

Introduction | README

Is the internet unhealthy? We planted this question in your mind with the title of this report and in the questions we ask throughout. But you will not be getting a simple yes or no answer.

As you may have gathered, this publication is neither a country-level index nor a doomsday clock. We invite you to join us in assessing what it means for the internet to be healthy, and to participate in setting an agenda for how we can work together to create an internet that truly puts people first.

Our intention with this compilation of research, interviews and analysis (designed with input from [hundreds of readers](#) in collaboration with over 200 experts) is to show that while the worldwide consequences of getting things wrong with the internet could be huge – for peace and security, for political and individual freedoms, for human equality – the problems are never so great that nothing can be done. More people than you imagine are working to make the internet healthier, and getting things right, by applying their skills, creativity, and even personal bravery, to business, technology, activism, policy and regulation, education and community development.

This annual report is a call to action to recognize the things that are having an impact on the internet today through research and analysis, and to embrace the notion that we as humans can change how we make money, govern societies, and interact with one another online.

Part of the trouble in explaining how to make the internet ‘healthier’ is that so much goes unseen. As internet users, we tend not to think about fibre optic cables beneath the seas, or the men and women who assemble our electronic devices, let alone about the decision processes coded into “intelligent” machines. Many of us don’t even know how our favorite internet companies profit, or how our personal desires and traits are tracked as we go about our lives.

If we're completely honest, a lot of us would probably prefer *not* to know. Why ruin the magic of the instant gratification we get at the [push of a button](#), hiding all technological processes behind the scenes. The downside is that we often don't recognize the things in need of systemic change before the dramatic news headlines assault us. We prefer to imagine that we are protected: by high tech internet companies, by governments, by other more savvy users.

We make choices all the time: about what software to use, what security risks to take, what steps to take to protect the privacy of our children and genetic relatives. As advocates for a healthier internet, let's now make *better* choices. Let's fight to change what is wrong and join with others to make things right. In reading the Internet Health Report, let's cast a glance at the seen *and* unseen opportunities of the internet, and consider this rich, diverse, complex ecosystem as one that adapts to our collective actions and changes over time.

Our "spotlights" this year invite you to consider three topics that in each their way are 'hidden in plain sight' and deserve special attention if we are to improve the health of the internet.

Our societies and economies will soon undergo incredible transformations because of the expanding capabilities of machines to "learn" and "make decisions." How do we begin to make tougher demands of artificial intelligence to meet our *human* needs above all others?

By now, you've surely heard that targeted advertising ads and personal data collection are at the heart of so much that is wrong with the internet. What are promising efforts to make things right?

More than half of the world's population lives in a city now. You had better believe that officials face tough challenges (and divergent interests) when it comes to putting ideals for a healthier internet into practice. No, this is not about "smart cities," but about the untapped power of city governments and civil society to work together to make the internet healthier worldwide.

Read and explore

This report is structured according to five overlapping themes that we consider a helpful framework for assessing internet health: privacy and security, openness, digital inclusion, web literacy, and decentralization, but it's designed so you can read the articles in any order.

In the spirit of engagement with readers, the website of the [2019 Internet Health Report](#) enables you to create and publicly share your own reading list of articles. We also encourage online comments and reflections on individual articles. For instance, how do you make decisions about what to share about your children online? Or would you recommend your country's approach to digital ID? There aren't simple answers to questions like this, but hearing diverse experiences and ideas can expand anyone's perception of the toughest issues. We welcome your input!

Credits

So many researchers, fellows, writers and allies of Mozilla generously contributed data and ideas alongside hundreds of readers who participated with comments and emails.

[Solana Larsen](#) is the editor of this report.

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[Rainbow Unicorn](#) in Berlin, Germany developed the visual design (and code for the website). [Christian Laesser](#) developed the data visuals that appear online, and [Julian Braun](#) produced the 3D artwork.

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