



# Open Cities Index Results & Report - 2019

# 01 Introduction

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PSD's Open Cities Index is Canada's first benchmarking study for municipal open data initiatives, serving as a tool for public sector organizations to measure the maturity of their open data programs. The 2019 Open Cities Index (OCI) is the fourth year that the survey has been released after first launching in 2015, and subsequently in 2016 and 2017. PSD paused the OCI program in 2018 to focus efforts on the launch of the first Geospatial Maturity Index (GMI), measuring the maturity of GIS programs across North America. This also afforded PSD the opportunity to conduct a more robust consultation and engagement process with open data leaders to ensure that the 2019 OCI survey adequately captured the significant changes underway with municipal open data programs.

Like in former years, the 2019 OCI survey is organized into three sections reflecting the core competencies of an open data program: Readiness, Implementation, and Impact. The Readiness section of the survey explores the capability of an organization to establish and sustain an open data program, such as funding and staff time, as well as buy-in from senior management and council. The Implementation section examines the accessibility of open data – that is, analyzing what data organizations have made publicly available. Finally, the Impact section of the survey measures the benefits that open data has yielded for both the organization and the public.

In the past four years, there have been significant shifts in the perception that senior management and council has of the value of open data and associated open data programs. Open data is foundational to municipal innovation efforts and serves as a mechanism to uphold transparency and accountability in government. Because of this shift, we are seeing more open data programs emerge across the country. Nonetheless, despite the greater acceptance of open data programs, municipalities are still faced with considerable challenges that hinder the ability for open data to proliferate.

This report provides an overview of the results from the 2019 OCI survey, including a list of Canada's Top 20 Most Open Cities, national trends, and insights from survey respondents. It is our intention that the Open Cities Index serves as a tool to learn of the state of open data programs in Canada, while also utilizing the results to further their maturity.

## 02 Canada's Top 20 Most Open Cities

A total of 55 organizations, including 17 new organizations, completed the 2019 OCI survey.

Rank	Organization	Province	Score
1	City of Edmonton	AB	98.82%
2	City of Winnipeg	MB	74.94%
3	City of Ottawa	ON	74.90%
4	City of Calgary	AB	74.84%
5	Ville de Montréal	QC	71.78%
6	City of New Westminster	BC	66.05%
7	Halifax Regional Municipality	NS	55.67%
8	York Region	ON	53.79%
9	City of Mississauga	ON	48.65%
10	City of Guelph	ON	48.24%
11	Niagara Region	ON	46.74%
12	City of Brampton	ON	43.84%
13	City of Brandon	MB	43.55%
14	City of Burlington	ON	41.15%
15	City of Victoria	BC	40.46%
16	City of Welland	ON	37.51%
17	Region of Durham	ON	37.37%
18	City of Kitchener	ON	35.69%
19	City of Hamilton	ON	33.24%
20	City of Prince George	BC	32.76%

For the fourth consecutive time, the City of Edmonton has earned the top spot in the Open Cities Ranking, claiming the title of “Canada’s Most Open City.” The City of Winnipeg climbed one spot from 2017 to secure the second place ranking this year, followed by the City of Ottawa in third, jumping seven spots from their previous ranking. An honourable mention is also in order for the “Most Improved” community; the Region of Durham, Ontario soared an impressive 25 spots to earn a Top 20 spot and ranking 17th overall.

A total of nine provinces were represented among the respondents of the 2019 survey, as well as one territory. Six provinces are represented in the list of Canada’s Top 20 Most Open Cities, signifying the breadth of the open data movement across the country.

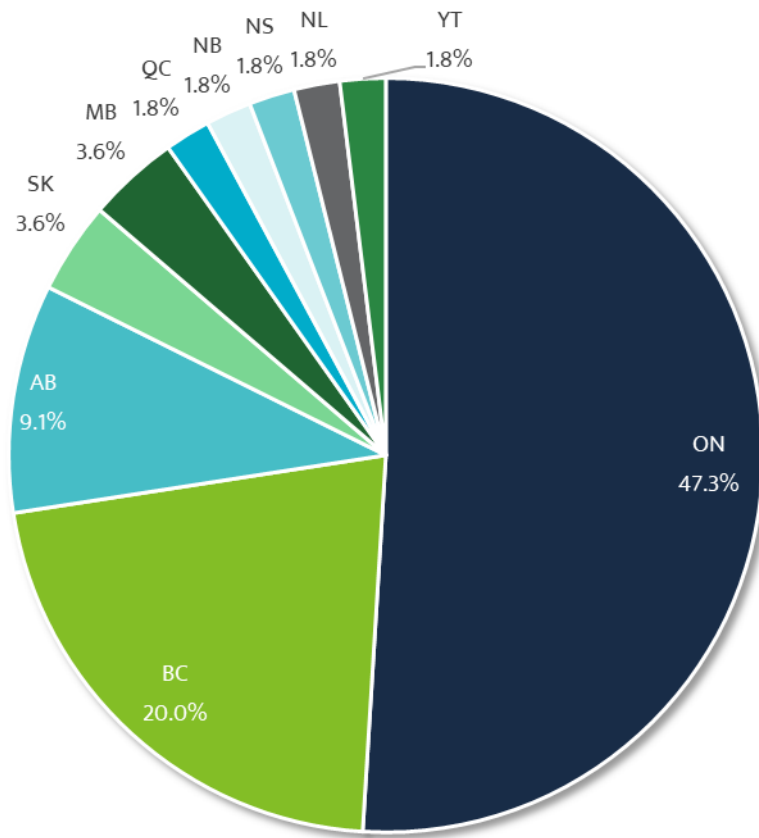


Figure 1. Provincial Participation

## 03 Top Cities

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Receiving a score of 98.8%, the City of Edmonton has demonstrated that their open data program continues to grow in maturity and is an example of how adequate resources can foster open data work. The City's program receives guidance from an open data committee that meets monthly and is bolstered by an open data policy, an open data strategic plan equipped with a roadmap for implementation, and an open data portal. The portal publicly hosts 42 of 43 data sets listed in the Implementation section of the OCI. Edmonton has also implemented software to automate the data publishing process – an important tool for the sustainability of open data initiatives.

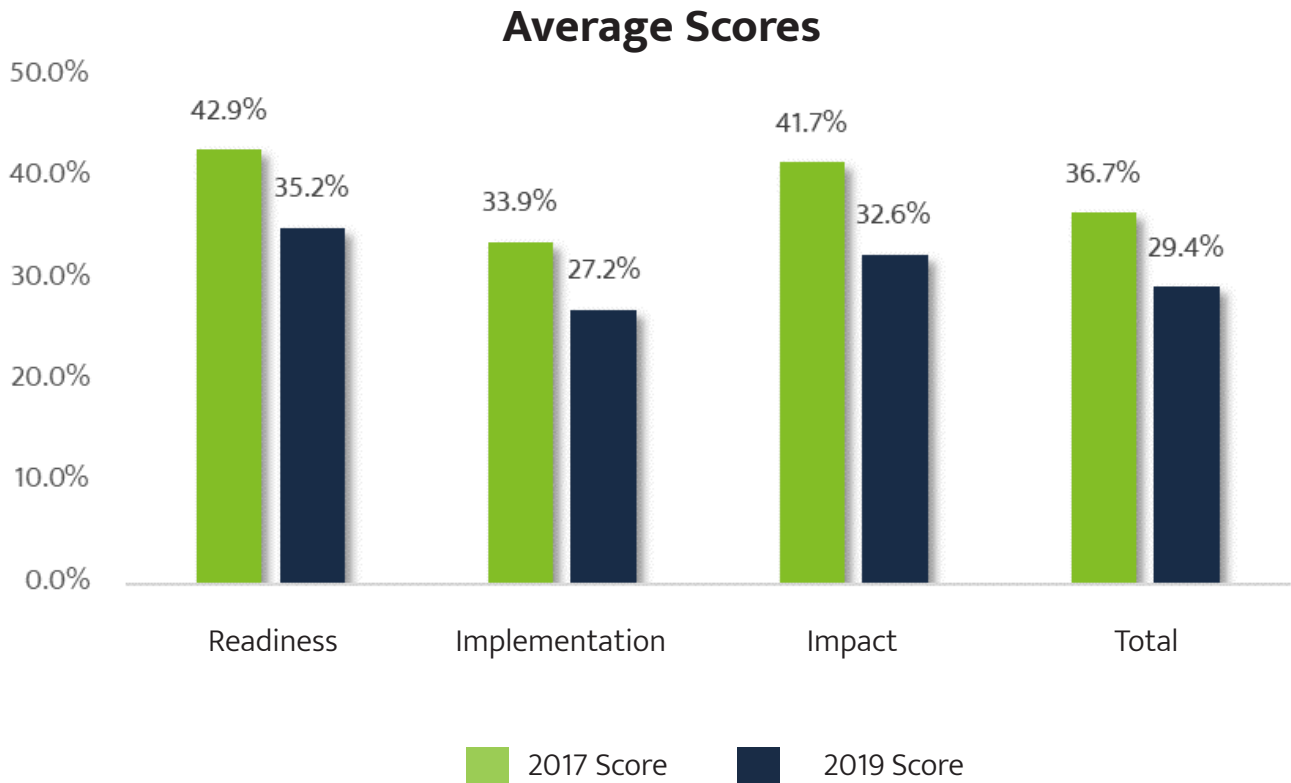
The City of Edmonton has also taken steps to measure the impact of their open data work. The City is one of only five OCI participants that reported measuring the extent to which municipal staff accesses open data for internal operations, and one of 12 respondents to report that a framework is in place to measure the quality of published data sets. Edmonton continues to exemplify exceptional open data work and their efforts aren't without acclaim, earning them the coveted first-place ranking.

In second place, the City of Winnipeg also exemplifies laudable open data programs worth exploring. The City of Winnipeg was one of only 12 organizations reporting having open data personas accompanying their open datasets – these personas help open data users better understand how data may be used based on their particular sector or use case (e.g. researcher vs. entrepreneur). Winnipeg is also one of only 8 organizations that reported implementing other mechanisms to measure the impact of their open data program, namely tracking the usage of their open data by local websites and the internal use of open data by the City itself.

In third place on the heels of Winnipeg, the City of Ottawa is one of only 10 organizations who reported releasing a survey to learn how users are using the data they are downloading. Understanding how users use open data remains one of the greatest challenges for governments, but at the same time, is also one of the most valuable pieces of information required to justify funding an open data program. Having an Open Data Master Plan is already a significant achievement for municipalities, and in the case of the City of Ottawa, their plan was created with feedback from both staff and the public, further demonstrating Ottawa's open data maturity. Finally, with a nod to open data's role in supporting innovation at the local level, the City of Ottawa has included open data within its Smart City Plan.

# 04 National Trends

The overall average score among survey respondents for 2019 is 29.4%, a drop from the 2017 average score of 36.7%. As the following graph depicts, there was a drop in average score within each section of the survey.



The overall lower scores of the 2019 OCI can be attributed in part to the 17 new organizations that filled out this year’s survey. When the Open Cities Index was first launched in 2015, open data was a new realm among public sector organizations and many of the organizations that participated were those who were well-versed in open data. As such, their open data programs reflected more mature programs. In the years since, open data programs are being more widely adopted in the public sector and more organizations – including small communities – are working towards maturing their open data programs, using the Open Cities Index as a resource to pinpoint areas for improvement.

Even more, as the open data ecosystem evolves, so does the methodology and scoring of the Open Cities Index. What defines a mature open data program has changed since the first three years of the survey. A total of 21 questions in the 2019 OCI were modified or added from the 2017 survey, with an additional six new data sets being included in the Implementation section. Questions such as “Does your open data policy align with the 6 principles of the International Open Data Charter?” and “Have you introduced software in order to help automate the open data publishing process?” exemplify new variables to consider when measuring the maturity of an open data program.

Despite the lower average scores compared to those of 2017, the 2019 overall average score is higher than the average in 2015 at 24%. The results of the survey provide insight on how open data programs are making considerable improvements in maturity. In reference to the newly added questions, 35% of respondents noted that their organization’s open data policy aligns with some of the 6 principles of the Open Data Charter and 71% of respondents reported having software to automate the open data publishing process.

Furthermore, compared to 2017 results, the percentage of respondents reporting having implemented an open data plan increased by 75% and those reporting hosting a hackathon rose by 15%. 38% of respondents reported having an open data committee in 2019. 33% of organizations indicated that open data is referenced as a component or principle of their smart city strategy – an impressive achievement considering the question in reference was not included in previous surveys.



“The Open Cities Index has provided Edmonton with an important way to objectively benchmark our Open Data program. It was instrumental in providing us a goal to aspire to and to challenge ourselves with. The City of Edmonton is extremely proud to be ranked #1 in Canada for all four years of the Open Cities Index.”

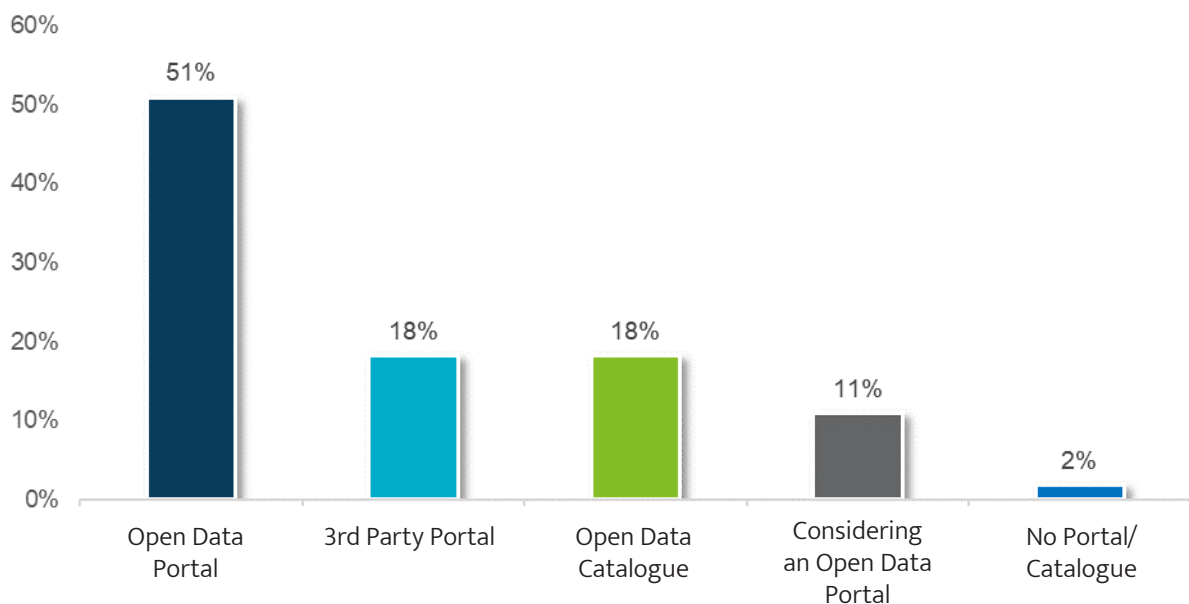
**- Soumya Ghosh, Director of Digital Enablement, City of Edmonton**

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Growing maturity of open data programs can also be exemplified by examining the results captured by the six new data sets of 2019. The following graph depicts organizations who have reported having open data related to the respective data sets:

Data Set	Number of organizations with the data available online in any form	% of organizations
Council Attendance	21	38.2%
Conflicts of Interest	17	30.9%
Energy Consumption and Efficiency Data	16	29.1%
Campaign Contributions	15	27.3%
GHG Emissions	13	23.6%
Parking Citations	6	10.9%

As this graph shows, organizations’ open data portals are growing, which is indicative of both an evolving open data ecosystem and the maturing of open data programs. 51% of respondents noted having an open data portal, with an additional 18% having a third-party portal.



## 05 Conclusion

On behalf of our team at PSD, congratulations to all participating OCI communities. We hope you are excited as we are to see open data programs evolve and grow with your organizations. In the upcoming months, we will delve deeper into the 2019 OCI and provide Insight Reports on the Readiness, Implementation, and Impact sections of the survey that more acutely explore the results of the respective sections, in addition to the unscored questions. Accompanying the Reports will be Virtual Roundtables that we encourage you to tune into to hear from thought leaders in the open data realm and to network with fellow open data stewards.



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