

Let's write some record requests!



A little background

What is FOI or RTI?

Freedom of Information
Right to Information

Freedom of Information Act

“The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has provided the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency. It is often described as the law that keeps citizens in the know about their government”

U.S. FOI law: Effective July 5, 1967

source: [foi.gov](https://www.foi.gov)

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Who has the oldest FOI law?



Sweden, 1766, The Freedom of the Press Act

Who else has FOI laws?

- Finland, 1951
- USA, 1966
- Norway, 1970
- Denmark, 1970
- France, 1978

And some new comers

2016

- Vietnam
- Kenya
- Sri Lanka
- Philippines
- Togo





Country Data

On this page you can find the results of the Global Right to Information Rating. The scores are organised by category. You can reorder the table to sort countries by name, by the date their RTI law was first passed or by their score on a particular category by clicking on the blue row at the top.

For an indicator-by-indicator breakdown of a country's score, click on the country's name. You can also click on the far right column for an excel sheet with that country's results.

You can also view the country results by category [here](#).

The International RTI Rating assesses each legal framework according to 61 indicators. You can view the country results by indicator [here](#).

RANKING POSITION	COUNTRY	DATE	RIGHT OF ACCESS	SCOPE	REQUESTING PROCEDURES	EXCEPTIONS & REFUSALS	APPEALS	SANCTIONS & PROTECTIONS	PROMOTIONAL MEASURES	TOTAL	LAW	CSV
1	Mexico	2002	6	30	28	28	26	4	14	136		
2	Serbia	2003	5	30	22	26	29	7	16	135		

Some tips

- Public record: documents, photos, spreadsheets, maps, calendars
- Do your research:
 - What data is collected/not collected —> records retention schedules
 - How agency handled prior requests & timing
 - Search DocumentCloud and pdf/excel search —> if the data has been requested before
 - Figure out the central agency that houses the records

Examples of what you can request

Travel records
Emails, Calendars
FOI of FOIs
Salary records (ex: contracts)
Audits
Organizational charts
Phone call logs
Inspection reports
Budgets
Projections
Quality reports

Some tips

- Be specific in your wording & what format you'd like to get the data in
- Include a “reasonable description” of the records
- Ask for fee waivers
- Include contact information

Keep track

- Follow up on requests!
- Make a log
- Know the denials process & exemptions

U.S. Exemptions as an example

1. National security
2. Internal agency rules
3. Statutory exemption
4. Trade secrets
5. Internal agency memos
6. Personal privacy
7. Law enforcement records
8. Financial institution reports
9. Oil and gas well data

Remember

- FOI officers are people too!
- Be nice
- Call ahead and ask questions
- Think of the data from a file cabinet perspective
- Can't get records that aren't created

<http://bit.ly/exampleFOI>

Some resources

- <https://archive.org>
- <https://www.access-info.org/>
- <http://www.freedominfo.org/>

Resources (US only)

- <https://www.rcfp.org/open-government-guide>
- <https://www.foia.gov/data.html>
- <http://bit.ly/2cZUsRM>
- <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/>

Thank you! Questions?

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