



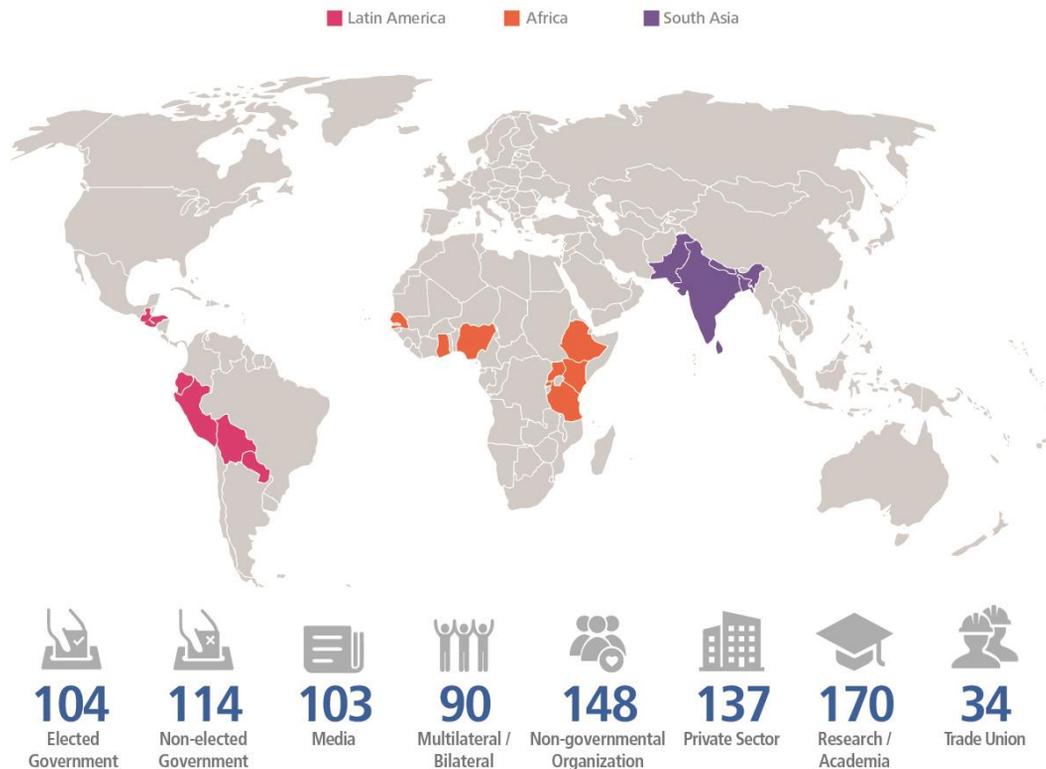
# Policy Community Survey: Overview of Findings

The Policy Community Survey (PCS) was conducted to better understand the perceptions of high-level policy stakeholders in select countries in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) commissioned GlobeScan, an insights and strategy consultancy, to conduct the survey at three points in time – in 2011, 2013, and 2018 – to develop an understanding of the policy community while benchmarking and tracking changes in perceptions of think tanks over time.

This policy brief outlines some of the key findings from this survey on the information needs of the policy community and their view of think tanks. To learn more about the study, refer to the link at the end of the brief.

## Highlights

- Information on the SDGs is among the most highly sought-after types of information in 2018.
- There is a high demand for research on gender equality and women’s empowerment across all regions.
- Collaboration and partnerships are seen as vital to ensure the long-term sustainability of national think tanks.



\*Please note that results of the PCS should not be considered statistically representative of the policy community at large as this would be impossible to achieve given the unknown size of the policy community across the 20 countries covered in the study. However, findings should be viewed as valid and valuable given the fact that respondents are highly informed senior level officials from the policy-making community and data over the past three waves of the study have been highly consistent across each of the three regions. All figures shown in this brief represent data from the 2018 global survey unless otherwise stated.



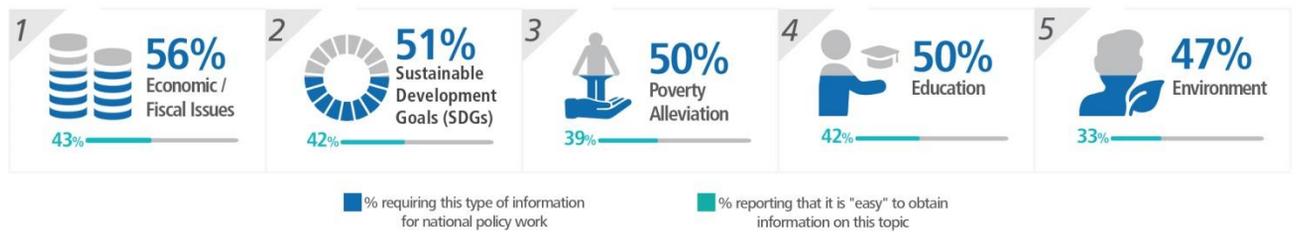
### Information Needs of Policy Makers Have Remained Fairly Consistent

The information needs of policy makers have evolved slightly over the years, with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a new metric for 2018 – ranking as one of the most important issue areas. The SDGs are cross-cutting and touch on a wide variety of issues, which in part may explain why they are in high demand. However, the needs of policy makers overall are similar to previous waves of research, with economic/fiscal issues ranking at the top in terms of importance for

supporting their public policy work, along with topics related to poverty alleviation, education, and the environment.

When it comes to the ease of obtaining information on topics related to policy-making, access appears to be moderate across all regions, with roughly between one-third and around half of stakeholders reporting easy access to the topics of most importance to them.

### Global Average of the Top Five Types of Information Needed by The Policy-Making Community

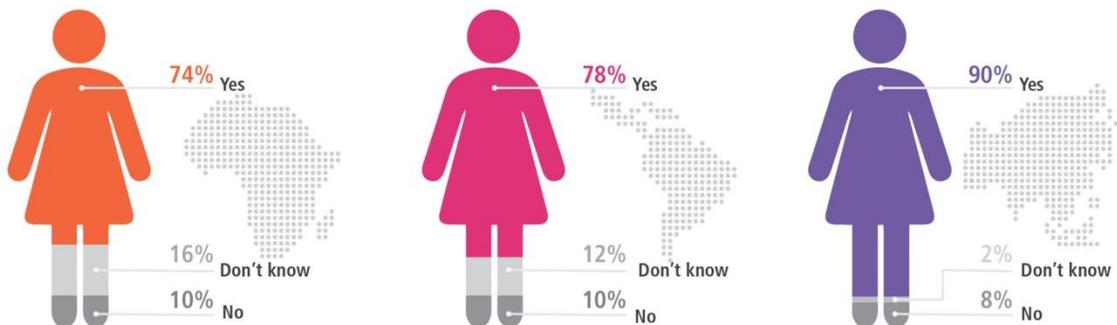


### There Is a Strong Demand for Gender Research

Across all regions, a sizeable majority believe there is demand for more research on gender equality and women’s empowerment in their country, particularly in South Asia where nine out of ten hold this belief. However, despite this high demand, the ease of obtaining information on gender issues is relatively more difficult than most other topics tested in Latin America and South Asia.

The suggested research topics of most interest to respondents were fairly consistent across the three regions, with financial empowerment, equal compensation, access to health and education, the eradication of domestic violence, and the role and representation of women in politics frequently cited.

### Demand for Research on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Research





## Quality, Relevance, and Credibility are Top Reasons for Turning to National Think Tanks

National think tanks are perceived to be producing relatively high-quality research across all regions. Quality is the most important driving force behind national think tank use in Africa and Latin America, while in South Asia, respondents are more

concerned with credibility. The relevance of research to users' needs is also seen as a very important factor driving preferred usage across all three regions.

### Top Three Reasons for Turning to National Think Tanks

Africa	Latin America	South Asia
 1. High Quality of Research	 1. High Quality of Research	 1. Credibility
 2. High Quality of Staff / Researchers	 2. Relevance of Research to Needs	 2. Relevance of Research to Needs
 3. Relevance of Research to Needs	 3. Credibility	 3. High Quality of Research

Although national think tanks enjoy relatively high ratings of quality, stakeholders note that improved quality of research is the most important factor in enhancing the performance of national think tanks. Therefore, this a factor that must always remain of primary importance and where continued improvement is always possible.

Improving quality can in part be accomplished by ensuring that think tanks have a sufficient number of trained and experienced staff, which is also among the most important factors rated by stakeholders for improving performance. However, high quality research is not the only force driving usage. Issues around accessibility and limited awareness also continue to limit the potential of national think tanks.

Stakeholders echo recommendations from previous years that materials need to be more audience-friendly, with less jargon, in order to appeal to a wider audience. Also, awareness of national think tanks is particularly low in some countries and respondents in all regions report

that they are most likely to learn about national think tanks from secondary sources such as colleagues or through the media. This shows that there is an opportunity for national think tanks to reach out more directly to stakeholders by better utilizing formats that respondents find most useful, such as websites, reports and publications, and social media.

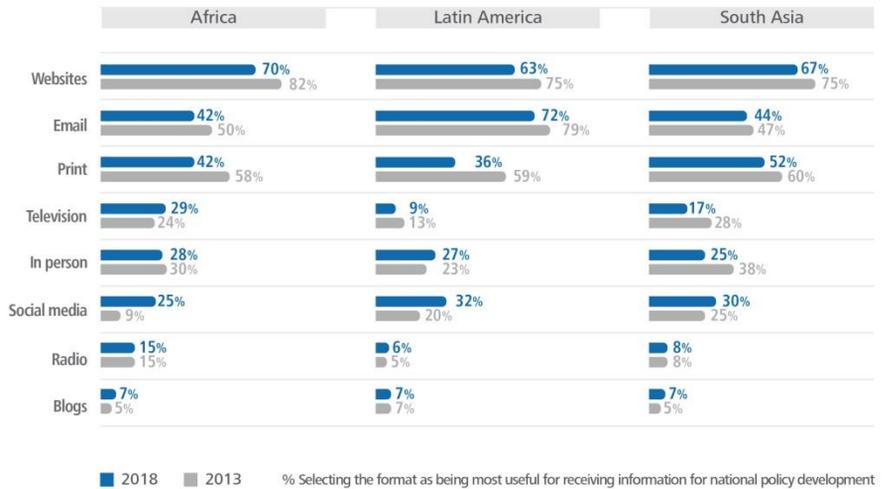
In an environment of shrinking national and donor budgets, policy community members also urge national think tanks to focus their efforts on developing partnerships and to collaborate with a wider range of organizations to diversify funding sources and limit political partisanship. Greater collaboration with local organizations can also increase awareness and relevance of research outputs which will be more applicable to the local context and more attractive to local donors and policy makers.



## Perceived Usefulness of Traditional Media Sources Is Declining, While Interest in Social Media Increases

Media sources such as websites, email, and print remain the preferred formats for receiving information for national policy development, although perceived usefulness of these formats has dropped slightly since 2013. While the perceived usefulness of social media is moderate, it has notably increased since 2013. This may be indicative of a downward trend of traditional formats, such as print and email, in favour of social media sources.

Most Useful Format for Receiving Information for National Policy Development



### Conclusion

The information needs of the policy making community surveyed have been fairly consistent over the past ten years with economic issues, poverty alleviation, and education remaining key areas of interest – and are now joined by the UN SDGs.

Members of the policy community continue to hold national think tanks in high regard, particularly in South Asia and Latin America, as a source for research-based evidence that can inform national policy development.

Building up the internal capacity and performance of think tanks continues to be a top priority for potential improvements. Making reports more understandable and audience-friendly, as well as improving the awareness of services, are also very important to stakeholders in improving think tank performance.

Finally, despite a slight decline in perceived usefulness, websites, print, and email remain as the primary preferred formats for receiving information that can inform national policy development.

### About GlobeScan

GlobeScan is an insights and strategy firm that helps companies, NGOs, and governmental organizations build the trust they need to create enduring value for themselves and for society.

### About the Think Tank Initiative

The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) helped to strengthen 43 policy research institutions in 20 developing countries over ten years through a mix of core funding and support for capacity development. TTI is a multi-funder partnership between Canada’s International Development Research Center (IDRC), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). To learn more, visit:

<http://www.thinktankinitiative.org/>

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Read the full report here:

<https://bit.ly/2J1uQYG>