General Perceptions of Open Government Data in Qatar: Usefulness and Trust

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In 2019, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology launched the Qatar Open Data Portal as a national platform for open data and information, in line with international standards. The portal is one of the most well-known open government data (OGD) initiatives in Qatar. Since 2023, the country's Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA) has been entrusted with the management and operation of the portal, and on July 16, 2023, the PSA announced on its website that it had launched the second version of the Qatar Open Data Portal. A representative sample of the Qatari population consisting of 1,426 Qatari nationals and white-collar expatriates was chosen and interviewed using computer-assisted telephone interviewing. The respondents' views were analyzed, and the results are presented in this report.

Sixteen statements on the usefulness of OGD and trust in the use of this type of data were employed to ascertain the respondents' thoughts about Qatar's OGD initiative and its impact on the relationship between the government and the public. The respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement with the statements, which addressed their OGD usage in terms of the usefulness of the data and the quality of the information and knowledge they required. Overall, the Qatari nationals and white-collar expatriates reported high levels of agreement (*strongly agree* and *somewhat agree*) with all the statements.

Usefulness of using OGD in Qatar

The results show that 95% of the Qataris and 97% of the white-collar expatriates believed that OGD are helpful in work and life.

Around 94% of the Qataris and 97% of the white-collar expatriates reported that having access to OGD could make their decision-making processes easier—for example, in transportation and education.

Figure 1: Usefulness of using OGD1
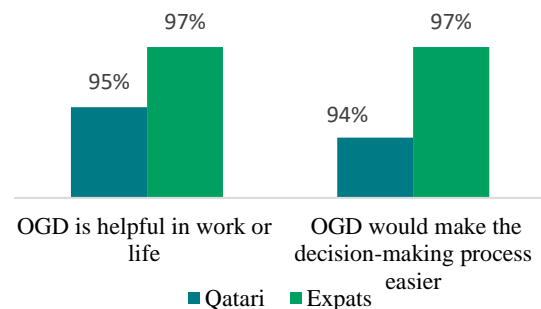
In addition, 92% of the Qataris and 95% of the white-collar expatriates agreed with the following statement: "The availability of OGD on public services, such as education, health care, and social care, assists me in making more informed decisions." Regarding the importance of OGD availability, 96% of the Qataris and 97% of the white-collar expatriates indicated that the availability of such data was critical for enhancing citizens' and residents' lives. Although the majority of the respondents strongly believed this, the results varied significantly between

the different age groups. Only 93% of the youngest age group (i.e., 24 years of age or younger) agreed with the relevant statement, compared to almost all the respondents in the other age groups (p-value = 0.0082).

Figure 2: Usefulness of using OGD2
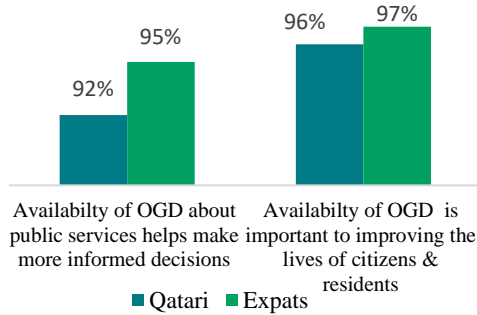
**Benefits of using OGD in Qatar**

The findings regarding the benefits of utilizing publicly available government data in Qatar reveal that 86% of the Qataris and 89% of the white-collar expatriates agreed that they were aware of the advantages of accessing OGD. In both groups, just 3% of the respondents said that they had never used public government data. Both the Qataris (88%) and white-collar expatriates (94%), with some variation by education level, agreed significantly with the statement "OGD help reduce fraud." Compared to most of the respondents who had attended school or university, roughly three-quarters (76%) of those who had never attended school or university agreed with this statement.

Public trust in OGD

Trust in technology and government have been shown to be key success factors in e-government. According to Teo et al. (2008), when citizens trust the government and technology, they are more likely to use government services. It is also believed that the trusted party will

act in a publicly responsible manner to meet the expectations of the trusting party.[1] According to the results presented in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents provided positive evaluations of the statements concerning the trustworthiness of the country's OGD and government agencies and the belief that the government will keep these data safe. Most of the respondents also expressed trust in the technology employed by Qatari government entities to administer the services of the OGD portal. Furthermore, the findings show that the respondents were generally well disposed toward countries that provide access to government data, and they regarded these governments as more trustworthy than those that did not provide such access.

Figure 3. Perceived Attitude towards Open Government Data-Trust
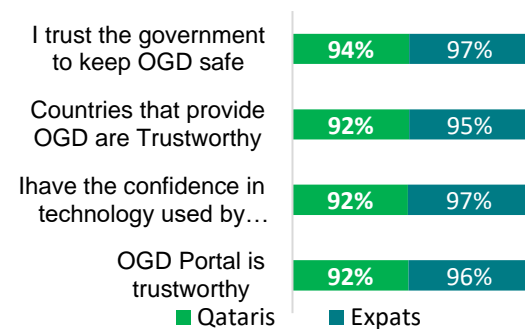
According to the survey's results, the interviewed Qatari citizens and expatriates thought that the country's OGD portal is reliable and user friendly. In light of this, it is highly recommended that Qatar continues developing and improving its OGD platform as this will further enhance the credibility and usability of the tool. Additionally, Qatar needs to guarantee that all the data on the portal are secure and that new, trustworthy data are added on a regular basis.

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References

1. Teo, T. S., Srivastava, S. C., & Jiang, L. I. (2008).Trust and electronic government success: An empirical study. Journal of management information systems, 25(3), 99-132.

Policy Recommendations

1. The Qatari government is strongly advised to keep developing and enhancing its OGD platform, as this will improve the tool's credibility and usability.
2. Qatar should ensure the safety of all the information on the platform, and it should regularly update it by incorporating new, reliable data.
3. The government of Qatar should persist in effectively managing and utilizing data to maximize their benefits for both citizens and expatriates.