

ACCESS TO INFORMATION POLICY

Annual Report 2021

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Note:

In this publication, "\$" refers to United States dollars.

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ACCESS TO INFORMATION POLICY 2021

AT A GLANCE

DISCLOSURE RATES FOR SELECTED DOCUMENT TYPES



100%

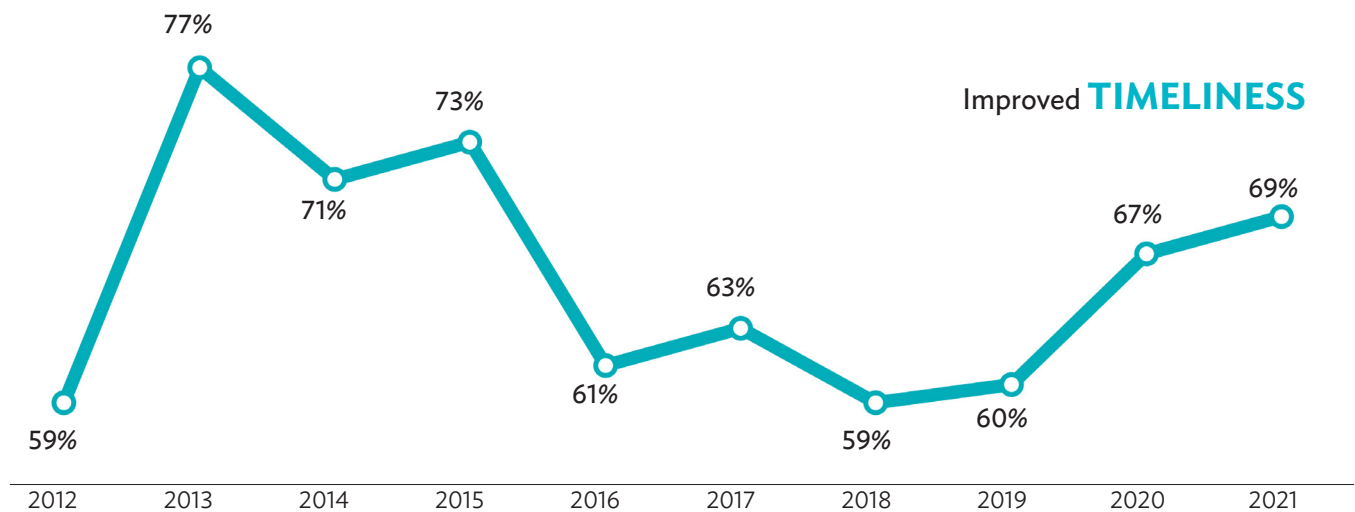
initial project data sheets, draft safeguard reports, major change reports, and progress reports on tranche releases

96%

completion reports and extended annual review reports

93%

approved project reports, including reports and recommendations of the President



TIMELINESS RATES FOR SELECTED DOCUMENT TYPES

100%

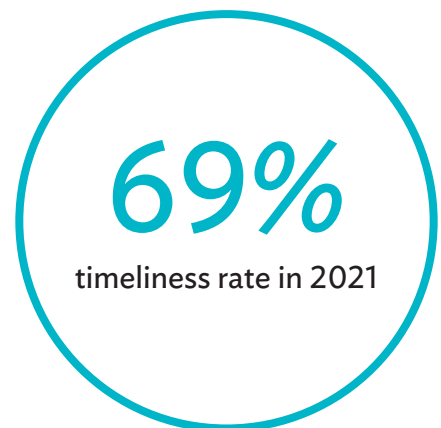
draft safeguard reports, major change reports, and progress reports on tranche releases

92%

completion reports and extended annual review reports

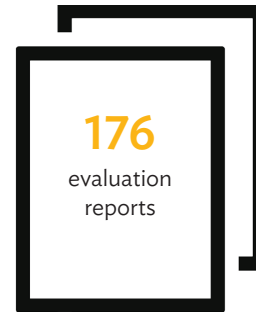
80%

approved project reports, including reports and recommendations of the President

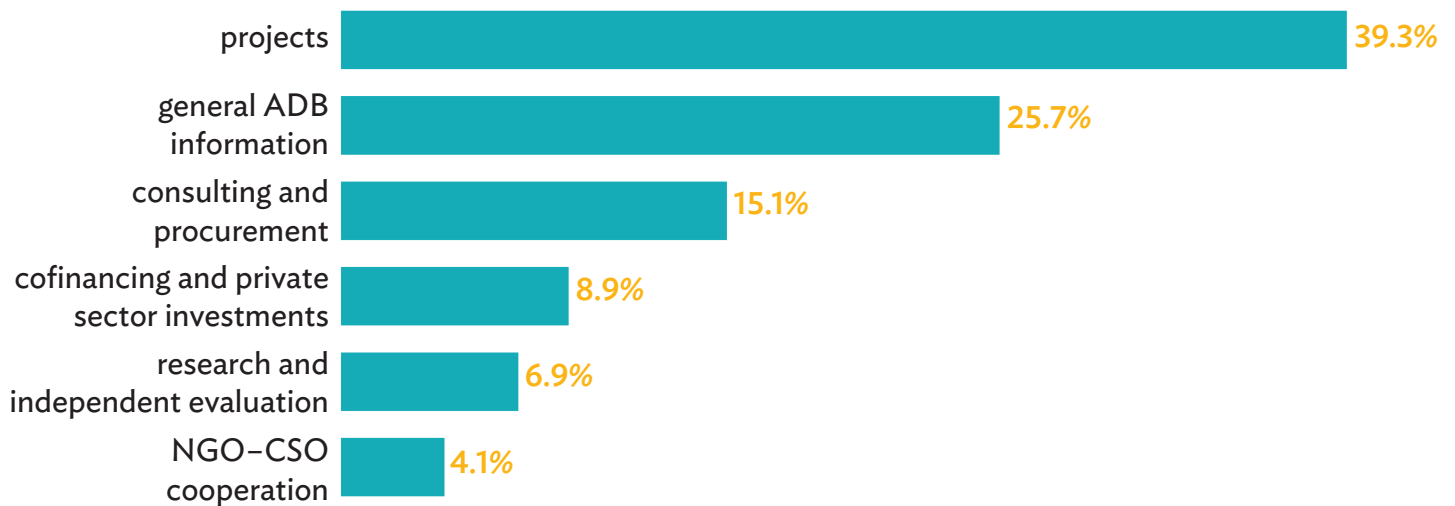


ADB has been monitoring a set of 12 key project document types to assess policy compliance. Because these documents are required to be disclosed within certain time frames, they provide a snapshot of the level and timeliness of ADB's project document disclosure. In 2021, **1,684** of these project documents were required to be disclosed.

TOTAL NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS DISCLOSED



2,806 VALID INFORMATION REQUESTS ON



CAME FROM



41%

private sector



16%

academe and research
organizations



8%

government



1%

media



10%

CSOs and NGOs



3%

multilateral organizations
and development agencies



21%

others

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIP	Access to Information Policy
COVID-19	coronavirus disease
IED	Independent Evaluation Department
TA	technical assistance

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2021 HIGHLIGHTS

6,243 project documents disclosed

812,215 downloads of project documents

98% disclosure rate

2,806 valid information requests

97% response rate to valid information requests

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This annual report assesses the progress of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in implementing the Access to Information Policy (AIP) from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.¹ The AIP guides ADB's commitment to transparency and accountability by publicly disclosing information and making information available upon request. It also ensures that information is available to people affected by ADB projects and other stakeholders in a form and language they can understand.²

2. ADB operated under extended work-from-home arrangements for a second year in 2021 because of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. To ensure staff continued to receive support in improving the timeliness and compliance of disclosure, ADB created a disclosure monitoring dashboard. The dashboard allows teams to (i) view the projects that require disclosure of project documents and (ii) generate data to track and monitor compliance with the AIP disclosure requirements. ADB also raised awareness by increasing the number of staff disclosure reminders and providing policy advice to staff.

3. In 2021, ADB continued to improve transparency in several key areas, including overall disclosure of project documents, on-time disclosure, and responsiveness to information requests.

II. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Disclosure

4. ADB's website (www.adb.org) remains the primary medium for disclosure to reach a wide audience. To facilitate dialogue with project-affected people and other stakeholders, ADB works closely with its borrowers and clients to ensure it shares relevant information during project design and implementation. It uses other means to disseminate information to project-affected people and stakeholders without access to technology based on literacy levels, geography, infrastructure, and popular mass media. ADB is also required to respond to requests for information about its operations and administration in a timely manner.

¹ ADB. 2018. *Access to Information Policy*. Manila. The policy provides nine principles, 13 exceptions to disclosure, and general information about external requests and appeals. ADB discloses information unless it falls within the exceptions specified in the policy.

² The [disclosure website](#) provides information on the AIP, including translations of the policy into 16 languages, information requests with online request forms and e-mail contact forms for staff, the appeals process with e-mail contact forms, annual reports, and the contact information of staff overseeing disclosure.

1. ADB Policy and Strategy Papers

5. In 2021, ADB's Board of Directors considered 10 institutional policy papers: (i) the Reference Rate Transition for the Asian Development Bank's Financial Loan Product; (ii) the Review of the Asian Development Bank's Exposure Limits on Nonsovereign Operations; (iii) the Revised Emergency Assistance Loan Policy; (iv) the Revised Disaster and Emergency Assistance Policy; (v) the Revised Ordinary Operations Loan Regulations; (vi) the Energy Policy Supporting Low-Carbon Transition in Asia and the Pacific; (vii) the Review of ADB's Comprehensive Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Policy; (viii) the Midterm Review of ADB's Corporate Results Framework, 2019–2024; (ix) the Workforce Rebalancing Framework; and (x) the Establishment of a Second Window of Assistance under the Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund.³ The first two were kept confidential and withheld from disclosure, and the rest were disclosed on ADB.org within 14 days of approval by the Board, as required by the AIP. All of these required chair summaries of the Board meeting, and each of these were disclosed.

2. Country Partnership Strategies and Regional Cooperation Strategies

6. The Board of Directors endorsed six country partnership strategies in 2021: Bangladesh, Mongolia, Pakistan, the People's Republic of China, Tajikistan, and Thailand.⁴ The Board also endorsed the Pacific Approach, 2021–2025, which serves as the regional country partnership strategy for the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.⁵ All were disclosed within the prescribed 14-day time frame after the Board's endorsement.

7. The AIP also requires the disclosure of country or regional operations business plans within 14 days of their circulation to the Board. In 2021, the country operations business plan for Pakistan, 2021–2023 was circulated to the Board and disclosed on time.⁶

3. Project Documents

8. ADB discloses information about its projects and operations to ensure that stakeholders are informed early in the project design stage and throughout implementation. In 2021, ADB posted 6,243 project documents on ADB.org, 7% more than in 2020 and 27% more than in 2019. Project documents were downloaded 812,215 times, 35% more than in 2020.

³ ADB. 2021. *Reference Rate Transition for the Asian Development Bank's Financial Loan Product*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Review of the Asian Development Bank's Exposure Limits on Nonsovereign Operations*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Revised Emergency Assistance Loan Policy*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Revised Disaster and Emergency Assistance Policy*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Revised Ordinary Operations Loan Regulations*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Energy Policy Supporting Low-Carbon Transition in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Review of ADB's Comprehensive Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Policy*. Manila; ADB. *Midterm Review of ADB's Corporate Results Framework, 2019–2024*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Workforce Rebalancing Framework*. Manila; and ADB. 2021. *Establishment of a Second Window of Assistance under the Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund*. Manila.

⁴ ADB. 2021. *Country Partnership Strategy: Bangladesh, 2021–2025—Sustain Growth, Build Resilience, and Foster Inclusion*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Country Partnership Strategy: Mongolia, 2021–2024—Laying Resilient Foundations for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth*. Manila; ADB. 2020. *Country Partnership Strategy: Pakistan, 2021–2025—Lifting Growth, Building Resilience, Increasing Competitiveness*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Country Partnership Strategy: People's Republic of China, 2021–2025—Toward High-Quality, Green Development*. Manila; ADB. 2021. *Country Partnership Strategy: Tajikistan, 2021–2025—Improving the Quality of Growth*. Manila; and ADB. 2021. *Country Partnership Strategy: Thailand, 2021–2025—Prosperity and Sustainability through Knowledge and Private-Sector-Led Growth*. Manila.

⁵ ADB. 2021. *Pacific Approach, 2021–2025*. Manila.

⁶ ADB. 2021. *Country Operations Business Plan: Pakistan, 2021–2023*. Manila. ADB discontinued country operations business plans in July 2021. Proposed projects are listed on the [Projects and Tenders page](#).

9. ADB monitors a set of 12 key project document types to assess policy compliance (Table 1). Because these documents are required to be disclosed within certain time frames, they are good indicators of the overall level and timeliness of ADB's project document disclosure.

10. In 2021, 1,684 project documents were required to be disclosed based on the monitored 12 key project document types. As of 31 December, 98% of these were disclosed, up from 95% in 2020.

Table 1: Web Posting of Selected ADB Project Documents (%)

Project Documents	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1. Initial project data sheet	93	95	92	96	97	97	100	96	100	100
2. Draft environmental impact assessment (subject to 120-day rule)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
3. Draft environmental assessment and review framework	100	100	95	100	100	95	96	100	100	100
4. Draft resettlement framework or plan	100	100	97	10	100	91	100	100	100	100
5. Draft indigenous peoples planning framework or plan	100	100	100	100	100	87	95	100	100	100
6. Initial poverty and social analysis	48	86	73	83	85	67	97	75	91	99
7. Technical assistance report	68	91	90	88	89	75	99	82	84	94
8. Report and recommendation of the President, PFR report, grant assistance report, FAST report, investment facility report	93	88	88	90	95	90	95	93	93	95
9. Major change report	33	71	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
10. Progress report on tranche release	100	100	None	100	100	100	100	83	100	100
11. Annual audited project financial statement	None	100	100	83	100	100	100	94	98	97
12. Completion report or extended annual review report	96	97	97	99	95	100	93	91	96	99
OVERALL	84	93	92	93	95	91	98	91	95	98

ADB = Asian Development Bank, FAST = Faster Approach to Small Nonsovereign Transactions, PFR = periodic financing request.
Source: Asian Development Bank.

11. Of the disclosed project documents, 69% were disclosed on time compared with 67% in 2020 and 60% in 2019. The timely disclosure of sovereign documents increased from 73% in 2020 to 75% in 2021, while the timeliness of nonsovereign documents remained at 30%.

12. ADB's efforts to improve the timeliness of disclosure were seen in almost all of the 12 key project document types (Table 2). The document types identified as having the least timely disclosure in 2019, when the AIP went into effect,⁷ continued showing improvement in 2021: audited project financial statements (from 56% in 2020 to 60%), initial poverty and social analysis (from 57% to 67%), initial project data sheets (from 48% to 55%), and technical assistance (TA) reports (from 60% to 78%).

⁷ The AIP went into effect on 1 January 2019, superseding the Public Communications Policy, 2011.

13. Of the 78 undisclosed project documents at the end of 2020, 69 have been disclosed.⁸

14. In addition to the monitored documents, ADB routinely discloses a variety of other project documents and information throughout the project cycle to keep stakeholders informed. These include updates to project data sheets, safeguard documents, and legal agreements.

Table 2: Disclosure Timeliness of Selected ADB Project Documents (%)

Project Documents	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1. Initial project data sheet	34	62	44	62	58	58	61	46	48	55
2. Draft environmental impact assessment	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
3. Draft environmental assessment and review framework	73	83	86	100	82	84	79	86	100	100
4. Draft resettlement framework or plan	98	89	92	98	96	91	88	97	100	100
5. Draft indigenous peoples planning framework or plan	100	92	100	92	93	87	86	100	100	100
6. Initial poverty and social analysis	25	49	51	63	61	43	41	42	57	67
7. Technical assistance report	43	83	75	68	57	45	38	57	60	78
8. Report and recommendation of the President, PFR report, grant assistance report, FAST report, investment facility report	47	68	60	72	72	64	63	76	80	73
9. Major change report	0	29	67	92	100	0	100	100	100	100
10. Progress report on tranche release	71	67	NA	100	50	75	20	83	100	50
11. Annual audited project financial statement	NA	67	50	53	24	42	47	48	56	60
12. Completion report or extended annual review report	93	94	92	96	89	97	76	87	92	93
OVERALL	59	77	71	73	61	63	59	60	67	69

ADB = Asian Development Bank, FAST = Faster Approach to Small Nonsovereign Transactions, NA = not applicable, PFR = periodic financing request.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

4. Other Project and Program Information

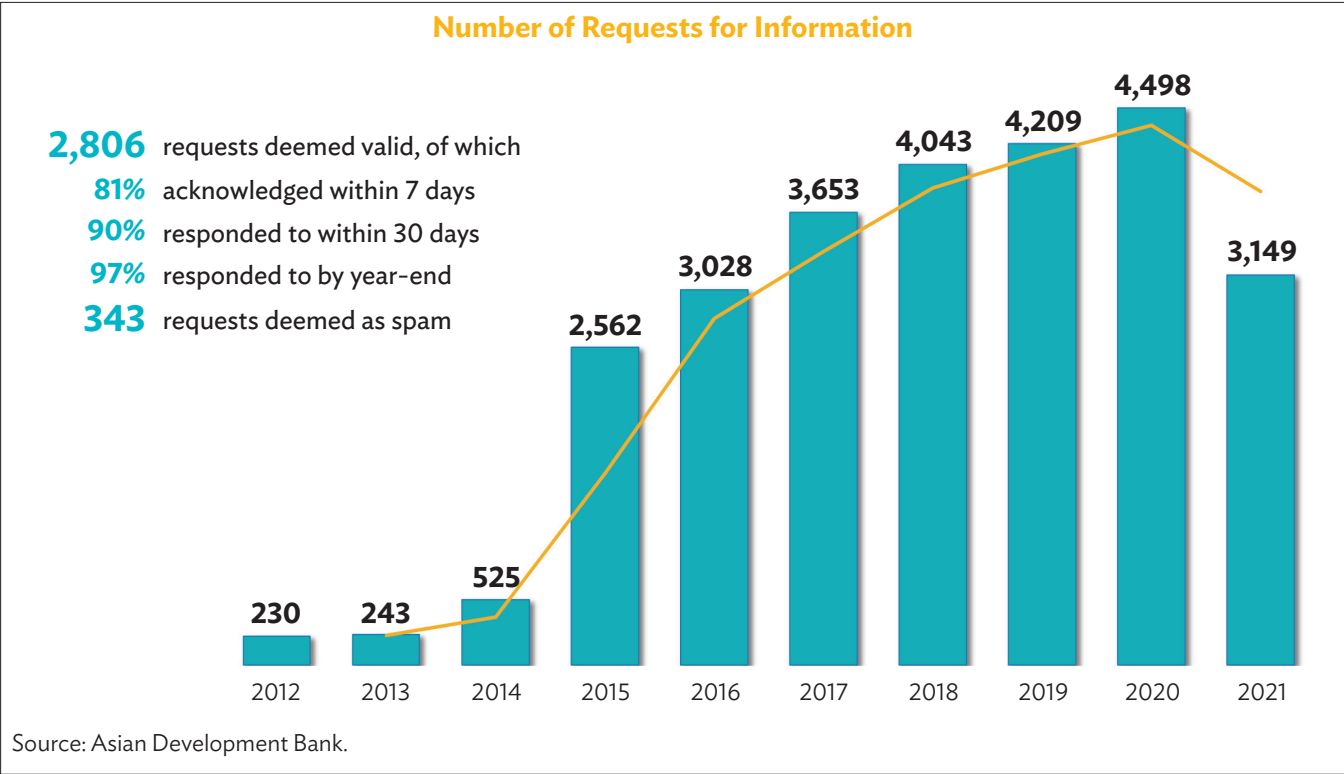
15. In 2021, the Independent Evaluation Department (IED) produced one annual evaluation review, two corporate and thematic evaluations, one country assistance program evaluation, four project and TA evaluations, three synthesis notes, and one lessons note on the COVID-19 response. IED also validated 4 country partnership strategy final reviews, 98 project completion reports, and 62 TA completion reports. All

⁸ One Faster Approach to Small Nonsovereign Transactions report, two reports and recommendations of the President, and six TA reports were not disclosed.

of these were disclosed on ADB.org within the prescribed time frame. IED’s validation of 28 extended annual review reports were not disclosed because they contain information that falls under one or more of the AIP’s exceptions to disclosure.

B. Requests for Information

16. In 2021, ADB received 3,149 requests for information--a decrease from 4,498 in 2020--through the inquiry form on its corporate website. However, 89% (2,806) of these were deemed valid compared with 76% in 2020. ADB acknowledged 81% (78% in 2020) of the valid requests within the required 7 days and responded to 90% (86% in 2020) within the required 30 days. ADB responded to 97% of the valid requests by the end of the year, an improvement from 93% in the previous year. The greatest number of requests were for project information (1,102 requests, or 39% of the total), and 41% of the requests came from the private sector. ADB denied 27 requests for information because they fell under one or more of the AIP’s exceptions to disclosure.



III. GOING FORWARD

17. ADB is committed to empowering stakeholders by providing them with the information they need in time to participate in the bank’s development activities. To ensure this, ADB will continue to issue regular disclosure reminders, provide advisory support to strengthen staff knowledge and capacity, and implement activities to improve its on-time disclosure and compliance.

18. ADB will resume discussions with staff on ways of addressing the bottleneck experienced in disclosing documents from private sector operations on time. It will also explore new ways of enhancing automated procedures to ensure documents that go to the Board for information or approval are disclosed automatically unless they fall under at least one of the AIP’s exceptions to disclosure.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members —49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.



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