⠿ RANKING DIGITAL RIGHTS

2018 CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX

The Ranking Digital Rights 2018 Corporate Accountability Index evaluates 22 of the world's most powerful internet, mobile, and telecommunications companies on their disclosed commitments and policies affecting freedom of expression and privacy.
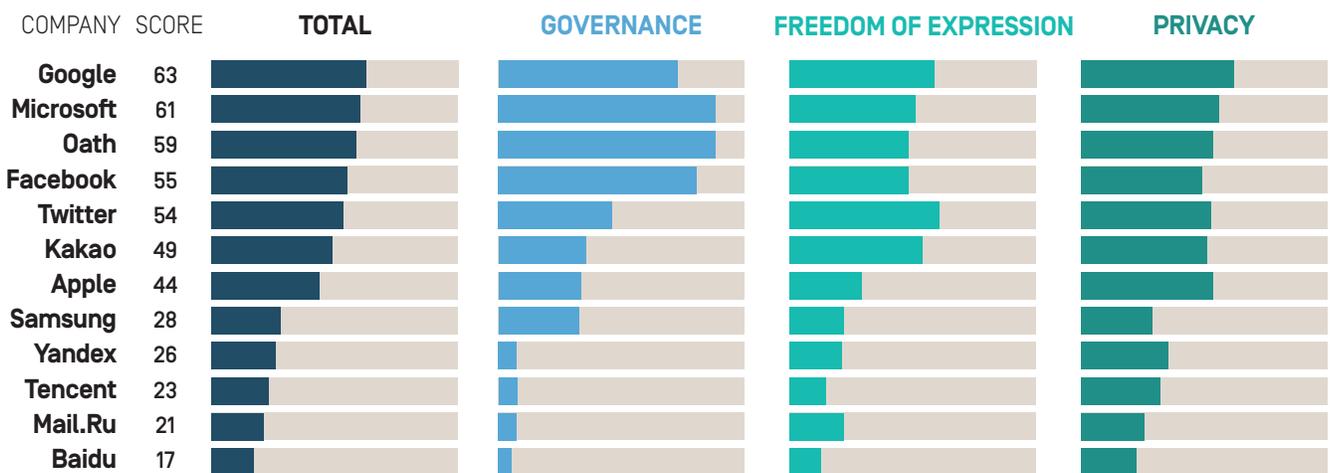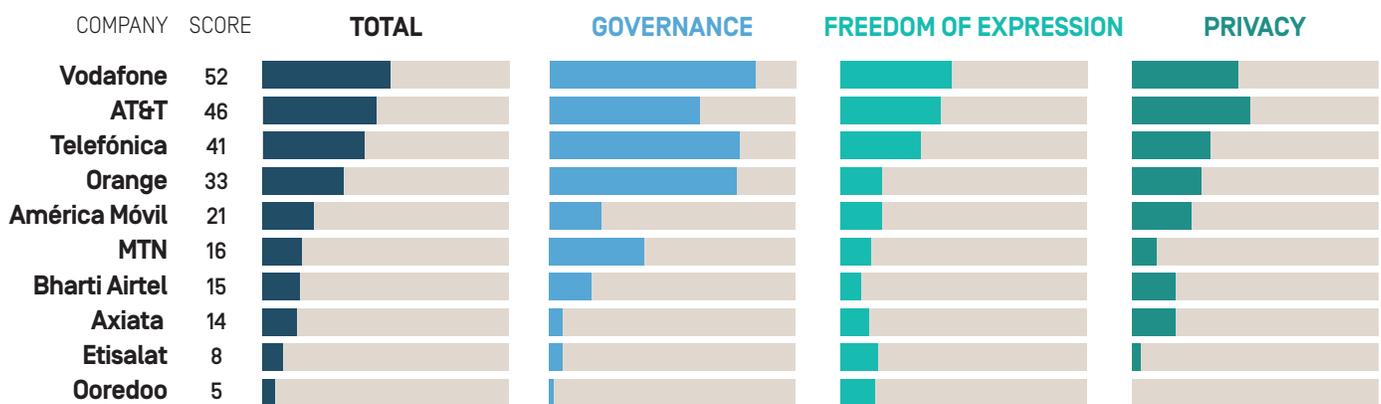
2018 CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX

The Ranking Digital Rights 2018 Corporate Accountability Index evaluates 22 of the world's most powerful internet, mobile, and telecommunications companies on 35 indicators examining their disclosed commitments and policies affecting freedom of expression and privacy, including governance and accountability mechanisms. Together, the companies evaluated in the Index offer products and services that are used by at least half of the world's 4.2 billion internet users.

This is the third Index: Previous Indexes were released in November 2015 and March 2017. The 2018 Index evaluates the same companies on the same questions as the 2017 Index. To view in-depth results, download data, and access related resources and news, visit rankingdigitalrights.org/index2018.

● INTERNET AND MOBILE ECOSYSTEM COMPANIES

COMPANY	SCORE	TOTAL	GOVERNANCE	FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION	PRIVACY
Google	63				
Microsoft	61				
Oath	59				
Facebook	55				
Twitter	54				
Kakao	49				
Apple	44				
Samsung	28				
Yandex	26				
Tencent	23				
Mail.Ru	21				
Baidu	17				

● TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES

COMPANY	SCORE	TOTAL	GOVERNANCE	FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION	PRIVACY
Vodafone	52				
AT&T	46				
Telefónica	41				
Orange	33				
América Móvil	21				
MTN	16				
Bharti Airtel	15				
Axiata	14				
Etisalat	8				
Ooredoo	5				

KEY FINDINGS

Companies lack transparency about policies and practices affecting freedom of expression and privacy, exposing users to undisclosed risk.

While more than half of the companies evaluated for the 2018 Index made some meaningful improvements, most still fell short of disclosing basic information to users about the design, management, and governance of the digital platforms and services that affect human rights.

- **Google** and **Microsoft** were the only companies in the entire Index to score more than 60 percent overall. However neither company led the pack on every question and each had areas of poor performance compared to other internet and mobile ecosystem companies in the Index.

- **Vodafone** shot ahead of **AT&T** and was the only telecommunications company to score more than 50 percent, thanks to improved transparency of governance practices and how it handles government network shutdown orders. Vodafone was the only company in the Index to clearly disclose how it handles data breaches.

- **Facebook** placed fourth in the Index overall, and it performed poorly in relation to its peers on questions about its handling of user information. However, it improved transparency about government requests for user information or lawful requests to restrict accounts and delete content.

- **Apple** saw the greatest score increase, gaining eight percentage points. Much of this improvement was due to improved transparency reporting, plus new direct disclosure to users on its own website of information that it had previously only disclosed to experts and other third parties.

For more details, data, and analysis visit: **rankingdigitalrights.org/index2018**.

Across the 22 companies evaluated, several issues stood out:

- **Governance: Too few companies make users' expression and privacy rights a central priority for corporate oversight and risk assessment.** Companies do not have adequate processes and mechanisms in place to identify and mitigate the full range of expression and privacy risks to users that may be caused not only by government censorship or surveillance, and by malicious non-state actors, but also by practices related to their own business models.

- **Security: Most companies withhold basic information about measures they take to keep users' data secure,** leaving users in the dark about risks they face when using a particular platform or service. At the same time, security failures by companies have serious economic, financial, political, and human rights consequences for people around the world.

- **Privacy: Companies don't disclose enough about how users' information is handled, including what is collected and shared, with whom, and under what circumstances.** This includes how user information is shared for targeted advertising. Such opacity makes it easier for digital platforms and services to be abused and manipulated by a range of state and non-state actors, including those seeking to attack institutions and communities, as well as individual users.

- **Expression: Companies do not adequately inform the public about how content and information flows are policed and shaped** through their platforms and services. In light of revelations that the world's most powerful social media platforms have been used to spread disinformation and manipulate political outcomes in a range of countries, companies' efforts to police and manage content lack accountability without greater transparency.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

All companies evaluated in the Index can make changes immediately, even in the absence of legal and policy reform. Corporate transparency and accountability is incomplete without transparent and accountable governments that fulfill their duty to protect human rights. While most governments fall short of their obligations, companies can and should be held responsible for all the ways that they affect users' rights, over which they have any control. Detailed recommendations are listed throughout the Index report and in the individual company report cards. They fall under seven broad categories:

1. **Strengthen corporate governance.** Companies should not only articulate clear commitments to respect users' freedom of expression and privacy, but also disclose concrete evidence that they have institutionalized these commitments through board and executive oversight, company-wide training, internal reporting, and whistleblowing programs.

2. **Get serious about risk assessment.** Companies should implement comprehensive due diligence processes to ensure they can anticipate and mitigate any negative impact that their products, services, and business operations may have on users' rights.

3. **Provide meaningful grievance and remedy mechanisms.** Companies should have channels for users and other affected parties to file grievances if their rights have been violated as a result of company actions. Companies should also have clearly disclosed processes for responding to complaints and providing appropriate redress.

4. **Be transparent and accountable.** Companies should publish regular information and data on their official websites that helps users and the public understand the circumstances under which personal information is accessed by third parties, speech is censored or restricted, and access to a service is blocked or restricted.

5. **Strengthen privacy.** Companies should clearly inform users about what happens to their information, minimize collection and use of data to what is necessary for provision and service, and provide users with maximum control over what information is collected and with whom it is shared.

6. **Strengthen security.** Companies should disclose credible evidence of their efforts to secure users' information. Specifically, they should show that they maintain industry standards of strong encryption and security, conduct security audits, monitor employee access to information, and have an established process for handling data breaches.

7. **Innovate for human rights.** Collaborate with government and civil society. Invest in the development of new technologies and business models that strengthen human rights, and maximize individual control and ownership over personal data and content.

We must all work together to build legal, regulatory, and corporate standards for the protection and advancement of human rights in the digital age.

About The Ranking Digital Rights Corporate Accountability Index

Ranking Digital Rights (RDR) is a non-profit research project housed at New America's Open Technology Institute. It produces a Corporate Accountability Index that ranks the world's most powerful internet, mobile, and telecommunications companies on their disclosed commitments and policies affecting users' freedom of expression and privacy. The standards the Index uses to evaluate companies build on more than a decade of work by the human rights, privacy, and security communities. The Index data and analysis inform the work of human rights advocates, policymakers, and responsible investors and are used by companies to improve their own policies and practices.

For the full 2018 Index data and analysis, report cards for each company, downloadable report, and raw data set, please visit: rankingdigitalrights.org/index2018.