

How Accessible and Reliable Is Your National Government's Data?



From now until January 2017, you can join individuals and organisations around the world in assessing the quality and availability of data from national governments. The Open Knowledge International (OKI) [Global Open Data Index 2016](#) survey is now open. This annual index has been measuring the state of open government data throughout the world since 2013.

This year, land ownership data is one of the key datasets being assessed, presenting the land tenure community and others who recognise the critical importance of land rights with an opportunity to measure the accessibility and reliability of their government's land data and compare with other countries'.

OKI included land ownership data in their Index for the first time in 2015, demonstrating the increased recognition of property rights as a key issue and data related to land and property rights as a critical concern. Open and accessible land and property records make land transactions easier – removing barriers to development. They are critical to strengthening land rights. Such open and accessible land and property records can help humanitarian organisations map and contain epidemics and prepare for and respond to natural disasters and they can help journalists and other watchdogs identify, track, and protect vulnerable communities and resources.

United States

Open and accessible land and property data can also help expedite the sharing of data between government agencies, potentially increasing tax revenue. Even in the US, land and property data is not always open, transparent or easily shared. For example, land data is often scattered between multiple government agencies or jurisdictions, sometimes only available for a hefty fee or locked behind government firewalls.

According to the [Federal Geographic Data Committee \(FGDC\) Subcommittee for Cadastral Data](#), more than half of 30 U.S. government agencies have a clear need for increased access to property related information. Among these agencies, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identified the lack of access to ownership data as problematic. The Agency was forced to delay payments to those displaced by Hurricane Katrina until they could access ownership records.

The 2016 Index effort now accepting information is an opportunity for civil society to demand that governments across the world open up vital cadastre and land registry data to the public.

Openness

For this year's edition, Cadasta partnered with OKI to improve the property rights category within the Index, to better reflect the complicated, on-the-ground-realities of property ownership documentation as well as the data needs of many stakeholders, from government officials, journalists, private sector actors and social good organizations.

Now, the survey is open for submissions and Cadasta is calling upon you to help assess the openness of property rights data.

By going to the [Index page](#) on Open Knowledge International's website, you can fill out the survey to submit information on the openness of land ownership data in your country. If you have more extensive knowledge of property rights data or general knowledge about government data in a specific country, you can also help review submissions from citizens and organizations around the world before the results are released in 2017. More information on how to submit data from your country to the Index can be found [here](#).

The final results will be published in March of 2017, but none of this can be done without your participation. Submit for your country today. Help increase access to this vital data for landowners, governments, civil society and more.

The authors

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Lindsay Ferris is an open data research fellow at Cadasta, working at the intersection of open government data and securing property rights. Lindsay is a trainer, researcher and open data specialist who is passionate about helping NGOs integrate technology and open data into their work. Follow her on twitter: [@lindsay_joelle](#).

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/blog/how-good-is-your-government-about-publicly-sharing-quality-data>
