

Methodological Note 1

From Commitments to Indicators: Mapping GDC and DFI implementation

The Declaration for the Future of the Internet (DFI) and the Global Digital Compact (GDC) serve as the normative foundations for the Internet Accountability Compass. The DFI, launched in 2022, articulates a vision for an ‘open, free, global, interoperable, reliable, and secure’ Internet through 23 high-level commitments. These commitments span human rights, inclusive connectivity, trust in the digital ecosystem, sustainability, and multi-stakeholder governance. The GDC, adopted 2024, defines an agenda for a ‘safe and secure digital future for all,’ structured around five objectives: closing digital divides, expanding an inclusive digital economy, fostering an open and rights-respecting digital space, advancing data governance, and governing AI responsibly. The Compass aims to translate these broad principles from both DFI and GDC into a practical framework of 12 measurable indicators grouped under four thematic categories. Each Compass category (Connectivity & Infrastructure, Rights & Freedoms, Responsibility & Sustainability, and Trust & Resilience) corresponds to key focus areas of the DFI and GDC, bridging high-level ideals with concrete metrics.

Connectivity and Infrastructure

This category relates to commitments on access, affordability and digital preparedness. The ICT Development Index captures the DFI’s call for inclusive and reliable Internet access (DFI #11) and the GDC’s objective to close digital divides (Objective 1, 11(a)–(g)). The Network Readiness Index reflects skills and preparedness, linked to DFI #12 on digital literacy and GDC Objective 1, 13(a)–(h). The Global Cybersecurity Index aims to capture commitments on cooperation in cybersecurity and secure infrastructure in both frameworks (DFI #10, #14, #17, #18; GDC Objective 2, 21(j) and Objective 3, 29(c)).

Rights and Freedoms

This category addresses human rights, non-discrimination and democratic accountability. Freedom on the Net includes factors such as censorship, surveillance and privacy protections, which correspond to DFI commitments #2, #4, #6, #8, #13, #15, #16, #19 and to GDC commitments in Objective 3, including 23(d), 31(d) and 35(b). Freedom in the World reflects broader civil liberties and political rights, linked to DFI #1 and #3, as well as GDC Objective 2, 21(a) and Objective 3, 23(b). The V-Dem Accountability Index relates to institutional accountability, connecting with DFI #5 and #22 and GDC Objective 3, 23(b) and 29(b).

Responsibility and Sustainability

This category covers responsible economic and environmental practices and the governance of emerging technologies. The Digital Trade Integration Index captures elements of cross-border data flows and fair digital markets (DFI #9 and #20; GDC Objective 4, 47 and Objective 2, 21(a)). The Global Index on Responsible AI is relevant to GDC Objective 5, including commitments on inclusive AI governance and human oversight (52 and 55(d)), though the DFI did not contain a specific AI commitment. The Global E-Waste Monitor aims to capture environmental aspects, including DFI #21 and GDC Objective 1, 11(e) and Objective 5, 53.

Trust and Resilience

This category relates to commitments on security, legal frameworks and infrastructure reliability. The Global Internet Shutdowns indicator reflects DFI #7 and GDC Objective 3, 29(d). The Internet Resilience Index links to commitments on secure and reliable infrastructure (DFI #18 and #23; GDC Objective 1, 11(c) and Objective 3, 29(a)). The Rule of Law Index aims to capture the broader legal environment underpinning digital trust, corresponding to DFI #1 and GDC Objective 3, 23(a) and 22.

Internet Accountability Compass Indicators Mapped to DFI and GDC Commitments

The table below shows how each of the 12 Compass indicators corresponds to commitments in the Declaration for the Future of the Internet (DFI) and the Global Digital Compact (GDC). DFI commitments are identified by their number (1–23), and GDC commitments by objective number and lettered paragraph. Each indicator covers certain commitments (fully or partially) from both frameworks:

Compass Indicator	DFI Commitment(s)	GDC Commitment(s)
ICT Development Index (IDI) – Measures Internet access, usage, and skills (Connectivity & Infrastructure)	DFI #11: Expand affordable, inclusive, reliable Internet access	Objective 1, 11(a) (set connectivity targets/metrics); 11(b) (finance affordable access); 11(c) (deploy resilient, secure infrastructure); 11(d) (connect schools & hospitals); 11(f) (include vulnerable groups in strategies); 11(g) (gender-inclusive connectivity).
Network Readiness Index (NRI) – Assesses digital infrastructure, human capital, and readiness (Connectivity & Infrastructure)	DFI #12: Build digital literacy and skills for safe participation (<i>also supports DFI #11</i>)	Objective 1, 13(a) (national digital skills strategies); 13(b) (accessible digital platforms/education); 13(c) (capacity-building for women, youth, vulnerable groups); 13(h) (inclusive STEM education & women’s participation).

Compass Indicator	DFI Commitment(s)	GDC Commitment(s)
Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) – Evaluates national cybersecurity capacity and cooperation (Connectivity & Infrastructure)	DFI #10: Cooperate on R&D and security standards; #14: Combat cybercrime and malicious activity; #17: Protect users (incl. women/children) from online fraud/harm; #18: Use trustworthy network infrastructure	Objective 1, 11(c) (safe, secure network coverage for all areas); Objective 2, 21(j) (build capacity for safe, secure, resilient digital systems); Objective 3, 29(c) (prevent Internet fragmentation via international cooperation).
Freedom on the Net (FoTN) – Rates Internet freedom, free expression, and privacy (Rights & Freedoms)	DFI #2: Promote online safety (esp. SGBV/child protection); #4: Content moderation consistent with free expression; #6: No unlawful surveillance or social scoring; #8: No blocking/throttling lawful content (net neutrality); #13: Enable diverse, multilingual content (fight disinformation); #15: Ensure any government access to data is lawful; #16: Protect privacy and communications; #19: Refrain from undermining elections via Internet	Objective 3, 23(d) (refrain from restrictions on free flow of information inconsistent with intl. law); Objective 3, 31(d) (ensure surveillance/encryption laws comply with human rights law); Objective 3, 35(b) (promote diverse and resilient information ecosystems, e.g. independent media to counter disinformation).
Freedom in the World (FIW) – Measures broad civil liberties, political rights & nondiscrimination (Rights & Freedoms)	DFI #3: Ensure equitable Internet use without discrimination (<i>supports DFI #1 on human rights</i>)	Objective 2, 21(a) (open, fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory digital environment for all); Objective 3, 23(b) (safeguards to prevent human rights abuses and ensure oversight/remedy).
V-Dem Accountability Index – Gauges government transparency, accountability, rule of law (Rights & Freedoms)	DFI #5: Provide remedies for digital rights abuses; #22: Protect and strengthen the multi-stakeholder Internet governance model (<i>supports DFI #1 on transparency</i>)	Objective 3, 23(b) (establish oversight and remedy mechanisms for digital rights abuses); Objective 3, 29(b) (support the multi-stakeholder Internet Governance Forum and diverse participation).
Digital Trade Integration Index – Assesses openness of digital economy (e.g. data flow policies, e-commerce) (Responsibility & Sustainability)	DFI #9: Enable cross-border “data free flow with trust”; #20: Support a rules-based digital economy with fair, contestable online markets	Objective 4, 47 (facilitate cross-border data flows with trust via multistakeholder consultations); Objective 2, 21(a) (inclusive digital economy access for MSMEs).

Compass Indicator	DFI Commitment(s)	GDC Commitment(s)
Global Index on Responsible AI – Evaluates adoption of ethical AI principles and governance (Responsibility & Sustainability)	(No explicit DFI commitment – aligns with DFI’s general principle of ethical and accountable tech use)	Objective 5, 52 (advance inclusive, risk-based AI governance in line with international law and human rights); Objective 5, 55(d) (promote transparency, accountability, and human oversight of AI systems).
Global E-Waste Monitor – Tracks electronic waste generation per capita (tech environmental impact) (Responsibility & Sustainability)	DFI #21: Leverage tech to combat climate change & reduce the Internet’s environmental footprint	Objective 1, 11(e) (promote sustainability in the digital tech life cycle to minimize environmental footprint); Objective 5, 53 (address potential negative environmental impacts of emerging digital technologies).
Global Internet Shutdowns (observatory) – Monitors frequency/duration of government-imposed Internet shutdowns (Trust & Resilience)	DFI #7: Refrain from government-imposed Internet shutdowns	Objective 3, 29(d) (commit to refrain from Internet shutdowns and other measures targeting access).
Internet Resilience Index – Measures the robustness, reliability and decentralization of Internet infrastructure (Trust & Resilience)	DFI #18: Use trustworthy network infrastructure (supply chain security); #23: Refrain from undermining the Internet’s technical infrastructure integrity	Objective 1, 11(c) (build resilient digital infrastructure for universal, reliable access); Objective 3, 29(a) (promote an open, global, interoperable, reliable Internet; maintain a safe, secure online environment).
Rule of Law Index – Measures adherence to rule of law, justice, and fundamental rights (Trust & Resilience)	DFI #1: Uphold human rights, rule of law, and transparency in digital governance	Objective 3, 23(a) (ensure national digital legislation complies with international law, including human rights law); Objective 3, 22 (uphold international human rights law in the digital context).