

Right to Information Laws Trends Snapshot

BASED ON THE GLOBAL RTI RATING



MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- From 14 laws in one region to 130 laws in all regions over 30 years
- Wide range from very weak to very strong laws
- Laws are strongest in terms of scope, weakest in terms of protection for good faith disclosures
- East and Central Europe best performing region, developed countries worst

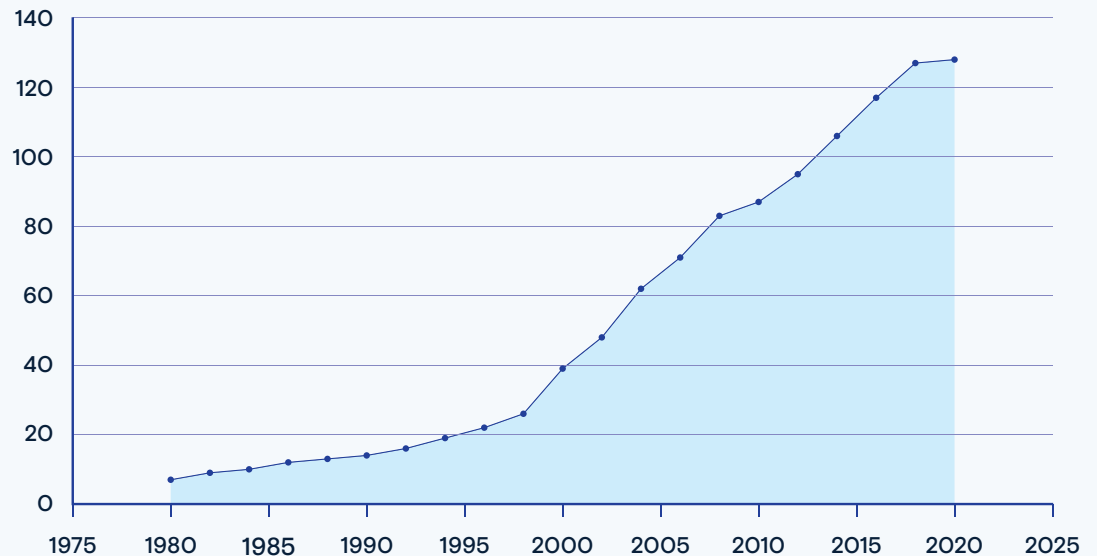
The Global RTI Rating was launched on International Right to Know Day, 28 September, in 2011. Since that time, the number of countries with laws guaranteeing the right to access information held by public authorities, or right to information (RTI) laws, has grown from 89 to nearly 130.

The top-scoring law has increased from 135 out of a possible 150 points to 139 points (Afghanistan), and many countries have amended their laws or adopted secondary regulations, thereby impacting their scores. This Trends Snapshot provides an overview of key highlights from the RTI Rating data.

RTI RATING WEBSITE
www.rti-rating.org

GROWTH IN NUMBER OF RTI LAWS OVER TIME

GRAPH 1 shows the rate of adoption of laws increasing from about one per year to about four per year starting around 1997. This has slowed recently, with only one new law in 2019 and none so far in 2020.



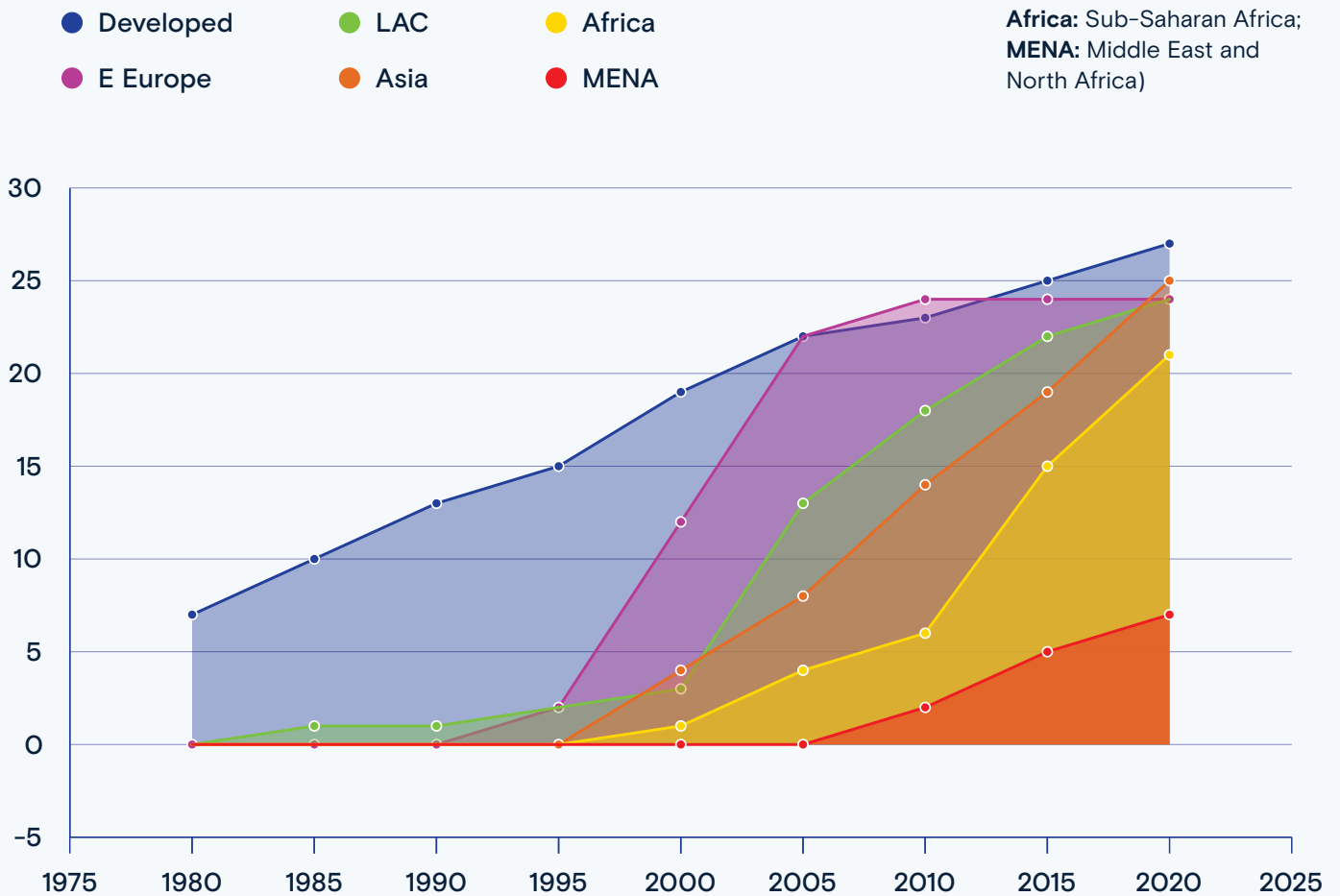
GRAPH 1
Growth in the Number of RTI Laws Over Time

GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF LAWS BY REGION AND OVER TIME

As might be expected, **GRAPH 2** shows that developed countries were the first to adopt these laws, followed by E Europe and Asia, starting around 1995, LAC and Africa starting around 2000, and finally the MENA region starting just after 2005. As of today, almost all developed countries and countries in East and Central Europe have adopted RTI laws, while the rate for LAC is about three-quarters, two-thirds for Asia, just under one-half for Africa and just over one-third for MENA.

GRAPH 2

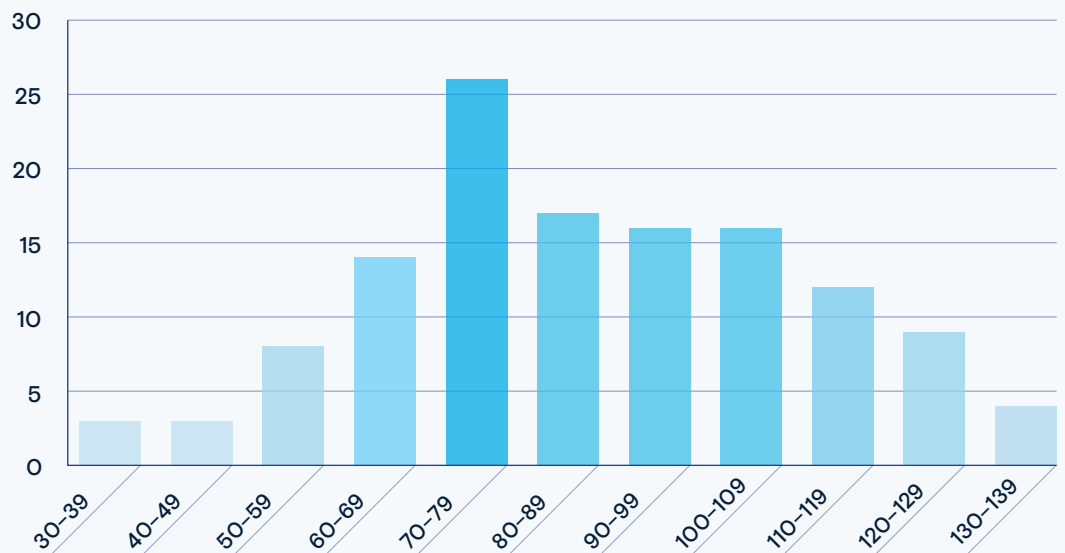
Growth in the Number of RTI Laws by Region and Over Time (**E Europe**: East and Central Europe; **LAC**: Latin America and the Caribbean; **Asia** includes the Pacific; **Africa**: Sub-Saharan Africa; **MENA**: Middle East and North Africa)



STRENGTH OF RTI LAWS

CHART 1 falls into a bell curve or normal distribution, in common with many sets of data (such as the height of humans or performance on an IQ test). This aligns with what one would expect. The presence of very strong laws, with the Afghan law earning 93% of the total points, suggests that the standards in the RTI Rating are not unduly stringent.

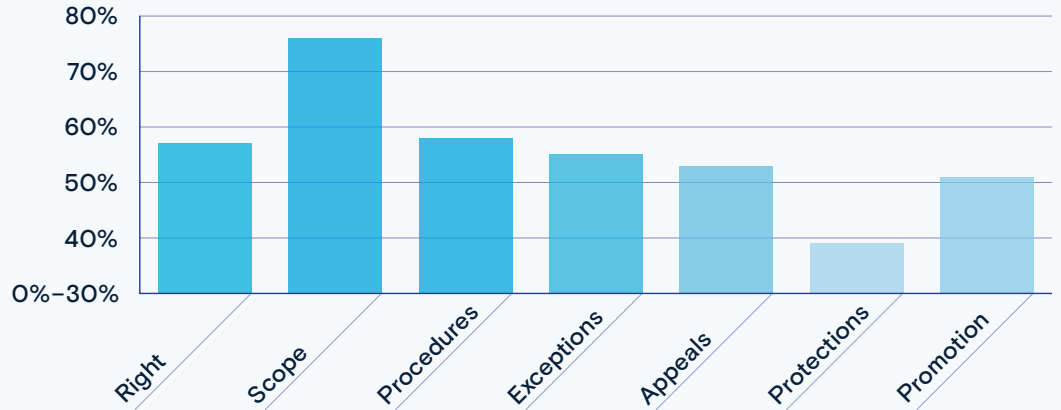
CHART 1
Strength: Number
of RTI Laws in Each
10-Point Range



COMPARATIVE STRENGTH OF LAWS IN DIFFERENT AREAS

The RTI Rating is broken down into seven different primary categories: Right of Access, Scope, Requesting Procedures, Exceptions and Refusals, Appeals, Sanctions and Protections, and Promotional Measures. **CHART 2** shows that the averages for most categories are close – within the 51-58% range – but Scope – how broadly the law applies, in particular in terms of public authorities – is substantially stronger, at 76%. Sanctions and Protections is substantially weaker, at just 39%; countries are less willing to protect those who disclose information in good faith or to punish those who wilfully obstruct access.

CHART 2
Average Strength of all 128 RTI Laws by RTI Rating Category



COMPARATIVE STRENGTH OF LAWS FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS

CHART 3 shows that E Europe has the strongest laws on average, more than 30% ahead of the developed countries, the weakest region, with LAC and Africa coming not far behind. This may partly reflect the higher priority put on government openness in E Europe and partly the fact that many developed countries adopted their laws earlier on, before stronger standards in this area had emerged.

CHART 3
Average Strength of RTI Laws by Region

