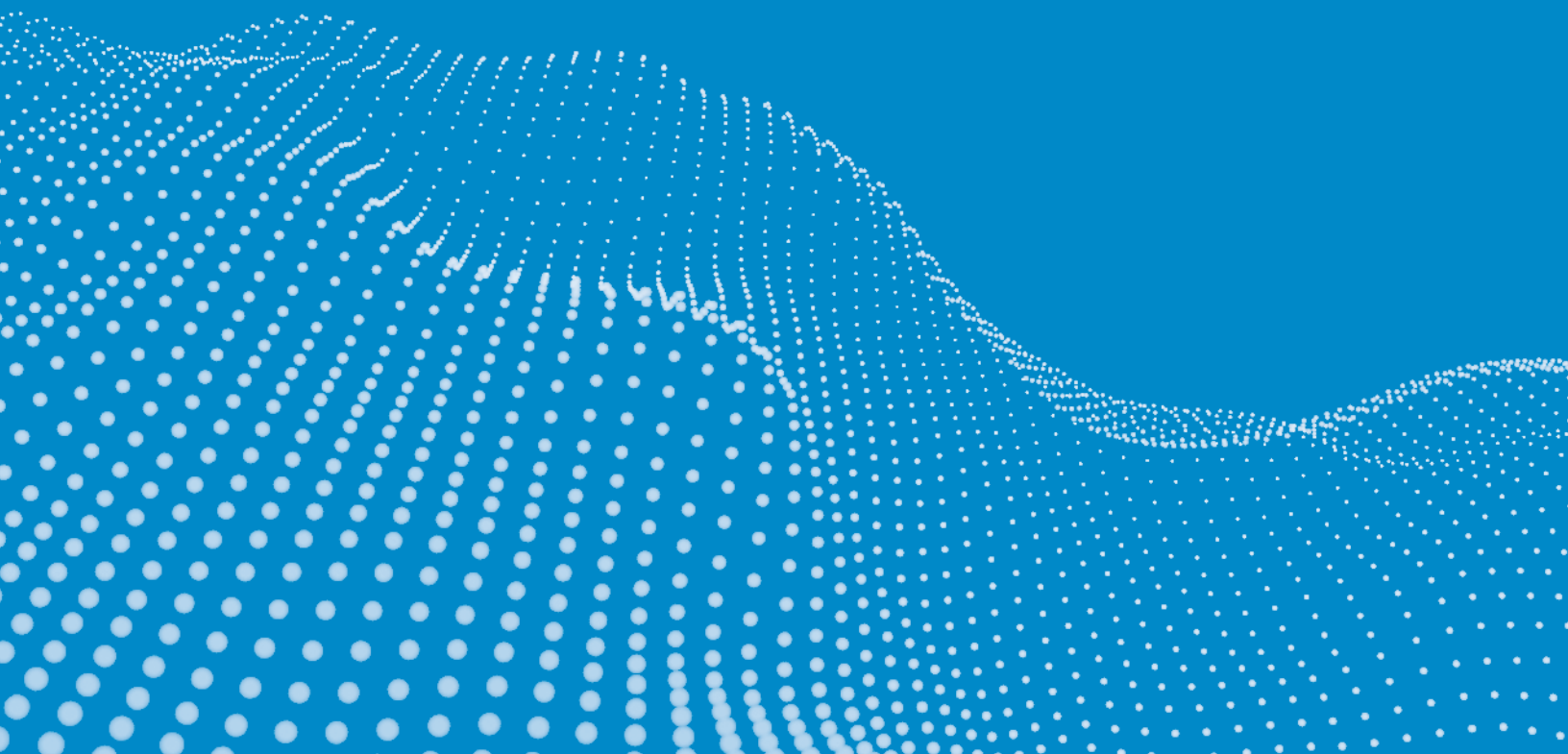




**THE WORLD BANK**  
IBRD • IDA | WORLD BANK GROUP

# Access to Information

**ANNUAL REPORT FY2020**







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# Introduction

Over the past year, as countries have struggled with the COVID-19 pandemic, rising levels of unsustainable debt, growing inequality, and the urgent climate crisis, it is clear that greater transparency and broader access to credible information are key parts of the solution to these global challenges.

The World Bank Group has made substantial progress recently in our work on climate change, vaccination and other COVID-related programs, sovereign debt transparency, and support for FCV countries. With the world’s focus on the need for urgent action, equitable allocations, and quick, sustainable results, the importance of transparency has never been stronger. More than ever, individuals and communities need to know their options, potential risks and benefits of government decisions, and how those in authority are handling public funds. Stakeholder engagement is critical to identifying problems, finding answers, and monitoring implementation.

Ten years ago, when World Bank Group President Bob Zoellick launched the Access to Information initiative, he noted the fundamental importance of transparency and accountability to development and to achieving the Bank’s mission. Over the last decade, the World Bank Policy on Access to Information has been an important tool for the public, civil society, media, academia, and policymakers to obtain information about World Bank operations, finances, research, data, and Board proceedings – information that can foster meaningful participation in development processes and enable accountability. The Policy completed 10 years of implementation on July 1, 2020, and we are proud of its impact on the transparency of our work and the deepening of our relationships with our stakeholders.

We encourage stakeholders to continue to use the Policy to mine the Bank’s information for better development outcomes.

For more information and to submit public access requests for information to the World Bank, visit [www.worldbank.org/en/access-to-information](http://www.worldbank.org/en/access-to-information).





## Access to Information Directive/Procedure Update

In FY20, the [Access to Information Directive/Procedure](#) was updated to reflect the changes in the disclosure process of routinely available documents related to Trust Funds and Partnerships.

Changes to the AI Directive/Procedure are part of the Bank's continual efforts to clarify and streamline implementation of the AI Policy. According to the AI Policy Framework, the Directive/Procedure is a statement of substantive directions, within Management's authority, that require, permit, or constrain activities.

## Open Data

At the World Bank, the [Development Data Group](#) coordinates statistical and data work and maintains a number of macro, financial and sector databases. Working closely with the Bank's regions and Global Practices, the group is guided by professional standards in the collection, compilation and dissemination of data to ensure that all data users can have confidence in the quality and integrity of the data produced.

3,000,000+

Open Data downloads

98 million+

Open Data page views

27,000

Development datasets, indicators, and visualizations



## Open Access

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of its [Access to Information Policy](#), the Bank launched an updated [Documents and Reports \(D&R\)](#) website on June 25, 2020. The revamped website introduced a modern user interface, enhanced search capabilities, and content usage information. The D&R website remains the official disclosure mechanism for the Access to Information Policy. It continues to grow at a pace of approximately 3,000 final documents and reports per month.

In July 2020, the [Open Knowledge Repository \(OKR\)](#) introduced direct and easy access to World Bank Group research and formal publications related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a [Sustainable Development Goals Focus](#) link on its home page. The OKR is the World Bank Group's official open access repository. It is a curated repository that focuses on original academic research and formal publications from the Bank, as well as knowledge products that are of interest to the research community and general public. It was launched in 2012, simultaneously with the [World Bank's Open Access Policy](#).

39,771,146

Documents and Reports  
downloads

6,034,023

Open Knowledge Repository  
abstract views

10,086,322

Open Knowledge Repository  
downloads



# General Inquiries

The general public can check the [Knowledge Base](#) for information about the World Bank Group or submit specific questions through the [help desk platform](#). The requests are addressed in a timely manner by redirecting users to the public link where they can find the requested information. In 88% of the time the users were able to find the answers to the most commonly asked questions during their first visit to the website.

Page views	Users	Answers	Web Portal
14,300 Page views	1,050 Unique users	2,980 Average answers per month	88% First-time answers through web portal



# World Bank Group Information Research Guide

Launched in fiscal year 2020, the [World Bank Group Information Research Guide](#), provides a "one stop shop" for quick links to information, knowledge, data, and research sites across the Bank's various public websites. It gives the public an introduction to the information riches and repositories of the institution.

## E-mail Alerts

Originally launched in fiscal year 2018, the [E-mail Alerts service](#) had two major upgrades in fiscal year 2020. In March, [Simultaneous Disclosure](#) alerts were added, replacing an earlier manual system. In June, E-mail Alerts expanded to include procurement notices, microdata, and follow-a-project functions. The public subscribes to multiple alerts by country, resource type, language, topic, and procurement code. Daily, customized alerts are delivered to subscribers worldwide, informing them of new procurement opportunities and newly disclosed items.

Workers cutting cane, Sarm Chuk, Thailand. 1830163;1957 World Bank Group/Peter Dewsbury



## Open Archives

The Bank continues to provide greater access to historical information over 20 years of age through the [World Bank Group Archives Holdings](#) and the Bank's [Projects and Operations website](#). At the end of fiscal year 2020, 289,324 folders of archival records were listed for some 6,150 projects in the Projects and Operations website, and approximately 1.3 million pages of archival records were digitized and made available through this website and through the Archives Holdings. The Archives declassified 153,264 pages of archival records in fiscal year 2020 and proactively disclosed over 1700 reports.

In fiscal year 2020, 41 researchers accessed 206,206 pages of archival records declassified under the Access to Information Policy.



On-site in  
Washington, DC

30

NUMBER OF RESEARCHERS

162,946

NUMBER OF PAGES RESEARCHED



Electronically or  
online-based

11

NUMBER OF RESEARCHERS

43,260

NUMBER OF PAGES RESEARCHED

## Access to Records of the Board of Executive Directors

In response to eight public access requests, a record 6,900+ pages of historical Board transcripts were processed and disclosed in fiscal year 2020, across 144 transcripts. Historical transcripts continue to provide an additional perspective on the World Bank's work, with this year's disclosures having focused mostly on activities in the 1950-60s. Further work was also carried out to support the Bank's Archives' broadening disclosure initiatives.

*Worker operating log-barking machine, Kemi Oy plant, Finland. (1721461; World Bank Group/Kemi Oy), 1955.*







# Historical Timeline

The World Bank Group Archives launched a new timeline, “[The World Bank and Europe, 1945-1960](#)”, on the Bank’s engagement with Europe and its role in the continent’s reconstruction following World War II. The project was undertaken as part of the Archives’ ongoing activities commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Bretton Woods conference and the birth of the World Bank. The timeline highlights more than 90 historical events supported by a variety of resources, including archival records, photographs, audio clips, oral history transcripts, reports, and more – nearly 600 in all. About half of the timeline events relate to individual projects, while the other half focuses on contextual events such as country membership, economic reports, and Bank activities and accomplishments related to its operations in Europe. The full set of declassified records relating to Bank-financed projects in Europe approved between 1947 and 1959 has been digitized and made available on the [Projects & Operations website](#). The European timeline is the third timeline launched by the Archives, following the [Bank-wide historical timeline](#) in 2017 and the [Indonesia timeline](#) in 2018.

- December 27, 1945**  
[Eleven European countries sign IBRD Articles of Agreement](#)
- May 9, 1947**  
[World Bank approves first loan for reconstruction](#)
- May 17, 1951**  
[First non-U.S. dollar public bond offering issued in the United Kingdom](#)
- June 30, 1957**  
[Total loans to Europe top \\$1 billion](#)
- September 24, 1959**  
[Funding to Austria for an industrial project approved](#)

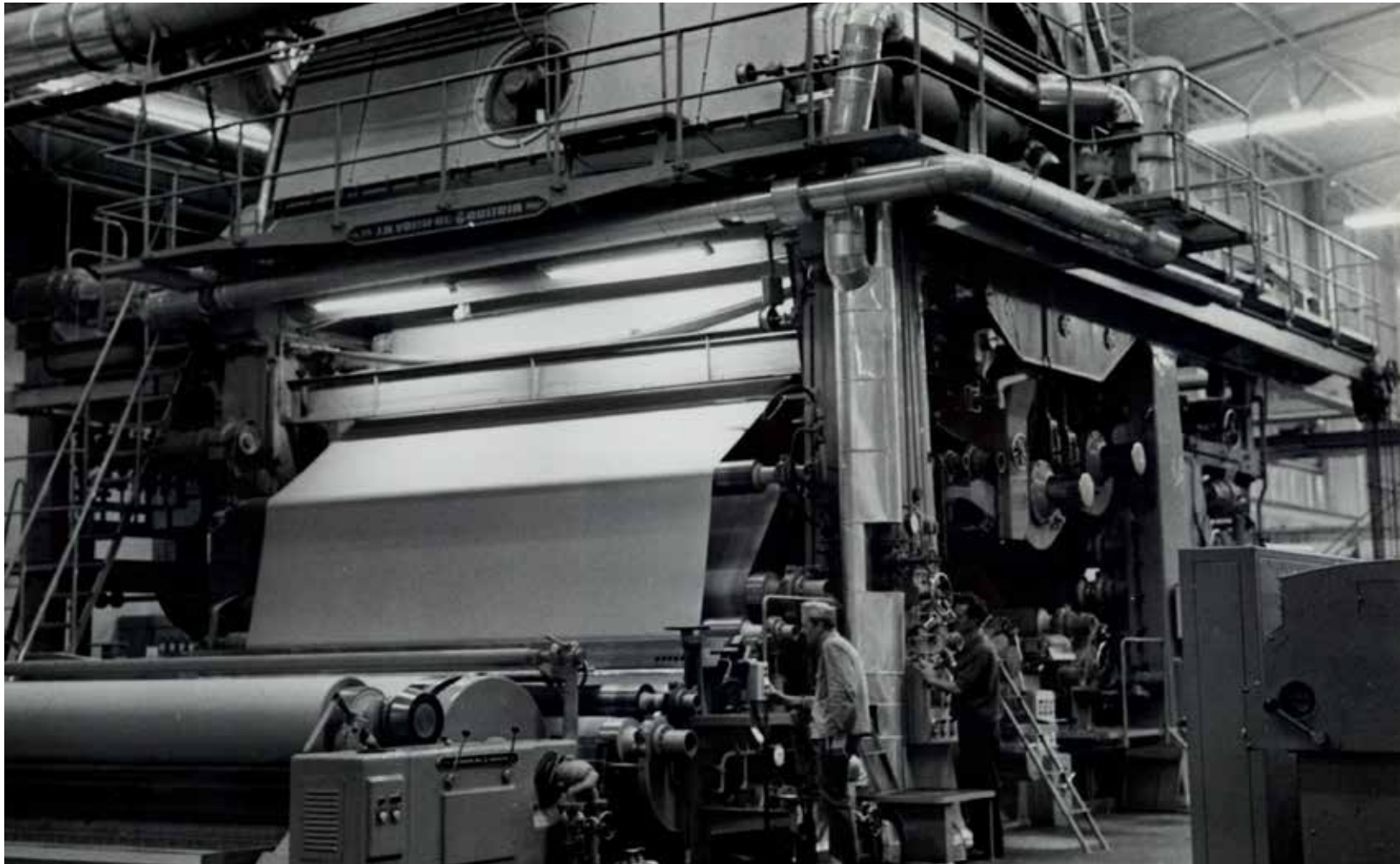


# Access to Information Requests Handled\*

Fiscal year in which the AI request was created	Number of AI requests Handled	Number of AI requests Closed	Percentage of AI requests Closed	Number of AI requests which remained Open
FY2020	589	551	94	38
FY2019	31	31	100	0
FY2018	1	1	100	0
Total	621	583	94	38

\*Handled – The request was created in FY2020 or was carried over from previous fiscal years as an open request pending completion.

Production of fine paper, Austria. (1716009; undated, World Bank Group/Franz Votaya, Pressebilddienst.





## Requests Fulfilled (in Whole or in Part) or Denied

Of the 583 requests closed in FY2020, 449 requests provided sufficient information and were handled by the AI system. 442 requests were fulfilled in whole or in part, and 7 requests were denied without fulfilling any part of the request.

The manner in which the remaining 134 were handled is described in in the table titled “Manner in Which the Remaining Cases Were Handled”.

Indicator	Requests Fulfilled in Whole	Requests Fulfilled in Part	Total Number of Requests Fulfilled in Whole or in Part
Total number	413	29*	442
Percent (%) of total	93	7	100

\*Of the 29 requests that were fulfilled in part, the outcomes were due to the following reasons:

- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” and “Personal Information” exceptions (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Information Provided by Member Countries or Third Parties in Confidence” and “Corporate Administrative Matters” exception (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” exception and records were not in custody (two requests)
- Some of the records were not in the Bank’s custody (three requests)
- The requester was unresponsive (five requests)
- Part of the request was handled through the Development Data Initiative (14 requests)
- Part of the request was handled through the [ESMAP](#) (two requests)
- Part of the request was referred to IEG (one request);



## Requests Denied (in Whole or in Part)

Of the 449 requests handled by the AI system and closed in FY2020, 7 requests were denied without fulfilling any part of the request.

Indicator	Requests Denied
Total Number	7

Of the 7 requests that were denied in whole or in part without fulfilling any part of the request, the outcomes were due to the following reasons:

- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” exception (three requests)
- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” exception and records were not found in custody (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Information Provided by Member Countries or Third Parties in Confidence” exception (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Corporate Administrative Matters” exception (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Attorney-Client Privilege” and “Deliberative Information” exceptions (one request)



# Manner in Which the Remaining Cases were Handled

As mentioned previously, of the 583 requests closed in FY2020, 449 were handled by the AI system and a response was provided. The remaining 134 requests were handled as follows:

Indicator	Numbers of Requests
Information Covered by AI Policy Exception -Information Restricted Under Separate Disclosure Regimes and Other Investigative Information	9
Referrals to IFC	1
Additional Information Needed or Unresponsive Requester	32
Records not Found in World Bank Custody	24
Referral to Doing Business, Development Data and Climate Change Knowledge Portals	68
Total	134



# Timeliness of Requests Closed

The Bank acknowledges receipt of written requests for information within five working days, and endeavors to provide a more comprehensive response within 20 working days.

Indicator	Number of Requests	Percentage of Requests (%)
Requests closed within 20 working days	503	86
Requests closed after 20 working days	80	14
Total number of Requests Closed	583	100





## Appeals Concluded by the Access to Information Committee (AIC)

Case number and information requested	Violation of AI Policy	Public Interest	AIC's Decision on the Appeal	Applicable Exception(s)
<u>Case No. AI6310</u>				
Project Preparation and Supervision Costs for all IDA and IBRD Projects		X	Not considered/ Moot	Corporate Administrative Matters; Financial Information.

**Dismissed** means that the appeal is not considered on its merits and is, therefore, rejected, because (a) the requester failed to file the appeal within the required time; (b) the requester failed to provide sufficient information that would reasonably support the appeal; or (c) the requester appealed a matter that the AIC does not have the authority to consider (e.g., decisions by the Board).

**Reversed** means that the AIC has decided to provide access to the information, overturning the World Bank’s initial decision to deny access to the information.

**Upheld** means that the AIC has confirmed the World Bank’s initial decision to deny access to the information.

**Not considered/Moot** means the AIC did not consider the ground(s) of appeal because the information requested was made public after the appeal was filed and prior to the AIC’s consideration.



## Appeals Concluded by the Access to Information Appeals Board (AIAB)

Case number and information requested	AIAB's Decision on the Appeal	Applicable Exception(s)
<u>Case No. AI6479*</u>		
Documents concerning amendments to the Tanzanian Statistics Act	Dismissed	Attorney-Client Privilege; Deliberative Information.

\*The application on this appeal preceded the AIC’s decision on the appeal at the first level of appeals.

For this reason, namely, lack of an AIC decision upholding the Bank’s initial decision to deny access at the time the application was submitted to the AIAB, the AIAB could not admit the application and the appeal was dismissed.

**Dismissed** means that the appeal is not considered on its merits because (a) the requester failed to file the appeal within the required time; (b) the requester failed to provide sufficient information that would reasonably support the appeal; or (c) the requester appealed a matter that the AIAB did not have the authority to consider (e.g., decisions by the Board).

**Reversed** means the AIAB has decided to provide access to the information, overturning the AIC’s decision to uphold the World Bank’s initial denial of access to the information because there was no violation of policy.

**Upheld** Upheld means that the AIAB has confirmed the AIC’s decision to deny access to the information on appeals alleging a violation of the policy; thus, the AIAB confirms the World Bank’s initial decision to deny access to the information.



## Access to Information Policy 10 Year Trends

3,829,339 Number of pages of declassified historical records (FY10-FY20)

Number of pages digitized (FY16-FY20) 722,030

436 Total number of research visits to access the records both in paper and digital format. This includes 360 in-person visits to the Archives' Reading Room and 76 virtual visits to review records online (FY11-FY20)

### Public Access Requests and Appeals

In the last 10 years, the Bank has received 6,263 information requests; 71 appeals have been considered by the Access to Information Committee, and 11 second stage appeals have gone to the external Access to Information Appeals Board.

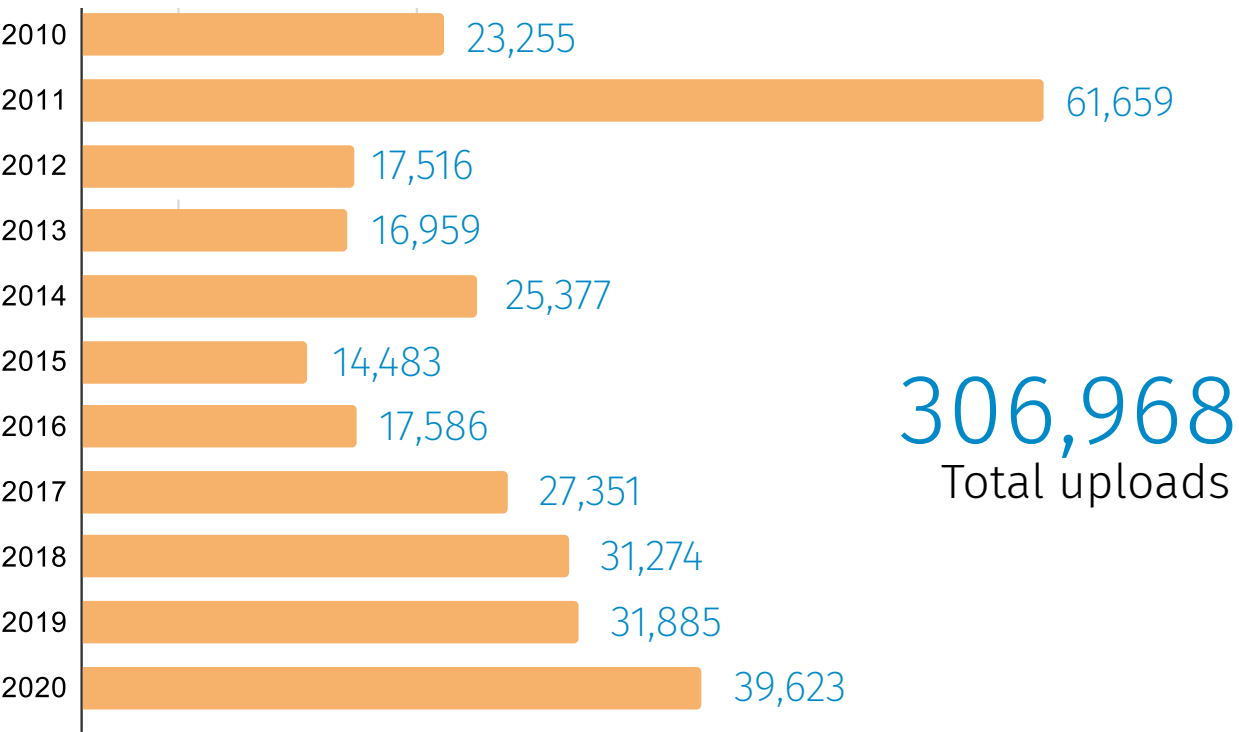
### Proactive Disclosure

The Policy has enabled proactive disclosure of much operational information, research and data over the last 10 years: 39,771,146 downloads from Documents & Reports; 10,086,322 downloads from OKR; 98 million page views and 3,000,000+ downloads on Open Data.



## Access to Information Policy 10 Year Trends

Number of documents added to the Documents and Reports website, fiscal years 2010 through 2020:







## Documents & Reports

is the official disclosure mechanism for more than 380,000 documents starting from the 1940s that enables sharing of the institution's extensive knowledge base and implementing its access to information policy.



## The World Bank Group Archives

offers a variety of online historical resources and information products, such as ISAD(G) finding aids, transcripts of oral history interviews, and exhibits featuring the Archives' collection and World Bank history.



## Projects & Operations

provides access to basic information on all of the World Bank's lending projects from 1947 to the present.



## The Open Knowledge Repository

is the Bank's official open access repository and is interoperable with other open access repositories. It offers a robust range of usage statistics, including those by title, series, country, and author.



## The Open Government Partnership

is a multilateral initiative that secures concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens and fight corruption.



## World Bank Group Finances

makes data related to the WBG's financials available to everybody in a social, interactive, visually compelling, and machine readable format.



## Open Data Initiative

provides free and open access to thousands of development data indicators.



## International Aid Transparency Initiative

is a global campaign to create transparency in the records of how aid money is spent. The World Bank is an IATI member and publishes data on a quarterly basis.

