Open Think Tank Directory

2019 THINK TANK STATE OF THE SECTOR

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Additionally more than 400 individuals all over the world have been contacted to ask for suggestions of organisations to include in the database.

Website development

Quaternary Consulting (Jeff Knezovich) developed the first version of the website and Soapbox updated the website and integrated it into the On Think Tanks site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very grateful to the team that made the Open Think Tank Directory and this report possible; to users of the directory for making our work relevant; to our extended network of associates, friends, colleagues and funders for lending a hand in the scoping exercises and for helping us make sense of the data; and to think tanks themselves for engaging with us and providing data for their profiles.

FUNDING

The development and maintenance of the Open Think Tank Directory has been, and remains, possible thanks to many funders. The Open Society Foundations gave us the initial grant that made the directory possible in 2016; the Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change Latin America from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. funded a scoping of organisations in Latin America with a specific focus on environment and climate change; UNICEF funded a scoping of organisations working in their priority regions and issues; Robert Bosch Stiftung funded a scoping of organisations worldwide focusing on topics related to migration, peace and security, inequality and environment; and finally our grant from the Hewlett Foundation makes the management, improvement, update and analysis of the Open Think Tank Directory possible.

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7

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8

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1

INTRODUCTION

Questions answered in this chapter

- How did this report come to be?
- Why does the Open Think Tank Directory exist?
- What are the inclusion criteria?
- What is the methodology for gathering data?
- How is the report structured?

INTRODUCTION

The problem with think tank data. The Open Think Tank Directory was born because information about think tanks, and other policy research centres, expertise bodies, etc. was difficult to find. Data on them is often disorganised with several sites and projects compiling incomplete lists. And when seemingly detailed information exists it tends to be not available to the public. So, it is difficult for think tanks to find each other, for the public to know which centres exist and for funders to know which ones work on which topic. It is therefore problematic, if not impossible, to answer questions like: What is the average staff size of a think tank? How many women lead think tanks? How many followers does the average think tank have? Are there any differences by sector, country, region or the gender of the leader? And without these answers we cannot begin to ask the most important question: why?

Our solution. To overcome the of shortage of publicly available information, we at On Think Tanks began working in 2016 in an Open Think Tank Directory that was open, public and maintained through the participation of think tanks themselves. The directory was developed, and is maintained, to be a public good, and aims to benefit the entire think tank and evidence-informed-policy community. Through it, centres can identify potential collaborators and connect with peers, funders and other stakeholders; for the growing body of scholars who study think tanks, the directory provides a sample frame for their investigations; interested people can browse the profiles of think tanks and also get an overview of the sector; and funders can identify organisations that focus on their agendas. Additionally, the public and open nature of the database (downloadable through this link) helps increase the sector's transparency.

What is a think tank? Thinks tanks are difficult to define as the term applies to various organisations with different characteristics, development pathways and even different business models and structures. Organisations labelled think tanks include for-profit consultancies, university-based research centres, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), public policy bodies, foundations, advocacy organisations and membership-based associations, to name a few. But despite their differences – and for the purpose of the Open Think Tank Directory – we have defined think tanks as a diverse group of knowledge and engagement organisations that have as their (main) objective to undertake research, generate knowledge and use evidence-informed arguments to inform and/or influence policy and its outcomes. To do this, they perform a range of functions, including undertaking research, aiming to influence the public agenda, monitoring how specific policies are carried out, suggesting, or advocating for policy changes, and so on.[1]

Criteria for inclusion. Given this definition the inclusion criteria for the directory is broad:

- The organisation must carry out some form of research with the aims of informing public policies – those doing research without a public policy angle are not included, neither are organisations mainly focusing on advocacy and not carrying out research.
- The organisation must have an independent identity (this is particularly relevant in the case of university-affiliated centres).
- The organisation needs to be formally registered in a country (but it can undertake research or influence anywhere in the world.

Description of the database. The directory currently[2] features public information (or information that should be public) on more than 3,440 organisations from around the world. This number includes organisations that are now defunct and organisations that have been deemed boundary organisations.[3] It registers information on almost 100 variables for each organisation,[4] including their name, website, brief description, the topics they focus on, contact details, business model, founders' names, current leaders, staff numbers, social media channels and followers, publication numbers, turnover and more.[5]

The nature of the Open Think Tank Directory. Developing and maintaining the Open Think Tank Directory is no easy task. We continuously work on its improvement (both the database and the website) for it to be as complete and up to date as possible. It is important to note that the nature of the database and the information it holds make it a *live* tool. Organisations grow, evolve, branch out, merge or close, they also experience changes in leadership, focus, and functions, hence data on them is always changing. Consequently, the database is never fully complete, but always being updated.

[1] *For more on the definition and functions of thinktanks see our series on Think Tanks: definition and terminology.*

[2] *At the time of publishing in November 2020.*

[3] *Boundary organisations are those that somewhat met the criteria for inclusion but cannot be deemed think tanks as their characteristics and main functions are different.*

[4] *Some of which are longitudinal data since 2016 e.g. name of leader 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.*

[5] *Full list of variables can be seen here.*

Data collection. The directory has been compiled and populated using a mixed approach: web searches in google to find existing lists; web searches to find organisations (looking for terms such as think tank, policy research centre or thought centre in different languages) in each country; suggestions of inclusion by country and regional experts; and by direct submission by think tanks. All organisations are reviewed to verify they fit the inclusion criteria and either accepted, accepted but deemed 'boundary', or not accepted. Information is retrieved from think tanks' websites and in some cases submitted by organisations themselves. We have established a review criterion for transparency of the quality of the data and include the sources of the information in the profile of each organisation.

Chart 1

Data collection methodology

Identify organisations	• Consulted public databases • Web searches • Consulted think tank experts • Submissions by think tanks
Verify organisations	• Consulted think tank experts or think tankers in specific countries • Quick review of organisation´s website to check if it fits the criteria
Gather information	• Organisation´s websites • Direct contact with organisations
Verify information	• Maintain oversight of entries and establish a review criteria: Imported, Authenticated and Reviewed

The Open Think Tank Directory does not make any evaluation of the organisations it features.

Featured organisations. We have made efforts to offer a complete overview of think tanks worldwide, but we do not claim for this to be a final and complete list of think tanks in each country. The sample of think tanks it holds might be biased as these are organisations that we either have identified or that have reached out to us, and hence are part of our extended network. This does risk missing out some think tanks that are not included in our expanded network; however, we are always receiving and looking for suggestions of organisations to add. And we urge readers and users of the Open Think Tank Directory to identify any issues in the data and suggest the inclusion of organisations we have inadvertently omitted. Additionally, and due to the directory's inclusive nature, there are many small centres featured – not only the best or most well-known ones. Nevertheless, we believe that the organisations the directory holds represent a good overview of think tanks and is a step towards a comprehensive database. We hope that with each passing year we can provide an increasingly accurate representation of the sector.

The report. This report is the first one we have produced using data from the directory and it is based on an analysis of 2019[6] data from 2,802 active think tanks.[7][8] The report is structured as follows: first we give an overview of the data and the level of completeness of each variable; we then move on to describe the regional breakdown, topics of focus, date founded, gender of founder, gender of leaders, business models, social media, staff, publications, turnover, and an analysis of descriptions and straplines. We compare and analyse each variable with each other to provide a detailed analysis of the data. The report ends with key conclusions and ideas for further development of the database.

We hope that this report provides a rich and useful overview of the sector across the world. As we continue to update the database, we will produce a yearly report.

[6] The data is from the previous year to that in which the report is published as we need to wait for the end of the year for some variables such as turnover and publication numbers.

[7] It does not include organisations that featured in the directory but that are defunct or deemed boundary.

[8] The cut-off date for inclusion in the report was August 2020. Organisations registered after this date have not been included in the analysis.

2

OVERVIEW OF THE DATA

Questions answered in this chapter

- How representative are the findings?
- How complete is the data for organisations included?
- Are there any differences in data completeness by region?

2

OVERVIEW OF THE DATA

This report is based on an analysis of 2019 data from 2,802 active think tanks[9] that feature in the directory. The directory has information on almost 100 variables for each organisation, (the full list of variables is available here) and for this report we have used a selection of those (see Annex 1 for the list and description of variables used in this report) that offered the most interesting findings and results.

Given the nature of the methodology and the data available, the findings are representative at the sample level. The report is not a complete sector analysis, but an analysis of the sample of think tanks that the Open Think Tank Directory holds. We hope that with time we can accrue data for all think tanks worldwide and produce a representative analysis. However, the report does present an interesting overview of the sector and gives useful indications of existing trends.

The data in the directory has been sourced from available information on organisations' websites and social media profiles, and a small number of organisations (6%) supplied the information themselves. The information that think tanks offer on their websites varies greatly; some offer little more than a short description, while others display great detail. Moreover, the structure of websites is diverse; some websites are easily navigated, and information can be found after one or two clicks, while in others further digging is needed. All think tanks aim to show on their websites what they do and how, but not all do so thoroughly or even clearly, and in many cases information is missing (e.g. who founded the organisation, staff profiles, contact information etc.[10]) Because of this, sourcing and completing data for each organisation is difficult and the database holds more information on some variables than others, and for some regions more than others.

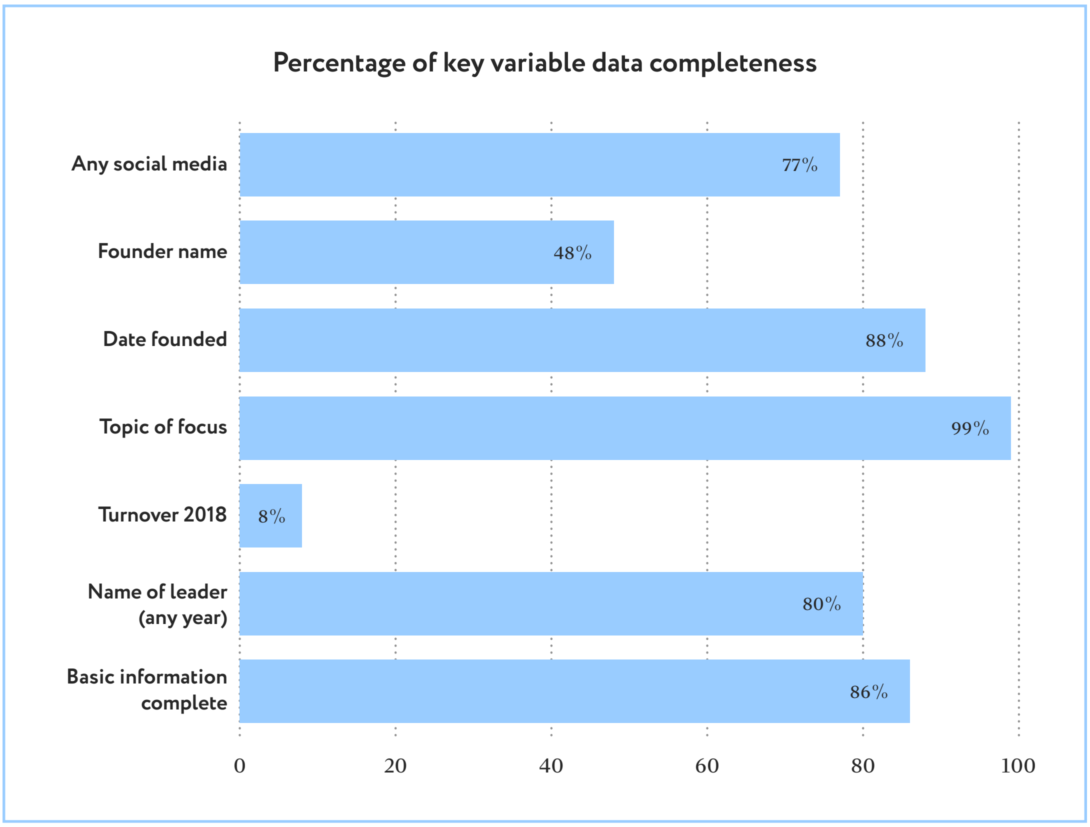
Chart 2 shows the total percentage of data completeness for key variables. Those with the lowest levels of completeness are turnover 2018 (8%) and founder's name (48%). Financial information data (turnover) has been the most difficult to source for many reasons: organisations don't always share

[9] *As mentioned, the results and analysis in this report do not include defunct or boundary organisations.*

[10] *For more on differences on the information offered by think tanks on their websites see our article "What we learned from looking at more than 3000 websites"*

their financial information or annual reports,[11] or they bury the information deep inside their websites. Information on founders has also been difficult to source as not all organisations display this on their website.

Chart 2



Note: Basic information is: name in original language, name in English, website, description, city, country, address, general contact email, operating language(s), topics and date founded.

Table 1 shows data completion by region and it shows that most have a similar percentage of completeness, with a few variations. On social media, Eastern Asia has a markedly smaller percentage of data completion, this is because we register platforms that are not widely used Eastern Asia (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram), and even banned in the case of China.

The charts, tables and analysis in this report are based on those variables on which we have the most information.

[11] *See the publications by Transparify for more references on this.*

Table 1

Data completeness in regions by key variables

Region	Variables						
	Basic information complete	Name of leader (any year)	Turnover 2018	Topic of focus	Date founded	Founder name	Any social media
Africa	85%	73%	10%	99%	87%	40%	80%
Eastern Asia	92%	81%	16%	100%	92%	39%	35%
Latin America & the Caribbean	89%	64%	8%	100%	89%	34%	95%
Oceania	78%	94%	1%	98%	80%	50%	84%
South & Eastern Europe	87%	69%	10%	99%	89%	46%	78%
Southern & South-Eastern Asia	89%	76%	5%	100%	91%	57%	87%
USA & Canada	82%	94%	2%	99%	82%	55%	77%
Western & Central Asia	93%	62%	7%	100%	93%	63%	80%
Western & Northern Europe	80%	94%	9%	99%	88%	52%	81%

Note: Basic information is: name in original language, name in English, website, description, city, country, address, general contact email, operating language(s), topics and date founded.

3

REGION

Questions answered in this chapter

- How many organisations are there per region?
- What is the median number of think tanks per country?
- Which countries feature more think tanks in the directory?
- Which city has the most think tanks worldwide?

3 REGION

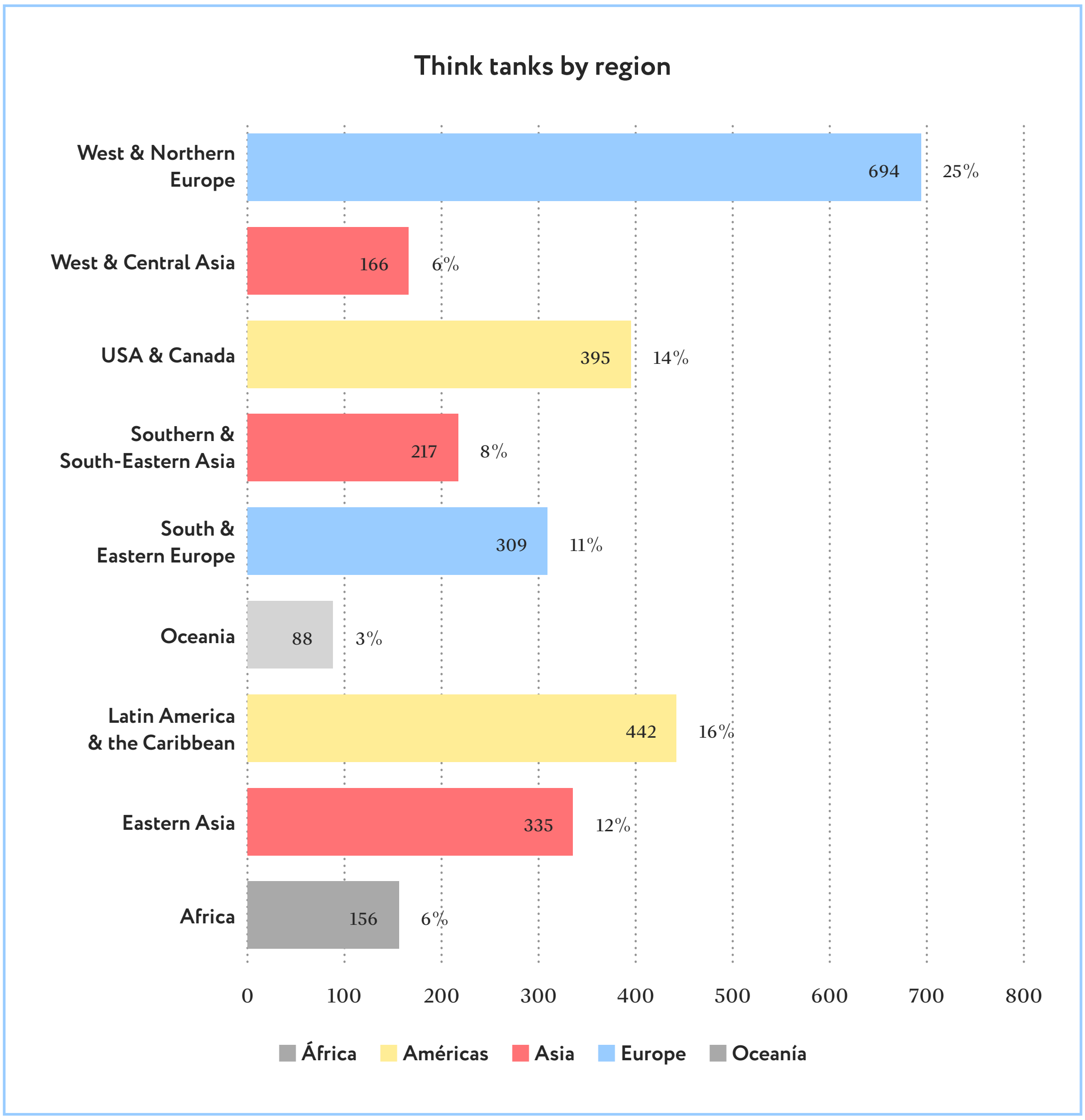
a. Overview

To provide a nuanced overview of geographical differences we have not opted to use continents as the key comparison variable but have chosen regional groups. We defined these using a mixed approach based on continent, UN subregional divisions and the number of think tanks in each. The resulting regional grouping (henceforth called 'region') is shown in Chart 3 and enabled us to compare different contexts without atomising the data excessively.

Western & Northern Europe is the region with most think tanks featured in the directory (694 organisations, 25% of the database) followed by Latin America & the Caribbean (442, 16%), USA & Canada (395, 14%), Eastern Asia (335, 12%), Southern & Eastern Europe (310, 11%), Southern & South-Eastern Asia (217, 8%), Western & Central Asia (167, 6%), Africa (157, 6%) and Oceania (88, 3%). Based on our knowledge of the sector and comparison with other think tanks lists, there is a higher than expected representation of think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean, and of West & Northern Europe, and a lower representation of the USA & Canada, and of Eastern Asia. This is due to how the organisations have been sourced and the methodology followed,[12] nevertheless, the database and the results do offer interesting results and comparisons.

[12] *See the introduction for details on the methodology and the funding and support note for information on the funding sources that enabled the scoping of organisations.*

Chart 3



n: 2,802

b. Country

An analysis by country provides a more nuanced view of the sector and uncovers even greater differences between regions. The average number of think tanks per country is 19, but there is great country variability, evidenced in the widely different numbers shown by region (Table 2). For example, Africa five think tanks per country on average and Eastern Asia has 56. But, beyond than the raw numbers, what is interesting are the regional differences that show the relative sizes of the sector, and evidence that the think tank sector is biggest in USA & Canada, West & Northern Europe and Eastern Asia.

Table 2

Average number of think tanks per country by region	
Region	Average # of hink tanks per country
Africa	5
Eastern Asia	56
Latin America & the Caribbean	18
Oceania	29
South & Eastern Europe	13
Southern & South-Eastern Asia	13
USA & Canada	198
West & Central Asia	8
West & Northern Europe	41

n: 2,802

A closer look at the number of think tanks by country in each region shows that that there are regions with a higher concentration of think tanks in some countries and less in others (Chart 4). For example, in Africa, South Africa features 29 (19% of Africa) and Kenya 26 (16%). In Oceania, Australia tops the region with 66 organisations (77% of the region). In Latin America, Brazil leads the region with 66 (15%) followed by Argentina with 55 (12%), Chile with 51(11%) and Mexico with 46 (10%).[13] India with 43 organisations (20%) has the most think tanks in Southern & South-Eastern Asia, followed by Philippines (12%), Pakistan (10%), Malaysia (9%) and Indonesia (8%). Southern & Eastern Europe shows a somewhat balanced distribution, with Italy leading (12%) and several countries following with a similar number: Spain, Hungary, Ukraine, Russia, Poland and Czech Republic. Eastern Asia is heavily led by China with 57% of the organisations featured, and Japan (17%) and South Korea (12%) follow far behind despite having numbers higher than the world average. Israel (47) is the country with the highest number of think tanks in Western & Central Asia (28% of the total of the region).

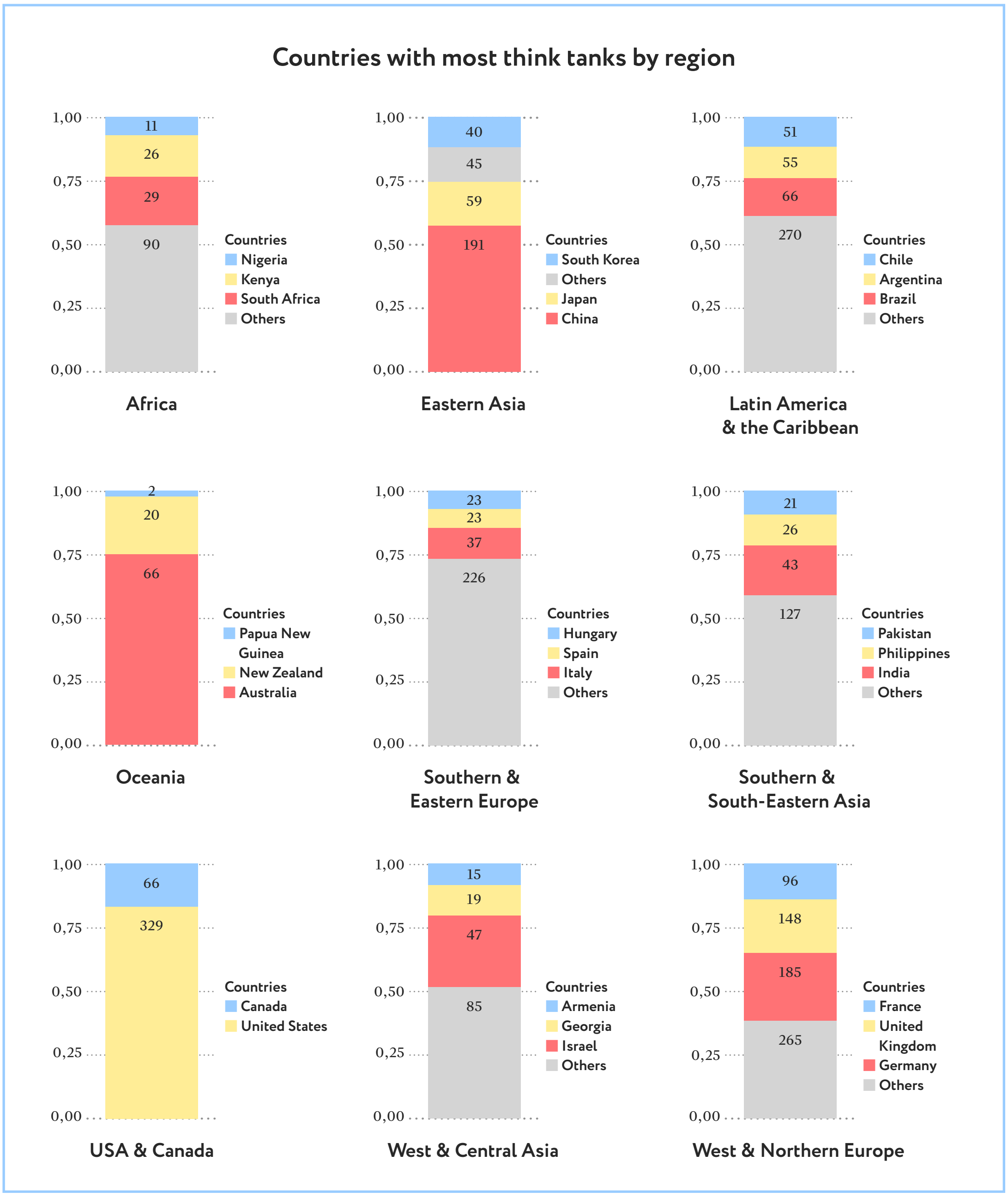
INTERESTING DATA

London (UK) and Washington DC (USA) top the charts of most think tanks in city with 112 and 115 respectively.

The country with the highest number of think tanks in the directory is the United States, which features 331 think tanks, representing 84%[14] of think tanks in USA & Canada. Next comes China with 191 (57% of Eastern Asia), followed by Germany (185), United Kingdom (148) and France (96) representing 27%, 21% and 14% respectively from Western & Northern Europe.

[13] *Within Latin America & the Caribbean, South America (and Mexico) feature more think tanks per country than Central America and the Caribbean.*
[14] *All percentages and averages shown are rounded.*

Chart 4



Note: The numbers in the bars are the number or think tanks in the country featured in the database.

REGION HIGHLIGHTS

- The average number of think tanks per country in the database is 19.
- There is great variability within regions and countries. Some regions show a higher concentration of think tanks in some countries and less in others.
- The think tank sector is biggest in countries in USA & Canada, Western & Northern Europe and Eastern Asia (taking into account both the total number of organisations and the average number per country).

4

TOPICS OF FOCUS

Questions answered in this chapter

- Which topics do think tanks mostly focus on?
- Which topics are more, or less, predominant by region?
- How many topics do organisations usually focus on?

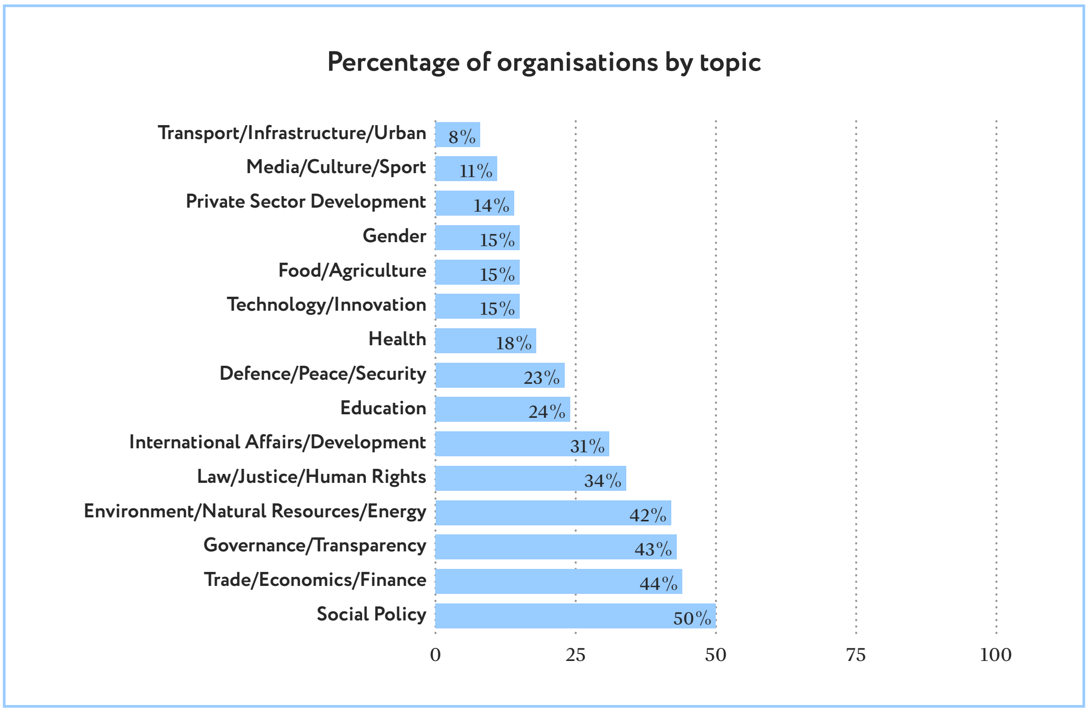
4 TOPICS OF FOCUS

a. Overview

The list of topics included on the Open Think Tank Directory has been developed to provide an overview of the issues[15] that an organisation focuses on, and to enable comparisons between them. Think tanks in the directory can focus on any number of issues, with the majority (85%) focusing on more than one.[16]

Most organisations focus on (Chart 5): social policy (50%) which includes issues such as poverty, social protection, social inclusion and inequality; trade/economics/finance (44%); governance/ transparency (43%) which comprises citizenship, democracy, transparency, decentralisation and related issues; and environment/natural resources/energy (42%).

Chart 5



n: 2,784

[15] *See full list of topics and description here.*
[16] *See section topic specialisation within this chapter for more data on this.*

b. Region

A regional analysis (Chart 6) shows the proportion of think tanks that focus on each topic by region (relative to the number of think tanks in the region). The chart shows the extent to which each topic is covered in each region. In general, regions follow the same trends as the global averages (see the introductory overview to this chapter,) but there are interesting differences and patterns that emerge that represent the priorities of the countries within each region.

African think tanks work predominantly on the top four global issues: governance/transparency (51%), environment/natural resources/energy (50%), social policy (48%), trade/economic/ finance (46%). But they also focus largely on food/agriculture (44%): they are the region with the highest percentage of think tanks (relative to the number of think tanks in the region) working on this issue, which is an indication of how important this issue is to the region. In addition, gender (31%) and health (35%) have a higher predominance in Africa than in other regions.

Think tanks in Eastern Asia also focus largely on the top worldwide topics, except environment/natural resources/energy, which is proportionately less dominant (only 25% specialise in this area). Unlike Africa, gender (7%) health (7%), and food/agriculture (17%) are less prominent, but they place a stronger emphasis on private sector development (21%) and media/culture/sport (28%).

Latin America & the Caribbean show a strong emphasis on environment/natural resources/ energy[17] (53%), social policy (44%), and law/justice/human rights (41%), but are a weaker presence in the areas of transport/infrastructure/urban (4%) and media/culture/sport (3).

Think tanks in Oceania show a strong emphasis on social policy (44%), followed by trade/economics/finance (32%). Technology/innovation (5%) is the topic that the least number of think tanks focus on. Oceania has the highest percentage of organisations working across three topics or fewer (70%), which might the explain the lower percentages across topics.

Think tanks in Southern & Eastern Europe follow the world average pattern, with a few variations: the top areas of research are social policy (65%), international affairs/development (40%), governance/transparency (52%), and trade/economics/finance (46%), and the least studied topic is food/agriculture (5%)

[17] *The strong predominance of environment/natural resources/energy in this region might be an effect of the funding we received from the Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change Latin America from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. to scope organisations in Latin America with a specific focus on environment and climate change.*

Think tanks in Southern & South-Eastern Asia focus predominantly on social policy (45%), environment/natural resources/energy (48%), governance/transparency (41%), and trade/ economics/finance. The least studied topic in this region is transport/infrastructure/urban (5%).

Think tanks in the USA & Canada also follow the world average pattern, with trade/economics/finance (46%) and environment/natural resources/energy (49%) being the most popular topics. But a below-average percentage of think tanks work in social policy in this region (38% vs. global average 50%).

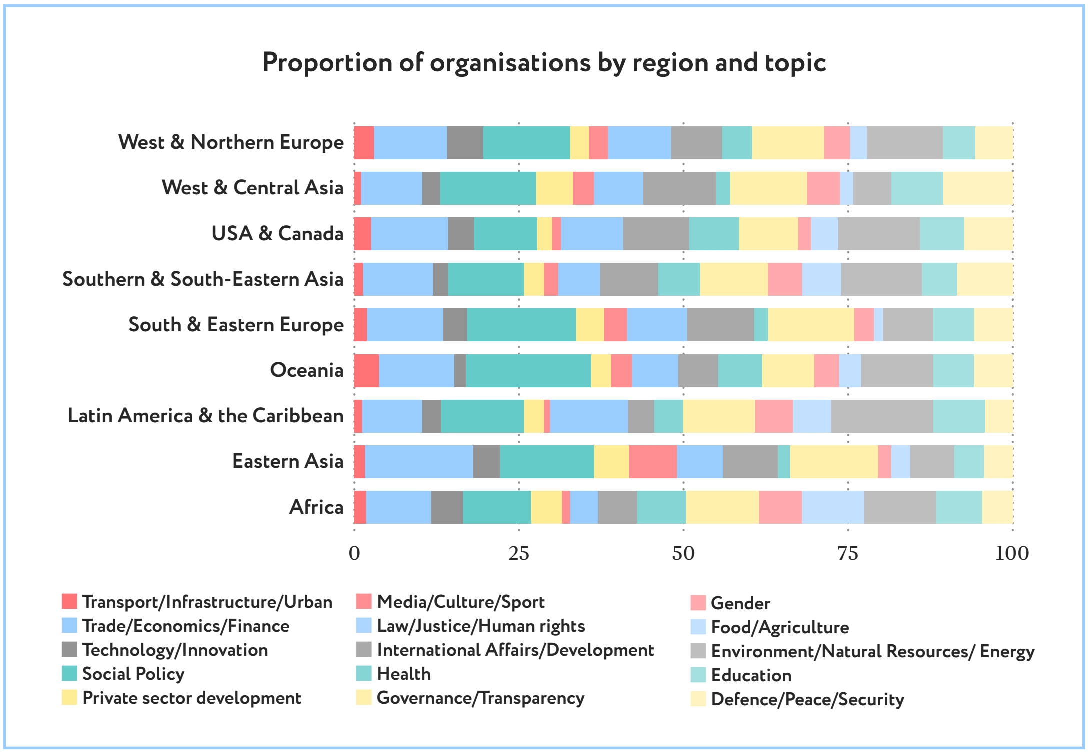
Western & Central Asian think tanks have a somewhat different pattern and show a stronger emphasis (compared to world averages) on international affairs/development (43%) and defence/peace/security (41%, the highest worldwide). Additionally, they have a higher than average percentage of think tanks working in private sector development (21%) and education (31%) and a lower than average number working in environment/natural resources/energy (23%).

Think tanks in Western & Northern Europe follow the world priorities (and are probably setting them giving their high numbers in the sample): social policy (53%), environment/natural resources/energy (46%), governance/transparency (45%), and trade/economics/finance (45%). The region also has the highest percentage of think tanks focusing on transport/infrastructure/urban (12%).

This descriptive analysis of the data in Chart 6 highlights the issues that are more, or less, important in each region. For example, food/agriculture is a high priority in Africa but is seldom the focus of think tanks in Europe (both regions) and Western & Central Asia. International affairs/development is another issue that is more predominant in some regions (Europe and Asia) than in others (Latin America & the Caribbean and Oceania), indicating a more outward-looking perspective in those where it is studied.[18]

[18] *Given the sample, methodology we dare not offer many explanations and inferences as to why each topic is more, or less, studied in each region, but we hope to strengthen this analysis in further editions of the report.*

Chart 6

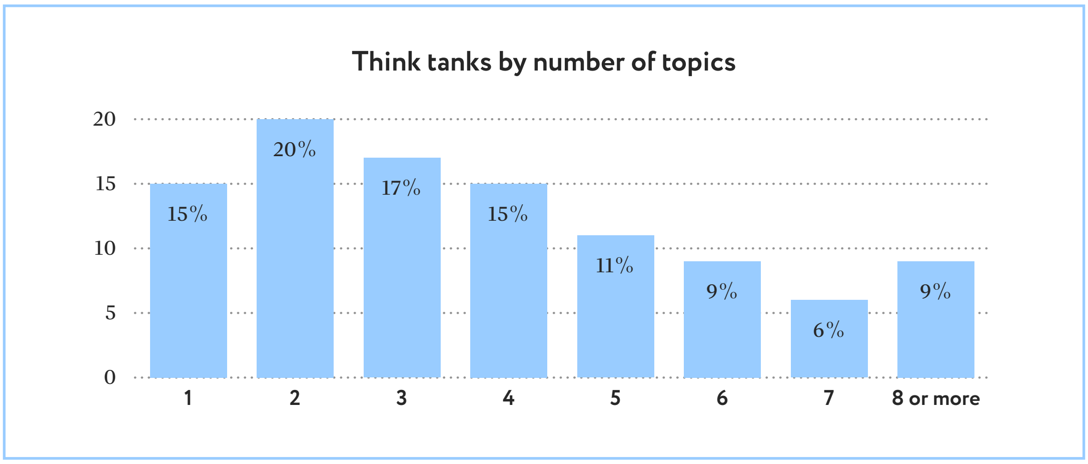


n: 2,784

c. Topic specialisation

Think tanks can focus on any number of topics. Chart 7 shows that think tanks working on up to three topics[19] account for 51% of the database. This indicates that most organisations focus on a few core issues and specialise in them.

Chart 7

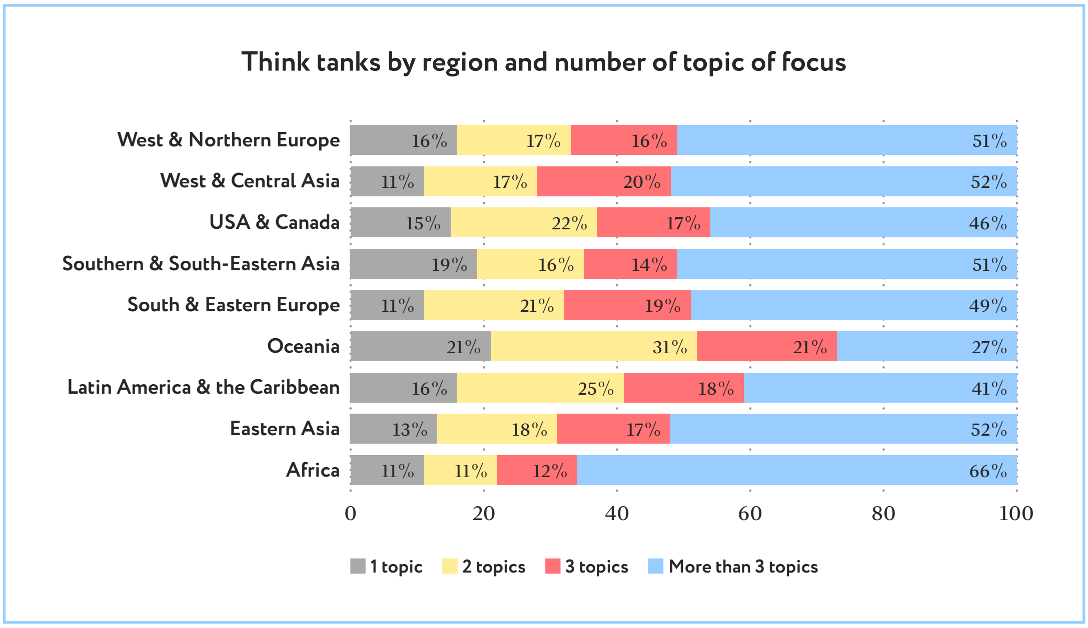


n: 2,787

[19] *Topics have been defined by the Open Think Tank Directory and have within them several issues, so think tanks focusing on a single topic can research many issues within them.*

Chart 8 shows topic specialisation by region. Oceania has the highest percentage of think tanks focusing on three or fewer topics (73%). Conversely, Africa is the region with the highest percentage of think tanks working on more than three topics (66%).

Chart 8



n:2,801
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

Despite the high proportion of organisations working on more than one topic (85%), a correlation analysis showed no strong global pattern revealing the topics that tend to be studied together. The analysis exposed only a medium correlation (0.32) between private sector development and trade/economics/finance, and between food/agriculture and environment/natural resources/energy (all other correlations were below 0.3). Therefore, there is no strong worldwide pattern showing the combinations of topics that organisations study.[20]

TOPIC OF FOCUS HIGHLIGHTS

- **The topics that most think tanks in the database focus on are social policy (50%), trade/economics/finance (44%), governance/transparency and environment/natural (43%) resources/energy (42%).**

[20] *We also ran topic correlations within regions, but no correlation above 0.5 was found. The analysis can be accessed here.*

- A descriptive analysis of topics by regions shows the issues that are more, or less, important in each. For example, food/agriculture is a high priority in Africa (44%) but is seldom the focus of think tanks in Europe (both regions) and Western & Central Asia. International affairs/development is predominant in Europe and Asia, but less so in Latin America & the Caribbean and Oceania).
- Only small correlations were found between topics (less than 0.5).

5

DATE FOUNDED

Questions answered in this chapter

- What is the average think tank age? What is the average by region?
- In what regions were think tanks founded earlier?
- When were most think tanks founded? Does this vary by region?

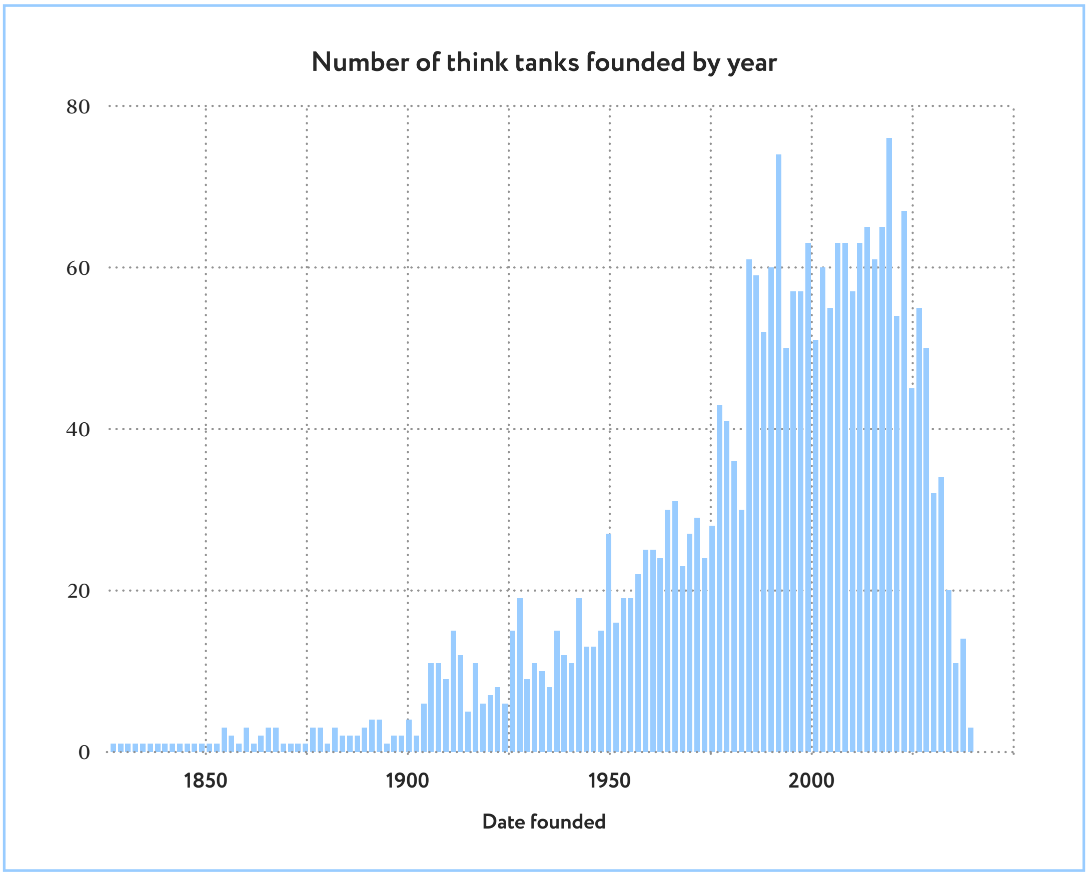
5

DATE FOUNDED[21]

a. Overview

The global average age for think tanks in 2019 was 29,[22] with great variability between countries (22 years standard deviation).[23] Chart 9 shows the number of think tanks founded each year. A steady increase in think tanks from the 1940s onward can clearly be seen, reaching a peak around the 2000s, followed by a slow decline in the last decade.

Chart 9



n: 2,469

[21] *We found no differences or interesting results when analysing the date founded in relation to topics of focus, and hence are not reporting this data. The charts and analysis can be accessed here.*

[22] *Information on the founding date of 2,470 organisations.*

[23] *See Date founded – region for more details on the average age by region.*

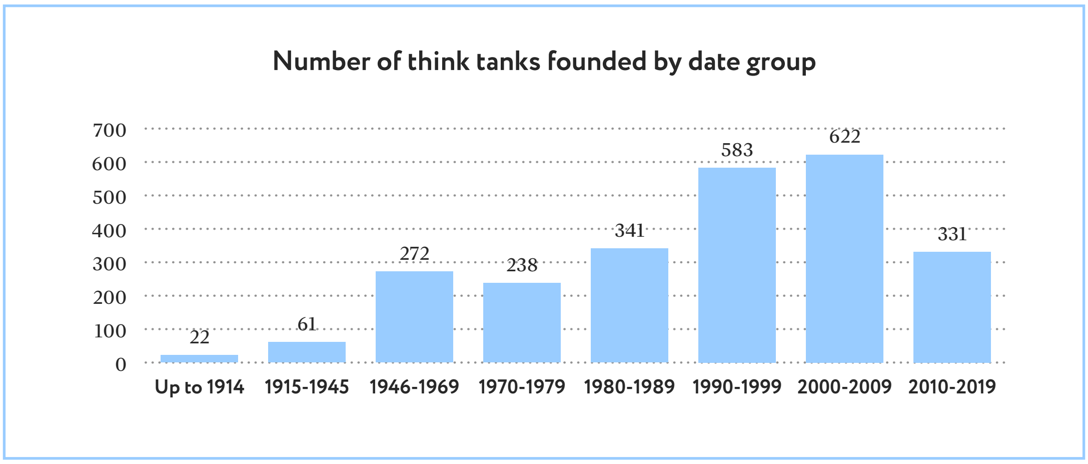
For ease of comparison we divided organisations into groups (based on their founding date): up to 1914, 1915–1945, 1946–1969, 1970–1979, 1980–1989, 1990–1999, 2000–2009 and 2010–2019. The first three groups correspond to historical moments. The first is up to the first world war when the world order was very different; the second covers wartime from World War 1 until the end of World War 2; and the third runs from the end of World War 2[24] to 1969. From then on there is a sharp increase in the number of think tanks founded each year (Charts 9 and 10 show this clearly). The first group (up to 1914) saw 22 think tanks founded, the 1915–1945 group had 61, the 1946–1969 group had 272, and the 1970–1979 group had 238. Because of this increase in numbers, from 1969 on we established the groups by decades.

INTERESTING DATA

The oldest organisations featured in the Open Think Tank Directory were not founded as think tanks (the label was not coined until the 1950s) but evolved to become such. Such is the case of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) (United Kingdom) founded in 1753. The second and third oldest featured are the Royal Danish Defence College (Denmark) and the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (United Kingdom) founded in 1830 and 1831 respectively, and probably as a response to these countries' defence concerns at the time.

Chart 10 shows that the decades when most think tanks were founded worldwide were 1990–1999 (583) and 2000–2009 (633), when the chart reaches its peak. The following decade, 2010–2009, shows a decrease (331) in the number of think tanks founded. The next section discusses this trend by region.

Chart 10



n: 2,470

[24] *For a discussion on the history of the label 'think tank' see Rich, A.(2004), Think tanks, public policies and politics of expertise. Cambridge University Press. Additionally Hauck, J, (2017) in What are 'Think Tanks'? Revisiting the Dilemma of the Definition, presents a good overview of the literature.*

b. Region

Chart 12 shows the distribution for each region and the differences found between them. Think tanks in the USA & Canada are the oldest on average (37) and reach a peak around the 1980s (the median is in 1987).

Eastern Asian organisations in the database were also founded earlier on average, but unlike organisations in USA & Canada, these peak around 2010. Rather than being distributed across different countries within the region, the statistic of earlier founding dates for organisations in Eastern Asia is driven by China, where several organisations that now fulfil think tank functions are Regional Party Schools.[25] These were instituted after the 1933 founding of the Marxist Communism School (now the Party School of the Central Committee of C.P.C. – the National Academy of Governance). Additionally, Academies of Social Sciences, which now also fulfil think tank functions, were founded beginning from the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Western & Northern Europe has the same average think tank age as Eastern Asia but shows a slower and steadier climb until around 2010, when the most think tanks in this region were founded. Conversely, Southern & Eastern Europe has one of the youngest averages and shows a steep increase from the 1980s onward, peaking in the late 1990s. This pattern could relate to the lifting of the iron curtain in 1989–1990s and the subsequent increase in the civil society sector in Eastern Europe.[26]

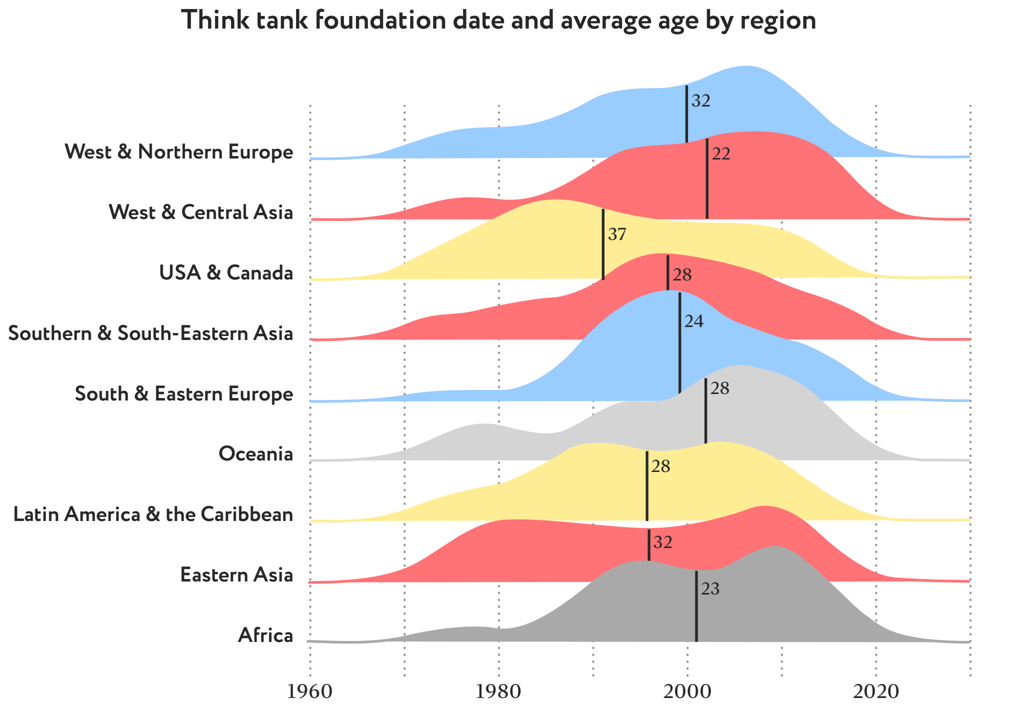
Western & Central Asia also show an increase in the number of think tanks being founded around the 1980s, but the curve is less pronounced and shows a plateau rather than a peak in the 2000s. Conversely, Southern & South-Eastern Asia show a slower and steadier increase since the 1970s and reach a soft peak in the late 1990s.

Oceania shows a curve similar to Western & Northern Europe, and also reaches a peak around 2010. Latin America & The Caribbean and Africa, albeit being different in the average age of their respective think tanks, show a somewhat similar distribution: a plateau with two soft mounds. These mounds both occur a little earlier in Latin America & The Caribbean.

[25] *See Shambaugh, D. (2018)Training China's Political Elite: The Party School System. The China Quarterly*

[26] *See Vandor et al.(2017) Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe: Challenges and Opportunities for a discussion of civil society actors in this region.*

Chart 11



n: 2,470
Note: The line shows when half the think tanks in each region have been founded. The number is the average age of think tanks in the region . Date range starts in the 1960s for comparison purposes.

DATE FOUNDED HIGHLIGHTS

- The global average age for think tanks in 2019 was 29 years.
- There has been a steady increase in the number of think tanks founded by year, and the average peak is around the 2000s. The last decade has seen a slow decline in the number of think tanks founded across regions.
- Think tanks in the USA & Canada are the oldest on average (37) and reached their peak in the 1980s.
- Western & Central Asia, Africa and Southern & Eastern Europe are the youngest on average (22, 23 and 24 respectively).

6

GENDER OF FOUNDERS

Questions answered in this chapter

- Who founds think tanks?
- Which regions have more female founders?
- Are older think tanks predominantly male founded?

6

GENDER OF FOUNDERS[27]

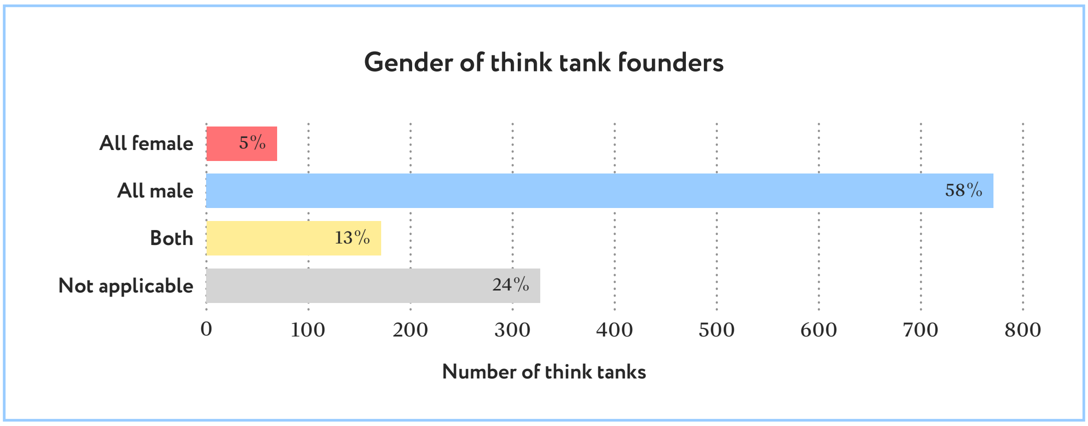
a. Overview

The directory holds data on the names of the founders for 1,338 organisations and has identified their gender, establishing the following categories: all male founders, all female founders, both male and female co-founders, and not applicable. Not applicable is used when the think tank self-reports that it was founded by another organisations or groups (e.g. governments, universities, companies, religious orders, international organisations) and does not recognise any named individual founder.[28] Chart 12 shows that 58% of organisations were founded by men only, 13% by both male and female co-founders, 5% by women only, and 24% not applicable (most of these being government level entities like ministries and universities).

INTERESTING DATA

There are seven organisations in the directory that have been founded by a religious organisation, six of which have been founded by the Society of Jesus of the Catholic Church (four in Latin America, one in Africa and one in Europe).

Chart 12



[27] *We found few differences when analysing the gender of the founder in relation to the topics of focus and hence are not reporting this data. The only small difference was that think tanks with female founders focused a little more on gender issues. The charts and analysis can be accessed here.*

[28] *This is an interesting category and further editions of the report will explore in more depth the types of organisations that found think tanks.*

b. Region

A regional comparison uncovers interesting findings. Despite the overall low percentage of think tanks founded by women, Latin America & the Caribbean and Africa have a higher than average percentage of think tanks[29] with women founders (counting both all-female and both male and female co-founded). One of the reasons for this could be the younger age of think tanks in these regions, as most were founded after the 1990s when progress towards gender equality was slowly being achieved.

The United States & Canada is the region with the most think tanks founded by men only, and this is driven by the USA only. We assessed whether the date of the foundation might explain this, as more than 50% of think tanks from this region were founded before 1987 when women had lower levels of political participation. But even after 1990 the percentage of think tanks founded by only men was higher[30] in the USA than in all other regions. A possible explanation might lie in the strength of the revolving door between former politicians and policy research institutes, or vice versa. Given the access to power that think tanks offer in the country, they are still a more largely male dominated sector.[31]

Eastern Asia shows a particular distribution pattern: it has a lower average of think tanks founded by all male (31%), all female (4%) and both female and male co-founders (5%), and a very high average of think tanks founded by entities (60%). This result is driven by all countries in the region, except Hong Kong[32] (which follows a pattern similar to the world average). An analysis of the entities that have founded think tanks and policy research centres shows that in China most have been funded by universities and the Communist Party. In Japan, founders include government ministries, universities and educational institutions and business groups. In South Korea and Taiwan, the main founding entity is the government.

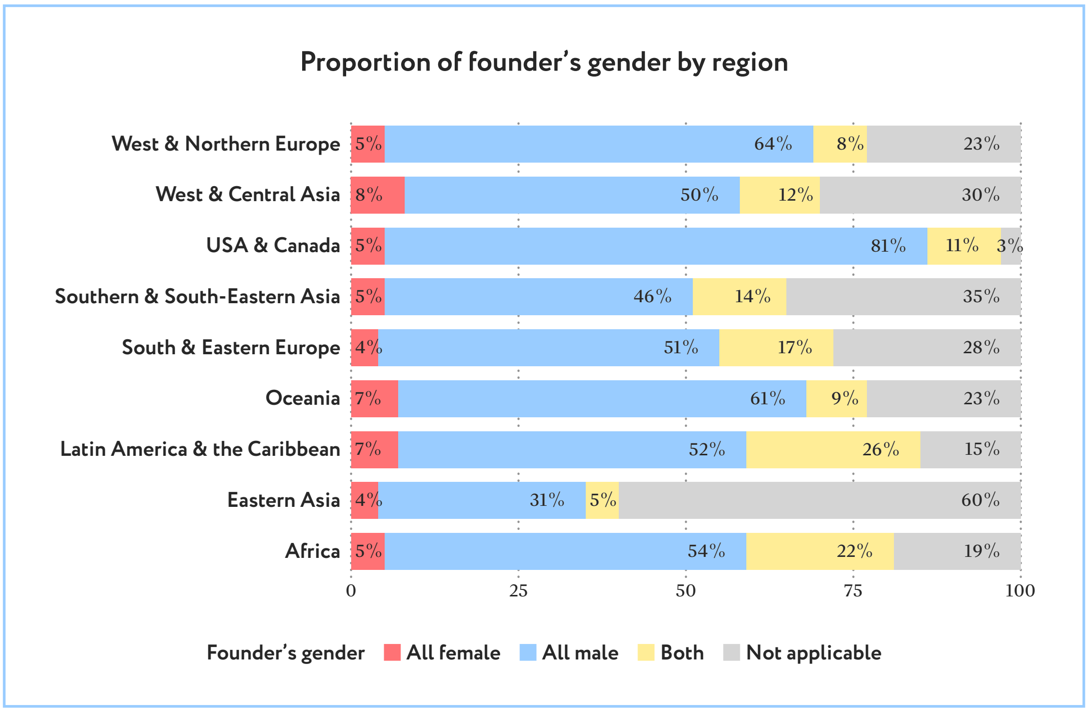
[29] *Percentage based on the number of think tanks in the region.*

[30] *Percentages based on the number of think tanks in each region.*

[31] *See Kenny & Duggan (2019) Gender Equality in US Think Tank Leadership: Data from Tax Records for more on gender equality in think tanks in the USA.*

[32] *Hong Kong is treated as a separate country in the directory for comparison purposes despite it being a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.*

Chart 13



n:1338
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

c. Date founded

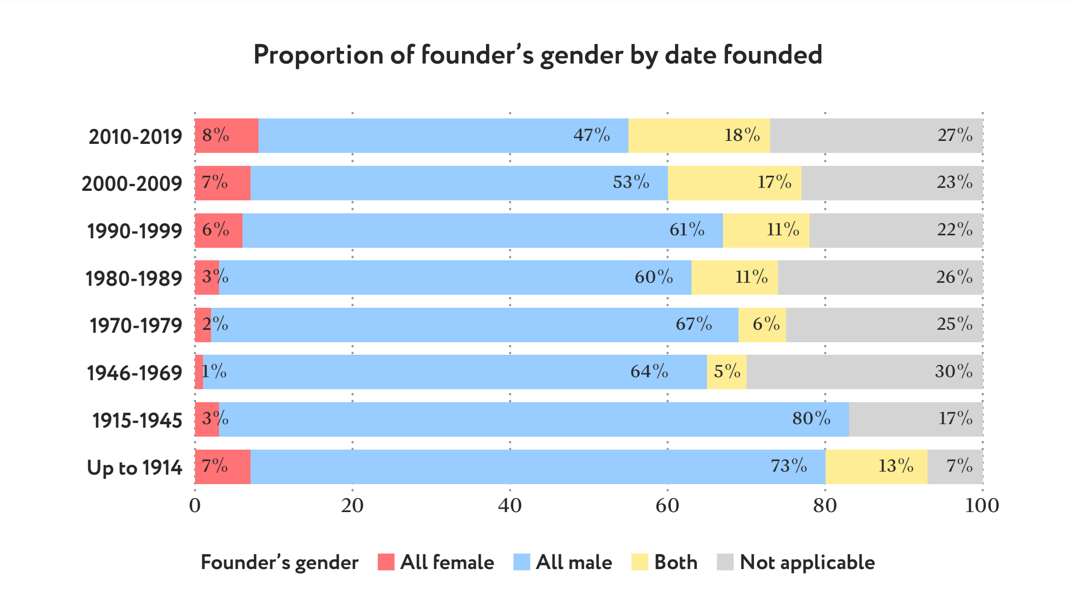
Most think tanks are solely male founded. But the percentage of all-male-founded think tanks has slowly decreased year by year, giving way slightly to all-female-founded think tanks, but mostly to both male and female co-founded think tanks. The decrease in all-male-founded think tanks and increase in those co-founded by both speaks of the increasing equality between men and women,[33] but the fact remains that even in the 2010–2019 decade almost 50% of think tanks were founded by only men.

The percentage of think tanks founded by entities has remained somewhat stable since the 1940s and no region has seen a sharp change in this either.

Interestingly, the regions that saw the earliest increase in both male and female co-founded think tanks were Africa and Latin America & the Caribbean, which since the 1970s have consistently shown the highest percentages of think tanks being co-founded by both genders (relative to the number of think tanks in each regions). From the 1990s onward, both Southern & Eastern Europe and Southern & South-Eastern Asia have also begun to see an increase in both male and female co-founded think tanks (relative to the number of think tanks in the region).

[33] *See UN Women (2020) Gender equality: Women's rights in review 25 years after Beijing for details on gender equality indicators and progress.*

Chart 14



n: 1,240
Note: In the database 65 think tanks have been founded by all female founders, 726 by all male, 153 by both male and female co-founders and 296 by entities or groups.
Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

GENDER OF FOUNDER HIGHLIGHTS

- 58% of organisations in the directory were founded only by men, 13% by both male and female co-founders, 5% by women only, and 24% were founded by other entities (e.g. governments, universities, companies, religious orders, international organisations etc.).
- The percentage of all-male-founded think tanks has slowly decreased year by year, giving way slightly to all-female-founded think tanks, but mostly to both male and female co-founded think tanks. Regardless of this, even in the 2010–2019 decade almost 50% of think tanks were founded by only men.
- Latin America & the Caribbean and Africa have a higher than average percentage of think tanks with women founders.
- The United States & Canada has the highest percentage of think tanks founded by only men.
- Eastern Asia has a lower average of think tanks founded by all male (31%), all female (4%) and both female and male founders (5%), and a remarkably high average of think tanks founded by entities (60%).
- We found little differences when analysing the gender of the founder against topics of focus and hence are not reporting this data. The only small difference was that think tanks with female founders focused a little more on gender issues.

7

GENDER OF LEADERS

Questions answered in this chapter

- How many men and women lead think tanks?
- Which regions are more equal?
- Is there a difference in the topics of focus by gender of the leader?
- Are there differences in the gender of the leader based on the age of the think tank?
- Are female-founded think tanks more likely to be led by women?

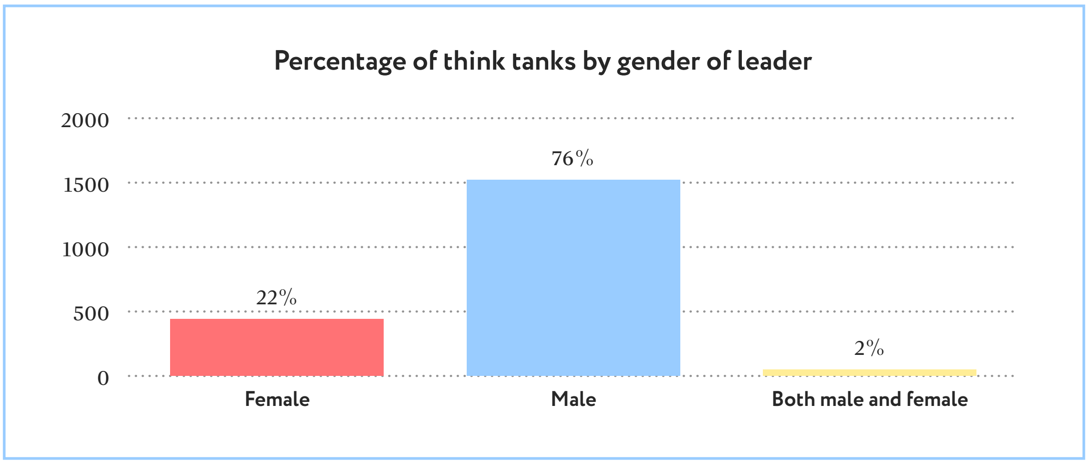
7

GENDER OF LEADERS[34]

a. Overview

Following the trend seen in the last chapter (gender of founder), 76% of think tanks are led by men, 22% by women, and there is a small percentage of organisations (2%) in which leadership is shared by men and women[35] (Chart 15). The data on leadership considers the role that each organisation identifies as being the overall leader, and this position can take many names: president, chairperson, director, chief executive officer, secretary general etc.

Chart 15



n: 2,268

b. Region

The data available on the name and gender of the leader varies greatly between regions; in some regions up to 35% of think tanks give no data on the name and gender of their leader (Latin America & The Caribbean 35%, Southern & Eastern Europe 31%, and Western & Central Asia 34%). Regional comparisons could be misleading because of this, so we have chosen to also show the missing data as 'unknown', to help read the results more transparently.

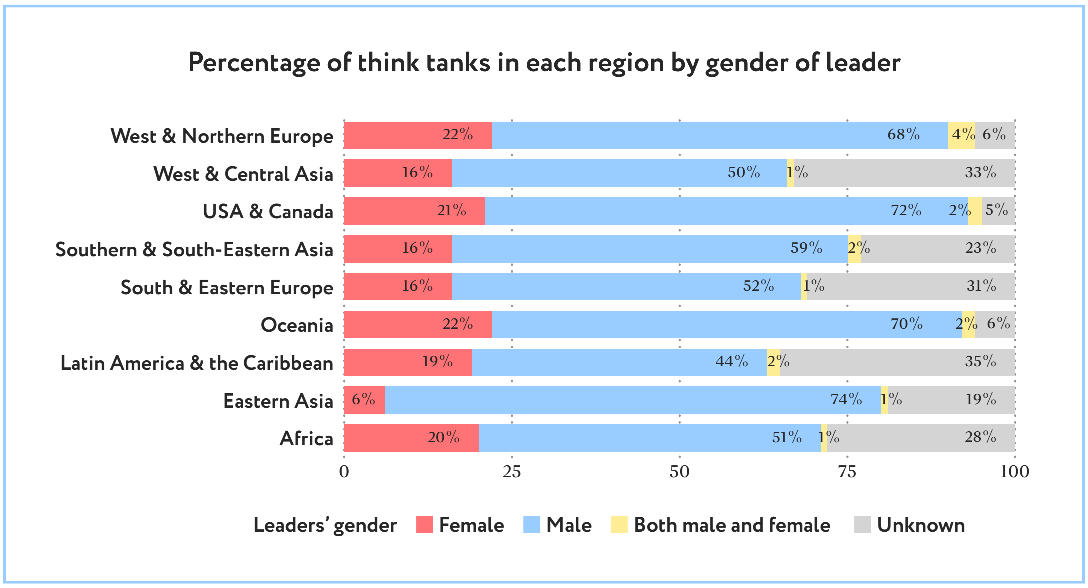
[34] No data on the gender of leader analysed against date founded is presented as no differences or interesting results were identified. The charts and analysis can be accessed here.

[35] The data presented is for the latest year available; the breakdown by year is 2019 – 1,880 records, 2018 – 23 records, 2017 – 215 records, and 2016 – 42 records. The percentages for the 2019 data are almost the same as for the aggregate data, hence we report aggregate data to have a wider representation of think tanks in the database.

Across all regions think tanks appear male led from the data available (Chart 16). This trend is more prominent in Asia (all regions) and especially in Eastern Asia where the percentage of female-led think tanks is substantially lower (7%) and the percentage of male-led organisations is the highest across all regions (91%).

Western & Northern Europe has the highest percentage of female leaders (26%), followed by Oceania (24%) and the USA & Canada (22%).

Chart 16



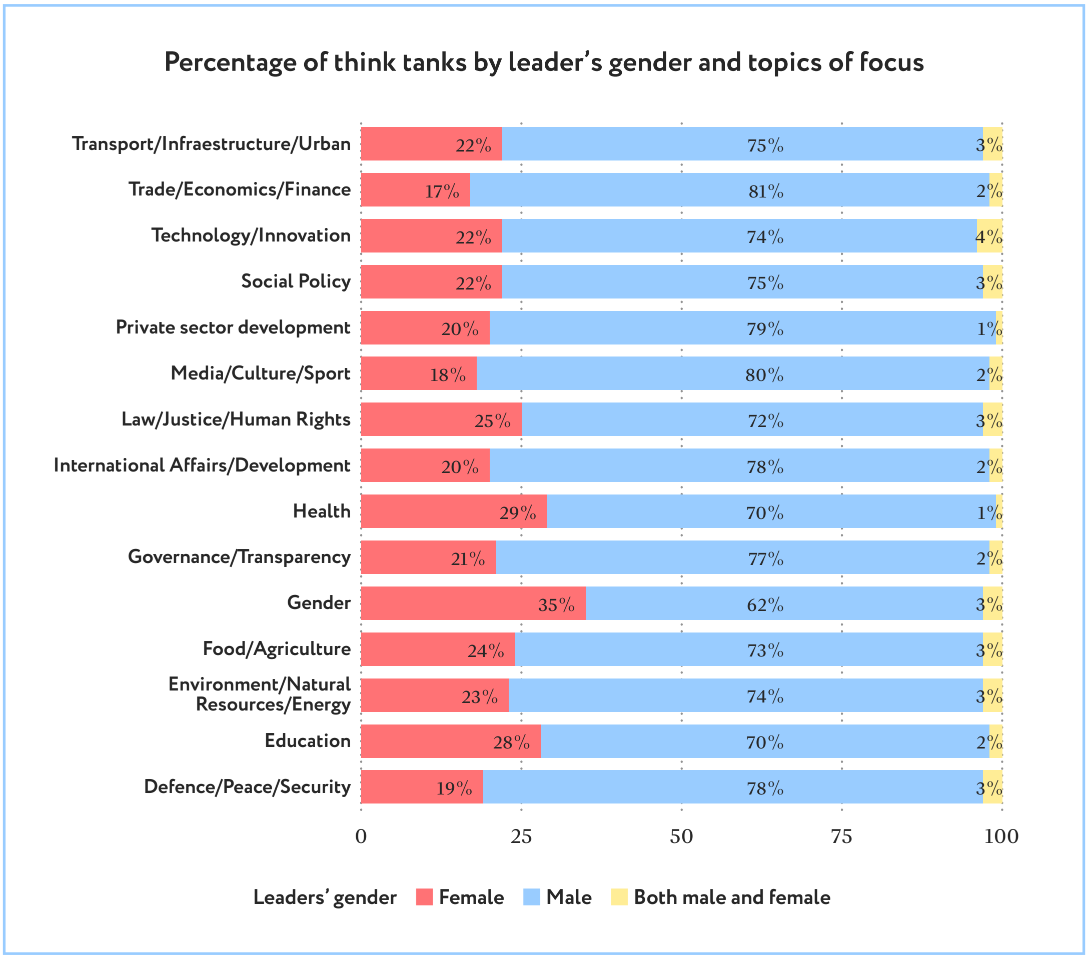
n: 2, 268
Note: 55 think tanks are led by both men and women, 494 by women, and 1,714 by men. There are 539 think tanks with no information on the gender of the leader.
Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

c. Topics of focus

We assessed the gender of the organisation leaders against the topics they focus on, and found that think tanks that focus on defence/peace/security and trade/economics/finance are in a higher proportion led by men (78% and 81% respectively). Think tanks that focus on education, health and gender are proportionally more led by women (28%, 29% and 35% respectively). This might be due to gender stereotypes that steer women into specific fields. Their choices of careers are influenced by stereotypes, and from that choice on they consequently develop and gain more experience in these fields. Thus, when they have accrued enough experience to take on leadership roles, they are prepared to do so in tracks aligned with the choices they made for their undergraduate degrees.[36]

[36] *See our women in think tank series and the article Why Aren't More Policy Experts Female?*

Chart 17

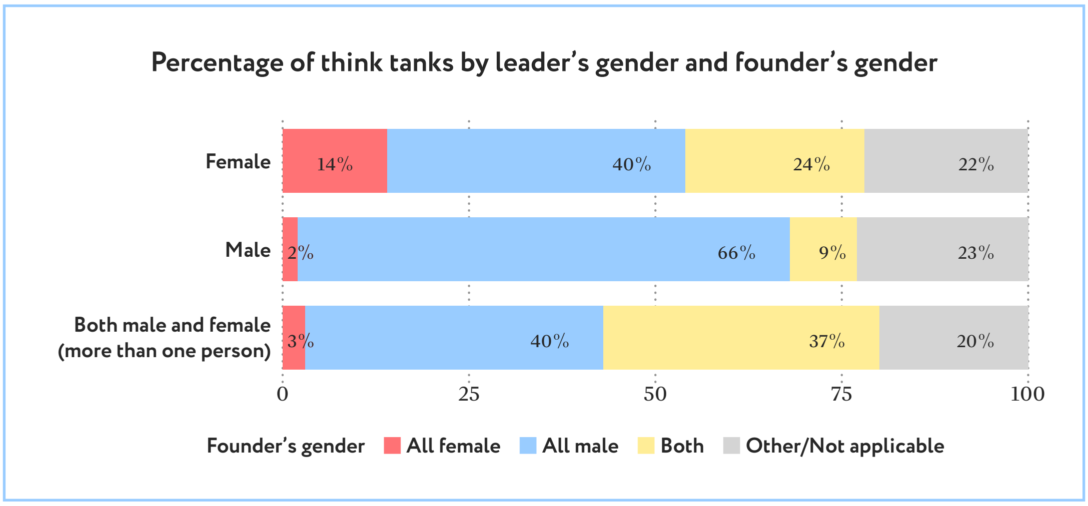


n: 2, 257
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

d. Gender of founder

A comparison of the gender of the leader by the gender of the founder of the organisations shows that think tanks founded by females (either all female founders or both male and female co-founders) have a higher percentage of female leaders. On the contrary, organisations founded by all-male founders have a smaller percentage of female leaders. Finally, organisations founded by entities (other/not applicable in the chart) closely follow the world average for the leader's gender.

Chart 18



n: 1,168

GENDER OF LEADER HIGHLIGHTS

- 76% of think tanks in the database are led by men, 22% by women, and in a small amount (2%) leadership is shared by men and women.
- Across regions think tanks are male led. This trend is more prominent in Asia (all regions) and especially in Eastern Asia where the percentage of female-led think tanks is substantially lower than average (7%) and the percentage of male-led organisations is the highest across regions (91%).
- Western & Northern Europe have the highest percentage of female leaders (26%), followed by Oceania (24%) and the USA & Canada (22%).
- Male-led think tanks focus more on defence/peace/security and trade/economics/finance in (78% and 81% respectively), while think tanks that focus on education, health and gender are proportionally more likely to be led by women (28%, 29& and 35% respectively).
- Think tanks founded by females (either all female founders or both male and female co-founders) have a higher percentage of female leaders. On the contrary, organisations with all-male founders have a smaller percentage of female leaders.

8

BUSINESS MODEL

Questions answered in this chapter ↓

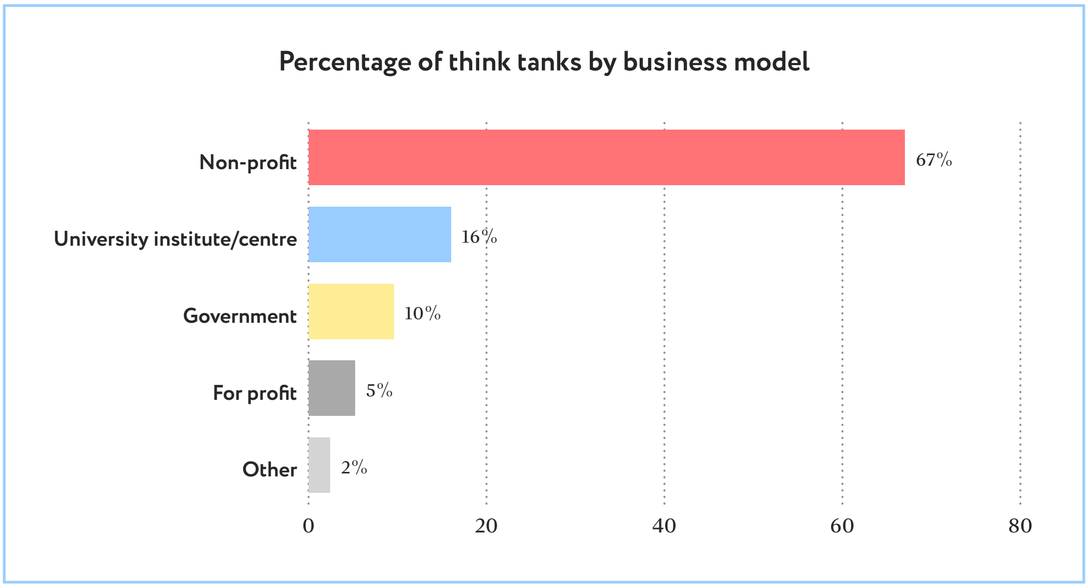
- What is the most common business model for think tanks?
- How does this differ by region?
- How do business model and date founded relate?
- Are there differences in business model by the topics of focus or the gender of the leader?

8 BUSINESS MODEL

a. Overview

The Open Think Tank Directory lists the business model of organisations, understood as how they are registered and operated. For comparability, as in the other variables, we have limited the number of options to for profit, non-profit, government organisation, university institute or centre, and other. In many countries, as expected, the majority of think tanks for which we have business model data are non-profit organisations (67%), followed by university institutes or centres (16%), government organisations (10%), for-profit organisations (5%) and a small group of other (2%) (Chart 19).

Chart 19



n:2512
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

b. Region

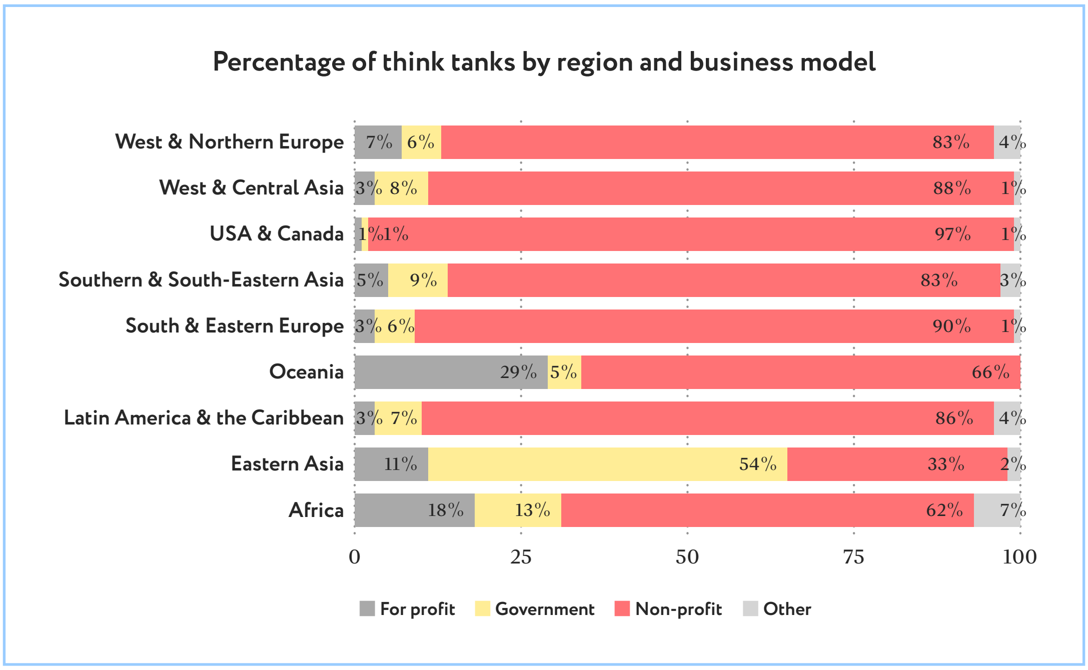
There is great variability in the business models found in the database by region (Chart 20). Oceania and Africa have a higher than average percentage of for-profit think tanks (22% and 16% respectively), because several consultancies there fulfil think tanks functions.

Conversely, Eastern Asia has the highest percentage of government think tanks (54%), but as in other cases this is mostly driven by China, where the percentage of government think tanks is 74%, and to a smaller degree by South Korea (40% government think tanks).[37 38]

The USA & Canada has the largest percentage of non-profit think tanks (97%) and the lowest of other types, which is consistent with the history of think tanks in the region, as well as the legal framework.[39]

Latin America & the Caribbean have a higher than average percentage of university institute/centre think tanks (20%), but it is unclear if this is due to the methodology of the scoping exercises or an underlying trend in the region.

Chart 20



n: 2,512
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

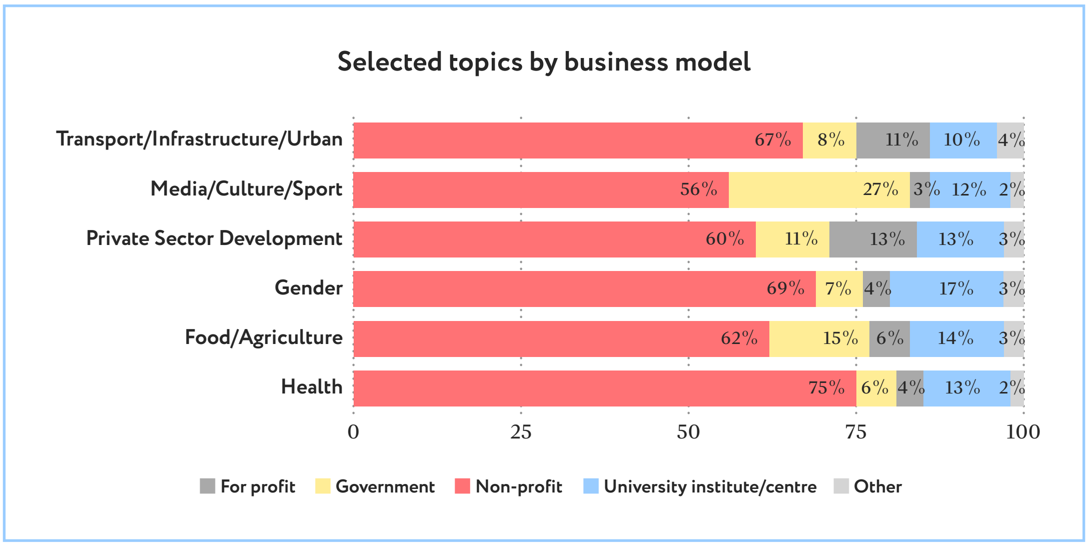
c. Topics

We found no noticeable correlations between the topics of focus and think tanks' business models in the most prevalent topics, but there were some in the least-studied ones (Chart 21 only shows these latter ones). For example, for-profit think tanks focus more predominantly on private sector development (13%) and transport/infrastructure/urban(11%) than on any other topic.

[37] *See the section Regional Comparison in Chapter 6.*
[38] *For a discussion of think tanks in China see Xufeng Zhu (2013)The Rise of Think Tanks in China.*
[39] *For more details on think tanks in the USA See Rich,A & Weaver, K. (2011), Think tanks in the political system of the United States. Friedrich Erbert Stiftung. Briefing Paper Special Issue.*

Government think tanks in the sample focus less on health and gender issues (6% and 7% respectively) than on others (they account for closer to 10% on most issues); on the contrary they focus more on media/culture/sport (27%) and food/agriculture (15%). But as mentioned in the previous section, government think tanks in the database are mostly from Eastern Asia (and China specifically). So, it is not that all government think tanks focus more, or less, on the aforementioned issues, but that Eastern Asia government think tanks do.

Chart 21

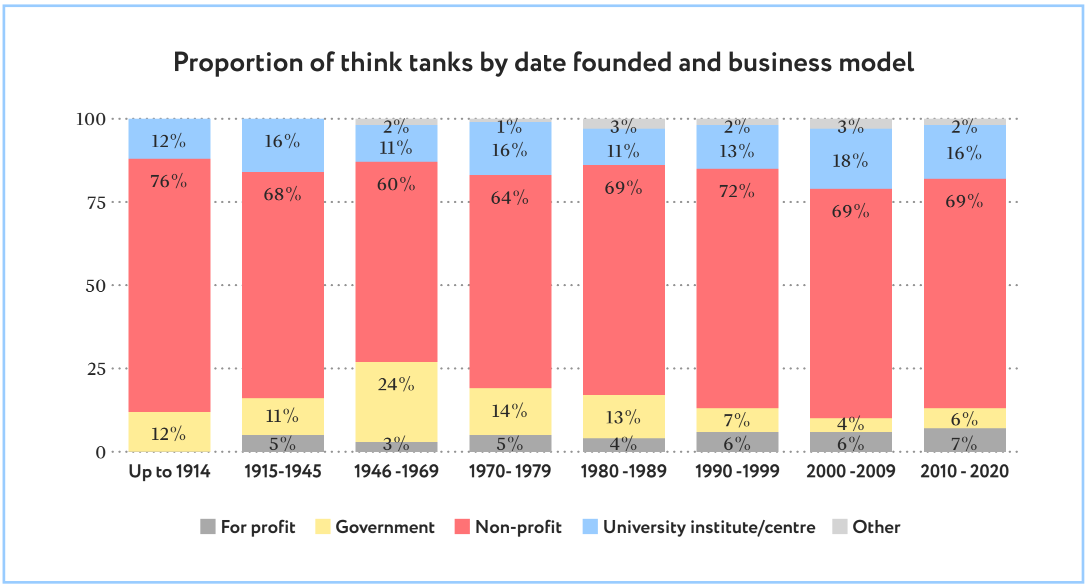


n:2503

d. Date founded

A comparison of business model and founding date (Chart 22) shows that their proportions have remained somewhat stable through the years: a high number of non-profits, followed far behind by university institutes/centres, government, for profit, and other. But there has been a slight downward tendency for government think tanks, driven mostly by Eastern Asia, and in particular Chinese organisations, as the majority that feature in the database were founded in the early years of the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

Chart 22

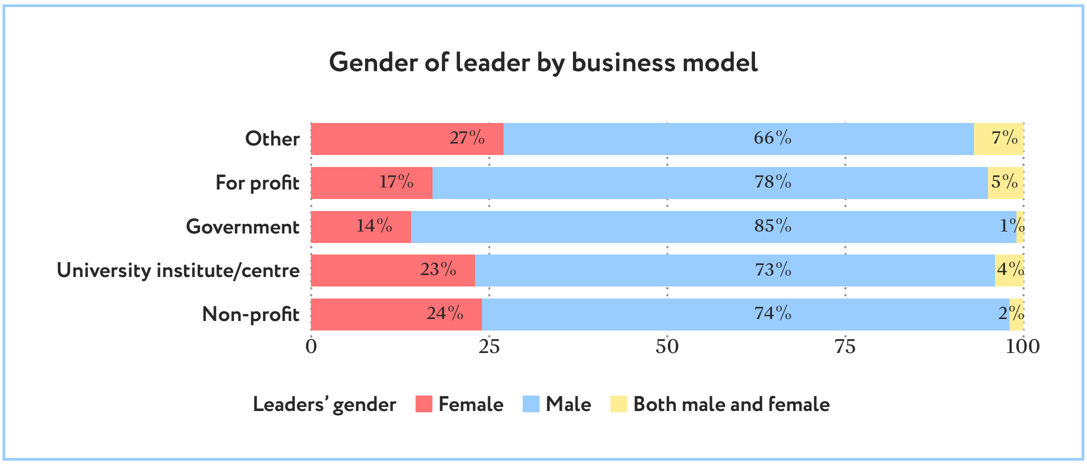


n:2,225

e. Gender of leader

Chart 23 shows the differences in the gender of the leader by business model and reveals that non-profit and university institute or centres follow the same pattern in terms of the gender of the leader, that is around 74% are male led and 23% female led. But government think tanks tend to be more male led (86%) and although this is mostly driven by Eastern Asia, it is also seen in Africa and Latin America & the Caribbean. Interestingly, organisations labelled as 'other' appear to be somewhat more equal, with a higher percentage of female leaders, but the low occurrence of this type of organisation makes it difficult to establish any inferences or further analysis.

Chart 23



n: 2,008
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

BUSINESS MODEL HIGHLIGHTS

- The majority of think tanks in the Open Think Tank Directory are non-profit organisations (65%), followed by university institutes/centres (15%), government organisations (10%), for-profit organisations (5%) and a small group of other types (2%) .
- Oceania (22%) and Africa (16%) have a higher than average percentage of for-profit think tanks.
- Eastern Asia has the highest percentage of government think tanks(54%), but this result is mostly a reflection of Chinese organisations in the database, where the percentage of government think tanks is 74%, and to a smaller degree by South Korea (40%).
- The USA & Canada has the largest percentage of non-profit think tanks (97%).
- For-profit think tanks focus more predominantly on private sector development (13%) and transport/infrastructure/urban(11%) than on any other topic.
- Government think tanks in the sample focus less on health and gender issues (6% and 7% respectively) than in others (they account closer to 10% in most issues), on the contrary they focus more on media/culture/sport (27%) and food/agriculture (15%).
- Non-profit and university institute or centres follow the same pattern in the gender of the leader, that is around 74% are male led and 23% female led. But government think tanks tend to be more male led (86%) and although this is mostly driven by Eastern Asia, it is also seen in Africa and Latin America & the Caribbean.

9

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Questions answered in this chapter ↓

- Which social media channels are think tanks more predominantly on?
- Which social media channels are more popular by region?
- Do younger think tanks have more or fewer followers?
- Are there differences in the follower numbers by the gender of the leader? Or by the gender of the founder?

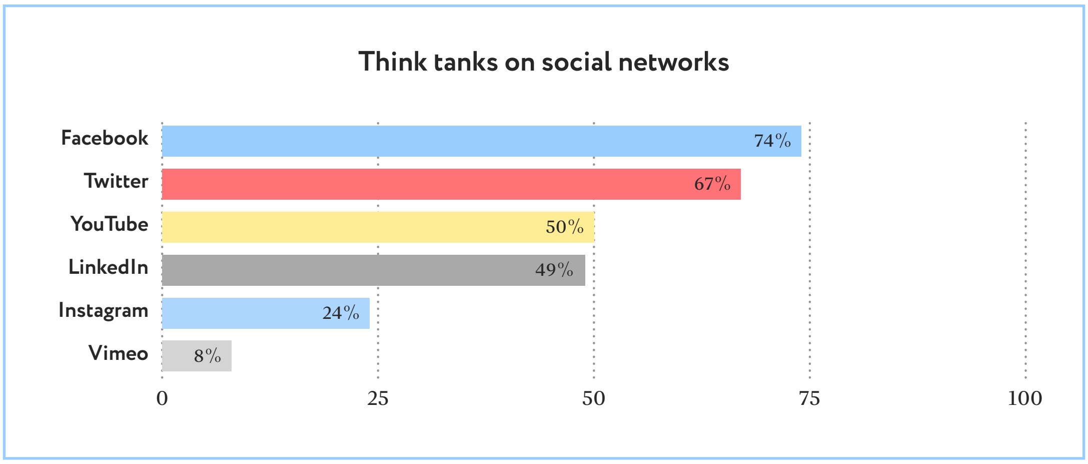
9 SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

a. Overview

The Open Think Tank Directory registers an organisation's presence on the following social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Vimeo, as well as the number of followers on each channel.[40] Social media channels needed to exclusively belong to the organisation to be registered.[41] Additionally, due to the data collection methodology, not all social media channels (or followers) that a think tanks uses have been registered (predominance has been given to Facebook and Twitter[42]), so results in this section need to be read with these caveats.

The social media channels that feature most prominently in the directory are Facebook (74% of organisations have an account registered) and Twitter (67%), followed by YouTube (50%), LinkedIn (49%), Instagram(24%) and a few have Vimeo (8%) (Chart 24).[43]

Chart 24



n: Twitter 1,878, Facebook 2,066, YouTube 1,400, LinkedIn 1,383

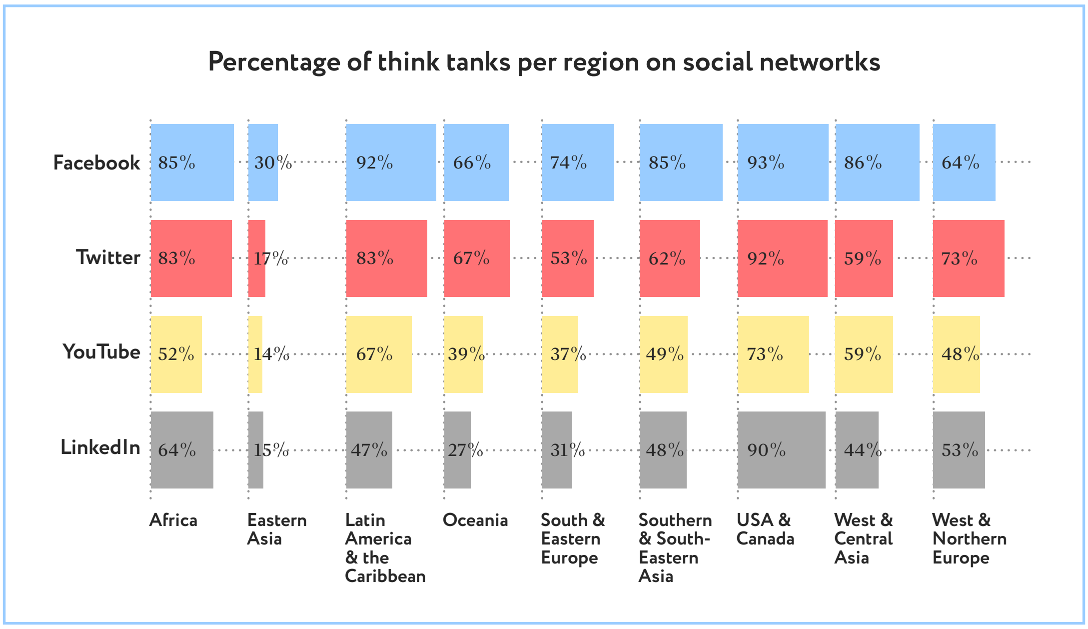
[40] *For Facebook it registers 'likes'*
[41] *For example, if a university centre uses the university's social media accounts then it is not registered.*
[42] *Think tanks can use other social media channels that we have not yet registered. The fact that an organisation does not appear to have a social media channel does not mean that it does not use it; it might be that it has not been registered in the database.*
[43] *Given the low numbers of both Instagram and Vimeo they will not be assessed in any of the following sections.*

b. Region

Chart 25 shows the prevalence of each social network registered on the database by region, and the variability between them. Given the data collection methodology explained above, more than establishing a comparison among regions we wanted to show the percentage of each social media channel for each region to be able to read the results of the next sections in context.

There is little social media data registered for Eastern Asia because the channels that the directory registers are either not the most popular in the region, or are limited or banned by governments (as are Facebook and Twitter in China).

Chart 25



n: Twitter 1878, Facebook 2066, YouTube 1400, LinkedIn 1383

To compare differences in followers between regions we decided to use the median, as the range of the data is high and organisations with a high follower count are skewing the average. Table 3 shows the median of followers in each social network and region and the global median. Facebook has the highest median globally (3,825), followed by Twitter (2,823), LinkedIn (892) and lastly YouTube (247).

The median of Facebook followers in Latin America & the Caribbean almost doubles that of Twitter followers and is the highest across all regions, showing a marked preference for Facebook in the region; the same is true for Southern & Eastern Europe, Southern & South-Eastern Asia, and Western & Central Africa. On the contrary, think tanks in the USA & Canada have a higher follower base on Twitter, followed by Western & Northern Europe (who fall within the interval).

Most regions have the same (low) number of followers on YouTube, indicating that it is not a platform that is widely used by think tanks to engage with audiences, probably because video has never been a key means for communications. Think tanks in the USA & Canada though, show a higher median, which indicates a higher use of this channel to engage with audiences.

The USA & Canada have the highest follower size on LinkedIn, followed by Western & Northern Europe, which coincidently also have the highest Twitter follower medians.

Table 3

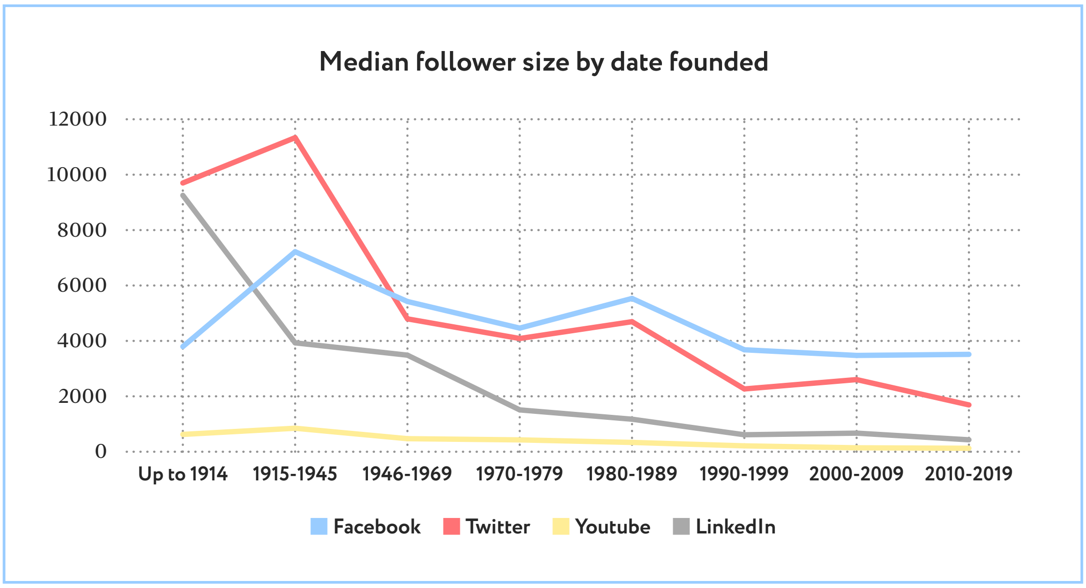
Median number of think tank followers on social networks in each region				
Region	Twitter median	Facebook Median	YouTube median	LinkedIn median
Africa	1415	2515	58	395
Eastern Asia	955	1353	377	193
Latin America & the Caribbean	3483	7753	289	699
Oceania	2434	3743	221	1199
Southern & Eastern Europe	934	2481	113	460
Southern & South-Eastern Asia	1126	3938	290	387
USA & Canada	6511	5058	610	1700
Western & Central Asia	1240	4554	140	290
Western & Northern Europe	4069	2772	141	1279
Total	**2823**	**3825**	**247**	**892**

c. Date founded

An analysis of the social media follower count by the date of foundation (Chart 26) shows that think tanks founded earlier have more followers than newly established one, probably linked to the reputation of the organisation and their trajectory. Their trajectory and past impact are probably giving them more memorability and more credibility,[44] making them a source of reference for a wider audience.

[44] *For a discussion on credibility see Baertl, A. (2018) De-constructing credibility: factors that affect a think tank's credibility. On Think Tanks Working Paper 4.*

Chart 26.

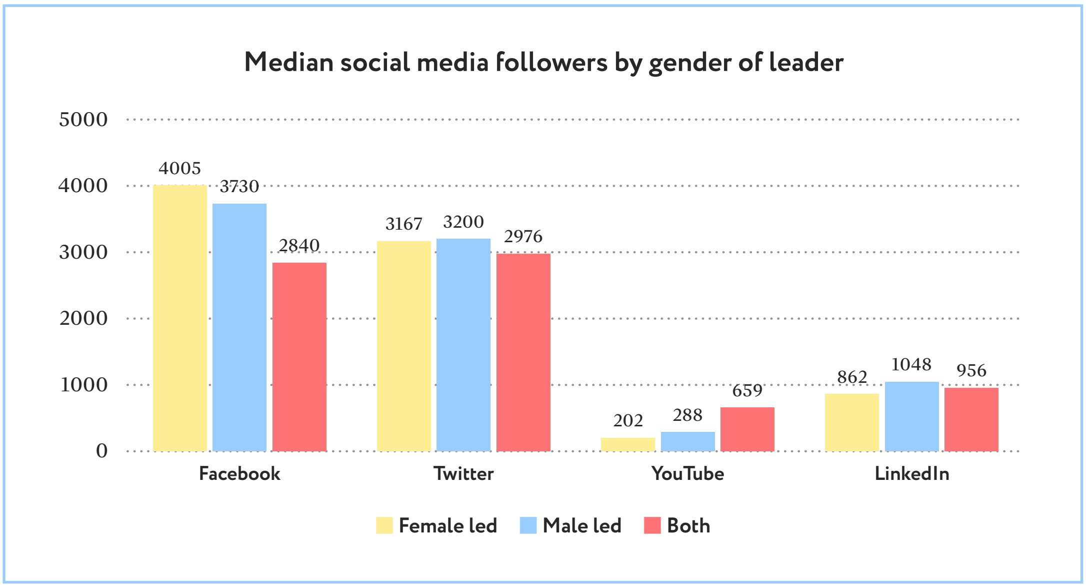


n: Twitter 1,646, Facebook 1,767, YouTube 1,167, LinkedIn 1,032

d. Gender of leader and founder

We found little differences in the median social media follower size on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn between male-led and female-led organisations (Chart 27). YouTube subscribers for think tanks with both male and female leaders are higher in the median and lower in the average, but given the low n of this group (15) we cannot say this represents a pattern.

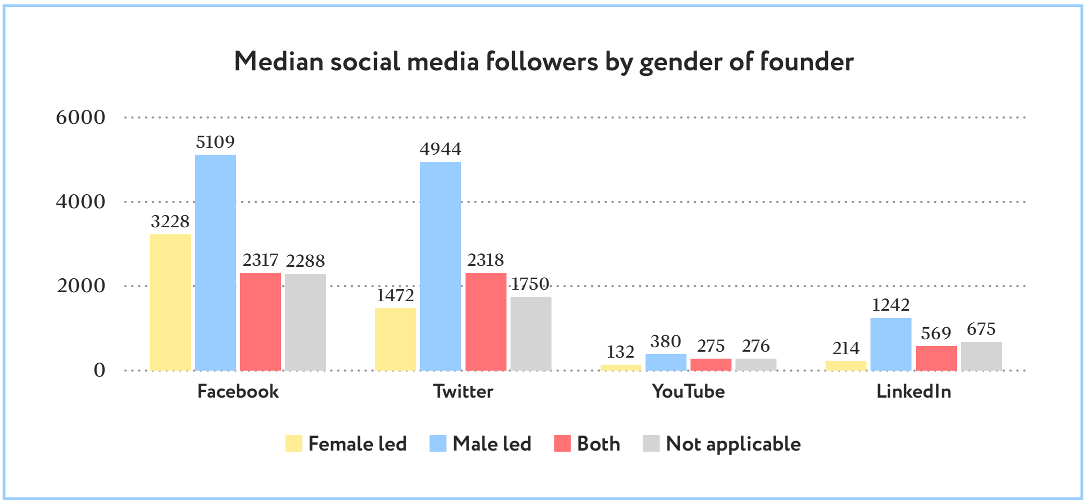
Chart 27



n: Twitter 1,574, Facebook 1,637, YouTube 1,087, LinkedIn 1,013

However, we did find differences in media follower size by gender of the founder, whereby think tanks founded by only men have more than double the follower size of think tanks founded by only women. The differences are greatest in Twitter and LinkedIn, but they are apparent in all other channels and an indication of a strong trend which deserves further research in future editions of the report.

Chart 28



n: Twitter 944, Facebook 1,008, YouTube 674, LinkedIn 1,027

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS HIGHLIGHTS

- The social media channels that feature most prominently in the directory are Facebook (74% of organisations have an account registered) and Twitter (67%), followed by YouTube (50%), LinkedIn (49%), Instagram(24%) and a few have Vimeo (8%).
- Facebook has the highest follower median globally (3,825), followed by Twitter (2,823), LinkedIn (892) and lastly YouTube (247).
- The median of Facebook likes in Latin America & the Caribbean almost doubles that of Twitter followers and is the highest across all regions, showing a marked preference for Facebook in the region; the same is true for Southern & Eastern Europe, Southern & South-Eastern Asia, and West & Central Africa. On the contrary, think tanks in the USA & Canada have a higher follower base on Twitter, followed by Western & Northern Europe (who fall within the interval).
- There is little social media data registered for Eastern Asia because the channels that the directory registers are either not the most popular in the region, or are limited or banned by governments (as are Facebook and Twitter in China).

- Think tanks across regions have a low follower media, on YouTube (slightly higher in the USA & Canada).
- Think tanks founded earlier have more followers than newly established ones, probably because their trajectory and past impact are giving them higher brand recognition and more credibility to a wider audience.
- We found little differences in the median followers across channels between male-led and female-led organisations. However, we did find differences in media follower size by gender of the founder, whereby think tanks founded by only men have more than double the follower size of think tanks founded by only women. The differences are greatest in Twitter and LinkedIn, but they are apparent in all other channels and an indication of a strong trend.

10

STAFF

Questions answered in this chapter

- What is the median staff size of think tanks?
- What is the percentage of women working in think tanks?
- How does this differ by region?
- Do older think tanks have more, or less, staff?
- Do male-led think tanks have more staff?
- Do female-led think tanks have a higher percentage of female staff?
- Is there a difference in staff size by business model?

10

STAFF

a. Overview

The Open Think Tank Directory holds the staff number and percentage of female staff, but the data available for staff size varies by region,[45] with Latin America & The Caribbean and Africa having the lowest percentages of available data (10% and 18% respectively for staff numbers) and Western & Northern Europe the highest (81%). Results in this section need to be read with this in mind, and data variability might occur in further editions of the report when more data is accrued. The main reason for this gap in data completeness lies in the information that think tank websites in each region offer. Organisations in Latin America & the Caribbean and Africa show far fewer staffing profiles than other regions, while Western & Northern European ones showcase their staff more consistently.

The global average staff size is 121, but this high average is heavily influenced by the Chinese Academy of Sciences which has 67,900 staff. When this organisation is taken out the average staff number is 74. Additionally, the outliers in each region skew the average (see Table 4), so as in the case of social media followers we decided to report the median when discussing staff size. The global median staff size is 20, and the global mean average is 44% female staff.

20

Median think tank staff size

n: 1,430

44%

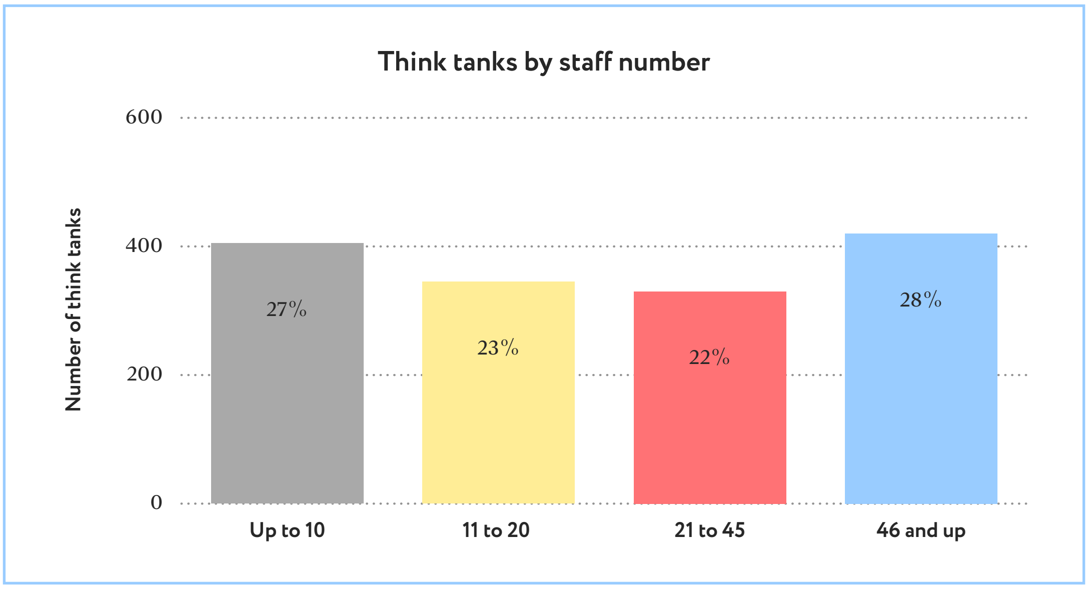
Female staff

n: 937

To facilitate comparisons with other variables we separated think tanks into four groups according to staff size: Up to 10; 11 to 20; 21 to 45; and 46 and up (Chart 29) and will use this grouping for comparison with other variables.

[45] *See Overview of the data for more details.*

Chart 29



n: 1, 430

b. Region[46]

Table 4 shows the average and median staff size of think tanks by region to clearly convey the differences between regions. Eastern Asia is the region with the highest staff average (580) and median (54). As mentioned in the previous section its average is heavily skewed by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (67,900 staff), and when this organisation is taken out of the calculation the average drops to 197, which is still well above the global average (74 without this organisation). As we will show in section e) on staff by business model, this is led by the higher staff median within government organisations, which are highly prevalent in this region.

INTERESTING DATA

There are 12 organisations in the database with a staff size over 1,000. They are located in China (5), the USA (2), United Kingdom (1), Japan (1), Germany (1), Brazil (1) and Bangladesh (1).

There are no organisations with staff sizes above 600 in Africa, Oceania, West & Central Asia, and Southern & South-Eastern Europe, indicating that the sector in those regions is not able to sustain the large organisations that exist in other regions.

[46] *We will not show regional comparisons with percentage of female staff, as the data availability by regions varies considerably e.g. Africa and Latin America & The Caribbean have only 6% completeness of data while Western & Northern Europe has 67%.*

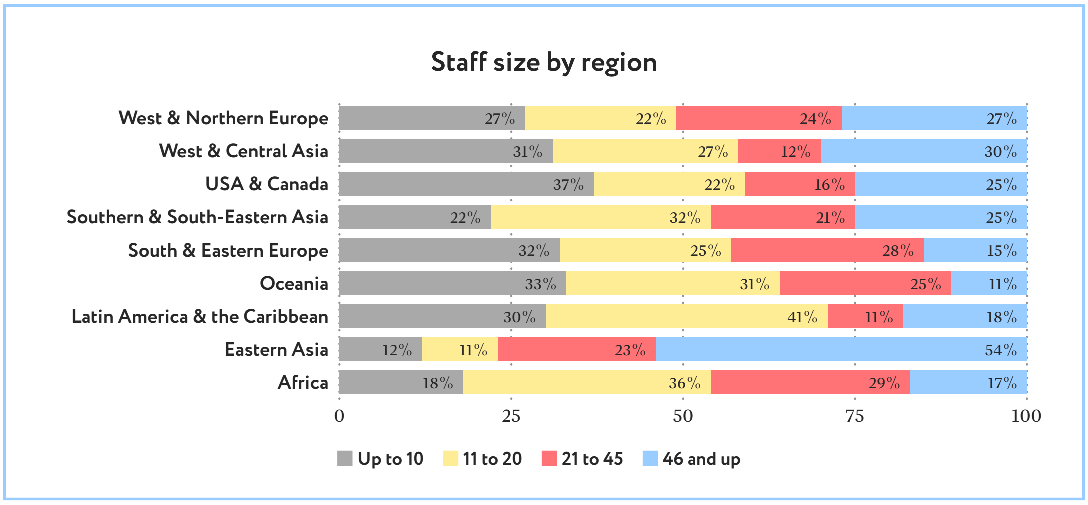
Table 4

Staff size indicators by region		
Region	Average	Median
Africa	37	20
Eastern Asia	580	54
Latin America & the Caribbean	100	15
Oceania	28	14
Southern & Eastern Europe	34	17
Southern & South-Eastern Asia	95	20
USA & Canada	59	16
Western & Central Asia	47	17
Western & Northern Europe	58	22
Total	**121**	**20**

n: 1,430

Grouping organisations by staff size (Chart 30) decreases the differences between regions (although they are still evident) but makes comparisons easier. Evidently, the region with the highest percentage of think tanks (relative to the number of think tanks in their own region) with more than 46 staff is Eastern Asia (54%). Africa, Oceania, and Southern & Eastern Europe have a lower percentage of organisations with more than 46 staff members (less than 18%). Latin America & the Caribbean, despite having one of the largest organisations (in terms of staff size) in the database (Getulio Vargas Foundation) also has a lower percentage of organisations in the upper staff numbers.[47] All other regions have a somewhat even split between groups.

Chart 30



n: 1,430
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

[47] *Due to the small n in the region we cannot assess if this is due to country differences or a regional trend.*

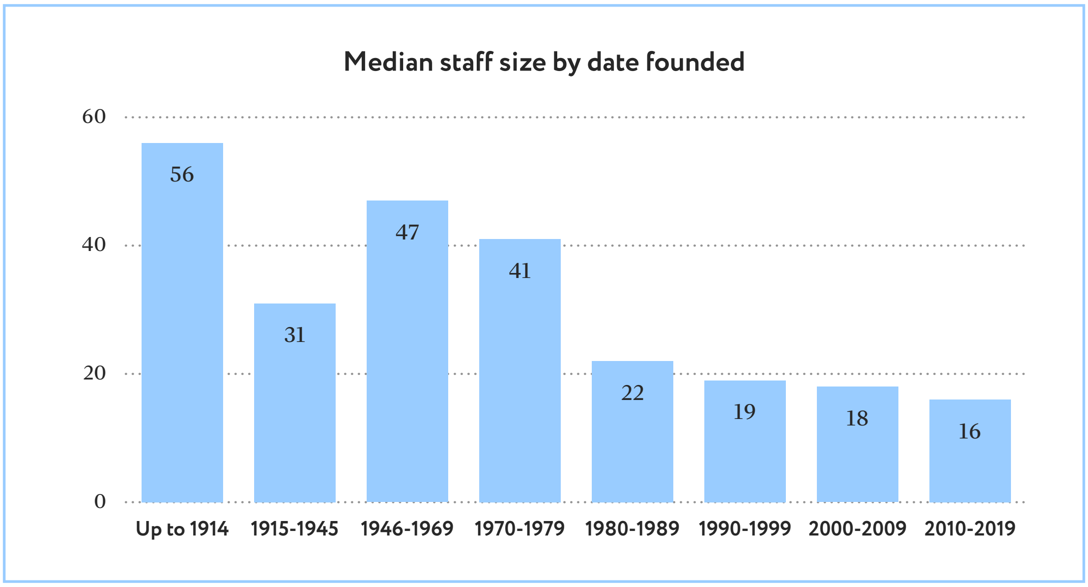
Oceania 48, Latin America & The Caribbean 46, Africa 28, USA & Canada 235, Western & Central Asia 67; Eastern Asia 177, Southern & South-Eastern Asia 82, Western & Norther Europe 561, Southern & Eastern Europe 186.

c. Date founded

There is a tendency for older organisations to have more staff. Chart 31 shows the median staff size for each date-founded group and Chart 32 shows the percentage of think tanks grouped by date founded and staff size; the trend for older organisations to be bigger in terms of staff size is clearly visible in both. Think tanks with 46 or more staff only account for 20% (or less) in organisations founded from the 2000s onwards, whereas for organisations founded prior to 1979, less than 17% of think tanks have a staff size of less than 10.[48]

This result although not surprising is nonetheless interesting. Older organisations have had time to establish themselves, secure funding and grow, while newly founded ones are still in this process, and many might even not stand the test of time and close. It would be interesting to see how these numbers progress through time, or asses historical data for older organisations and understand if the differences are only due to their age or if the context in which think tanks are now being created and operate is geared towards smaller and leaner organisations.

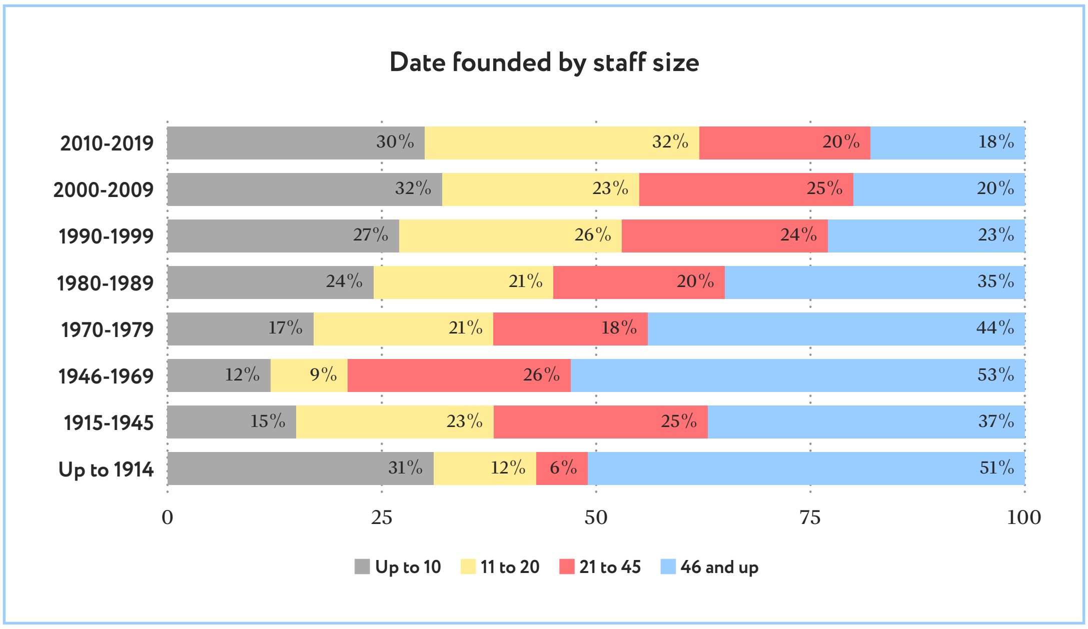
Chart 31



n: 1,248

[48] *The up to 1914 group shows a higher percentage of organisations with up to 10 staff, but the n for this group is 16.*

Chart 32



n: 1,248
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

d. Gender of leader and founder

Male-led think tanks have a higher staff median than think tanks with female leaders (Table 5). This difference is more prominent when the average is compared (151 staff members for male-led and 46 for female-led). The data also shows that the largest think tanks in the database are all led by men. The largest female-led organisation (in terms of size) is Norce (Norway) which ranks #17 with a staff of 900.

The same pattern emerges when comparing the gender of the founder and the average and median staff size. Think tanks founded by entities have the highest average and median staff size, however most organisations in this group are government or private-sector backed, and their relationship with these actors could be giving them the funds and support to sustain large staff numbers.

The differences that consistently appear (across variables) when comparing by the gender of the founder could be an indication of the strength of the influence of founders in several aspects of think tank functioning, management and impact.

Table 5

Staff size indicators by gender of leader			
Gender of leader	Average Staff	Median staff	Max number of staff
Both male and female	45	16	350
Female	46	18	900
Male	151	22	4695
Total	**125**	**1349**	**4695**

n: 1,354

Table 6

Staff size indicators by gender of founder			
Gender of founder	Average Staff	Median staff	Max number of staff
All female	28	21	135
All male	53	20	2920
Both male and female	39	15	610
Other/Not applicable	87	31	4541
Total	**58**	**21**	**4541**

n: 1,354

Table 7 shows the percentage of female staff by gender of leader, and Table 8 by gender of founder. Organisations with female leaders have a higher percentage of female staff (53% and 48% vs. 41%), and the same pattern is found when assessing the gender of the founder: organisations with female founders have a higher percentage of female staff. This indicates a clear relationship between women in power positions and more equality within organisations. Further analysis on the roles that women have within each organisation is needed to further assess this relationship.

Table 7

Percentage of female staff by gender of leader	
Gender of leader	Percentage of female staff
Both male and female	48%
Female	53%
Male	41%
Total	**44%**

n: 942

Table 8

Percentage of female staff by gender of founder	
Gender of leader	Percentage of female staff
All female	48%
All male	42%
Both male and female founders	49%
Other/Not applicable	43%
Total	**44%**

n: 588

e. Business model

Government think tanks have a higher staff median than all other types of organisation, and both for-profit and non-profit organisations have the lowest median size. As mentioned earlier, the bigger staff size of government organisations could be related to resources that these organisations have available, as well as the bureaucracy they need to comply with.

Table 9

Staff size indicators by business model	
Business model	Median staff
For profit	19
Government	56
Non-profit	20
Other	27
University institute/center	22
Total	**21**

n: 1,236

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

- The median staff number is 20 and on average 44% of think tank staff are women.
- There are differences in data completeness by regions as organisations in Latin America & the Caribbean and Africa show far fewer staff profiles than other regions, while Western & Northern European ones showcase their staff more consistently.

- The region with the highest median is Eastern Asia, but this number is led by China and the government organisations within it that make up the sample. Additionally, China holds the largest number of think tanks with a staff number of 46 and higher.
- There are no organisations with more than 600 staff members in Africa, Oceania, Western & Central Asia, and Southern & South-Eastern Europe, indicating that the sector in those regions is not able to sustain the large organisations that exist elsewhere.
- There is a tendency for older organisation to have more staff, probably because they have had time to establish themselves and grow, but it could also be a characteristics of the times (leaner and more agile organisations nowadays). Further research is needed.
- Male-led and male-founded think tanks have a higher staff median than think tanks with female leaders or founders. Additionally, the largest think tanks in the database are all led by men. The largest female-led organisation (in terms of staff) is Norce (Norway) which ranks #17 with a staff of 900.
- Think tanks founded by entities have the highest average and median staff size. This is because most organisations in this group are government or private-sector backed, which could be giving them the funds and support to sustain large staff numbers.
- Organisations with female leaders and/or founders have a higher percentage of female staff, indicating a clear relationship between women in power positions and more equality within organisations. Further analysis on the roles that women have within each organisation is needed to further assess this relationship.

11

TURNOVER

Questions answered in this chapter

- What is the average and median turnover for think tanks?
- Which regions have the highest and lowest turnover?
- Do older think tanks have more turnover?
- Is there a difference in turnover by the gender of the leader? Or the gender of the founder?

11

TURNOVER

a. Overview

The Open Think Tank Directory registers the turnover[49] of the organisations it features, but it is one of the least complete variables, having data for only 228 organisations (8% of the organisations included in this report). This is in part due to difficulties during fieldwork, but mainly because most organisations do not show or share their turnover information, or when they do it is difficult to uncover and buried deep within difficult-to-read reports.[50] Because of this, this chapter, more than any other, offers only a description and database-level explanation of the result. Nevertheless, the results are interesting and indicate trends and patterns that need to be explored further.

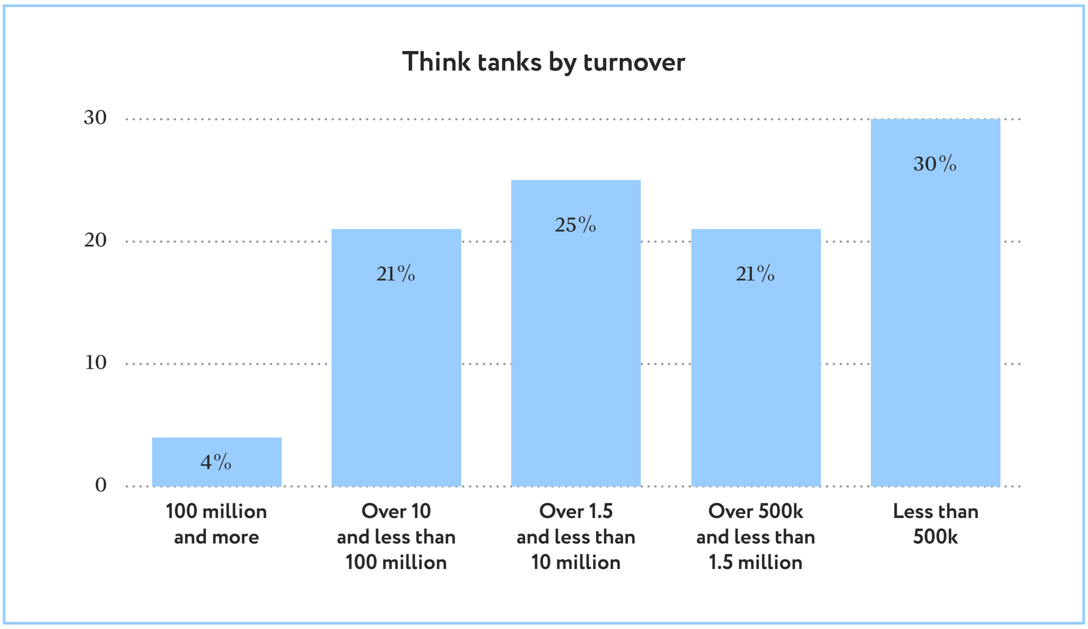
The average turnover is USD 67,187,306, but two organisations heavily skew this average: The Chinese Academy of Sciences with a turnover of USD 10,604,356,627 and the China Association for Science and Technology with USD 1,712,623,520. Without these the average is USD 13,281,971.77, still a very skewed number given the big budgets of a few organisations. As with other variables and due to the great variability within the sample, the median is a better statistic with which to compare turnover. The median turnover is USD 1,455,803.

To provide a better overview of the turnover, and ease of comparison with other variables, we grouped think tanks according to their turnover. We tried to establish groups of roughly the same size, but also showcase the bigger organisations. The groups established are: less than 500,000; over 500,000 and less than 1.5 million; over 1.5 million and less than 10 million; over 10 million and less than 100 million; and 100 million and more, which each unit being in USD. Chart 33 shows the breakdown of the data.

[49] *Defined as the amount of money turned over/received by the think tank in a year, expressed in USD and based on the exchange rate of 31 December of the year reported.*

[50] *See the publications by Transparify for more references on the financial transparency of organisations.*

Chart 33



n:228

b. Region

Bearing in mind the poor data availability mentioned in the previous section, Table 10 shows the average, median and maximum turnover per region (as well as the percentage of organisations in the region with data). The highest median, average, and maximum are found in Eastern Asia, followed (far behind) by Western & Northern Europe. The difference in turnover between Western & Northern (USD 4,016,913 median) and Eastern & Southern Europe (USD 294,758 median) is notable and speaks of the differences in the sector found within Europe.

INTERESTING DATA

There are eight organisations in the database with a turnover of 100 million USD or more. They are in China (3), Germany (3), Brazil (1), United Kingdom (1), Germany(1), and Switzerland (1).

The region with the lowest turnover is Western & Central Asia, both on average (USD 287,299) and in the median (USD 275,338). The small turnover in this region might be because we only hold data for university and non-profit think tanks for this region, which have a lower turnover (see Turnover-Business model); organisations in this region are also younger, which also have a lower turnover (see Turnover- Date founded); but it must also relate to the strength and size of the sector in the region.

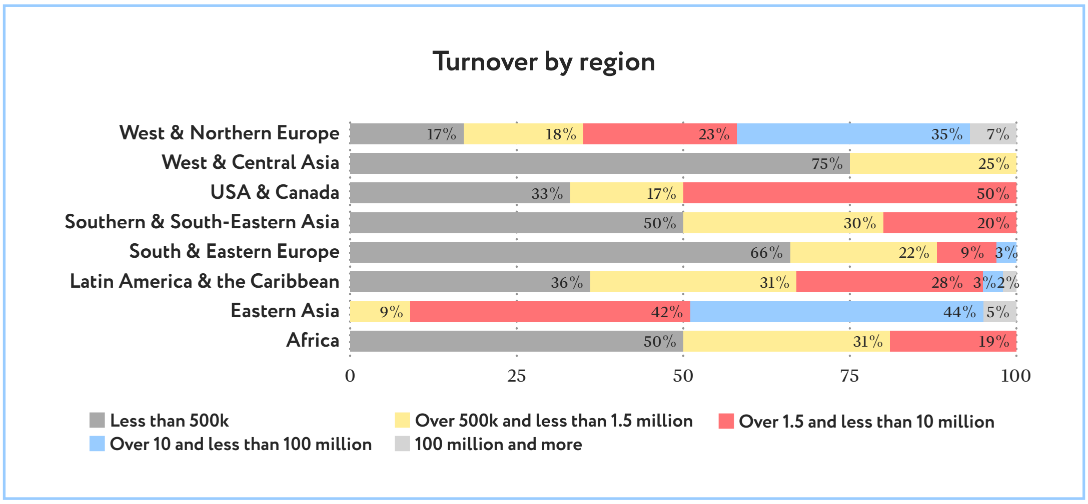
Table 10

Turnover indicators by region (USD)				
Region	Average	Median	Maximum	% of org. in region with data
Africa	$1,054,356	$481,894.00	$4,200,000	10%
Eastern Asia	$240,678,428	$9,177,569.00	$10,604,356,627	16%
Latin America & the Caribbean	$12,326,495	$825,000.00	$343,603,982	8%
Southern & Eastern Europe	$1,143,766	$294,758.00	$17,285,000	10%
Southernern & Southern-Eastern Asia	$866,959	$600,000.00	$3,365,394	5%
USA & Canada	$2,445,001	$1,810,771.00	$6,509,206	2%
Western & Central Asia	$287,299	$275,338.00	$1,000,000	7%
Western & Northern Europe	$25,939,684	$4,016,913.00	$350,377,133	9%
Total	**$67,187,306**	**$1,455,803.00**	**$10,604,356,627**	**8%**

n: 228
Note: the chart does not include Oceania as it had only one think tank with turnover data. Percentage is relative to the number of think tanks in the region.

Chart 34 shows the distribution of think tanks in each region by turnover. Organisations in Eastern Asia and in Western & Northern Europe have a higher percentage of think tanks in the high turnover groups, while for the rest of Asia at least 50% of organisations are below the USD 500,000 mark. Latin America & the Caribbean, Africa, and Southern & South-Eastern Asia have around 30% of organisations with a turnover of over 500k and less than 10 million, but Latin America & The Caribbean has a higher percentage of organisations above 1.5 million in turnover.

Chart 34

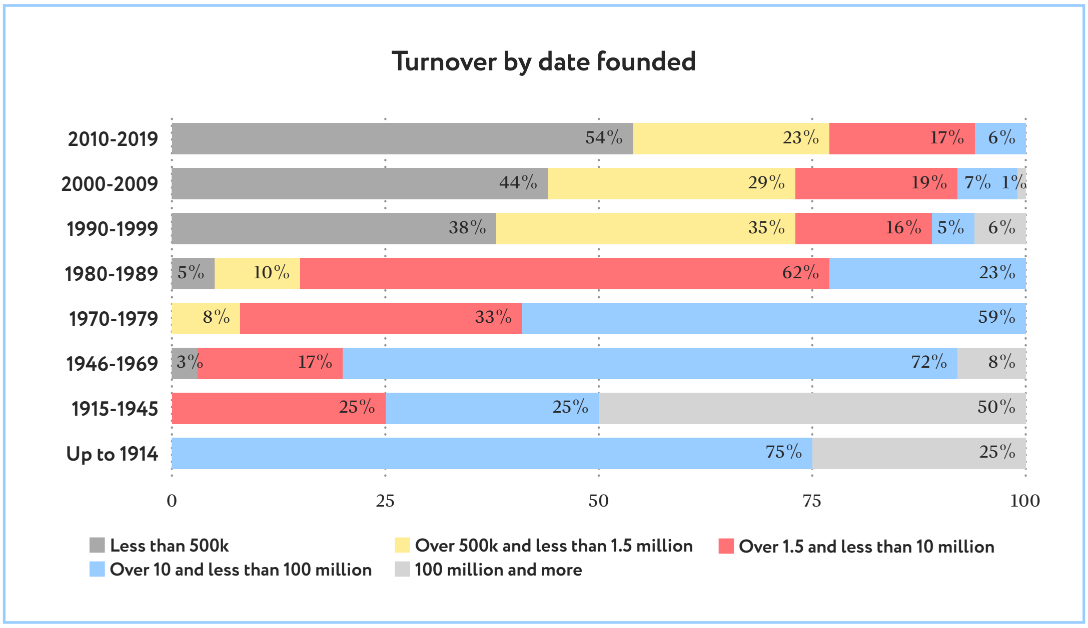


n: 227
Note: the chart does not include Oceania as it had only one think tank with turnover data.

c. Date founded

The analysis of foundation date by turnover shows a tendency for older organisations to have a higher turnover than younger organisations. No organisation in the database founded in the last decade has a turnover of more than 100 million. Furthermore, only a small percentage of organisations founded after 1990 (less than 7% of each group) have over 10 million in turnover. On the contrary, a small percentage of organisations founded before 1980 have less than 500k in turnover (3% of those founded in the 1946–1969 group), and most (over 58% in each group) have at turnover of above 10 million.

Chart 35



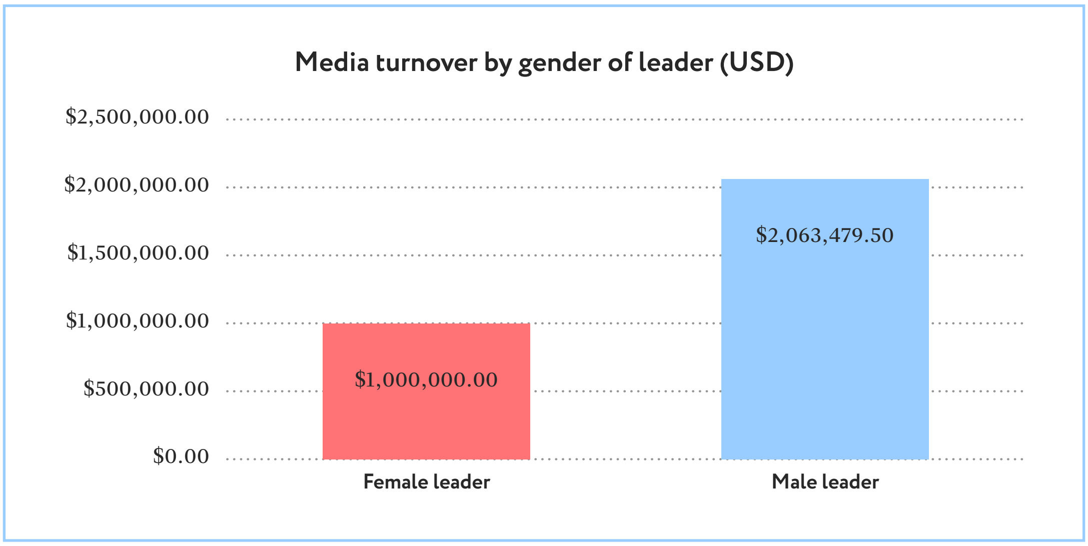
n: 201
Note: Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

d. Gender of leader and founder

The analysis of median turnover by gender of the leader (Chart 36) shows that male-led organisations more than double the turnover of female-led organisations (USD 2,063,479.50 vs. USD 1,000,000). Additionally, there are no female-only-led think tanks that have a turnover of above 100 million (Chart 37) and the majority of female-led organisations have a turnover of less than 500k.

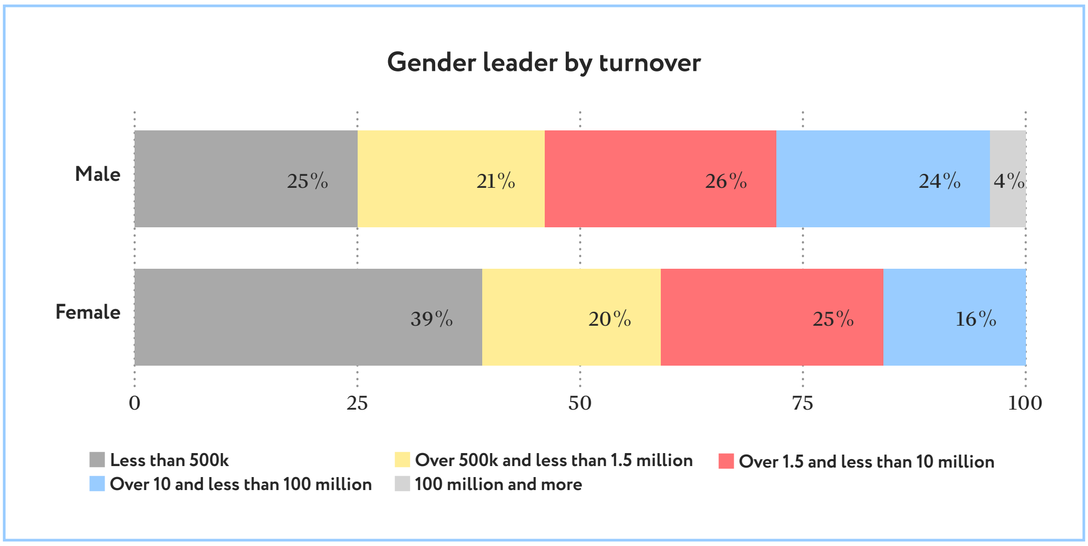
Given the low n of think tanks with turnover data we cannot explore the data any further and assess whether the age, region or type of organisation can help explain this. In addition, it would be interesting to explore historical data, and also assess causality: do think tanks with a higher turnover not select female leaders or is it that male leaders attract more funding?

Chart 36



n: 217
Note: there were eight cases for both male and female leaders (median 138,724) and they are not shown for comparison purposes.

Chart 37

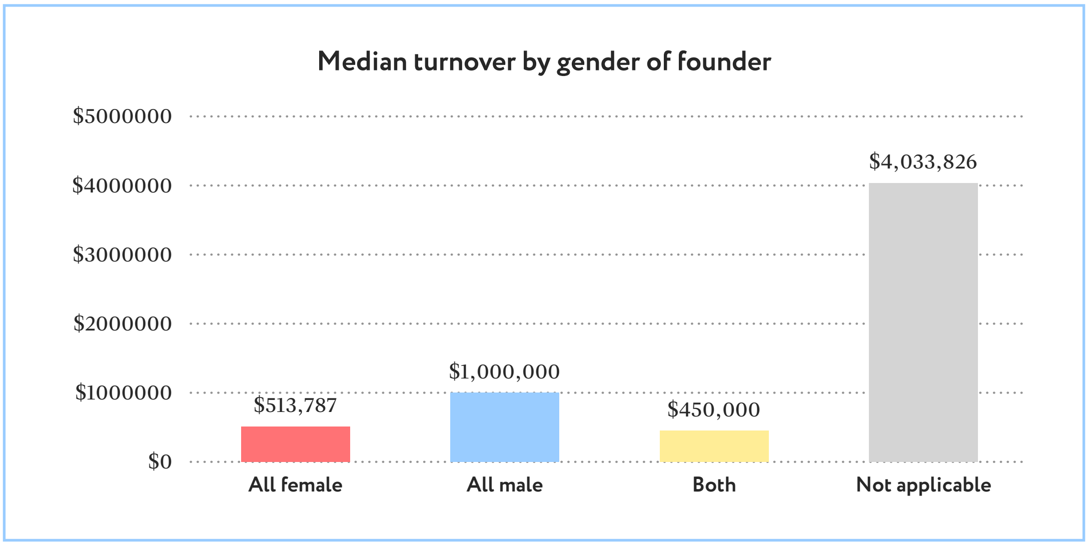


n: 217
Note: Median male-led: USD 2,063,479.50, median female-led: USD 2,049,159. There were eight cases for both male and female leaders (median 138,724) and they are not shown as the groups broke up the data too much. Percentages have been rounded and might not add up to a 100.

Organisations founded by entities have the highest median turnover: USD 4,033,826 (Chart 38) and the smallest percentage of organisations with less than 500k in turnover. Again, organisations founded by entities are mostly government-founded organisations in Eastern Asia, which have government resources and backing to help them operate. More than an indication that government-founded think tanks have a higher turnover in general, this is an indication of the importance placed on research by Eastern Asian governments.

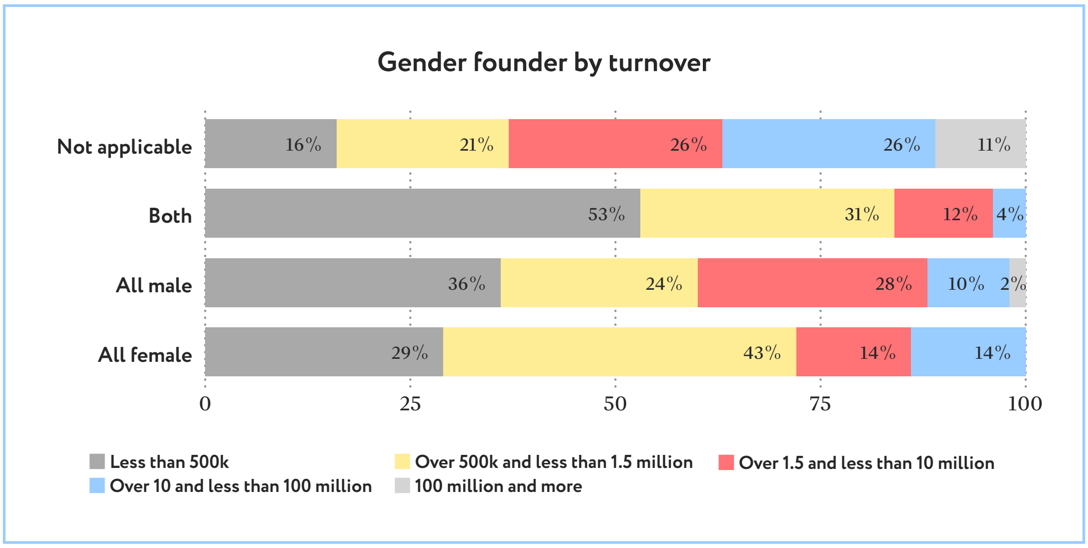
Chart 38 shows that the median turnover of organisations founded by men is double that of those with female founders (either all female or male and female co-founders). Additionally, 53% of think tanks founded by both men and women together have less than 500K in turnover (Chart 38), while there is only 36% in this turnover group for male-founded organisations. The low number of think tanks for which we have data on the turnover and founder's gender does not let us explore the data further or confidently identify other patterns.

Chart 38



n: 264
Note: the n of all-female founded think tanks is low (7) but the data has been kept for comparison purposes

Chart 39



n:133
Note: the n of all-female founded think tanks is low (7) but the data has been kept for comparison purposes

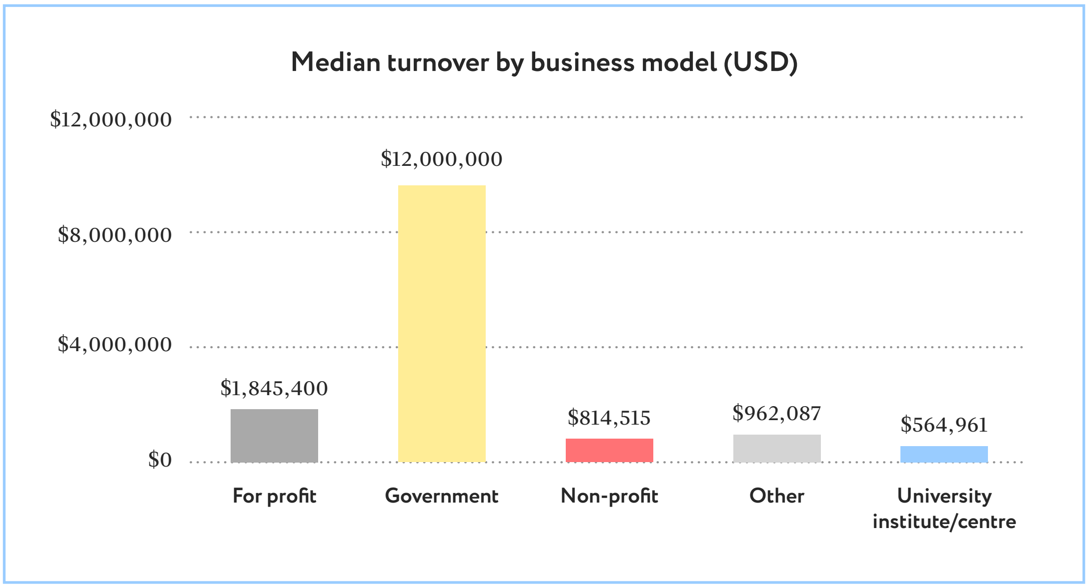
e. Business model

Our analysis of turnover by business model shows that government think tanks have the highest median turnover (USD 9,598,310), with 50% having a turnover of above 10 million. As mentioned, the reason for the higher turnover and staffing levels of government organisations can relate to their government-funded budgets. Again, it is important to highlight that most government policy research organisations in the sample are in Eastern Asia (85% of all government think tanks in the database are from this region). More than just an indication that government think tanks in general have a higher turnover, this is an indication that government think tanks in Eastern Asia, specifically China, have a higher turnover.

On the contrary, the median turnover for non-profits is USD 814,515 (Chart 40), and 40% have less than 500k in turnover (Chart 41). The larger number of organisations founded in the last 20 years paired with the finding that older organisations tend to have the highest turnover explains why such a big percentage of think tanks in the sample have less than 500k in turnover.

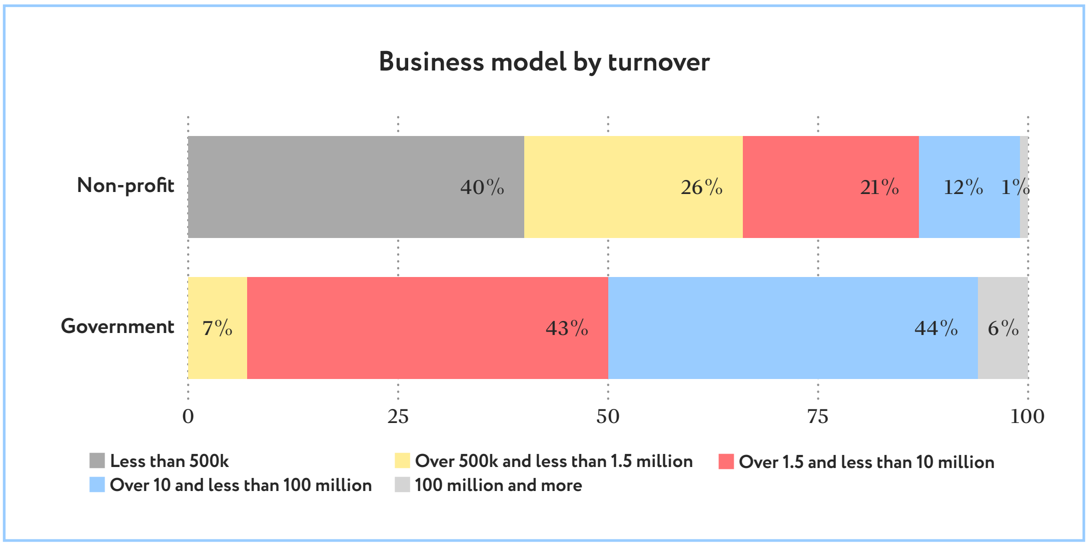
We cannot offer any other explanations or inferences for the other groups as the number of other business models is low.

Chart 40



n: 218

Chart 41



n: 197
Note: the n for other, university insitute/centre, and for-profit think tanks was below 10, and they are not shown as the groups broke up the data too much.

TURNOVER HIGHLIGHTS

- Turnover is the variable with the least amount of data available (data is held for only 228 organisations, 8% of the organisations included in this report). This is mainly because most organisations do not show or share their turnover information in an accessible fashion.
- The average turnover for think tanks in the database is USD 67,187,306, but this is heavily skewed by the very large organisations in the sample, hence the median is a better indicator to use for analysis and comparison. The median turnover for think tanks is USD 1 455 803.
- The highest median (USD 9,177,569) and average (USD 240,678,428) are found in Eastern Asia, followed (far behind) by Western & Northern Europe (average USD 25,939,684 and median USD 4,016,913).
- The difference in turnover between Western & Northern (USD 4,016,913 median) and Eastern & Southern Europe (USD 294,758 median) is notable and indicates how different the think tank landscape is in different parts of Europe.
- The region with the lowest turnover is Western & Central Asia, both on average (USD 287,299) and in median (USD 275,338). The small turnover in this region might be because we only hold data for university and non-profit think tanks for this region, which have a lower turnover; additionally organisations in this region are younger, which also have a lower turnover; but it must also relate to the strength and size of the sector in the region.

- Male-led and male-founded organisations have more than double the turnover of female-led and female-founded organisations (USD 2,063,479.50 vs. USD 1,000,000 in the case of leaders). Additionally, there are no female-only-led think tanks that have a turnover of above 100 million and most female-led organisations have a turnover of less than 500k.
- Organisations founded by entities have the highest median turnover: USD 4,033,826 and the smallest percentage of organisations with less than 500k in turnover. Organisations founded by entities are mostly government-founded organisations, which are the those with the highest median (compared to other business models). Most government organisations in the database are in Eastern Asia, hence this finding is not an indication of government-founded think tanks having higher turnover in general, but that government-founded think tanks in Eastern Asia, and specifically China, have a higher turnover.
- The median turnover for non-profits is USD 814,515, and 40% have less than 500k in turnover. The larger number of organisations founded in the last 20 years paired with the finding that older organisations tend to have a highest turnover explains why such a big percentage of think tanks in the sample have less than 500k in turnover.

12

CONCLUSIONS

12

CONCLUSIONS

The Open Think Tank Directory was born to overcome the lack of centralised and publicly available information about think tanks and other policy research centres, expertise bodies, and related organisations. But, more importantly it was developed and is maintained to promote and foster the transparency of the sector; to enable and facilitate connections between think tanks, funders, the media, the public, scholars and others; and to help make sense of a diverse and ever-changing sector. Today, four years since the idea was born, we can say that we are on our way to achieving those goals and this report is a step in that direction.

We have defined the boundary of the think tank label to include a diverse group of knowledge and engagement organisations that have as their (main) objective to undertake research, generate knowledge and use evidence to develop arguments to inform and/or influence policy debates, policies and their outcomes.

The report is based on data from 2,802 organisations on key variables: region, date founded, topics of focus, gender of leader, gender of founder, staff numbers, turnover, social media channels and business model.

Data quality

Due to its nature, the Open Think Tank Directory is always being updated as organisations grow, evolve or close. Currently it provides a good overview of the sector, but some regions are overly represented. We aim to increase coverage in each edition to better more data and improved analysis. But, while the data is not perfect it does offer interesting results, patterns, and trends across variables.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

- **The think tank sector is bigger (based on staff and turnover) in the USA & Canada, Western & Northern Europe, and Eastern Asia.**
- **Most think tanks focus on up to three topics, the most prominent ones being social policy, trade/economics/finance, governance/transparency and environment/natural resources/energy.**

The information that think tanks offer about themselves (on their websites) varies greatly. For example, Latin America & Africa showcase their staff less, and their executive directors are not often listed (this influences the completeness of the data). Turnover is the variable with the least amount of data (data for 8% of the organisations included in this report). This is because most organisations do not show or share their turnover information in an accessible fashion.

Date founded

Organisations now labelled think tanks began to appear in the 1800s (one even earlier) but their functions have evolved over time. The last century saw an explosion of think tanks across the world, and from the 1940s onward they began to consistently make their appearance in every region, peaking around the 2000s. The last decade has seen a slow decline in the number or think tanks founded across all regions.

- Think tanks are young on average (29 years).
- The majority of think tanks in the database are non-profit organisations (65%), followed by university institutes/centres (15%), government organisations (10%), for-profit organisations (5%) and a small group of other types (2%) .
- The social media channels that feature most prominently in the directory are Facebook (74% of organisations have an account registered) and Twitter (67%), followed by YouTube (50%), LinkedIn (49%), Instagram(24%) and a few have Vimeo (8%) .
- The median number of staff is 20, and on average 44% of think tank staff are women.
- The median turnover for think tanks is USD 1,455,803. We used the median as an indicator as there was great variability in the data.

Think tanks in the USA & Canada are the oldest in average (37 years) and reached their peak around the 1980s. Think tanks in Western & Central Asian, Africa and Southern & Eastern Europe are the youngest on average (22, 23 and 24 years respectively).

Older organisations tend to have more staff, more social media followers and more turnover. This result, although not surprising, is nonetheless interesting. Older organisations have had time to establish themselves, secure funding and grow, while newly founded ones are still in this process, and many might even not stand the test of time and eventually close. It would be interesting see how these numbers progress through time[51]. We could also assess historical data for older organisations and understand whether the differences are only due to their age or if the context in which think tanks are now being created and operate is geared towards smaller and leaner organisations.

Additionally, the trajectory and past impact of older organisations very likely give them a higher brand recognition and more credibility to a wider audience, and hence a higher attraction to funding, staff, and social media followers. It would be interesting to see if some of the older think tanks help or hinder younger ones' efforts to make a space for themselves.

Region

Think tanks are found across the world, they take many forms, have different structures, turnovers, focus on different topics, etc.; but they are everywhere. The average number of think tanks per country in the database is 19, but there is great variability between regions, and some regions show a higher concentration of think tanks in some countries and less in others.

Regionally, some issues have more prominence, showing their relative importance and the priorities of the region. For example, food/agriculture is a high priority in Africa (44%) but is seldom the focus of think tanks in Europe (both regions) and Western & Central Asia. International affairs/development is predominant in Europe and Asia, but less so in Latin America & the Caribbean and in Oceania.

There are also considerable differences in turnover by region. The highest median turnover is found in Eastern Asia (USD 9,177,5690) (relating to their higher count of Chinese government organisations), followed (far behind) by Western & Northern Europe (USD 4,016,913) and the USA & Canada (USD 1,810,771).[52] An interesting finding was the difference in turnover between Western & Northern and Eastern & Southern Europe (USD 294,758 median), which indicates how different the think tank landscape is in different parts of Europe. The region with the lowest turnover is Western & Central Asia (median USD 275,338). The small turnover in this region might be because think tanks in this region are younger, and/or because the directory holds no data on the traditionally higher-turnover government think tanks in this region, but it must also relate to the strength and size of the sector in the region.

On social media, there is little data registered for Eastern Asia because the channels that the directory registers are either not the most popular in the

[51] *And also compare this finding with Struyk's think tank development stages (see Struyk (2015) Improving Think Tank Management for a discussion of the different stages of think tank development).*

[52] *Readers are reminded that the data available for turnover is low in general, and even lower for the USA & Canada region(2% of think tanks in this region have turnover data).*

region, or are limited or banned by governments (such as are Facebook and Twitter in China). In future editions of the report we hope to expand the social media channels for which we have data.

Differences between regions are also found when comparing staff numbers. The differences are greater when comparing averages than when comparing medians (e.g. Eastern Asia[53] has 580 average and 54 median, while Western & Central Asia has 47 average and 17 median), which implies the differences are due to the larger organisations found in some regions. As evidence of this is, there are no organisations with more than 600 staff members in Africa, Oceania, Western & Central Asia, and Southern & South-Eastern Europe, indicating that the sector in those regions is not able to sustain the large organisations that exist elsewhere.

Gender of founders and leaders

Through the report and across almost all variables, comparing think tanks by the gender of the founder and the gender of the leader uncovers vast differences between think tanks. Across the world think tanks have mostly been founded by men only (58%)[54] and led by men (76%).[55] The percentage of all-male-founded think tanks has slowly decreased year by year, giving way to some all-female-founded think tanks (but mostly to both male- and female-co-founded think tanks). But even in the date group 2010–2019, almost 47% of think tanks were founded by men only, with only 8% by women only and 18% by men and women co-founders.[56]

The gender of the founder and of the leader are related (hence being discussed together). Think tanks founded by females (either all-female founders or both male and female co-founders) have a higher percentage of female leaders. On the contrary, organisations with all-male founders have a smaller percentage of female leaders. The gender of the founder and of the leader also influence the size in terms of staff, turnover and social media visibility.

This trend (male-founded and male-led) is seen across the world with a few variations, for example Latin America & the Caribbean and Africa have a higher than average percentage of think tanks with women founders, particularly in recent years. Western & Northern Europe have the highest percentage of female leaders (26%), followed by Oceania (24%) and the USA & Canada (22%).[57]

[53] *China holds the largest number of think tanks with staff numbers of 46 and higher.*

[54] *13% were founded by both male and female co-founders, 5% by women only, and 24% were founded by entities (e.g. government, universities, companies, religious orders, international organisations etc.).*

[55] *22% by women and in a small number (2%) leadership is shared by men and women.*

[56] *27% were founded by entities, groups or associations for which names were not disclosed.*

[57] *Thinks tanks in the USA & Canada have conversely been mostly founded by men only, but this is partly due to the older average age of think tanks in this region and the starker gender inequalities that existed when they were set up.*

On the contrary, Asia shows the opposite trend, and in Eastern Asia in particular the percentage of female-led think tanks is substantially lower (7%) and the percentage of male-led organisations is the highest across all regions (91%).

The topics that male-led and female-led think tanks focus on mirror existing gender stereotypes: a higher percentage of male-led think tanks focus on defence/peace/security and trade/economics/finance (78% and 81% respectively). Think tanks that focus on education, health and gender are proportionally more likely to be led by women (28%, 29% and 35% respectively).

We found no difference in social media follower size between male-led or female-led think tanks, but think tanks founded by men only have more than double the follower size of think tanks founded by women only (they are also older, which partly, but not completely, explains this result). The differences are greatest on Twitter and LinkedIn, but they are apparent in all other channels and indicate a strong trend.

Male-led and male-founded organisations have more than double the turnover of female-led and female-founded organisations (USD 2,063,479.50 vs. USD 1,000,000 in the case of leaders). Additionally, there are no female-only-led think tanks with a turnover of above 100 million, and most female-led organisations have a turnover of less than 500k.

Furthermore, male-led and male-founded think tanks have a higher staff median than think tanks with female leaders or founders. Additionally, the largest think tanks in the database are all led by men.[58] Conversely, organisations with female leaders and/or founders have a higher percentage of female staff, indicating a clear relationship between women in power positions and more equality within organisations. Further analysis on the roles that women have within each organisation is needed to further assess this relationship, but that the relationship exists is evident.

The differences that consistently appear when comparing the gender of the founder could be an indication of the strength of the influence of founders in several aspects of think tank functioning, management, and impact. These findings lead to the following questions: what influence does the founder's characteristics have in relation to who works and leads a think tank? What is their influence on long-term work? If gender has an influence on other variables, could the same be true with other equality indicators (race, class, etc.)? The answers to this could call for a stronger push for diversity among founding members.

[58] *The largest female-led organisation (in terms of staff) is Norce (Norway) which ranks #17 with a staff of 900.*

Other questions that arise are: how many think tank founders are also think tank leaders? Do think tank founders and leaders go on to found other think tanks? Do think tanks with a higher turnover simply not select female leaders or is it that male leaders attract more funding? What are the roles of women within a think tank? Are they mostly in low level positions? What is the make-up of think tanks boards? Do they also have an impact on staff and leadership? These questions will guide our future data collection efforts.

Government organisations

Government organisations are an interesting case. They do not account for a large percentage of the sample (9%) and are predominantly found in Eastern Asia (54% for this region). This latter high result is mostly a reflection of Chinese organisations in the database, where the percentage of government think tanks is 74%, and to a smaller degree by South Korea (40% government think tanks). Government organisations, as expected, are usually founded by the government (no specific individuals are mentioned) and have the highest turnover and staffing levels (by far). Given the high prevalence of this organisational set-up in Eastern Asia, and in particular China, this finding is not an indication of government-founded think tanks having higher turnover and more staff in general, but of government-founded think tanks in Eastern Asia, and specifically China, having higher turnover and staff, and of the relative importance that these governments place on research for policy.

Next steps for the Open Think Tank Directory

We will continue working on updating the Open Think Tank Database yearly and producing an annual report. Each year we will aim to accrue more data in the number of organisations featured and in the variables held. Potential inclusions and data improvements to aim for are:

- improvement of data held on organisations' turnover;
- analysis of funding sources and mechanisms;
- inclusion of data about board members and breakdown of the board; and
- inclusion of other social media channels.

Furthermore, we hope to increase the number of organisations that submit their own information; widen the use of the database among stakeholders in the evidence-informed-policy world; and include a wider number of collaborators in the analysis of the data.

Will you help us?

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Description of variables included

VARIABLE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
NAME (ENGLISH)	Name of the organisation in English. Translated either by the organisation when available or by our fieldworkers.	Think Tank
COUNTRY	Country where organisation is located.	USA
CONTINENT	Continent where the organisation is located.	Asia
REGION GROUP	Grouping of sub-regions (based on the United Nations geoscheme) where the organisation is located.	Western & Central Asia
BUSINESS MODEL	How the organisation is registered.	Non-profit
TOPICS	Main thematic areas that the organisation focuses on following the Open Think Tank Directory divisions.	Trade/economics/finance; food/agriculture; social policy; governance/transparency
NUMBER OF TOPICS	Number of thematic areas	2
DATE FOUNDED	Date founded at the most accurate level available. When only year is available January 1st is registered.	28 January 1998
DATE FOUNDED GROUPS	Grouping of think tanks based on their founding dates	1970-1979
GENDER FOUNDER	Gender of the founder (not applicable if it was founded by another organisation).	Both male and female co-founders
GENDER LEADER	Gender of the leader in 2019. If no data for 2019 is available, the last available year is used.	Female
NUMBER OF STAFF	Number of staff in 2019. This includes all staff, whether researchers, communications, support, full-time or part-time (except research associates).	30
NUMBER OF STAFF GROUPS	Grouping of organisations based on their staff size	Up to 10
PERCENTAGE FEMALE STAFF	Percentage of female staff (all staff) in 2019.	15%
TURNOVER	In USD the amount of money turned over/received by the organisation in the last year.	$500,000
TURNOVER GROUPS	Grouping of think tanks based on their turnover in 2019	Up to $500,000
TWITTER HANDLE AND FOLLOWERS	Twitter handle. Number of followers when the data was updated in 2019.	5,670
FACEBOOK PROFILE AND LIKES	Link to Facebook profile. Number of likes in 2019 when the data was updated.	7,590
YOUTUBE CHANNEL AND SUBSCRIBERS	Link to YouTube channel. Number of subscribers to the organisation's YouTube channel in 2019 when the data was updated.	250
VIMEO CHANNEL	Link to Vimeo channel.	5
INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT	Link to Instagram account.	450
LINKEDIN PROFILE AND FOLLOWERS	Link to LinkedIn profile.	50

Annex 2. Description of topics of focus

Topic of research	Examples
DEFENCE/PEACE/SECURITY	Military studies; violence; peace promotion; conflict; war
EDUCATION	Education models; Strengthening the education system;
ENVIRONMENT/NATURAL RESOURCES/ENERGY	Rainforest; Adaptation and mitigation of climate change; Biodiversity; Forests; Energy efficiency; Fossil fuels
FOOD/AGRICULTURE	Value chains and agribusiness; Food Safety; Sustainable agriculture
GENDER	Women´s rights, Gender Violence, Inequality
GOVERNANCE/ TRANSPARENCY	Citizenship; Democracy; Transparency; Decentralization
HEALTH	Infant nutrition; Drugs, WASH
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS / DEVELOPMENT	International relations, Development, Humanitarian actions
LAW/JUSTICE/HUMAN RIGHTS	Discrimination; Trafficking; Legal studies
MEDIA/CULTURE/SPORT	Religion; Language
PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT	Business; Entrepreneurship
SOCIAL POLICY	Poverty; Protection of children and adolescents; Social inclusion; Inequality; Social development
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION	Information Technology; Sustainable technologies;
TRADE/ECONOMICS/FINANCE	Commerce; Macro economy; Fiscal studies
TRANSPORT/INFRASTRUCTURE	Engineering; Road policy; Urban or rural infrastructure (hospital buildings, highways etc)

Annex 3. Link to database and other charts

The database used in this report can be accessed and downloaded with this link. We invite readers to explore the data and let us know if we missed an interesting bit of information or if something in the report or the database needs to be corrected.

As part of the process of analysis we have produced several charts and tables, and not all of them have made it to the report. Interested readers can access all charts, tables and analysis in this link in the Open Think Tank Directory.

On Think Tanks

www.onthinktanks.org