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- Internet Censorship – An Analysis of 195 Countries (Repost)

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ORIGINAL POST

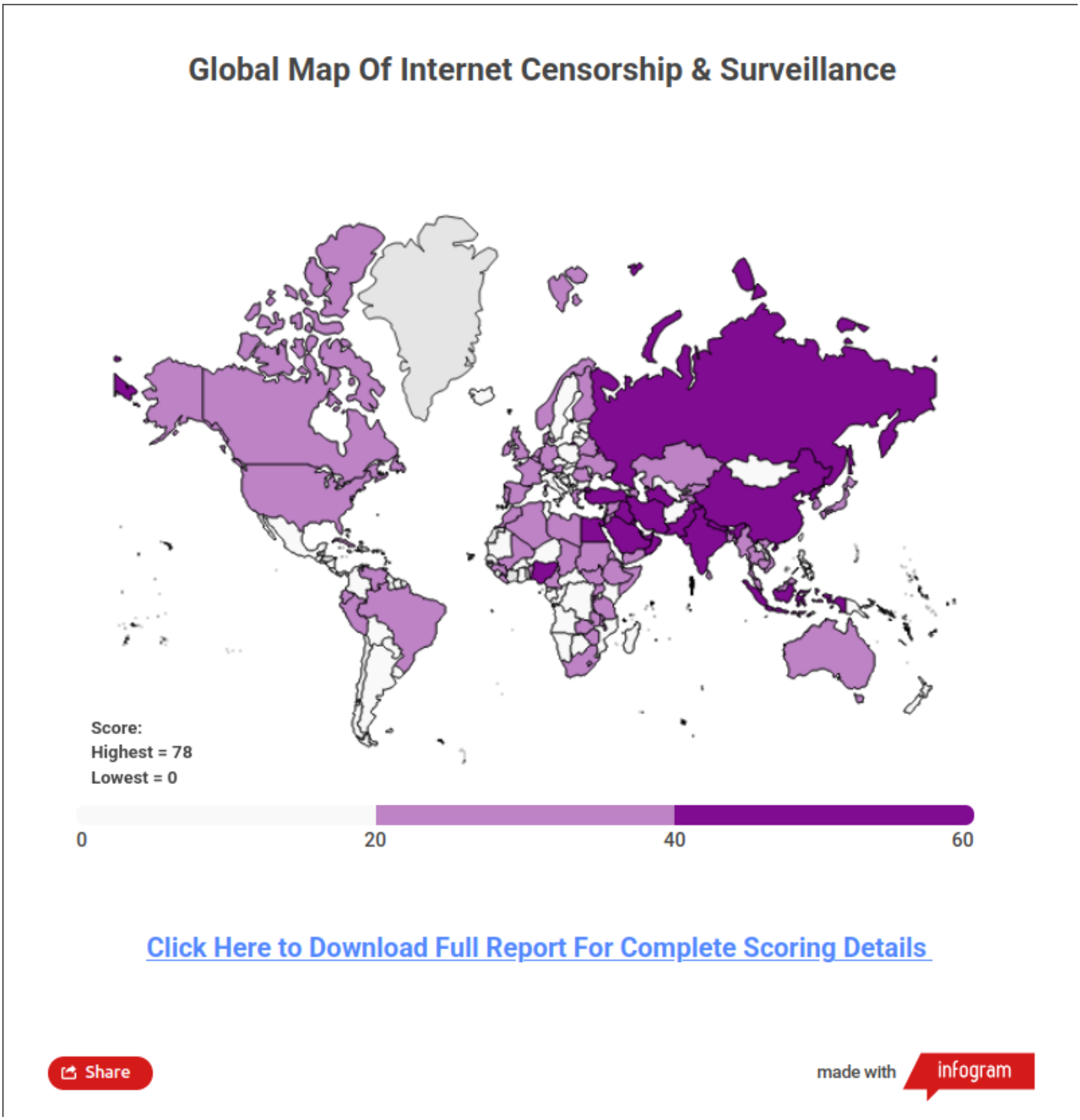
Global Map Of Internet Censorship & Surveillance

Around 4.66 billion people use the internet as a source of information, social interaction, entertainment, and more. But the truth is, not everyone in the world has the privilege of enjoying open and equal internet access.

In this study, we have conducted an analysis of 195 countries to see which have the most and least internet freedom. Our analysis includes bans or restrictions of VPNs, torrenting, social media, VoIP, and multiple websites and apps. Also taken into account are major internet censorship decisions taken between 2019 and 2020, along with user data and content restriction requests made to companies like Facebook, Twitter, and Google.

While the top spots aren’t surprising, some seemingly free countries make the cut as well. One thing is for certain: our online freedom is in danger more than ever!

Scoring Summary



Top Countries with the Highest Score

We have given scores, ranging from 0-65, to every country in our list on the basis of multiple factors, ranging from social media restrictions to bans on certain internet activities like the use of proxy or torrents. The following are the top 20 countries that have the highest scores.



North Korea and China (78)

North Korea practices extreme forms of internet censorship, limiting the use of the internet to only foreign travelers and high government officials. The locals have access to only the national intranet service, Kwangmyong, which allows access to a limited number of web services.

China imposes strict restrictions against foreign websites like Google, social media services like Facebook and Instagram, VPNs, VoIP services, and everything in between. To gain a better control on its citizens' internet activities, China encourages its users to use local alternatives, such as

Baidu.

Turkey (65)

In recent years, Turkey has imposed censorships on websites and social media platforms. The country has even banned the use of encrypted messaging apps like WhatsApp for their public sector employees.

Russia and United Arab Emirates (56)

Russia has a history of blocking websites and IP addresses as part of its censorship policies. The country also blocks VPN services and proxy tools that offer private browsing to internet users. In 2018, Russia even fined Google for not taking down some blacklisted services.

As of late, the government aims to block Twitter in 30 days unless it removes a particular list of banned content.

The internet in the Middle East is not as censored as that in China or Iran. The country mostly blocks web services that are unethical or immoral in nature, such as gambling, fraud, and nudity. However, UAE has also often blocked messaging apps like WhatsApp because of its end-to-end encryption.

Pakistan (54)

Pakistan continuously blocks content that is either a threat to its national security or is blasphemous in nature. In 2010, Pakistan blocked Facebook temporarily to protest against a blasphemous contest on the social media platform.

On April 16, Pakistan blocked access to social media and google following days of anti-French protests throughout the country by a far-right Islamist pollical party. The sites temporarily blocked by the government include Twitter and Facebook.

Iran and Turkmenistan (52)

Iran is second to China in terms of censorship. The country has a continuous practice of blocking popular web services and social media platforms, such as Google, Facebook, TikTok, HBO, and other platforms of a similar nature.

Internet censorship in Turkmenistan can be considered draconian. The country has banned the use of encrypted applications, such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Moreover, netizens cannot use even VPNs or proxy tools for blocked websites.

India (51)

The state government of India possess strict control on internet censorship and surveillance ever since the 2008 bombings. To date, India has both temporarily and permanently blocked many websites and social media services. Recently, it has banned over 200 Chinese websites, games, and applications due to political conflicts.

Iraq (50)

The internet in Iraq was shut down in certain provinces to curb the threat brought upon by an extremist party during the war days. In fact, in many regions, some social media platforms like Facebook were also blocked. However, as soon as the level of threat to the region reduced, the shutdown was lifted along with social media platform bans.

Oman and Kuwait (46)

Like many Arab countries, Oman also placed a total ban on VoIP services due to security concerns. But due to Covid-19, the country has lifted bans from certain VoIP services. Apart from that, Oman practices limited to moderate restrictions for the use of VPNs and social media platforms.

Kuwait does block certain torrent websites, but it doesn’t ban the use of torrents. Likewise, the use of VPN services in Kuwait is completely legal.

Indonesia (42)

Indonesia observes a moderate level of internet censorship across the nation. Most actions of censorship are limited to only unethical and immoral platforms that promote nudity, gambling, and

hoaxes. In certain situations, the Indonesian government has also banned certain social media apps, such as Facebook and Instagram. But the ban was later lifted.

Egypt (41)

Like most countries, Egypt often put restrictions on social media platforms mostly due to political reasons. At one point, the government also blocked over 34,000 websites that promoted an opposition campaign.

Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Nepal, and Qatar(40)

Nigerian internet censorship policies are getting more severe with time. In 2019, an anti-social media bill was forwarded to the senate that seeks to empower the law enforcement agencies to ban some social platforms and even shut down the internet whenever the need arises.

Saudi Arabia mostly limits restrictions to copyright, blasphemy, and political issues. Like other Arab nations, the use of VoIP services is also prohibited in the country.

Nepal strictly prohibits the use of torrents or to be involved in any torrent related activity. Apart from the continuous ban on torrent, Nepal also practices social media censorship to a certain level. In fact, a bill has been proposed that would empower the government to block any social media platform at will.

Internet censorship in Qatar follows the same practices as that of the rest of Arab regions. The government has blocked torrents, and it also prohibits the use of VoIP services.

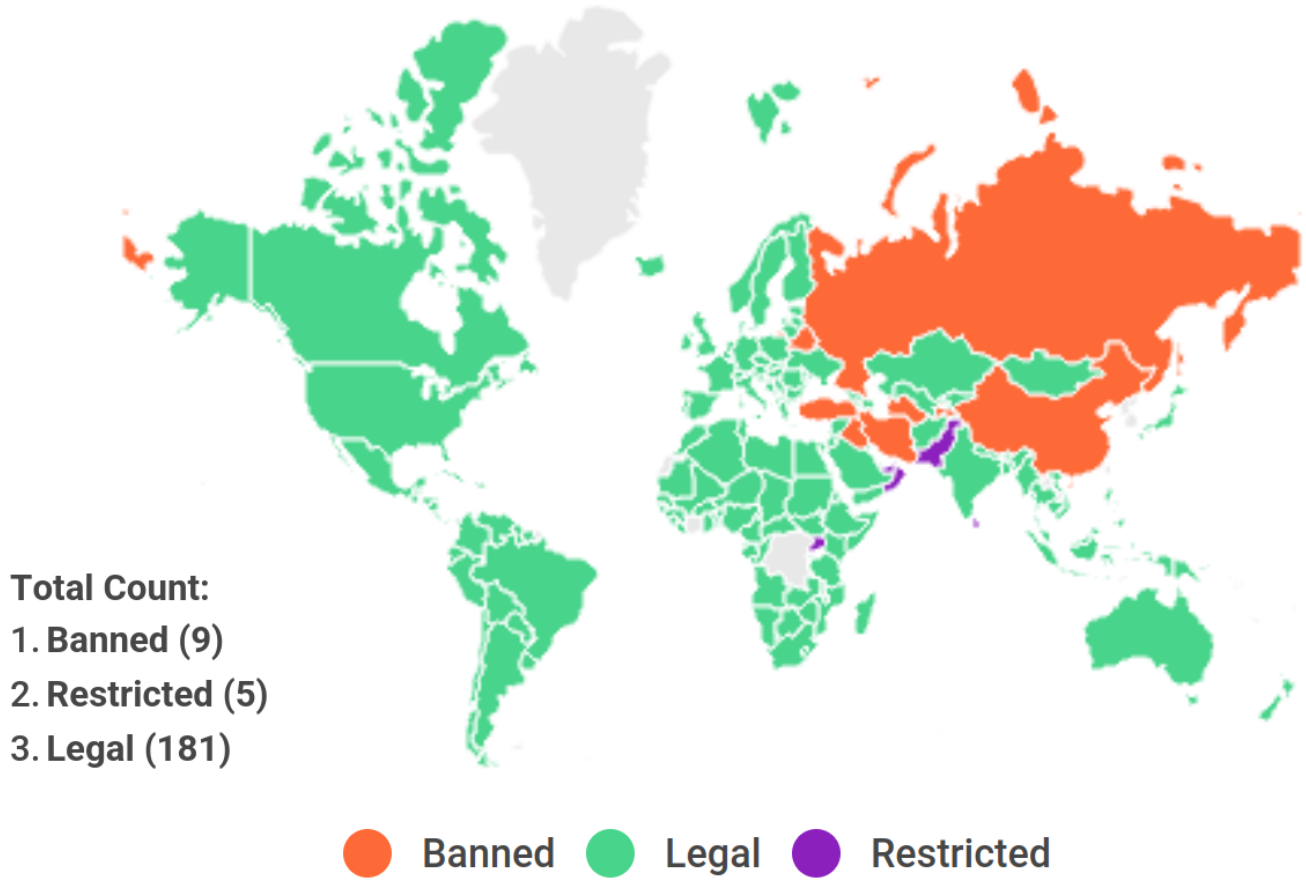
Thailand & Myanmar (37)

Internet censorship in Thailand is mostly limited to social media and web content. The government has a long history of blocking and removing content. Over the past few years, the Thai government has blocked some Wikipedia pages, Facebook groups, and content from other prominent sites in the country.

Following a military coup earlier this year, internet censorship is on the rise in Myanmar. There have been as many as five internet blackouts in an effort to curb pro-democracy protests in the country. Some social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are also being blocked, leaving

them unaccessible to millions of citizens.

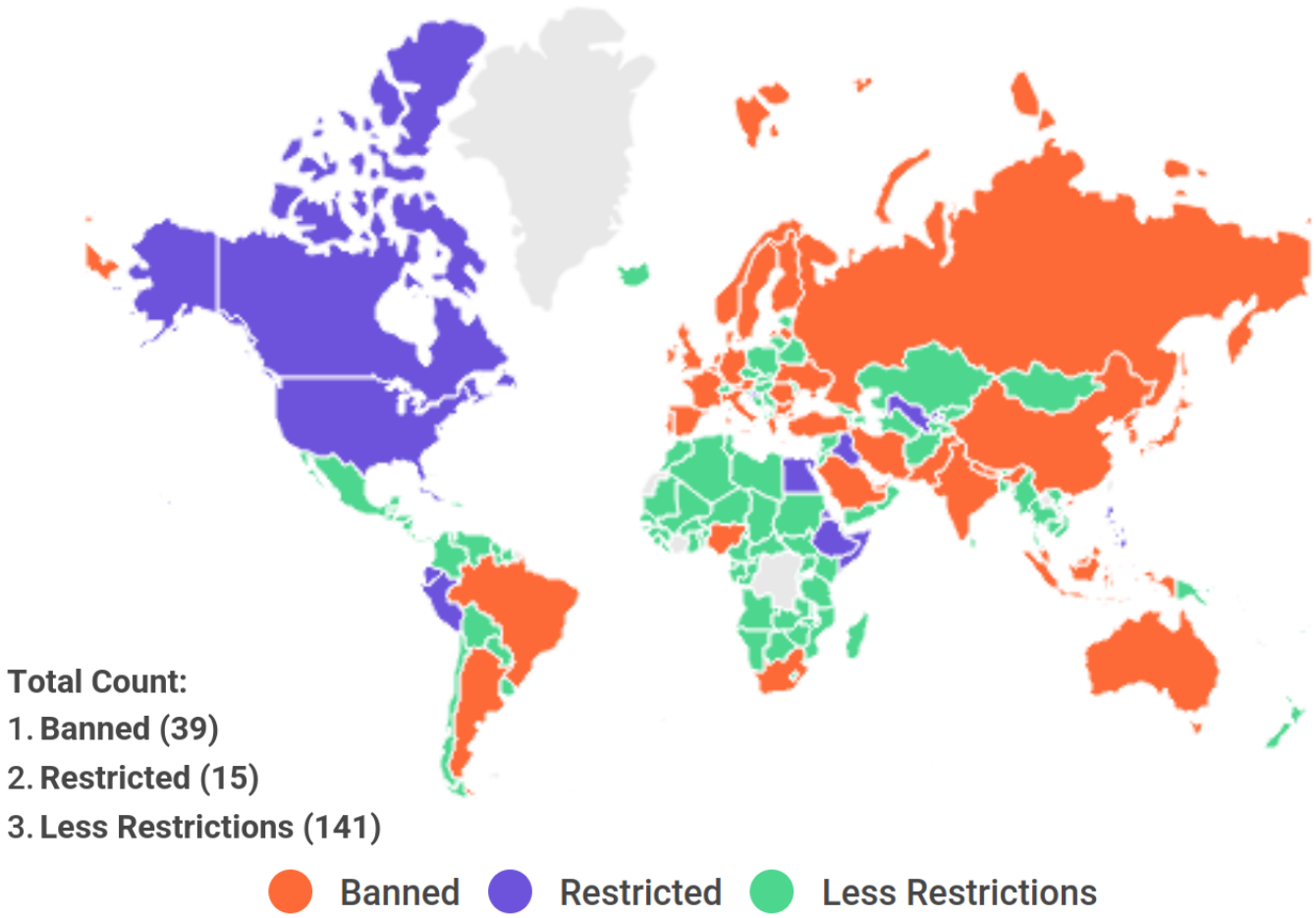
Countries that Ban or Restrict VPNs



In this section, we have listed the countries that either put limited restrictions on VPNs, totally ban it, or don't have any restrictions at all. There are only a handful of countries where VPNs are totally banned, such as Uganda, China, Turkmenistan, and Turkey.

A few countries like Pakistan impose limited restrictions on the use of VPNs. For instance, the use of unregistered VPN is deemed illegal in Pakistan.

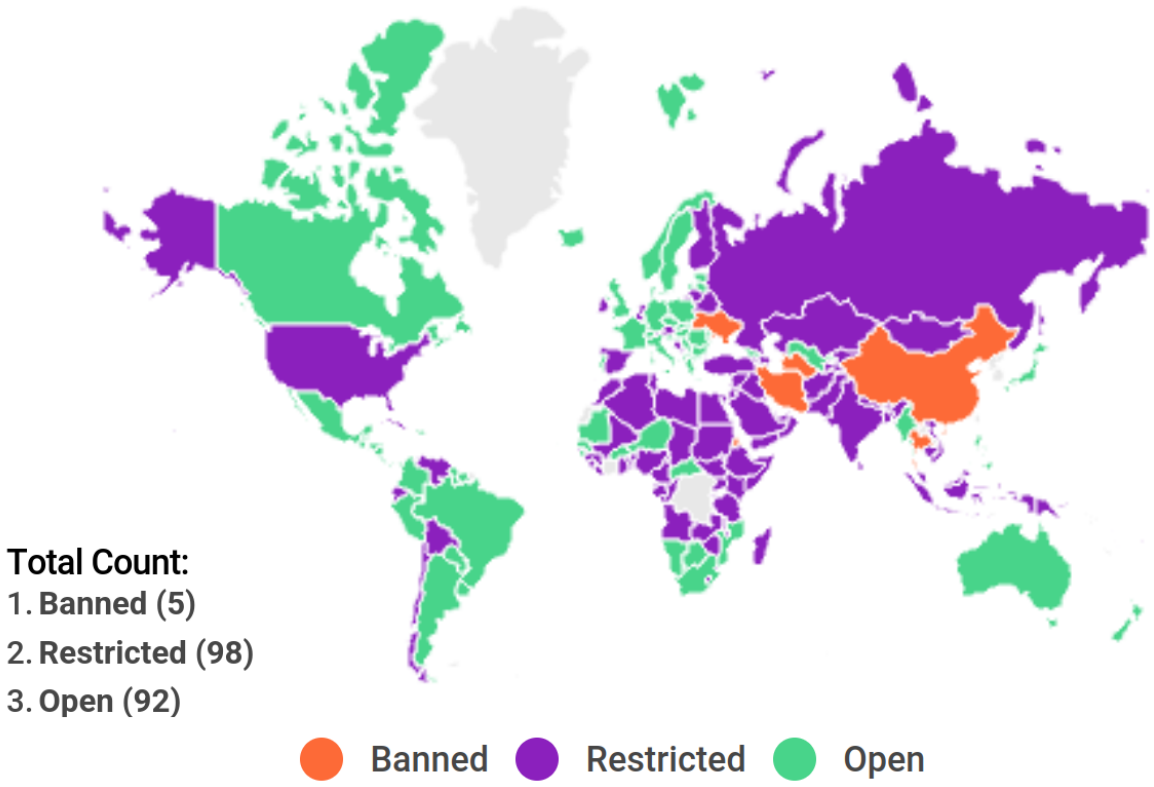
Countries that Limit or Block Torrents



There is hardly any country where the use of torrent isn’t free from any restriction. Since torrents are mostly used for downloading copyright content, most countries have put limited to moderate restrictions on its use.

However, there are certain countries like Iran, Turkey, Germany, France, United Kingdom, and South Korea where one or many torrent websites are banned.

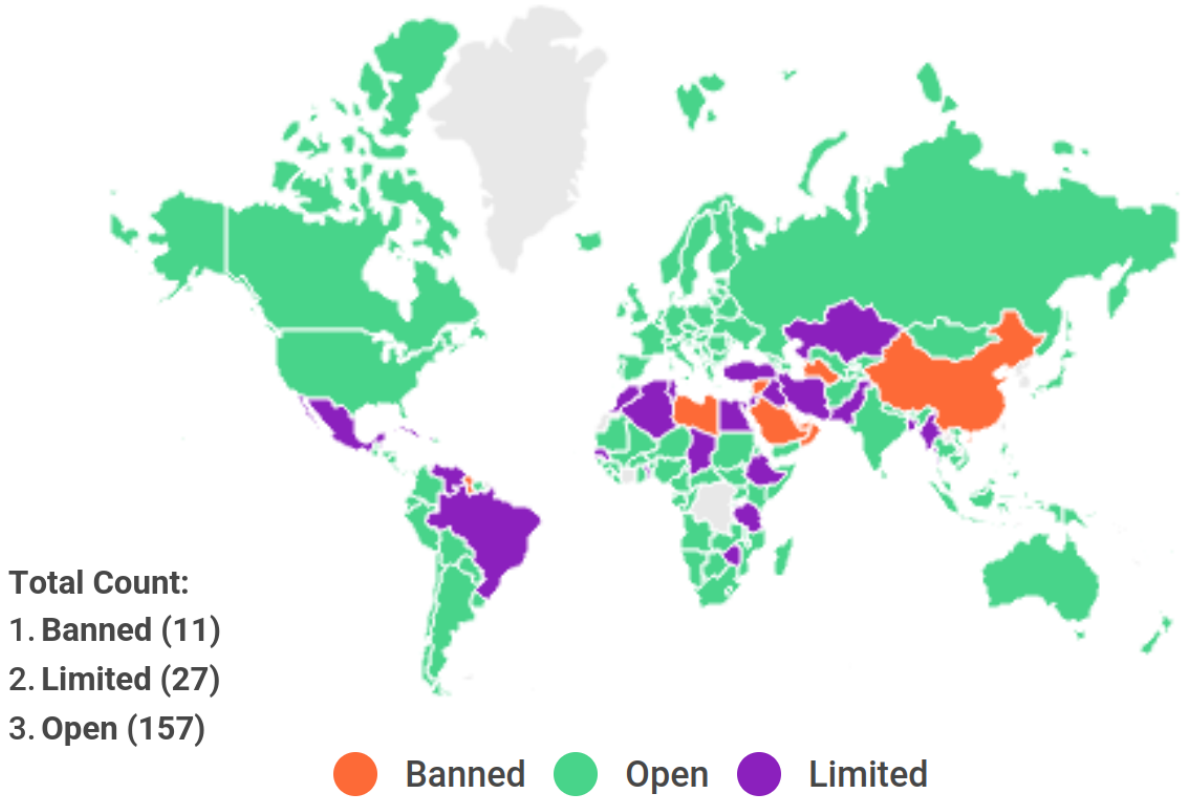
Countries that Censor or Block Social Media



Social media platforms hardly face permanent ban in any country. However, there are certain restrictions and temporary bans that some social media platforms have experienced in some countries. For instance, Chad netizens experienced a 16-month ban on social media platforms which was lifted in 2019.

Some other countries like Pakistan, India, and Indonesia have blocked some or most social media platforms temporarily due to instigation of violence, public threat, national threat, blasphemy, or other political purposes like election.

Countries that Ban or Restrict VoIP

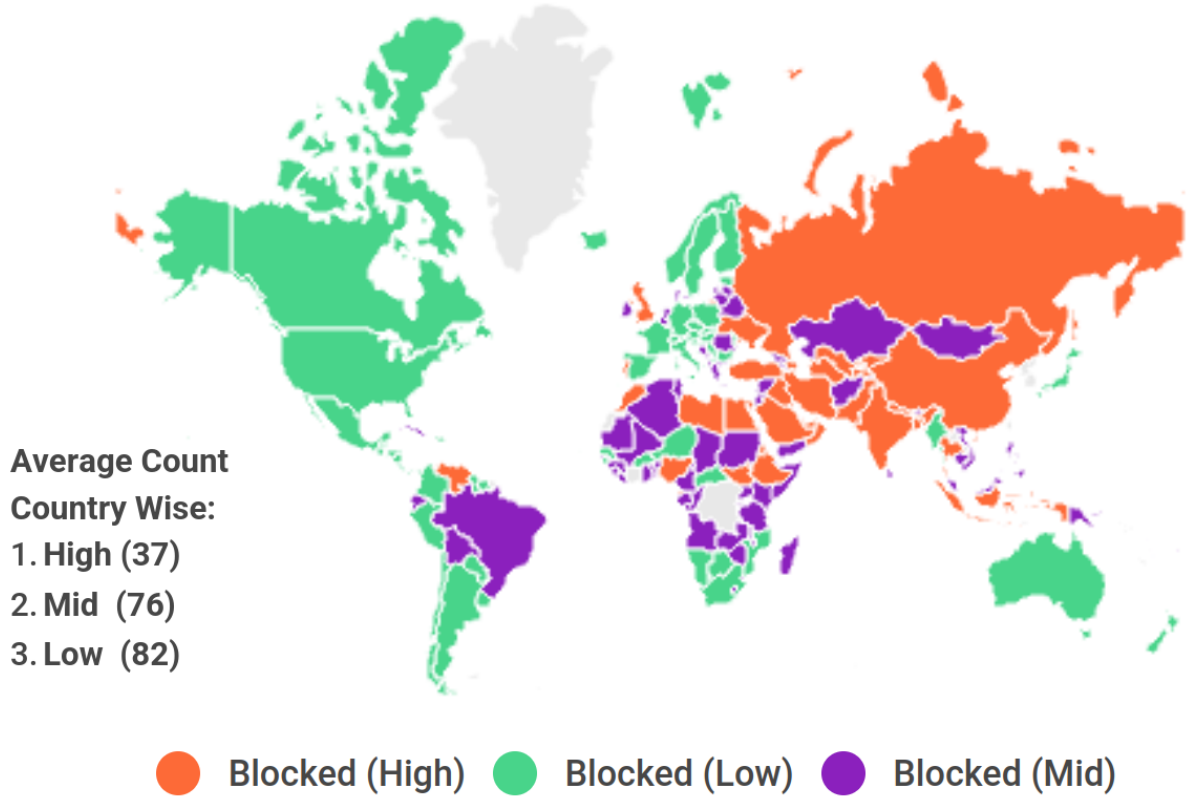


VoIP, which stands for Voice over Internet Protocol, is a blessing for many across the globe, especially during the pandemic that has torn friends, families, and communities apart. It allows people to stay in touch with others through online audio and video meetups.

However, due to the end-to-end encryption feature, as practiced by many VoIP services, certain countries have restricted these applications as it causes disruption to their investigative procedures.

We have scored the countries in this category based on the level of restrictions that are imposed.

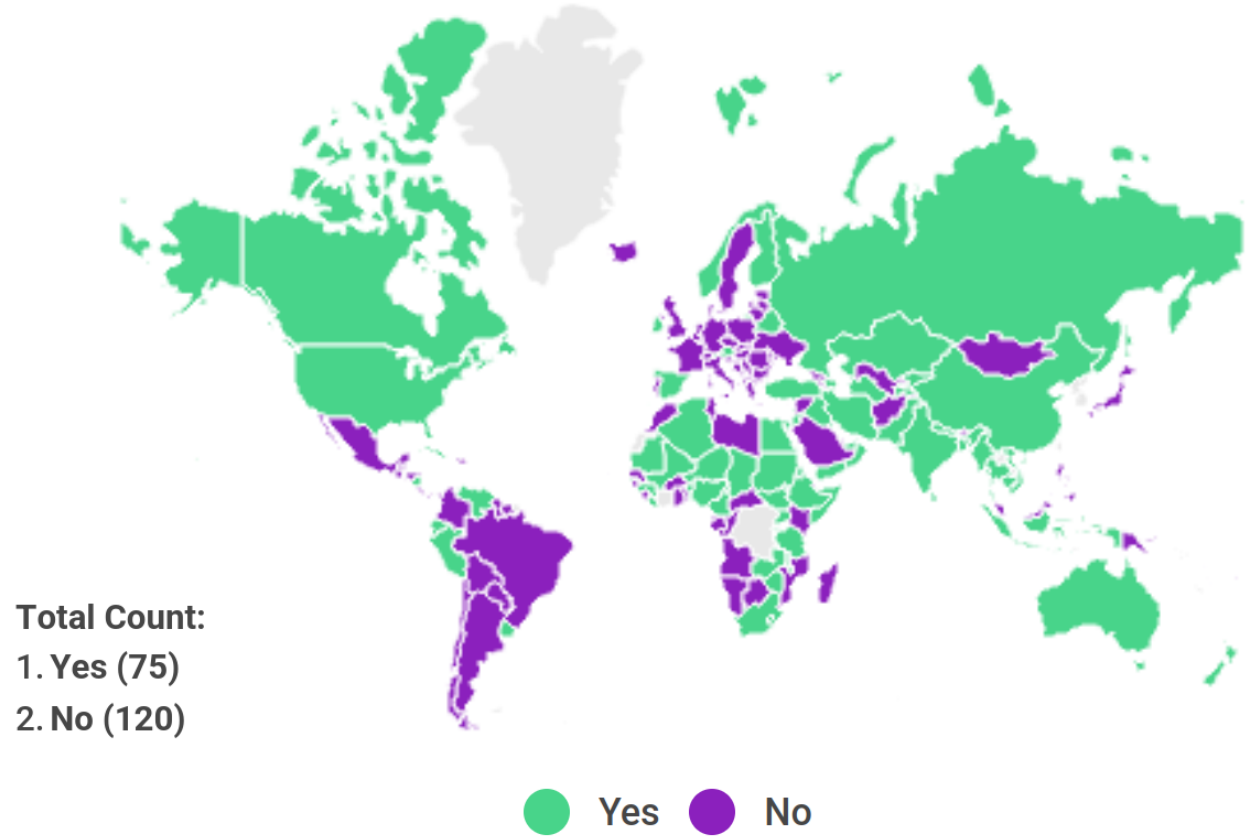
Countries that Ban or Restrict Multiple Websites & Apps



Blocking certain content has been a norm for the past few decades. Some regions block content for reasonable purposes like to curb unethical practices like the promotion of gambling and explicit content. Some countries block websites that incite violence or impose political or public threat.

However, over the recent few years, content blocking has seemingly been abused by many. For instance, certain countries block websites that reveal internal political conflicts, while some countries ban content to control freedom of speech.

Internet Censorship Events That Made the Headlines Between 2019 and 2020



To some extent, internet restrictions are imposed in most countries around the globe throughout the year. But some censorship is so severe that it makes international headlines.

Between 2019 and 2020, many countries had to resort to online restrictions for certain reasons, such as political clashes or religious conflicts. Take, for instance, China's revision of its censorship policies that seem to be harsher than the ones placed in 2000. Fines have been increased to 1 million yuan for propagating false information on the internet or causing social unrest. Similarly, users will now agree to share their PII data to use social media and similar services.

India also made the headlines when it blocked around 256 Chinese websites and applications in their country due to political conflict with the concerned country. The government also forced an internet shutdown in Kashmir back in 2020.

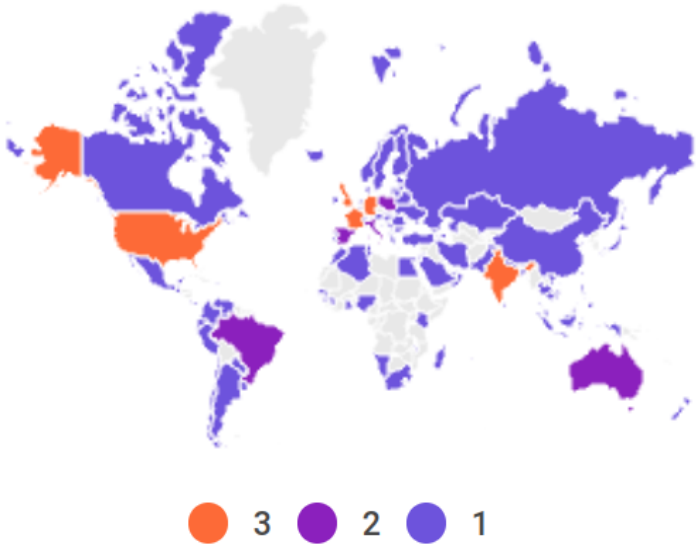
Google’s User Data and Content Removal Requests 2010-2019

Information Requests

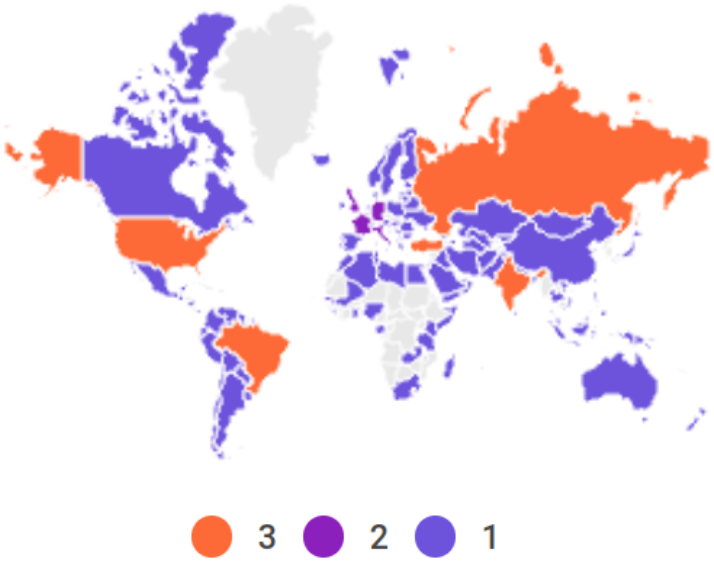
Top 5 Countries with High No of Requests

1. United States (348624 Requests)
2. Germany (101283 Requests)
3. India (76782 Requests)
4. France (74434 Requests)
5. United Kingdom (55956 Requests)

Transparency Report 2010 - 2019



Removal Requests



Top 5 Countries with High No of Requests

1.Russia (104897 Requests)
2.Turkey (13421 Requests)
3. United States (9699 Requests)
4.India (9148 Requests)
5. Brazil (8429 Requests)

Transparency Report 2012 - 2020

Score: Top 5 position (3) , 5 to 10 position (2), >10 position (1)

Every year, Google rolls out transparency reports on a wide range of subjects that range from the ecosystem security of its products to data requests from governments globally. In this section, we have analyzed and listed countries that have either requested Google for users' information or content takedown from its search engine.

We allocated the scores against each country depending on the number of requests they made between 2010 and 2019.

Facebook's User Data and Content Removal Requests 2013-2020

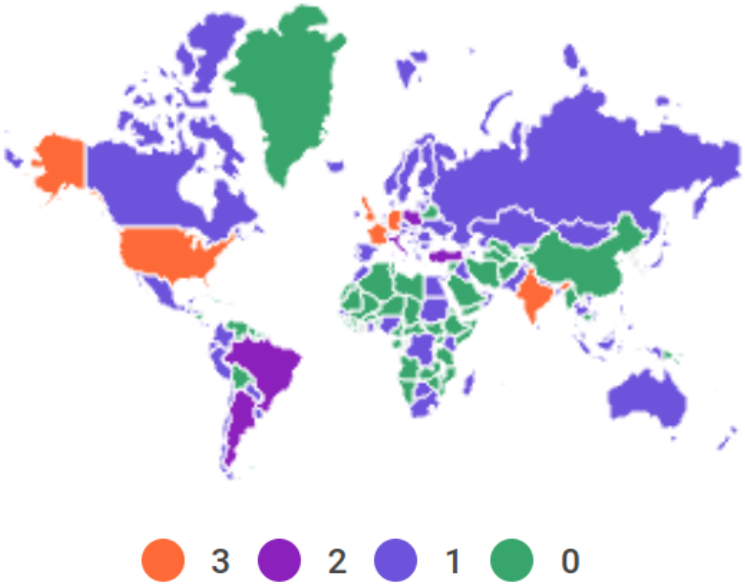
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Information Requests

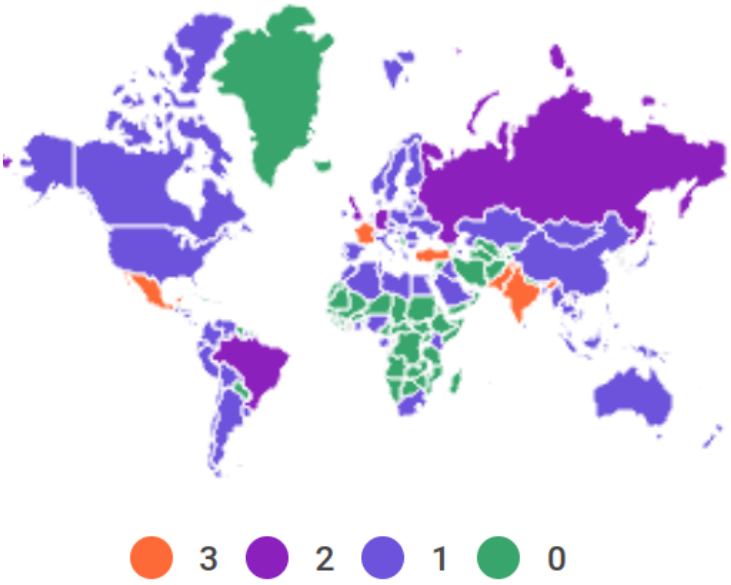
Top 5 Countries with High No of Requests

1. USA (584821 Requests)
2. India (205075 Requests)
3. UK (88027 Requests)
4.Germany (79502 Requests)
5.France (69300 Requests)

Transparency Report 2013 - 2020



Removal Requests



Top 5 Countries with High No of Requests

1. India (73730 Requests)
2. France (43735 Requests)
3. Mexico (38153 Requests)
4. Turkey (24958 Requests)
5. Pakistan (17924 Requests)

Transparency Report 2013 - 2020

Score: Top 5 position (3) , 5 to 10 position (2), >10 position (1)

Like many tech companies, Facebook also maintains transparency reports on a variety of subject matters. In this section, we have compiled a list of countries that have requested for user data and content restrictions to Facebook for over the last few years.

Most content takedown requests are related to the local matters that may have a negative impact globally.

Twitter’s User Data and Content Removal Requests 2010-2019

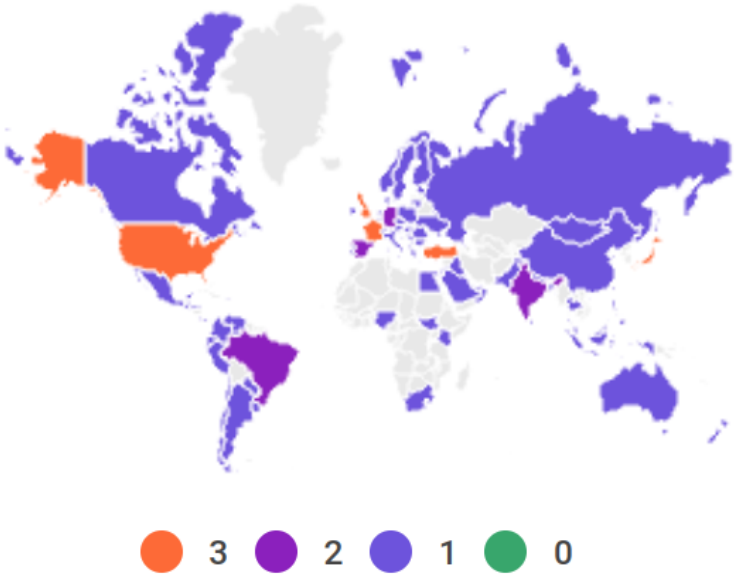




Information Requests

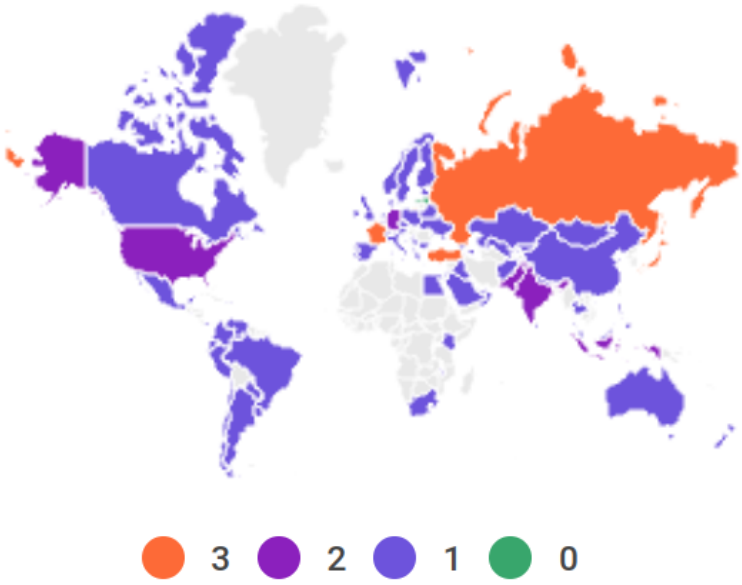
Top 5 Countries with High No of Requests

1 .US (30116 Requests)
2. Japan (14371 Requests)
3. United Kingdom (6748 Requests)
4. France (5576 Requests)
5.Turkey (4608 Requests)



Transparency Report 2012 - 2020

Removal Requests



Top 5 Countries with High No of Requests

1.Turkey (41451 Requests)
2. Russia (21487 Requests)
3. Japan (19017 Requests)
4. France (4580 Requests)
5. South Korea (3853 Requests)

Transparency Report 2012 - 2020

Score: Top 5 position (3) , 5 to 10 position (2), >10 position (1)

Twitter also publishes its transparency reports every year that give a detailed insight into matters like content restrictions, account bans, and user information. Take, for instance, Donald Trump's social media account bans which were made due to instigation of violence.

Would You Still Take Your Freedom for Granted?

Countries like China, Iran and Russia have been censoring content and putting shackles on the online freedom of their netizens for ages. But it is quite surprising to see the netizens of other countries suffering the same due to their local government following up on the footsteps of others and imposing strict restrictions.

As censorships grow across the globe, our online freedom becomes thinner than ever. It is high time we take necessary measures before we lose it forever. Spread the word and jolt our friends and family into the realization of their fading freedom.

Click here to download full report for complete scoring details and sources