Transparify rates the extent to which think tanks publicly disclose through their websites where their funding comes from.

We visited think tanks’ websites and looked at the funding and donor information disclosed online, including in online annual reports.

Institutions rated with the maximum of five stars are highly transparent about who funds them. Think tanks with four stars are broadly transparent; typically, they do not disclose the precise amounts given, but instead group their donors into several funding brackets. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the funding of think tanks with zero stars or one star is highly opaque as they fail to disclose even the names of some or all of their donors.

Multiple steps reinforce the reliability of Transparify’s rating results:

- Systematic and transparent approach with clear categories
- Ratings by two separate raters
- Adjudication process
- Respondent validation with selected think tanks
- Full replicability of results by third parties

The ratings for the main cohort of think tanks in this report capture the status quo as of January 20, 2016.

Taken from Transparify’s 2016 Report

To see transparify’s full report, go to www.transparify.org/publications-main/
United Kingdom Results

Following British think tanks’ disappointing performance in last year’s rating, Transparify decided to focus its advocacy efforts on the UK during 2015–2016. Using an external list to select institutions, they reached out to 25 think tanks. Of those, 14 decided to put more funding data online, typically increasing their score by three or more stars.

A year ago, only a small minority of those UK think tanks were financially transparent. Today, over half of them allow outsiders to see who funds their research and advocacy. As a result, the UK’s average transparency score has leapt from 2.0 stars to 3.4 stars, placing British think tanks as a group ahead of their peers in most European countries and the United States in terms of funding transparency.

From Transparify’s 2016 Report

1 The Royal United Services Institute informed Transparify that it plans to update its disclosure in July 2016.
Africa Results

The existence of highly transparent think tanks in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa clearly demonstrate that other African institutions can also excel in transparency if they choose to.

For example, the three highly opaque think tanks in Ghana will now find it difficult to argue that there is something unique about their country that prevents them from disclosing who funds them, and think tanks in Nigeria may want to reflect on why they cannot meet the high standards set by some of their peers in other large African states.

From Transparify’s 2016 Report
The Americas Results (excluding the U.S.)

Canada’s policy research and advocacy scene now includes three highly transparent institutions, with the International Institute for Sustainable Development and Publish What You Pay Canada joining transparency veteran CIGI at the top of the table. Sadly, Fraser Institute is still highly opaque and remains at the bottom end of the spectrum.

In Ecuador, Grupo FARO has maintained its excellent performance of previous years, as has Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada in Brazil.

From Transparify’s 2016 Report
Europe Results (non-EU)

Think tanks in Europe have continued their movement towards greater transparency. At the time of our first baseline assessment, only five institutions were transparent, and ten were highly opaque. Today, 15 think tanks are transparent, including 13 that are highly transparent. Only seven highly opaque institutions remain.

Throughout the region, numerous models of transparency now exist. Think tanks aspiring to excellence in Bosnia, Georgia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Ukraine can all turn to local role models for inspiration and guidance. Only Serbia still lacks a local champion for full disclosure.

From Transparency’s 2016 Report
Within the European Union, transparency is slowly but surely becoming the norm among leading think tanks. The International Crisis Group improved further on last year’s strong performance by disclosing the precise sums received from each of its donors, and Hungary’s Eötvös Károly Institute became highly transparent in one giant leap. Transparency International’s European Union office also joined the ranks of European organizations recognized for their outstanding transparency.

From Transparify’s 2016 Report

2 FRIDE was assessed in late 2015. It ceased operating at the end of 2015.
South Asia & Oceania

India’s Centre for Policy Research and Pakistan’s Social Policy and Development Centre continue to set an example for South Asian think tanks with their excellent level of transparency.

Overall performance remains disappointing in South Asia. Despite their global aspirations, many prominent policy research institutes in the world’s largest democracy still fall short of global transparency standards.

Oceania presents an equally mixed picture. The Centre for Independent Studies (Australia) and the Centre for Strategic Studies (New Zealand) are highly opaque. They do not even disclose the names of the donors who fund their work. In contrast, the Lowy Institute does disclose donors’ names, but does not reveal who pays how much. Only the Australian Institute of International Affairs and the Development Policy Centre demonstrate broadly transparent levels of disclosure.

From Transparify’s 2016 Report
In the United States, three additional major think tanks have become transparent. Atlantic Council, Center for American Progress and Center for Strategic and International Studies have all grouped their donors into financial brackets, allowing citizens and policy makers to gain insight into their funding structures.

The average transparency score among Transparify’s original population of U.S. think tanks is now 3.3, up from just 2.1 when we first assessed them in late 2013. The field is becoming increasingly polarized between a growing transparent majority and a small highly opaque minority, with fewer and fewer institutions remaining in the middle ground.

From Transparify’s 2016 Report

United States

Center for Global Development
Natural Resource Governance Institute
Pew Research Center
Stimson Center
Woodrow Wilson Center
World Resources Institute
Financial Transparency Coalition
Global Integrity
GovLab @ NYU
International Budget Partnership
Open Contracting Partnership
Publish What You Pay - United States
Sunlight Foundation
Atlantic Council
Brookings Institution
Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Center for a New American Security
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Center for American Progress
Center for Strategic and International Studies
Center on International Development
Cato Institute
Council on Foreign Relations
Foreign Policy Research Institute
Baker III Institute for Public Policy
Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs
Center for International Development
Human Rights Watch
National Bureau of Economic Research
United States Institute of Peace
American Enterprise Institute
Hoover Institution
Hudson Institute
Open Society Foundations

www.orthinktanks.org