

## Executive Summary

Digital data exists in human-defined contexts. All types of data, and the complex interrelationship among data, human groups, and norms, constitute the Datasphere. How we govern this Datasphere affects society in profound ways and will shape our capacity to deal with global challenges, such as climate change and future pandemics.

This Datasphere Governance Atlas is the first of its kind. It aims to provide a better understanding of the data governance ecosystem, its highlights and potential gaps, supporting strategies for addressing the challenges and leveraging opportunities associated with data. This first publication is part of a larger research project to promote an understanding of the dynamics among actors and norms in the vast domain of data governance.

The Atlas maps trends by actors and across regions and sectors, painting a broad picture of the diverse data ecosystem. It also provides a common vocabulary – and a proposed categorization – to bridge conceptual differences around data governance. As the data landscape evolves, so, too, do organizations and stakeholders that contribute to advancing data governance and policy, and

so does the complexity of the issue. The Atlas is intended to reflect this variability.

Specifically, the Atlas brings to the fore original and latest information about more than 260 actors who participate in the global data ecosystem, including their geographic location and scope, as well as their activities' focus, objectives, and outcomes. The methodology consisted of sampling organizations, both intergovernmental and others (governmental, non-governmental, private, academic/research, and coalition/alliance), and conducting qualitative analysis of public information related to their work on data governance and policy. A quantitative analysis of 220 organizations (excluding intergovernmental ones) was also conducted. Descriptive statistics summarize general characteristics of these organizations and initiatives, including their areas of practice and intended outcomes. Regional and cross-regional analysis of the actors and their activities identify existing trends and set the basis for recommendations for future research. The results provide a large overview of organizations and initiatives from almost every corner of the globe. Identification of relevant actors will continue on an ongoing basis.

**Some findings based on classification categories of the sample of 220 organizations (excluding the 41 intergovernmental organizations) include:**



### Nature

The majority of the 220 organizations in the organizational database, 61.4% (135), are non-governmental groups. Coalitions, formed by three or more entities, represent the second largest group, 15% (33), followed by research organizations, 13.2% (29).



### Objectives

The leading objective among the organizations is data governance, with 40.5% (89) documenting and researching emerging data governance models and experiences. Data repositories make up 29.1% (64) of the organizational database.



### Activities

The most popular activities used to execute the organizations' missions are research, 69.5% (139), and networking, 67% (134).



### Geographic scope

The largest group of the organizations, 56.5% (113), aim to have a global impact. The next major group represents organizations focusing on domestic impact, 36.5% (73).



### Sectors

The majority of the organizations, 58.5% (117), do not seem to cover any specific topic/sector. Among those organizations that focus on advancing data governance aspects within a sector, environment is the leading theme with 20% (40), followed by the health sector, 19.5% (39), and the justice sector, 12% (24).



### Outcomes

The community building outcome is leading among the organizations with 69% (138), followed by knowledge building with 66.5% (133).

Furthermore, the organizational database contributes to advancing discussions around data governance in two substantive ways. First, a detailed, albeit not all-inclusive, data governance lexicon, developed in the process of content analysis, is intended to help bridge disparate approaches to data governance: it will enable more effective discussions among diverse actors across regions and sectors. This lexicon will be further developed in the future to support more actors, collaborations, and a review of the second pillar of the Datasphere concept – the norms. Second, the organizational database provides a foundation to a series of research questions about the actors, norms, and data to guide further investigations in order to develop innovative tools, frameworks and concepts to address data governance.

Questions to further this research include: (1) What other actors are out there? (2) How do all these initiatives relate to each other and potentially contribute to a collaboratively governed Datasphere? (3) How can various efforts better inform each other? (4) How to bring together global, regional, and national efforts to support cross-sectoral and cross-regional interoperability (legal, technical, and in terms of vocabulary)? (5) What models of data governance do exist, and how can they unlock the value of data for all? (6) What values around data

governance, if any, are shared widely by many actors across sectors?

The Data Governance Atlas creates new knowledge and adds to the body of research not only on data use and governance but also provides insights to international organizations and their activities across sectors and geographies. The organizational database points to a wide range of investments in data across the globe – through knowledge, skills, values, and services. The Atlas is the first extensive database of organizations that serves as a benchmark for future inquiries. It will keep evolving through regular updates.

The Datasphere Governance Atlas showcases the numerous initiatives that already try to develop innovative approaches and collaborations around data governance. This evidence highlights the need for multistakeholder cooperation to develop and agree on common language, concepts, and priorities to foster a new, more holistic approach. The debate on data governance is both global, as so many of the organizations aspire to be, and local, as most of them are. It is marked by a high level of complexity and thus requires a nuanced and systemic approach. A milestone today, the Atlas helps show the way to the Datasphere of tomorrow.