

COLLABORATORS

U.S. companies provide most of the technology for foreign censors. Secure Computing's SmartFilter has been used by Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Iran. To comply with China's laws, Google has created a censored search engine, Microsoft has taken down offending blogs, and Yahoo has shared information that landed a Chinese journalist in jail.

FREE (FOR NOW)

Vladimir Putin's media crackdown in Russia has largely missed the Web, which is teeming with opposition (although the state has hired hackers, and at least one anti-Putin site has been hacked and replaced with government propaganda). Whether or not to block dissent on the Internet remains a contentious debate in the Kremlin.

THE GREAT FIREWALL

China has built the world's most advanced filtering regime. It can block not just whole domains (like www.amnesty.org) but individual pages within a site (yale.edu is available, but its pages on the Falun Gong are blocked), making its censorship seem less oppressive. Sophisticated technology allows China to automatically search and instantly block new Web content containing politically sensitive keywords—the maintenance of "blacklists" is not required.

MISSION CREEP

Once begun, filtering sometimes expands beyond its original purposes. In Thailand, for instance, filtering systems established legally to stop certain vice-related online activities were then used secretly to block muckraking and political opposition sites.

POPULAR POLICING

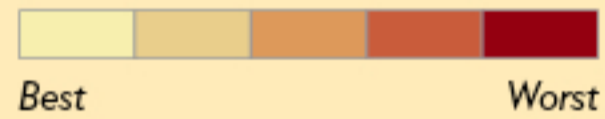
Saudi Arabia blocks most drug, sex, and gambling sites—but gay and lesbian, political, news, and alcohol sites are largely accessible, and the Saudi government is open about its filtering activities. In a 1999 survey, while 45 percent of Saudis thought too many sites were blocked, 41 percent thought the level was reasonable and 14 percent wanted more censorship.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF CENSORSHIP

The OpenNet Initiative has gone inside some of the world's most repressive regimes to see what different states are most afraid of on the Web. The bar graph below shows the percentage of residents in selected countries who have any Internet access at all. The circles on the facing page indicate the percentage of sites blocked by category in those countries in 2004 and 2005. Very small percentages may represent inadvertent blocking.

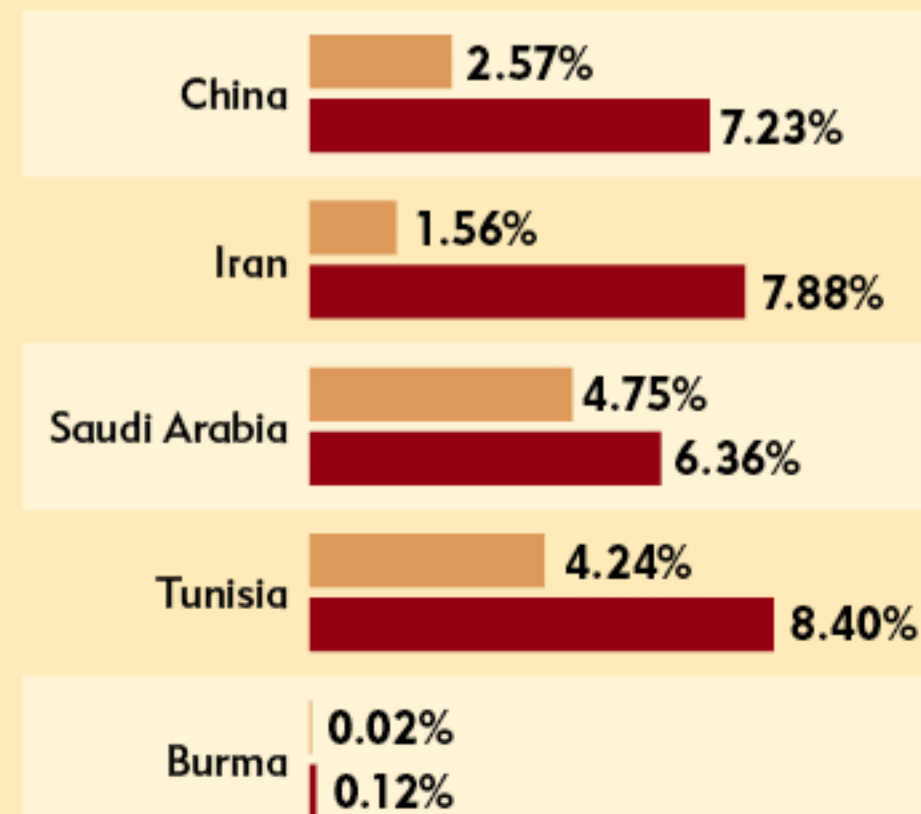
INTERNET FREEDOM

The map to the right is based on the work of Reporters Without Borders, a free-press advocacy group that ranked fifty-five countries in a 2004 survey based on levels of Web censorship, intimidation, and the existence of independent online media.



PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION USING THE INTERNET

2001 2004



PERCENTAGE OF WEB SITES IN EACH CATEGORY THAT WERE BLOCKED

