)
11 (14)	Great Britain	34.3 (33.0)	35 (140)	Brunei	29.0 (22.4)
12 (71)	Bahamas	34.0 (27.0)	35 (102)	Colombia	29.0 (24.8)
13 (40)	Chile	32.1 (29.2)	35 (14)	Dominica	29.0 (33.0)
14 (109)	Chad	32.0 (24.0)	35 (71)	Saint Lucia	29.0 (27.0)
14 (47)	Estonia	32.0 (28.5)	35 (143)	Swaziland	29.0 (22.0)
14 (41)	Finland	32.0 (29.1)	35 (192)	Tuvalu	29.0 (12.0)
14 (160)	Guinea-Bissau	32.0 (20.0)	42 (25)	Malta	28.8 (31.4)
14 (109)	Macedonia	32.0 (24.0)	43 (160)	East Timor	28.7 (20.0)
19 (27)	Netherlands	31.4 (31.0)	43 (86)	Portugal	28.7 (26.0)
20 (62)	Switzerland	31.2 (27.6)	45 (98)	Bosnia and Herzegovina	28.6 (25.3)
21 (14)	Liechtenstein	31.0 (33.0)	45 (61)	Slovenia	28.6 (27.7)
21 (14)	Bahrain	31.0 (33.0)	45 (28)	Czech Republic	28.6 (30.9)
21 (54)	Belize	31.0 (28.0)	48 (18)	France	28.5 (32.8)
21 (19)	Israel	31.0 (32.3)	48 (106)	Brazil	28.5 (24.4)
25 (42)	Iran	30.7 (29.0)	48 (143)	Cook Islands	28.5 (22.0)

Rankings from 51 to 100:

Rank	Country	Score	Rank	Country	Score
51 (60)	Slovakia	28.4 (27.9)	76 (101)	Botswana	27.0 (25.0)
51 (95)	Albania	28.4 (25.6)	76 (33)	Kuwait	27.0 (30.1)
53 (13)	Italy	28.3 (33.2)	76 (62)	Philippines	27.0 (27.6)
53 (29)	Japan	28.3 (30.8)	76 (77)	Vietnam	27.0 (26.5)
55 (35)	Sweden	28.2 (29.8)	80 (130)	Nepal	26.9 (23.2)
56 (66)	Serbia and Montenegro	28.1 (27.5)	81 (10)	Iraq	26.8 (34.0)
57 (160)	Antigua and Barbuda	28.0 (20.0)	81 (37)	Luxembourg	26.8 (29.6)
57 (51)	Austria	28.0 (28.2)	83 (54)	Latvia	26.6 (28.0)
57 (160)	Burundi	28.0 (20.0)	84 (66)	Romania	26.4 (27.5)
57 (160)	Congo (Dem. Rep.)	28.0 (20.0)	85 (127)	Argentina	26.3 (23.5)
57 (134)	Ghana	28.0 (23.0)	86 (32)	Korea (Republic)	26.2 (30.5)
57 (143)	Haiti	28.0 (22.0)	87 (69)	Lithuania	26.1 (27.3)
57 (98)	Laos	28.0 (25.3)	88 (136)	Algeria	26.0 (22.8)
57 (192)	Liberia	28.0 (12.0)	88 (86)	Gambia	26.0 (26.0)
57 (86)	Madagascar	28.0 (26.0)	88 (77)	Spain	26.0 (26.5)
57 (20)	Moldova	28.0 (32.0)	88 (47)	Oman	26.0 (28.5)
57 (94)	Mongolia	28.0 (25.7)	92 (46)	Poland	25.9 (28.6)
57 (184)	Tonga	28.0 (16.0)	93 (42)	Maldives	25.8 (29.0)
69 (54)	Egypt	27.8 (28.0)	93 (93)	Ukraine	25.8 (25.8)
70 (62)	Turkey	27.7 (27.6)	95 (128)	Jamaica	25.5 (23.4)
71 (36)	Jordan	27.5 (29.7)	95 (104)	Pakistan	25.5 (24.6)
72 (30)	Saudi Arabia	27.4 (30.7)	95 (149)	Uganda	25.5 (21.8)
73 (42)	Lebanon	27.3 (29.0)	98 (109)	Nigeria	25.4 (24.0)
74 (75)	Cyprus (Republic)	27.1 (26.8)	99 (86)	Afghanistan	25.3 (26.0)
74 (76)	Peru	27.1 (26.7)	100 (54)	Myanmar	25.3 (28.0)

Rankings from 101 to 150:

Rank	Country	Score	Rank	Country	Score
101 (52)	Greece	25.1 (28.1)	115 (20)	Marshall Islands	24.0 (32.0)
102 (85)	El Salvador	25.0 (26.1)	115 (86)	Mauritania	24.0 (26.0)
103 (37)	India	24.8 (29.6)	115 (5)	Monaco	24.0 (39.0)
104 (95)	Morocco	24.6 (25.6)	115 (141)	Mozambique	24.0 (22.3)

104 (26)	Belgium	24.6 (31.1)		115 (180)	Saint Kitts and Nevis	24.0 (17.3)
106 (108)	South Africa	24.5 (24.2)		115 (20)	Saint Vincent, Grenadines	24.0 (32.0)
107 (130)	Ecuador	24.4 (23.2)		115 (109)	Sierra Leone	24.0 (24.0)
107 (97)	Hungary	24.4 (25.4)		115 (109)	Sri Lanka	24.0 (24.0)
107 (125)	Trinidad and Tobago	24.4 (23.8)		115 (49)	Uzbekistan	24.0 (28.3)
109 (70)	Croatia	24.2 (27.2)		136 (124)	Nicaragua	23.6 (23.9)
109 (129)	Russian Federation	24.2 (23.3)		136 (130)	Tunisia	23.6 (23.2)
112 (136)	Fiji	24.1 (22.8)		138 (80)	Panama	23.5 (26.4)
112 (62)	Thailand	24.1 (27.6)		138 (130)	Venezuela	23.5 (23.2)
112 (138)	Zambia	24.1 (22.7)		140 (153)	Senegal	23.4 (21.6)
115 (66)	Armenia	24.0 (27.5)		141 (151)	Uruguay	23.2 (21.7)
115 (184)	Azerbaijan	24.0 (16.0)		142 (109)	Kazakhstan	23.0 (24.0)
115 (74)	Bangladesh	24.0 (26.8)		142 (175)	Kyrgyzstan	23.0 (19.4)
115 (103)	Belarus	24.0 (24.7)		144 (105)	Yemen	22.9 (24.5)
115 (81)	Bulgaria	24.0 (26.3)		145 (160)	Angola	22.7 (20.0)
115 (77)	Cambodia	24.0 (26.5)		146 (139)	Burkina Faso	22.4 (22.6)
115 (109)	Cote d'Ivoire	24.0 (24.0)		147 (155)	Paraguay	22.0 (21.2)
115 (109)	Dominican Republic	24.0 (24.0)		147 (157)	Gabon	22.0 (21.0)
115 (192)	Eritrea	24.0 (12.0)		149 (126)	Djibouti	21.9 (23.6)
115 (109)	Ethiopia	24.0 (24.0)		150 (176)	Malawi	21.3 (19.3)
115 (20)	Indonesia	24.0 (32.0)		150 (98)	Georgia	21.3 (25.3)
115 (109)	Libya	24.0 (24.0)				

Rankings from 151 to 198:

152 (184)	Micronesia	21.0 (16.0)		176 (176)	Seychelles	19.7 (19.3)
152 (160)	Namibia	21.0 (20.0)		177 (134)	San Marino	19.3 (23.0)
152 (154)	Guatemala	21.0 (21.3)		178 (149)	Cuba	19.1 (21.8)
155 (142)	Mauritius	20.9 (22.2)		179 (107)	Barbados	18.7 (24.3)
155 (155)	Rwanda	20.9 (21.2)		179 (81)	Sudan	18.7 (26.3)
157 (83)	Malaysia	20.8 (26.2)		181 (181)	Bhutan	18.0 (17.0)
157 (159)	Samoa	20.8 (20.2)		182 (174)	Papua New Guinea	17.1 (19.9)
159 (160)	Kenya	20.7 (20.0)		183 (20)	Bolivia	16.0 (32.0)
160 (151)	Honduras	20.2 (21.7)		183 (179)	Cameroon	16.0 (17.9)
160 (151)	Honduras	20.2 (21.7)		183 (184)	Equatorial Guinea	16.0 (16.0)
161 (143)	Cape Verde	20.0 (22.0)		183 (158)	Grenada	16.0 (20.3)
161 (192)	Central Africa	20.0 (12.0)		183 (54)	Korea (Dem. People's Rep.)	16.0 (28.0)
161 (109)	Comoros	20.0 (24.0)		183 (143)	Mali	16.0 (22.0)
161 (86)	Congo (Rep.)	20.0 (26.0)		183 (160)	Niger	16.0 (20.0)
161 (184)	Costa Rica	20.0 (16.0)		183 (42)	Palau	16.0 (29.0)
161 (109)	Cyprus (Turkish Rep.)	20.0 (24.0)		183 (184)	Sao Tome and Principe	16.0 (16.0)
161 (160)	Guinea	20.0 (20.0)		183 (184)	Suriname	16.0 (16.0)
161 (54)	Guyana	20.0 (28.0)		183 (184)	Vanuatu	16.0 (16.0)
161 (192)	Nauru	20.0 (12.0)		194 (181)	Tanzania	15.2 (17.0)
161 (109)	Niue	20.0 (24.0)		195 (183)	Lesotho	14.7 (16.7)
161 (160)	Somaliland	20.0 (20.0)		196 (178)	Solomon Islands	14.0 (19.0)
161 (160)	Tajikistan	20.0 (20.0)		197 (192)	Kiribati	12.0 (12.0)
161 (8)	Togo	20.0 (36.0)		197 (192)	Somalia	12.0 (12.0)
161 (109)	Turkmenistan	20.0 (24.0)				
161 (109)	Turkmenistan	20.0 (24.0)				
161 (143)	Zimbabwe	20.0 (22.0)				

In order to improve electronic government, the report suggests that governments take several steps to reach their full potential in terms of accessibility and effectiveness. Governments can make their sites more user-friendly by improving site design. Adding a link to a sitemap would help citizens locate information. National governments might also considering taking steps to standardize the websites of all government agencies, so that citizens might become familiar with the layout and location of certain features on a collection of national sites.

The report also notes that site maintenance has become increasingly important but often overlooked. Webmasters are constantly adding features and services to sites without ensuring their constant functioning. Many sites are under construction or have not been updated for long periods of time. Designers should attempt to keep their sites as current as possible to ensure that all information presented is accurate, complete, and functional.

A number of sites already provide services revolving around tourism, such as hotel and flight bookings. The report suggests that more agencies should offer services that are fully executable online and target citizens as well as tourists to save on government time, money, and labor. To help increase the use of e-services, countries could follow the example of Malaysia, which has created financial incentives to complete government services online. Additionally, all of the services offered on the site of a particular agency should be located on the same page in order to make them easy to find and to increase citizens' awareness of the available services.

For more information on this study, contact Professor Darrell M. West of Brown University at (401) 863-1163 or email Darrell_West@brown.edu. The full Global E-Government Study is online at www.insidepolitics.org. The Appendix of the report presents detailed profiles of each of the 198 national governments.