



Autocratization Turns Viral

DEMOCRACY REPORT 2021



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

V-Dem is a unique approach to measuring democracy – historical, multidimensional, nuanced, and disaggregated – employing state-of-the-art methodology.

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) produces the largest global dataset on democracy with almost 30 million data points for 202 countries from 1789 to 2020. Involving over 3,500 scholars and other country experts, V-Dem measures hundreds of different attributes of democracy. V-Dem enables new ways to study the nature, causes, and consequences of democracy embracing its multiple meanings.

We are very grateful for our funders' support over the years, which has made this venture possible. To learn more about our funders, please visit: <https://www.v-dem.net/en/about/funders/>.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect an official position of the V-Dem Project or the V-Dem Steering Committee.

Produced by the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg

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Pro-democracy protest in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo by Kan Sangtong, Shutterstock.

A Word from the Team

WE ARE PLEASED TO PRESENT *Democracy Report 2021*, the fifth annual report from the V-Dem Institute. Our report comes at uncertain times, as the world is combating the Covid-19 pandemic and democratic principles continue to decline. It is our hope that this report will contribute to a greater understanding of these global challenges.

With the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, we started the *Pandemic Backsliding project* (PanDem) with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden, in March 2020. The project tracks state responses to Covid-19 and their potential effects on democracy in 144 countries until December 2020. To make the data more easily accessible, we have also developed an interactive online dashboard which can be accessed [on our website](#).

We are also pleased that during 2020 we became part of, and host the team building **Demscore**. Demscore brings together some of the world's leading research infrastructures and databases at various Swedish universities. The objective is to advance national and international research on complex societal challenges facing the world.

The launch of the **Varieties of Party Identity and Organization (V-Party) dataset** in November 2020 was another significant moment for the V-Dem Institute. V-Party is the largest ever study of political parties highlighting shifts and trends within 3,489 political parties in 178 countries since 1970, with funding from the Swedish Research Council. This dataset offers a unique opportunity to compare how different political parties respond to socio-economic and political pressures.

Like many other observers around the world, we are deeply concerned with the decline of democratic attributes over the past decade or so, and this year's Democracy Report documents that this trend continues during 2020. This intensifying wave of autocratization across the world highlights the need for new programs to defend democracy. That is why in November 2020, we started *the Case for Democracy initiative* with the financial support from the European Commission. *The Case for Democracy* collates state-of-the-art research on the benefits of democracy for economic and human development, health and socio-economic protections, environmental protection and climate action, as well as international and domestic security. We are looking forward to carry on and expand this effort in the coming years.

In order to better understand the patterns that lead to regime change, this year we are also publishing the new Regimes survey in the V-Dem dataset version 11. This survey is part of Professor Knutsen's European Research Council grant on the "**Emergence, Life, and Demise of Autocratic Regimes**". It provides an opportunity to track the main actors who keep a regime in power and those who want to remove the regime by looking at the size, geographic location and social composition of both support coalitions and regime opposition groups.

The data presented in this report is the result of an internationally collaborative effort. We are immensely grateful to the 3,500 country experts without whose contribution the data and this report would not have been possible, and to the Country Coordinators, Regional Managers, Project Managers, and Steering Committee Members for their active engagement.

The V-Dem Institute Team





Executive Summary

PANDEMIC BACKSLIDING LOOMS

- Most democracies acted responsibly but 9 democracies register major and 23 moderate violations of international norms.
- 55 autocratic regimes engaged in major or moderate violations.
- 2/3 of all countries imposed restrictions on the media.
- 1/3 of all countries have had emergency measures without a time limit.
- The final toll on democracy may turn out to be high unless restrictions are eliminated immediately after the pandemic ends.

ANOTHER YEAR OF DECLINE FOR LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

- The global decline during the past 10 years is steep and continues in 2020, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.
- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2020 is down to levels last found around 1990.

AUTOCRACIES: HOME TO 68% OF THE POPULATION

- Electoral autocracy remains the most common regime type. Together with closed autocracies they number 87 states, home to 68% of the world population.
- The world's largest democracy turned into an electoral autocracy: India with 1.37 billion citizens.
- Liberal democracies diminished over the past decade from 41 countries to 32, with a population share of only 14%.

AUTOCRATIZATION ACCELERATES

- The “third wave of autocratization” accelerates, now engulfing 25 countries and 34% of the world population (2.6 billion).
- Over the last ten years the number of democratizing countries dropped by almost half to 16, hosting a mere 4% of the global population.

THE DECLINE IN 2020 AND COVID-19

- The pandemic’s direct effects on global levels of liberal democracy were limited in 2020.
- Longer-term consequences may be worse and must be monitored closely.

ADVANCERS AND DECLINERS

MAJOR AUTOCRATIZERS

- Several G20 nations such as Brazil, India, and Turkey are among the top 10 decliners.
- Poland takes a dubious first place and three new nations join this group: Benin, Bolivia, and Mauritius.
- Six of the top-10 decliners became autocracies.

HOW AUTOCRATIZATION UNFOLDS

- Autocratization typically follows a similar pattern. Ruling governments first attack the media and civil society, and polarize societies by disrespecting opponents and spreading false information, only to then undermine formal institutions.

RAYS OF HOPE: TOP-10 ADVANCERS

- Democratization is still occurring but small countries dominate this trend.
- Four countries among the top-10 advancers turned into new democracies during the last 10 years.
- Tunisia and Armenia are the two best performers and South Korea and Ecuador are resurging after a period of decline.

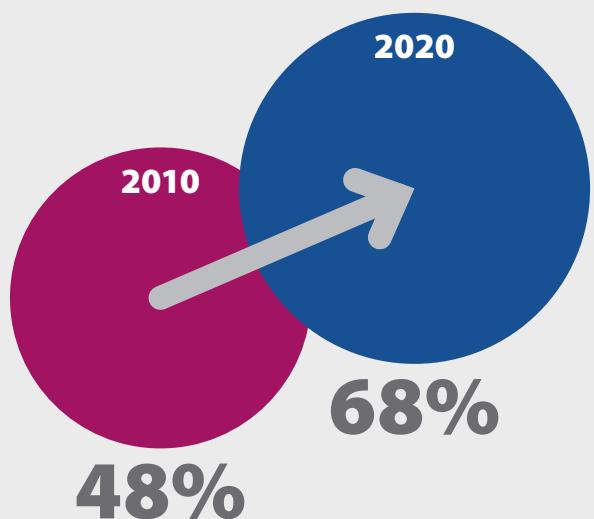
THREAT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION INTENSIFIES

- The threat to freedom of expression and media intensifies. 32 countries are declining substantially, compared to only 19 just three years ago.
- Freedom of expression and the media make 8 of the 10 indicators declining in the greatest number of countries over the past 10 years.
- Repression of civil society is also intensifying. The V-Dem data register substantial deterioration in 50 countries over the past 10 years.

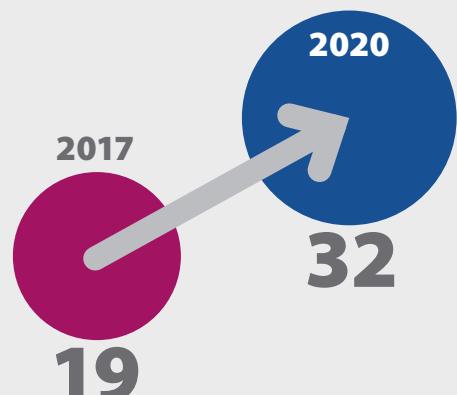
FROM YEAR OF PROTEST TO YEAR OF LOCKDOWN

- From an all-time high in 2019, mass mobilization declined to its lowest level in over a decade.
- However, even a global pandemic and forceful state-imposed restrictions could not dissuade pro-democracy forces.
- The decline in pro-democracy mass mobilization in 2020 may well prove to be short-lived.

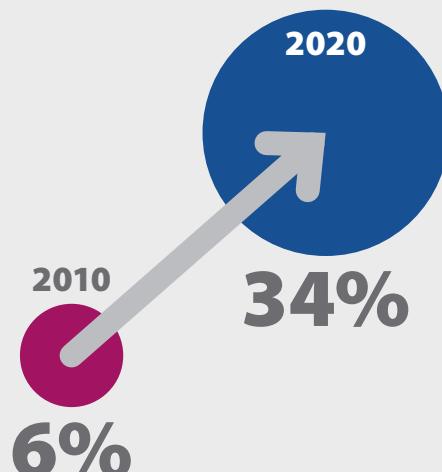
SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION
LIVING IN AUTOCRACIES



NUMBER OF COUNTRIES
THREATENING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION
LIVING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES





Anti-government demonstrators in São Paulo, Brazil. Photo by Ettore Chiaregiani, Shutterstock.

State of the World: Autocratization Turns Viral

THIS IS THE 5TH ANNUAL DEMOCRACY REPORT from the V-Dem Institute at University of Gothenburg. It summarizes the state of liberal democracy in the world in 2020 against the backdrop of developments over the last 10 years, but we open with a special section on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The title “*Autocratization Turns Viral*” reflects what we see as the main developments. In brief, this is what we find:

Summary of Report

The “year of lockdown” in 2020 replaced the 2019 “year of protest” that was the focus of last year’s *Democracy Report*. While the data shows that most democracies have acted responsibly in the face of the pandemic, 9 register major, and 23 moderate, violations of international norms. The situation is worse in autocracies: 55 were involved in major or moderate violations in response to the pandemic. The V-Dem data suggests that the direct impact on democracy has been limited so far, but the final toll may turn out to be much higher unless restrictions are eliminated immediately after the pandemic is over.

While the world is still more democratic than it was in the 1970s and 1980s, the global decline of liberal democracy continues in 2020. To put this into perspective, the level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2020 is down to the levels around 1990. Electoral autocracies continue to be the most common regime type. A major change is that the world’s largest democracy turned into an electoral autocracy: India with 1.37 billion people. Together, electoral and closed autocracies are home to 68% of the world’s population. Meanwhile, the number of liberal democracies is decreasing to 32, with a population share of only 14%. Electoral democracies account for 60 nations and the remaining 19% of the population.¹

This reflects an accelerating wave of autocratization engulfing 25 nations that hold 1/3 of the world’s population – 2.6 billion people. Several G20 nations such as Brazil, India, Turkey, and the United States of America are part of this drift. Poland takes a dubious “lead” as the country which declined the most during the last decade and three new nations join the major autocratizers: Benin, Bolivia, and Mauritius. The report shows that autocratization typically follows a pattern. Ruling governments first attack the media and civil society and polarize societies by disrespecting opponents and spreading false information, then undermine elections.

The number of democratizing countries is also dwindling, down almost by half compared to ten years ago – now 16 that are home to 4% of the global population. But on the bright side, we find that four countries among the top 10 with the greatest advances have transitioned to become democracies, with Tunisia and Armenia as the best performers.

The threat to freedom of expression and the media intensifies – 32 countries are declining substantially, compared to only 19 just three years ago. Repression of civil society is also severe now and the V-Dem data register substantial deterioration in 50 countries.

From a record high in 2019, mass mobilization declined to its lowest level in over a decade in 2020. Yet the decline in pro-democratic mass mobilization in 2020 may well prove to be short-lived. The “year of lockdown” demonstrated that pro-democracy forces cannot be dissuaded. Activists rose above adverse conditions and several movements found alternative ways of furthering their cause.

The *Democracy Report* 2021 reflects analyses conducted at the Institute, and should not necessarily be assumed to have the full endorsement of the international V-Dem team. This report is released alongside these findings, and reports on the 11th version of the V-Dem dataset.² Based on the assessments of over 3,500 country experts, the dataset provides nearly 30 million data points on aspects of democracy such as the liberties and independence of the media and civil society, legislatures, judiciaries, human rights, and many related topics. The V-Dem data and visualization tools are freely available at <https://v-dem.net>.

At the end of this year’s *Democracy Report*, readers can find **Figure 16** listing the exact values and rankings of all countries in the V-Dem dataset as at year-end 2020, as well as how each has fared in terms of liberal democracy over the last decade. In the section **Country Scores and V-Dem indices**, readers can find the values and rankings for all countries also on other democracy indices in the V-Dem database.

¹ Percentages are rounded.

² V-Dem improves the quality of the released data every year by engaging a large number of global experts. This process of constant improvement may lead to a correction of scores reported in earlier versions of the dataset and the Democracy Report.

Pandemic Backsliding: Does Covid-19 Put Democracy at Risk?

Most democracies acted responsibly in the face of the pandemic but 9 democracies register major and 23 moderate violations of international norms.

55 autocratic regimes engaged in major or moderate violations of international norms in response to the pandemic.

Restrictions on media freedom are most common by far – 2/3 of all countries imposed moderate or major ones. Almost 1/3 of nations (31%) have (or had) emergency measures without a time limit.

The final toll on democracy may turn out to be higher unless restrictions are eliminated immediately after the pandemic ends.

Reports about the [excessive use of emergency powers](#) and [limitations on media freedoms](#) created widespread concerns that responses to Covid-19 would shut down democracy itself.³ From March to December 2020, the V-Dem Institute's Pandemic Backsliding Project (PanDem) monitored the extent to which 144 governments violated international standards for emergency provisions in response to the pandemic.⁴ PanDem data suggests that the most pessimistic predictions did not materialize during 2020.

The majority of severe violators were already autocracies before the pandemic and their violations therefore meant going from a bad situation to a slightly worse situation. Yet, a few governments in democracies do seem to be using the pandemic to erode democratic institutions. This risk of pandemic backsliding is high in **El Salvador** and **Sri Lanka**, and to a lesser extent in **Nepal** and **Paraguay** (see Figure 3).

What does it mean to respect international standards during an emergency? Based on international human rights law,⁵ emergency measures may alter democratic institutions, rights, and proceedings only within certain boundaries. For example, while

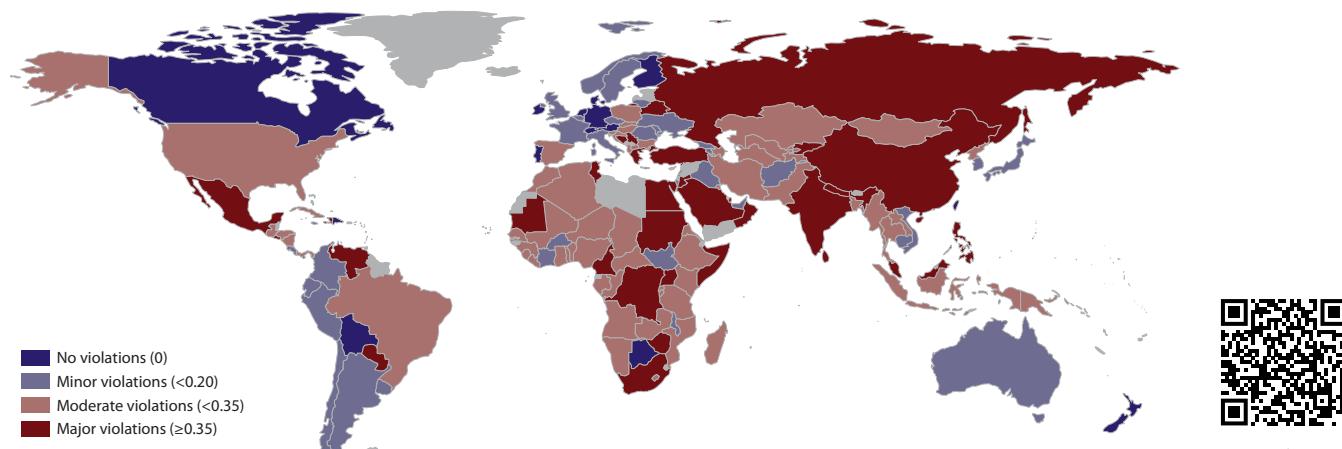
responses to Covid-19 may ensure physical distancing by restricting freedom of movement and assembly, they may not infringe on non-derogable rights like the right to life or freedom from torture. In short, emergency measures must be "[proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory](#)", have a clear time limit, and not be implemented in an excessive manner.⁶

With these standards as benchmarks, the PanDem project measured seven types of violations: (1) discrimination against minorities, (2) violations of fundamental rights (non-derogable rights), (3) excessive use of force, (4) absence of a time limit for emergency measures, (5) limitations on the legislature's ability to constrain the executive, (6) official disinformation campaigns, and (7) restrictions on media freedoms. The composite Pandemic Democratic Violations Index (PanDem) assesses the extent to which state responses to Covid-19 contravene the standards, ranging from zero (no violation) to one (maximum number of violations).⁷

The map in Figure 1 shows the maximum score each country recorded on the PanDem Index between March and December 2020. On the bright side, there were no violations in 14 countries (dark blue in Figure 1), 13 of which are democracies such as Botswana, Canada, Finland, and Taiwan. Another 35 countries (light blue), committed only minor violations, such as a few isolated instances of limitations on access to information. In total about 55% of all democracies and 34% of the countries coded have committed no or only minor violations of democratic standards in their response to Covid-19.

However, no less than 95 other countries (66%) committed either moderate or major violations during this time period. The 63 countries marked in light red exhibit moderate violations, out of which the 40 autocracies make up the majority (63%) but 23 are

FIGURE 1: PANDEMIC DEMOCRATIC VIOLATIONS INDEX, 11 MARCH–10 DECEMBER 2020



The map displays the maximum score for each country recorded at some point during the period. No data available for countries in grey.
Source: PanDem Project ([Edgell et al. 2021](#)).

Create similar maps using V-Dem data.

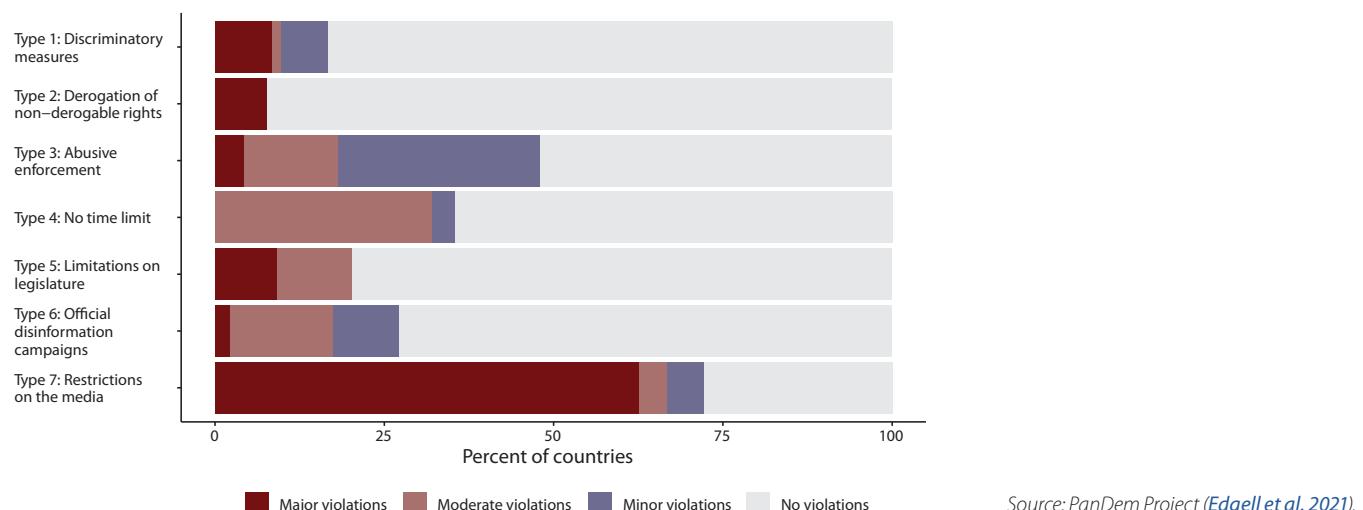
³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/30/world/europe/coronavirus-governments-power.html> and <https://ipi.media/european-media-freedom-suffers-covid-19-response/>

⁴ The PanDem data covers all countries with a population of over two million. Based on academic sources, official documents and credible newspaper articles, trained research assistants assessed the extent of violations on a range of specifically-phrased indicators. The sources are documented at <https://github.com/vdeminstitute/pandem>. For more information see <https://www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/PanDem/>, Kolvani et al. (2020), and <https://www.v-dem.net/en/publications/briefing-papers/>.

⁵ United Nations ICCPR (2020).

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25722&LangID=E>

⁷ The PanDem index is the weighted sum of all violations. For details, see documentation at <https://github.com/vdeminstitute/pandem>.

FIGURE 2: VIOLATIONS BY TYPE, 11 MARCH–10 DECEMBER 2020Source: PanDem Project ([Edgell et al. 2021](#)).

democracies. Of particular concern are the 32 countries (dark red) – 23 autocracies but also 9 democracies – with major violations as measured by the PanDem Index.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of violations across types. Restrictions on media freedom have been most common by far, with about two-thirds of all countries imposing moderate ones. Abusive enforcement of emergency measures was also quite common with almost half of the countries recording at least minor levels, and almost a third of the countries (31%) have (or had) emergency measures without a time limit. A quarter (25%) engaged in some form of disinformation campaigns, while the legislature's role was limited during the pandemic (or there was no legislative check to begin with) in 17% of countries. Discriminatory measures occurred in 15% of the countries, and violations of non-derogable rights in 7% of countries.

Figure 3 demonstrates that violations were more common in closed autocracies and electoral autocracies. For instance, the **Saudi** government detained hundreds of migrant workers in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions,⁸ and the **Venezuelan** authorities detained thousands of its citizens who were returning from abroad in makeshift facilities.⁹ There are alarming reports of harassment of journalists covering Covid-19 in **India**,¹⁰ which is now an electoral autocracy as this report documents below. In other electoral autocracies like **Turkey** authorities arrested journalists for their reporting on the pandemic and detained hundreds of citizens for discussing the issue on social media.¹¹ In **Uganda**, the authorities

invoked social distancing regulations to target LGBT communities and intimidate journalists.¹² In **Serbia**, the government imposed excessive restrictions on movements in refugee camps.¹³

Violations also occurred in electoral democracies, most notably in Sri Lanka and El Salvador, where they caused a substantial decline in democracy compared with the previous year (see below). The **Sri Lankan** government used the pandemic to impose new restrictions on the media, intimidate and silence critics, and repress civil society organizations.¹⁴ V-Dem data also recorded a noticeable decline in judicial independence and in the autonomy of the election management body. Likewise, in **El Salvador** the government detained hundreds of people for violating lockdown regulations and held them in unsanitary conditions, while ignoring injunctions by the country's Supreme Court to protect fundamental rights.¹⁵

To a lesser extent, there were also violations in **Nepal**,¹⁶ **Paraguay**,¹⁷ and **South Africa**,¹⁸ with reports of security forces employing humiliating tactics or excessive forces against those who violated social distancing rules. In **Tunisia** bloggers faced prosecution for criticizing the government's approach to the pandemic.¹⁹ The government in **Slovakia** imposed restrictions on Roma communities that raised criticisms of discriminatory treatment.²⁰ Violations even occurred in a couple of liberal democracies such as the **United States of America**, where the government frequently engaged in disinformation about the pandemic,²¹ and **Greece** where lockdown measures disproportionately affected refugee camps.²²

⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/15/saudi-arabia-migrants-held-inhuman-degrading-conditions>

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/19/world/americas/coronavirus-venezuela.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.dw.com/en/can-indian-media-report-freely-about-the-covid-19-crisis/a-53728264>

¹¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2020/06/turkey-stifling-free-expression-during-the-covid19-pandemic/>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/nov/23/nowhere-to-go-the-young-lgbt-ugandans-outed-during-lockdown>

¹³ <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0125112020ENGLISH.PDF>

¹⁴ https://github.com/vdeminstitute/pandem/blob/master/by_country/Sri%20Lanka.md

¹⁵ https://github.com/vdeminstitute/pandem/blob/master/by_country/El%20Salvador.md

¹⁶ <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/police-use-improvised-man-catcher-stick-to-detain-lockdown-offenders-in-banke>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/01/extreme-coronavirus-lockdown-controls-raise-fears-for-worlds-poorest>

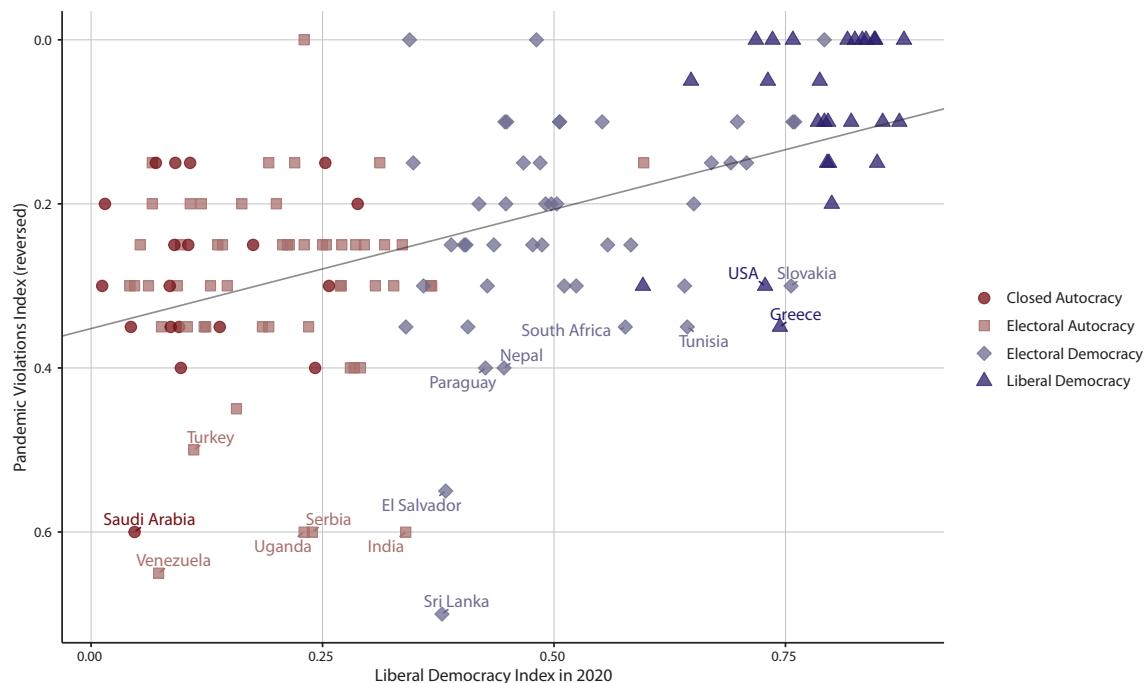
¹⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-un-rights/u-n-raises-alarm-about-police-brutality-in-lockdowns-idUSKCN2291X9>

¹⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/tunisia-end-prosecution-of-bloggers-for-criticizing-governments-response-to-covid19/>

²⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-slovakia-roma/slovakia-closes-off-five-roma-settlements-due-to-coronavirus-idUSKCN21R28U>

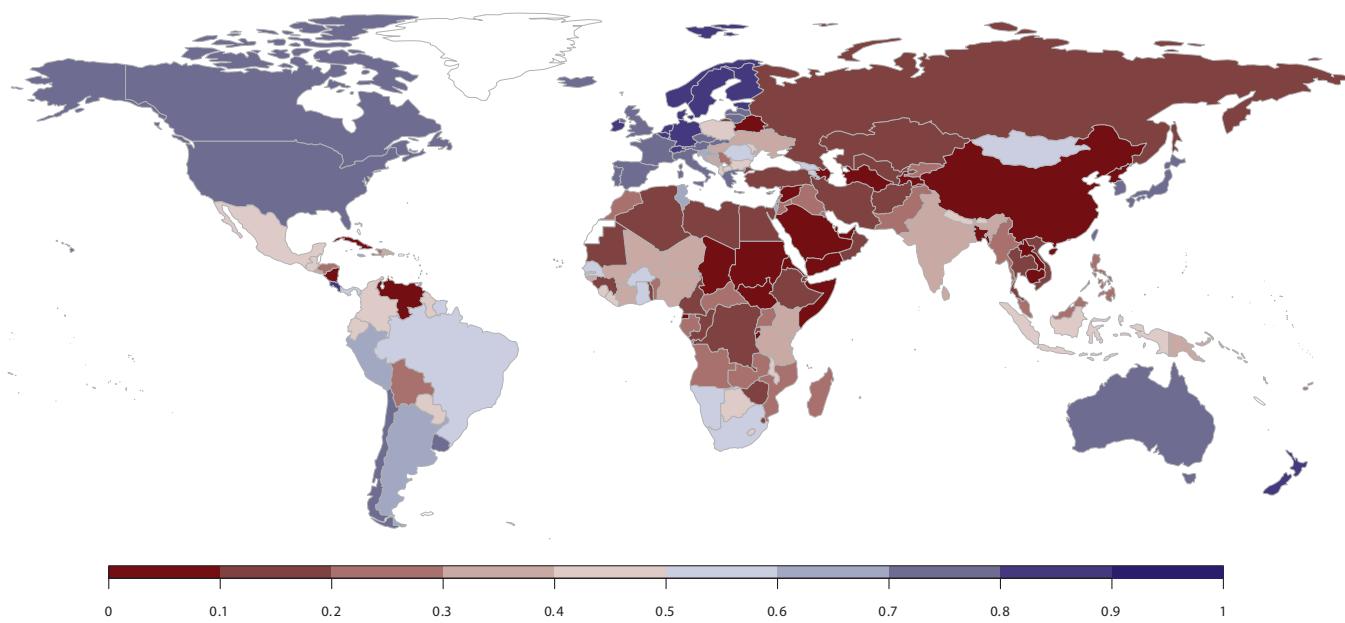
²¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/11/trumps-lies-about-coronavirus/608647/>

²² <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/greece-extends-lockdown-more-120000-migrants-refugees>

FIGURE 3: AUTOCRACIES VIOLATE INTERNATIONAL NORMS MORE THAN DEMOCRACIES IN 2020

In addition, 43 countries – 24 democracies and 19 autocracies – still had emergency measures without a time limit by December 2020, including [Albania](#), [Mexico](#), and [The Gambia](#).²³ Other countries – including [Brazil](#), [Jamaica](#), and [Kyrgyzstan](#) – have set a time limit for specific emergency measures, but not for the

overall emergency response.²⁴ Despite [international pressure](#) to set an end-date for emergency measures only eight countries have done so.²⁵ For democracy to endure the pandemic without long-term damages, it is vital that governments lift the measures once the pandemic tapers off.

FIGURE 4: THE STATE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN 2020

Source: PanDem Project ([Edgell et al. 2021](#)).

²³ <https://shendetesia.gov.al/nivel-i-larte-risku-komiteti-teknik-i-eksperteve-vijone-te-mbbeten-ne-fuqi-masat-e-marra-pa-afat/>; https://github.com/vdeminstitute/pandem/blob/master/by_country/Mexico.md; https://github.com/vdeminstitute/pandem/blob/master/by_country/The%20Gambia.md

²⁴ <https://www.in.gov.br/web/dou/-/portaria-n-188-de-3-de-fevereiro-de-2020-241408388>; https://github.com/vdeminstitute/pandem/blob/master/by_country/Jamaica.md; <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/340411/kyrgyzstan-authorities-extend-state-of-emergency-indefinitely-may-8-update-10>

²⁵ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/EmergencyMeasures_Covid19.pdf

Another Year of Decline for Liberal Democracy

- The world is still more democratic than it was in the 1970s and 1980s, but the global decline in liberal democracy has been steep during the past 10 years and continues in 2020.
- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2020 is down to levels last found around 1990.
- The decline is especially prominent in the Asia-Pacific region, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America.
- Electoral autocracies continue to be the most common regime type. A major change is that India – formerly the world's largest democracy with 1.37 billion inhabitants – turned into an electoral autocracy. With this, electoral and closed autocracies are home to 68% of the world's population. Liberal democracies diminished from 41 countries in 2010 to 32 in 2020, with a population share of only 14%. Electoral democracies account for 60 nations and the remaining 19% of the population.²⁶
- The "third wave of autocratization" accelerates – 25 countries, home to 34% of the world's population (2.6 billion people), are in democratic decline by 2020. At the same time, the number of democratizing countries drop by almost half down to 16 that are home to a mere 4% of the global population.

- The pandemic's direct effects on levels of liberal democracy in 2020 were limited, but the longer-term consequences may be worse and must be monitored closely.

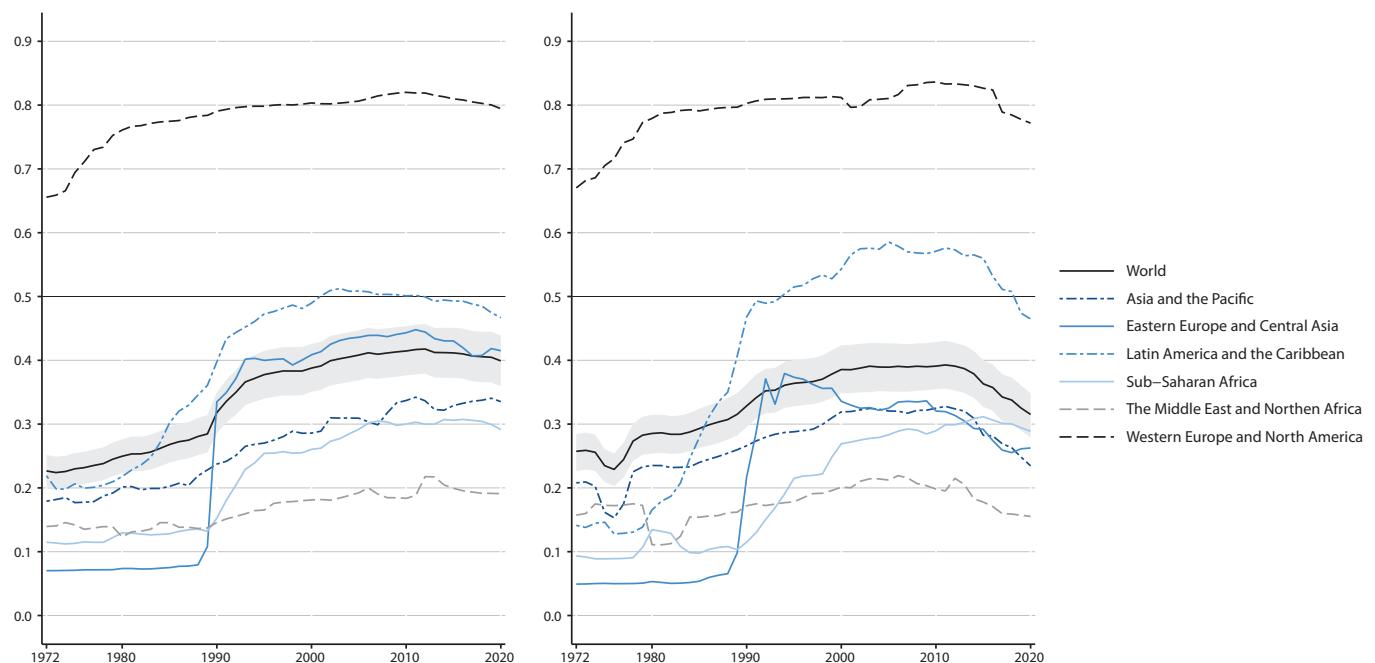
The map in Figure 4 shows the state of democracy in 2020 based on V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI).²⁷ Western Europe and North America, as well as parts of Latin America, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and Taiwan have the highest levels of liberal democracy. The least democratic countries in the world include parts of sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region, as well as China, Russia, and Venezuela.

Figure 5 provides a perspective on the current state of the world with global and regional breakdowns of liberal democracy from 1972 to 2020. The left panel of Figure 5 is based on country averages and the thick black line represents the global average of the LDI along with confidence intervals. The Figure captures the gradual increase in democracy that began in 1974, often labelled the "third wave of democratization". The level of liberal democracy in the world and in most regions then started to decline around 2010, but the decline is still within the confidence intervals as indicated by the grey area around the world average.

However, an issue with this conventional approach is that it treats countries with small and large populations equally. Since democracy is *rule by the people*, it arguably matters how many people are enjoying democratic rights and freedoms. The right-hand

FIGURE 5: LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX, GLOBAL AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1972–2020

(Left side – number of countries; Right side – share of world population)

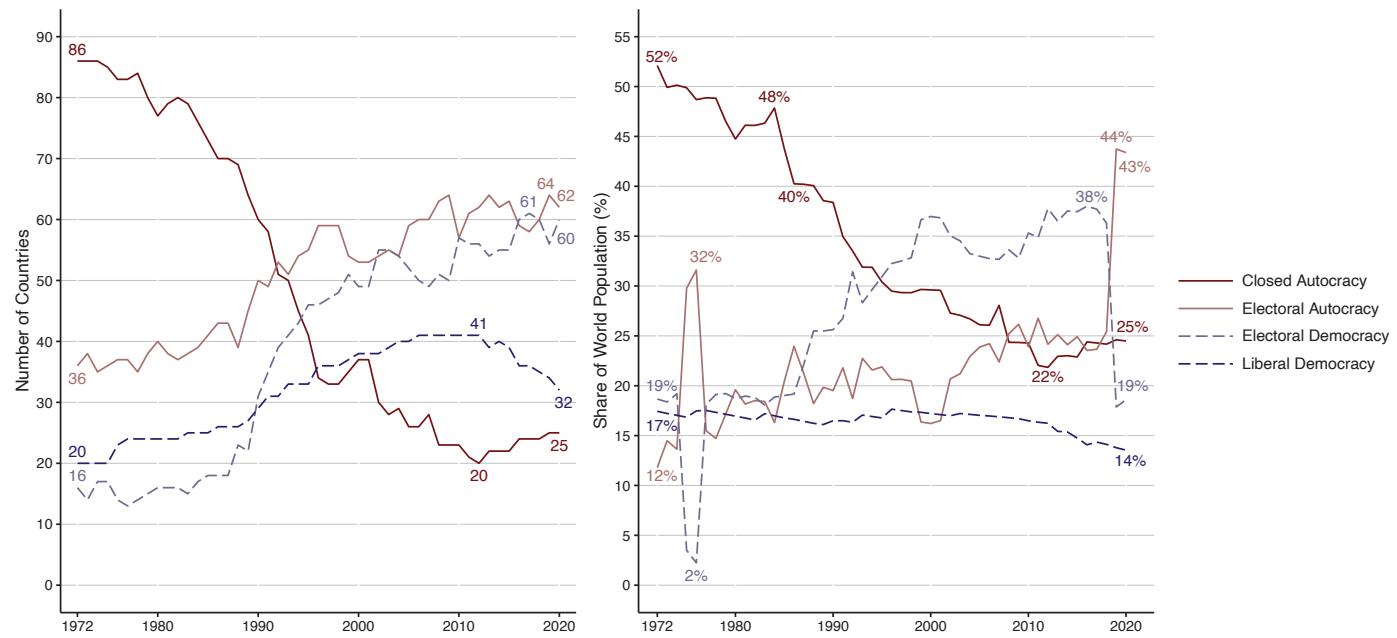


26 Percentages are rounded.

27 V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) captures both electoral and liberal aspects of democracy and goes from the lowest (0) to the highest (1). The electoral component is measured by the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) that captures the extent to which all elements of Robert Dahl's (1971, 1989) famous articulation of "polyarchy" are present, including the quality of elections, individual rights, as well as the media and freedoms of association. The Liberal Component Index (LCI) captures the liberal aspects including checks and balances on the executive arm of government, respect for civil liberties, the rule of law, and the independence of the legislature and the judiciary.

FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF COUNTRIES VS SHARE OF POPULATION, BY REGIME TYPE, 1972–2020

(Left side – number of countries; Right side – share of world population)



Naturally, uncertainty remains about the classification of countries exhibiting similar degrees of authoritarian and democratic traits and thus are close to the thresholds between regime types. Taking this uncertainty into account, the number of autocracies in 2020 could range from 79 to 98, with 87 being our best estimate. For more details on the Regimes of the World measure, see Lührmann et al. (2018).

panel in Figure 5 therefore shows levels adjusted for population size. The magnitude of the decline in democracy is much larger when accounting for population size, indicating that many more people live in autocratizing than in democratizing countries. By this measure, the democratic rights and freedoms of the average global citizen in 2020 are similar to the level found around 1990. The decline in liberal democracy has been steep during the past 10 years, remarkably so in the Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America.

AUTOCRACIES: HOME TO 68% OF THE WORLD POPULATION

What do the trends in democracy look like if we switch to the perspective of regime types? For most parts of the *Democracy Report* the focus is on gradual changes in the LDI. However, it is useful to analyze the current state of the world and its trajectory from varying perspectives. In this section, we take an alternative perspective and approach the world in terms of regime types while using the same underlying indicators and data from V-Dem as the LDI.²⁸ Figure 6 portrays the development over time since 1972 by the four regime types: closed and electoral autocracies, along with electoral and liberal democracies. Once more the left-hand panel is based on the number of countries, while the right-hand panel depicts shares of the world's population. For a complete list of all countries' regime classifications and regime transitions for 2010–2020, see Table 3 on page 31 of this report.

This perspective reminds us again that the world used to be a lot less democratic than it is today, despite relapses over the past

decade. The world is more democratic compared to the 1970s and 1980s, even with the 87 autocracies at the end of 2020. The dark red lines demonstrate that closed autocracies dominated the world both in terms of number of countries and as the share of the population they harbored back in the 1970s and 1980s. The numbers then fell gradually to reach a record low when these dictatorships were found in only 20 countries by 2013. Their number has since increased again to 25 as of 2020.

Electoral autocracies (light red lines) have almost doubled in number since 1972 (when there were only 36) and became the world's most common regime type with the end of the Cold War. Peaking with 64 last year, the number is now down to 62 but it remains the most common regime type in the world. Smaller and larger countries have transitioned in and out of this category so their share of the world's population has varied. **India's** democratic decline, which led to a transition to an electoral autocracy in 2019²⁹ is especially visible on the right-hand side of Figure 6. The autogolpe of Indira Gandhi in 1975 is also reflected in the figure. With India's 1.37 billion people, electoral autocracies now hold 43% of the global population, and autocracies together more than two-thirds (68%), among the highest recorded since 1972.

The number of electoral democracies (dashed light blue lines) has remained around 55 to 60 countries over the past decade and in 2020 **Albania**, **Malawi** and **Ukraine** transitioned from electoral autocracies to join this type of democracy.

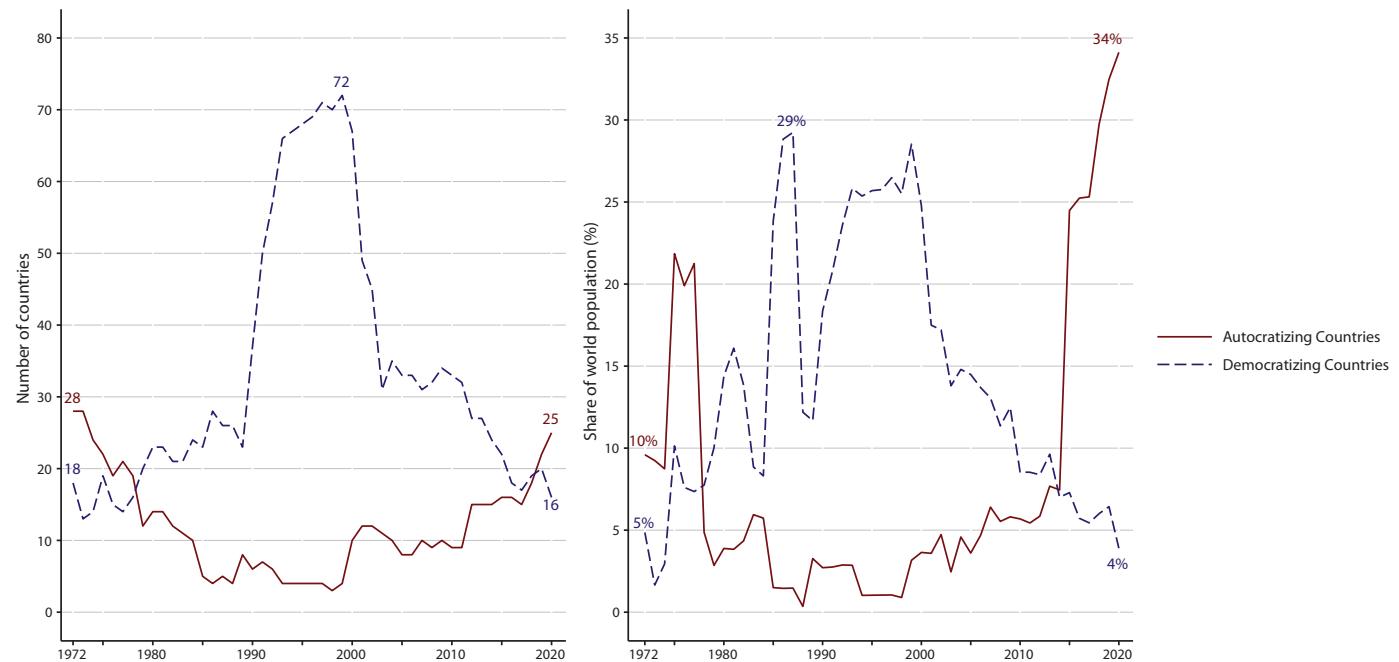
The number of liberal democracies (dashed dark blue lines) was on a steady upward path for many years, starting from 20 in 1972 and peaking at 41 in 2010. The right-hand panel in Figure 6

²⁸ The typology and indicator "Regimes of the World" published in Lührmann et al. (2018) uses V-Dem data but is not officially endorsed by the V-Dem Steering Committee.

²⁹ V-Dem measures uncertainty associated with underlying data in a meticulous way (see "Methodology" at the end of this report). This resulted in the classification of India being highly uncertain last year but with more and better data this year, India is classified with a higher degree of certainty as an electoral autocracy from 2019.

FIGURE 7: AUTOCRATIZING VS DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 1972–2020

(Left side – number of countries; Right side – share of world population)



demonstrates that the uptake in the number of countries over the years was not matched by increasing shares of the population of the world, reflecting that many liberal democracies have relatively small populations such as **Barbados, Belgium, Costa Rica, Latvia, Taiwan, and Uruguay**. Since 2010, a series of liberal democracies have also been marked by the global wave of autocratization and their numbers diminished to 32 in 2020 when countries such as Chile, Portugal, Slovenia, and South Africa have gone from being liberal to more limited electoral democracies.

AUTOCRATIZATION ACCELERATES

Here we leave the regime perspective and switch back to analyze the trends based on changes in the LDI over time. Figure 7 shows the number of countries undergoing autocratization or democratization³⁰ by year since 1972. The left-hand panel is based on the number of countries while the right-hand panel displays population shares.

The dashed dark blue line in the left-hand panel demonstrates how a wave of democratization built up through the 1970s and 1980s, and broke in the early 1990s to slowly subside. At its peak in 1999, 72 countries with about 30% of the global population were in a process of democratization. While the number of countries undergoing autocratization (red solid line) fell off during the period that democratization wave was building, it has been on the rise since around 2000 in an uneven but

pronounced upward trajectory. However, the pace of this “third wave of autocratization”³¹ escalated in the last few years. In 2020, there were 25 countries undergoing autocratization compared to less than ten a decade ago. Meanwhile only 16 registered as in a process of democratization by 2020, a drop by almost half compared to ten years ago.

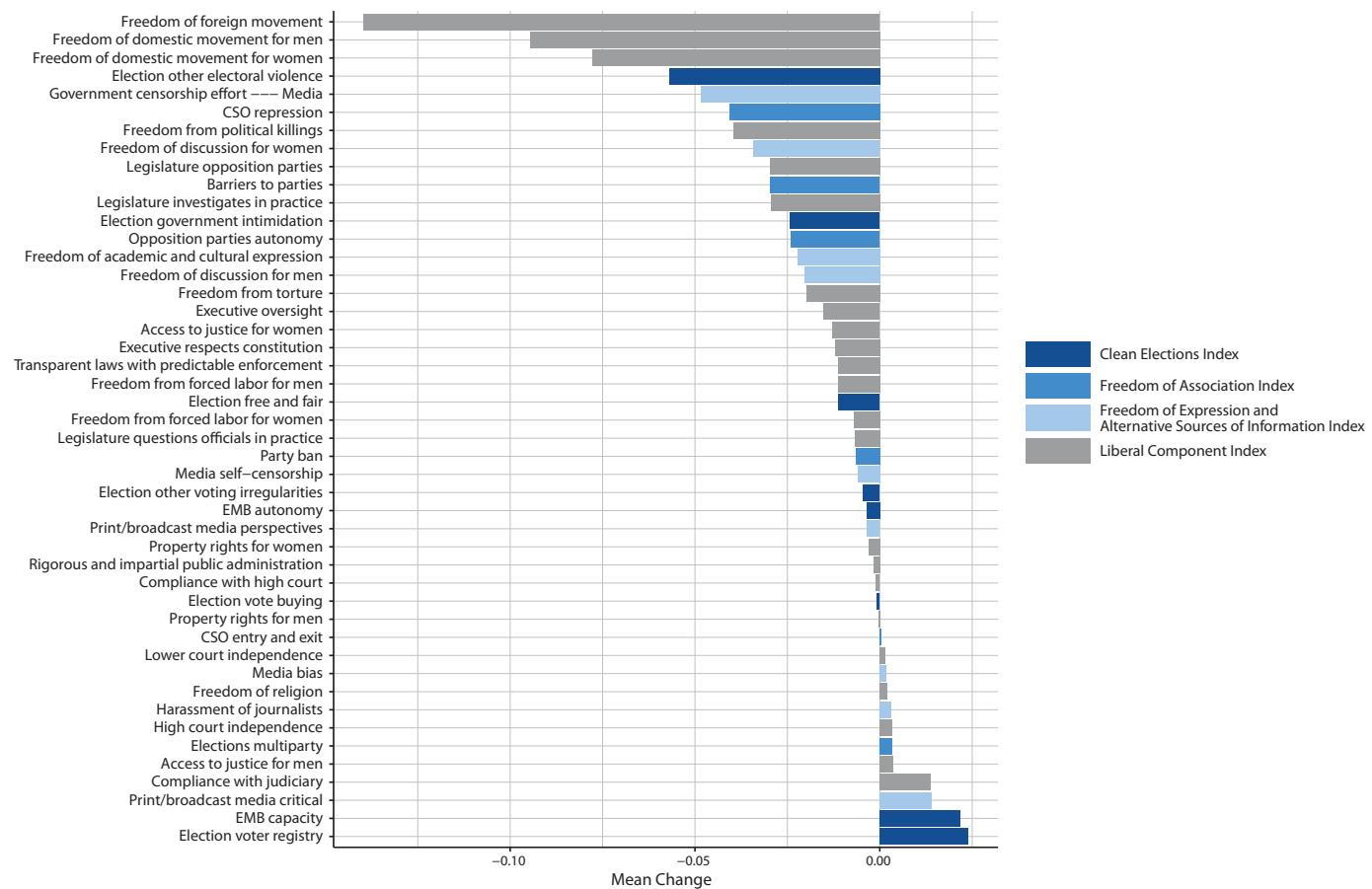
The accelerating pace at which the world is being taken over by processes of autocratization is manifest in bold relief when population size is taken into account, as in the right-hand panel of Figure 7. The sharp increase in the last few years is the result of autocratization in large countries like **India, Brazil, and the United States of America**. By 2020, more than one-third (34%) of the world’s population were living in countries undergoing autocratization while a minuscule 4% were living in democratizing nations.

THE DECLINE IN 2020 AND COVID-19

What was the toll of Covid-19 on democracy in 2020? How much of the decline described above is a direct effect of responses to the pandemic? The data described in the first section of this report suggests that the direct and immediate effects have been limited. Similarly, Figure 5 suggests that the global average of the LDI has not decreased dramatically from 2019 to 2020. Figure 8 details the average changes from 2019 to 2020 for all indicators used to measure liberal democracy. The only indicators with really substantive negative changes are freedom of domestic

³⁰ In the Democracy Report we use a simplified metric to capture which countries are autocratizing or democratizing. We simply measure the difference between the country score at time t and time t-10 years. If the difference is statistically significant (confidence intervals do not overlap) and substantial (a difference greater than 0.05), we count the country as being in a process of autocratization or democratization. For a more sophisticated approach, see the “Episodes of Regime Transformation” data and codebook (Edgell et al. 2020, Maerz et al. 2021), www.github.com/vdeminstitute/ert

³¹ Lührmann and Lindberg (2019).

FIGURE 8: CHANGE ON INDICATORS COMPOSING THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX, 2019–2020

and international movement – reflecting the lockdown measures during the pandemic – or three out of the 46 indicators forming the LDI. The effect on the overall index score is minuscule.³² In short, the pandemic seems to have had a marginal impact on the global level of liberal democracy, at least in this short-term perspective.

Even so, holding elections during the pandemic presented many challenges, from ensuring voter safety to organizing election observers amidst travel restrictions. Some countries managed the difficulties exceptionally well, such as **South Korea** where voter turnout in the legislature elections reached the highest level in 16 years.³³ In other countries, the pandemic made it harder to observe the quality of elections such as in **Burundi** where, in addition to domestic electoral observers, international observers were not allowed to monitor the presidential elections in May 2020.³⁴

Restrictions on international observers also reduced the integrity of the **Belarusian presidential elections** in August 2020.³⁵ In addition, some governments postponed elections without indicating a reliable alternative date, for instance in **Ethiopia**. Finally, a series of countries witnessed an upsurge of violence around elections, such as in the **Central African Republic**³⁶ and in **Guinea**,³⁷ which explains why the indicator for electoral violence is the fourth most affected in Figure 8.

While it seems that in the short term the pandemic has not been used to substantially increase autocratization in most countries, the longer-term consequences are uncertain. The continued violations documented above are a reason for serious concerns however, and for close monitoring of the coming months and years in order to ensure that measures are removed once the pandemic subdues.

³² We also calculated an LDI without those indicators, but the difference between the average of the original LDI (0.3990) and the one without the freedom of movement indicators (0.3998) is minuscule. Only one country has an LDI value that is more than 0.01% greater without the freedom of movement indicators (Timor Leste; LDI: 0.4636; adjusted LDI: 0.4746) than with them; for a further eleven countries the index value would be between 0.005% and 0.01% greater (United Arab Emirates; Burma/Myanmar; Luxembourg; Croatia; United Kingdom; Bhutan; Palestine/Gaza; Norway; Slovenia; Ethiopia; Burkina Faso). For all other countries, the difference is below 0.005%.

³³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52275993>

³⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-burundi-election-idUSKBN22Y2NE>; <https://www.dw.com/en/ohrcr-burundis-elections-arent-credible-and-free/a-53513705>

³⁵ <https://www.euronews.com/2020/07/23/who-is-making-sure-belarus-presidential-election-is-free-and-fair>

³⁶ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/01/1081682>

³⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/19/guinea-post-election-violence-repression>



All-Russian vote on the approval of amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, June 25 2020. Tver region, Russia.
Photo by Aleksandr Beliakov, Shutterstock.

Advancers and Decliners

- Several G20 nations such as Brazil, India, and Turkey are among the top 10 decliners. Poland takes a dubious first place, and three new nations join the group: Benin, Bolivia, and Mauritius. Six of the top decliners became autocracies.
- Autocratization typically follows a similar pattern across very different contexts. Ruling governments first attack the media and civil society, and polarize societies by disrespecting opponents and spreading false information, then undermine elections.
- Democratization is still occurring but small countries dominate this trend. Tunisia is the greatest democratizer over the past ten years followed by Armenia, while South Korea and Ecuador are resurging after a period of decline.
- Four countries among the top 10 advancers turned into new democracies during the last 10 years.

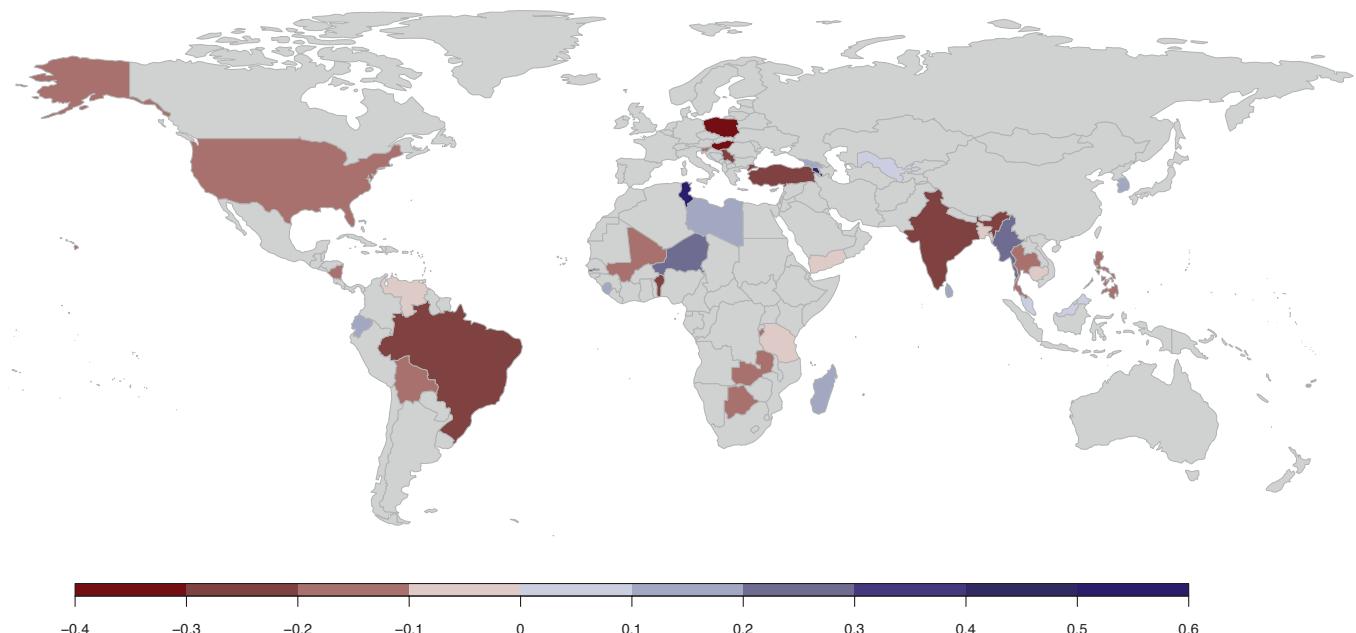
While autocratization is the dominant trend in the world, the demand for democracy remains high in many quarters and positive regime transitions have taken place. The world map in Figure 9 shows where liberal democracy has advanced (blue) and declined (red) over the past 10 years. It demonstrates that countries moving toward autocratization outnumber advancing countries and they cover broad swathes of territory globally as well as in most regions of the world. In North America, and Western and Eastern Europe, no country has advanced in democracy in the past 10 years while **Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, and the United States of America** have declined substantially.

In Figure 10, countries above the diagonal line have democratized based on an improvement on the LDI while states below the diagonal line have autocratized. There are labels (country names) only for markers of countries where the difference from 2010 to 2020 is statistically significant and substantially meaningful.

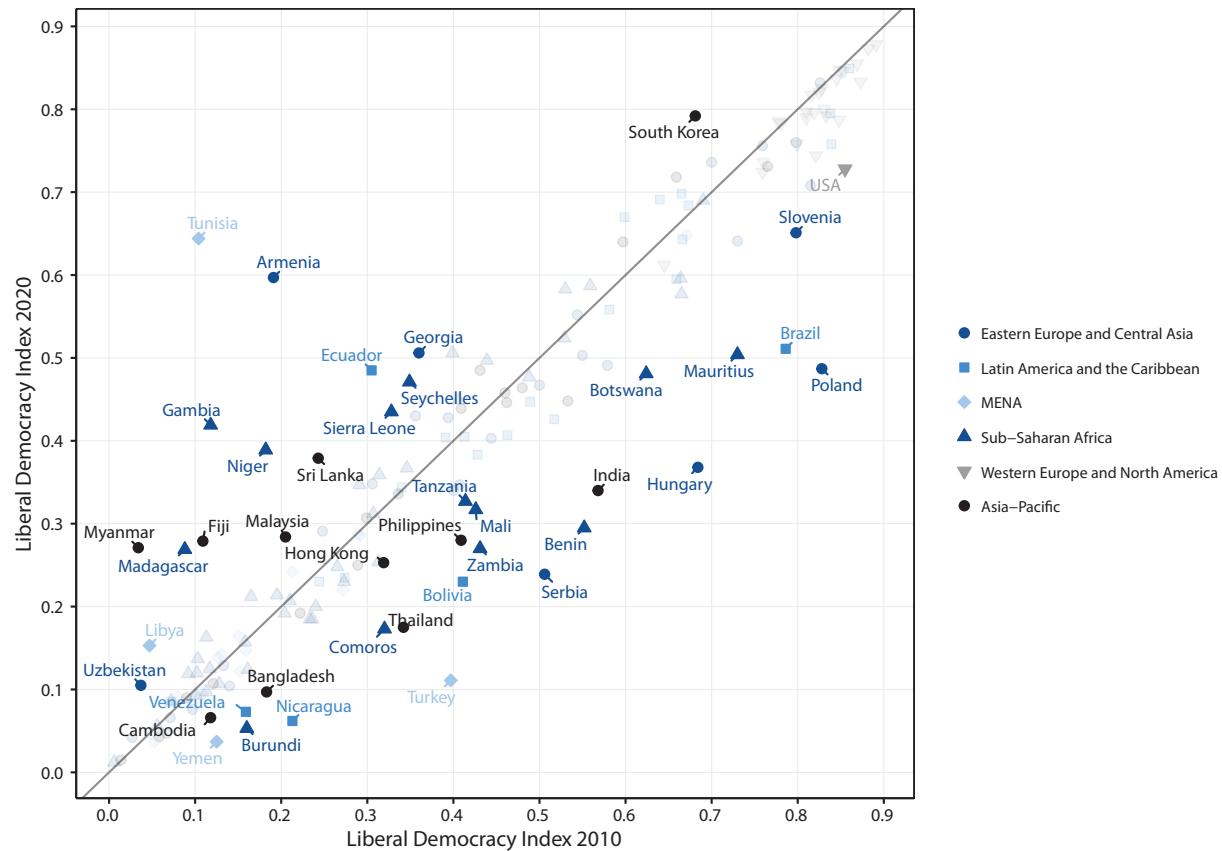
The upper diagonal of Figure 10 shows the 16 countries advancing over the last ten years, including **Armenia, The Gambia, and Tunisia** with records of relatively free and fair elections, and stronger civil societies. **South Korea** stands out as one of the few cases ever recorded where a process of autocratization started in a liberal democracy but was turned around thus avoiding a breakdown. **Ecuador** is another recent instance of such a rare “U-turn” during a process of change and together these two cases could be studied in further detail for clues about what it takes to stop and turn around a process of autocratization before it goes too far. However, since the democratizing countries – with the exception of South Korea – are typically small they can only play a marginal role in influencing regional and world trajectories.

Contrast this with the 25 autocratizing nations where we find major G20 nations such as **Brazil, India, Turkey, and the United States of America**. The data also shows that other populous, influential states such as **Bangladesh, Hungary, Philippines, and Tanzania** belong to this group of autocratizers, as does **Hong Kong**. Some of these are large, influential countries found across the major regions in the world, making it a truly global trend. Notably, the majority of countries with such substantial and significant declines on the LDI, no less than 15, are electoral autocracies where rights and freedoms are deteriorating.

FIGURE 9: COUNTRIES DEMOCRATIZING OR AUTOCRATIZING SUBSTANTIALLY AND SIGNIFICANTLY, 2010–2020



Key to colors: Red marks countries where the LDI has declined substantially and significantly over the past ten years. Blue marks countries where the level of democracy has advanced. Countries in grey are substantially unchanged.

FIGURE 10: COUNTRIES WITH SUBSTANTIAL AND SIGNIFICANT CHANGES ON THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI), 2010–2020

As noted above, **India** recently lost its status as an electoral democracy and its LDI declines from 0.57 in 2010 to 0.34 in 2020, following the government led by Prime Minister Modi placing restrictions on multiple facets of democracy such as civil society and free speech (see box on **India** and tables at the end of this report for details).

States in Eastern Europe such as **Hungary**, **Poland**, and **Serbia** have continued their downward decline after continued assaults on the judiciary and restrictions on the media and civil society. The **United States of America** declines substantially on the LDI from 0.86 in 2010 to 0.73 in 2020, in part as a consequence of President Trump's repeated attacks on the media, opposition politicians, and the substantial weakening of the legislature's de facto checks and balances on executive power.

THE MAJOR AUTOCRATIZERS

The top 10 major decliners are listed in Table 1. The most notable finding at the general level is that nine out of these ten were electoral or even liberal democracies in 2010. Only three (**Brazil**, **Mauritius**, and **Poland**) of those nine remain democracies, but all are now only electoral democracies. This presents a worrying trend, which is corroborated by a recent study analyzing all instances of autocratization in democracies from 1900 to 2019 and showing that almost 80% lead to democratic breakdown.³⁸

In this year's *Democracy Report*, **Benin**, **Bolivia**, and **Mauritius** are new cases among the top 10 autocratizing countries and our data documents substantial declines for all three.

Otherwise, the countries among the top 10 are the same identified by the analyses in last year's *Democracy Report*. While **Hungary**'s ongoing autocratization is still conspicuous, **Poland** has taken over the dubious first position with a dramatic 34 percentage-points decline on the LDI, most of which has occurred since 2015. **Turkey** is still found in the very top group among the major decliners, closely followed by **Brazil** and **Serbia**.

TABLE 1: TOP-10 AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 2010–2020

	CHANGE	LDI 2010	LDI 2020	REGIME TYPE 2010	REGIME TYPE 2020
1	-0.34	0.83	0.49	Liberal Democracy	Electoral Democracy
2	-0.32	0.68	0.37	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
3	-0.29	0.40	0.11	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
4	-0.28	0.79	0.51	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Democracy
5	-0.27	0.51	0.24	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
6	-0.26	0.55	0.29	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
7	-0.23	0.57	0.34	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
8	-0.23	0.73	0.50	Liberal Democracy	Electoral Democracy
9	-0.18	0.41	0.231	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
10	-0.17	0.34	0.17	Electoral Autocracy	Closed Autocracy

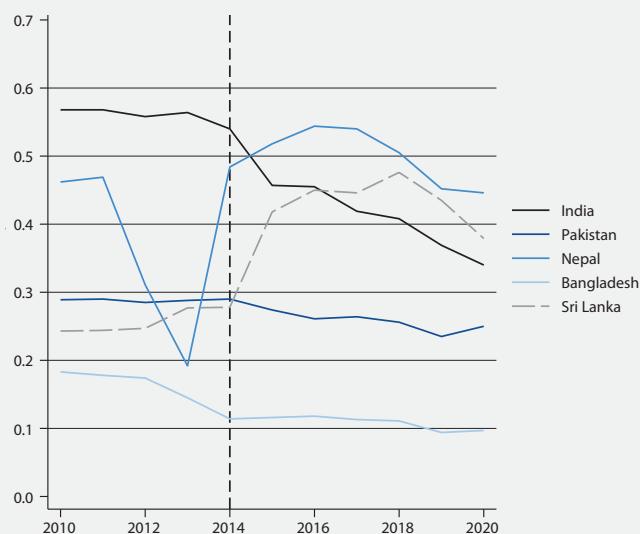
The classification of regime type is not only based on the LDI score but also the Electoral Democracy Index, as well as the extent to which elections overall have been free and fair. See Lührmann et al. (2018) for details.

Democracy Broken Down: India

Shreya Pillai and Staffan I. Lindberg

The world's largest democracy has turned into an electoral autocracy. India's autocratization process has largely followed the typical pattern for countries in the "Third Wave" over the past ten years: a gradual deterioration where freedom of the media, academia, and civil society were curtailed first and to the greatest extent (see the figure below in this box).

AUTOCRATIZATION IN INDIA COMPARED TO ITS NEIGHBORS, 2010–2020



Narendra Modi led the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to victory in India's 2014 elections (marked with a vertical dashed line in the figure above) and most of the decline occurred following BJP's victory and their promotion of a Hindu-nationalist agenda. India's level of liberal democracy registered at 0.34 by the end of 2020 after a steep decline since its high at 0.57 in 2013. That represents a 23-percentage point drop on the 0 to 1 LDI scale, making it one of the most dramatic shifts among all countries in the world over the past 10 years, alongside autocratizing countries like Brazil, Hungary, and Turkey. The latter two became (electoral) autocracies in 2018 and 2014 respectively, and India now joins their ranks.

The figure to the right provides evidence of how far India's autocratization has driven down various indicators that go into the LDI, between 2010 and 2020. The indicators typically range from

"0" to "4" and a drop of two full points on that scale represents a dramatic shift towards autocracy. Notably, the autonomy of the election management body is found in the top group. This captures a severe depreciation since around 2013 and signals the decline in the quality of critical formal institutions. The overall freedom and fairness of elections ("Elections free and fair") also was hard hit, with the last elections held under Prime Minister Modi's reign in 2019, precipitating a downgrading to an electoral autocracy.

Yet, the diminishing of freedom of expression, the media, and civil society have gone the furthest. The Indian government rarely, if ever, used to exercise censorship as evidenced by its score of 3.5 out of 4 before Modi became Prime Minister. By 2020, this score is close to 1.5 meaning that censorship efforts are becoming routine and no longer even restricted to sensitive (to the government) issues. India is, in this aspect, now as autocratic as is Pakistan, and worse than both its neighbors Bangladesh and Nepal. In general, the Modi-led government in India has used laws on sedition, defamation, and counterterrorism to silence critics.¹ For example, over 7,000 people have been charged with sedition after the BJP assumed power and most of the accused are critics of the ruling party.²

The law on defamation, upheld in India's Supreme Court on May 2016, has been used frequently to silence journalists and news outlets that take exception to policies of the BJP government.³ The punishments for critical messaging range from two years in prison to life imprisonment for "words, spoken or written, or signs or visible representation that can cause "hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection" toward the government.⁴

Modi and his party have also placed constraints on civil society and have gone against the constitution's commitment to secularism.⁵ Recently, the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act** (UAPA) from 1967 and amended in August 2019 is being used to harass, intimidate, and imprison political opponents, as well as people mobilizing to protest government policies.⁶ The UAPA has been used also to silence dissent in academia.⁷ Universities and authorities have also punished students and activists in universities engaging in protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).⁸ The CAA was passed by India's parliament in

1 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/india>

2 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/openindia/india-turning-colonial-era-laws-silence-journalists/>

3 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/25/india-stop-treating-critics-criminals>

4 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/24/how-indias-archaic-laws-have-chilling-effect-dissent>

5 Ding and Slater (2020).

6 <https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/A1967-37.pdf>; <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/india-release-human-rights-defenders-at-risk-in-the-context-of-covid>; <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/india#>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56111289>

7 <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Scholars-at-Risk-Free-to-Think-2020.pdf>

8 <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Scholars-at-Risk-Free-to-Think-2020.pdf>

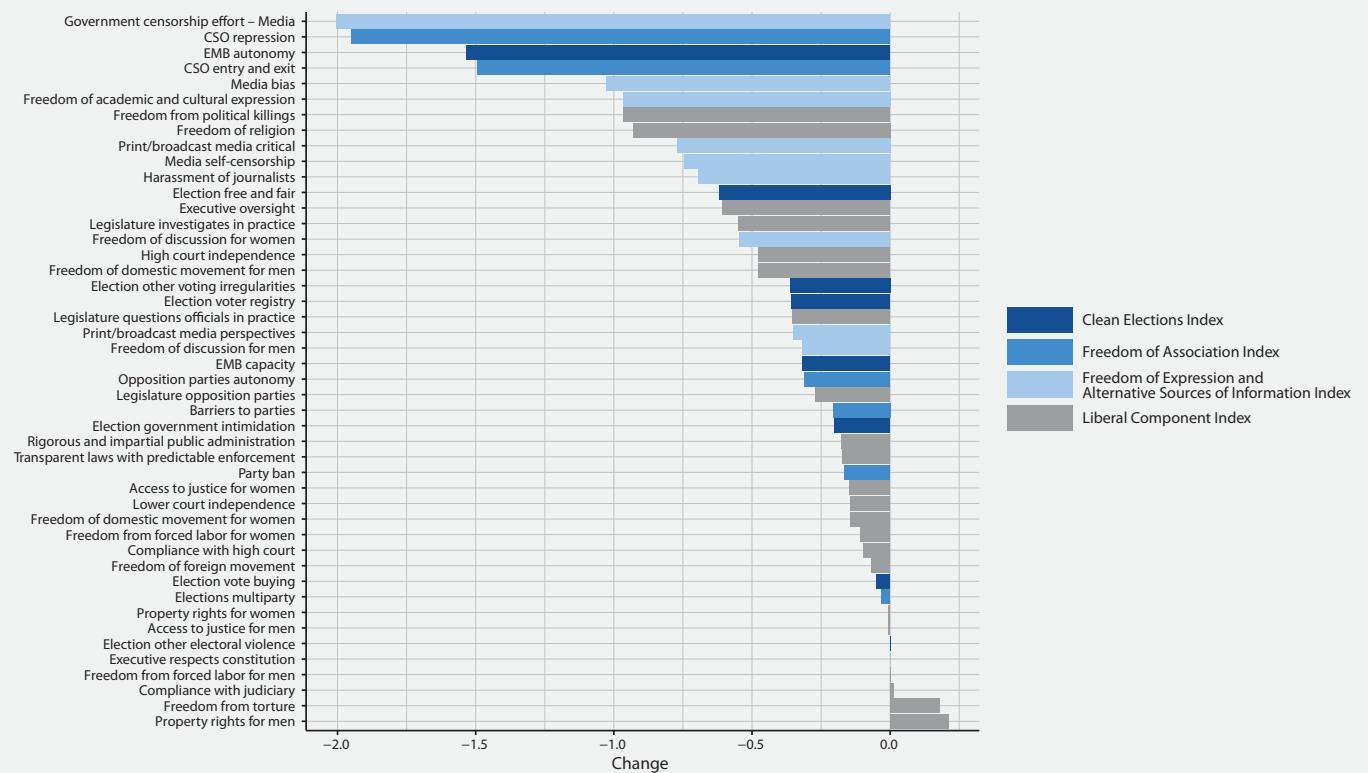
December 2019.⁹ It makes it possible for illegal immigrants that are Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian to become citizens while denying it to Muslims. Arguably, the **bill** violates the constitution, which prohibits discrimination by religion.¹⁰

Civil society is also being muzzled in the autocratization process. The indicators gauging the level of repression of civil society organizations (CSO) and the government's control of which organizations are allowed to exist ("CSO entry and exit") capture that severe deterioration. Meanwhile, civil society organizations aligning themselves with the Hindutva movement have gained more freedom.¹¹ The BJP have increasingly used the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) to restrict the entry, exit and functioning of Civil Society Organisations (CSO).¹² The FCRA was amended in September 2020 to further constrain the use of foreign contributions to NGOs within India.¹³ These developments are among the instances contributing to the descent into electoral authoritarianism in what used to be the world's largest democracy.



Police personnel conduct a flag march to spread awareness of the coronavirus pandemic in Beawar, Rajasthan, India. Photo by Sumit Saraswat, Shutterstock.

DEGREE OF CHANGE ON INDICATORS OF LDI, INDIA 2010–2020



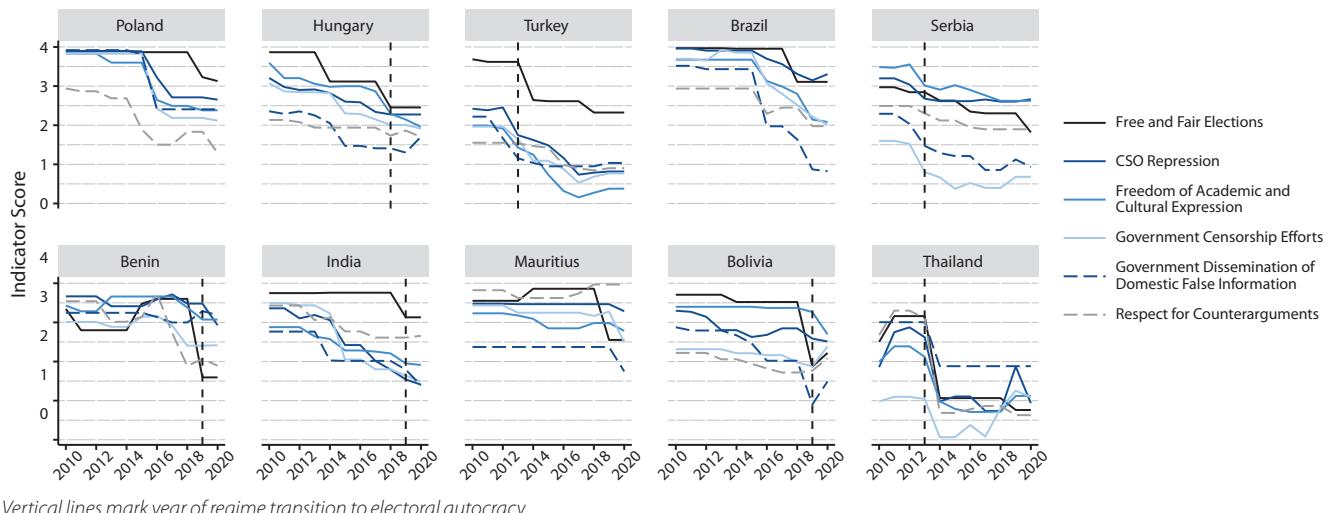
9 <https://www.reuters.com/article/india-citizenship-idINKBN1YF0QA>

10 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/04/09/shoot-traitors/discrimination-against-muslims-under-indias-new-citizenship-policy; https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50670393>

11 Basu (2015).

12 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/08/india-foreign-funding-law-used-harass-25-groups; https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Anti-national-acts-25-NGOs-lose-foreign-fund-licences/articleshowprint/55254613.cms?null>

13 <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=0d92af5-6817-419f-a58d-7597b5c68904>

FIGURE 11: HOW AUTOCRATIZATION UNFOLDS – COUNTRY EXAMPLES, 2010–2020

HOW AUTOCRATIZATION UNFOLDS

When V-Dem data on the indicators comprising the LDI are analyzed to decipher how contemporary autocratization unfolds, a striking pattern emerges. The playbook of “wannabe” dictators seems to have been shared widely among leaders in (former) democracies. First, seek to restrict and control the media while curbing academia and civil society. Then couple these with disrespect for political opponents to feed polarization while using the machinery of the government to spread disinformation. Only when you have come far enough on these fronts is it time for an attack on democracy’s core: elections and other formal institutions.

Figure 11 shows those indicators that tended to deteriorate first and ultimately the most, among the top 10 autocratizing countries. Vertical dashed lines indicate if a democratic breakdown took place, meaning that autocratization has gone so far that the country is downgraded to an electoral autocracy.

The commonalities in the way autocratization unfolds across these varying contexts is notable. Media and academic freedoms, and civil society, are typically repressed first. Alongside that, ruling governments often engage in polarization by official disinformation campaigns disseminated via social media³⁹ and by increasing disrespect for counterarguments from political opponents.⁴⁰ Only then are formal institutions such as the quality of elections undermined in a further step towards autocracy. Making these early and often slow-moving attributes observable is a key feature of V-Dem’s highly disaggregated data.

Eight of the top 10 major autocratizers over the last ten years follow this pattern: **Brazil, Bolivia, Hungary, India, Poland, Turkey**, as well as **Benin** and **Serbia**, although the latter two show some more variation. Only **Mauritius** and **Thailand** stand out.

Thailand was in a process of limited liberalization when the military coup occurred on 22nd May 2014, which was a very different situation. The recent developments in **Mauritius** come as a surprise to many observers. The island has been a democracy for over 40 years. The sharp decline in the indicator for quality of elections in 2019 is likely related to **widespread allegations** of electoral fraud in the November 2019 parliamentary elections.⁴¹ The electoral period also saw complaints of **false information** being disseminated by both government and opposition.⁴² With the Covid-19 pandemic, further anti-democratic measures were enacted, including the **suspension of parliament** in December 2020 and dispersion of peaceful protests.⁴³

But among the more typical processes is that in **Hungary** with the deterioration of freedom of expression and civil society repression dating back to as early as 2010 when right-wing government led by Viktor Orbán and his Fidez party enacted several media laws that curtailed media freedom substantially. The **establishment** of a national media authority gave the government greater control over news media.⁴⁴ Subsequently, the government **limited academic freedom** and further limited pluralism by the formation of a **pro-government news conglomerate**.⁴⁵

The decay in freedom of the press, academia, civil society, and increasing spread of false information in **Turkey** predates 2010 but has continued since, with legal restrictions to further limit civil society activity and freedom of expression, for example.⁴⁶

³⁹ The indicator on “Government Disinformation of Domestic False Information” is part of the Digital Society Survey in the V-Dem dataset.

⁴⁰ This is an indicator on deliberation (the extent to which political elites respect counterarguments) as another component of democracy which has been identified as being targeted already during early phases of autocratization, see Gora and de Wilde (2020).

⁴¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nishandegnarin/2021/01/11/mauritius-in-crisis-as-militarized-police-deployed-against-peaceful-protestors/>

⁴² <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-11-06-mauritius-polls-marred-by-hacking-allegations/>

⁴³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nishandegnarin/2021/01/11/mauritius-in-crisis-as-militarized-police-deployed-against-peaceful-protestors/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.economist.com/eastern-approaches/2010/12/23/all-eyes-on-orban>

⁴⁵ [https://www.euronews.com/2019/06/12/don-t-be-fooled-hungary-s-government-remains-a-threat-to-european-values-view/](https://www.euronews.com/2019/06/12/don-t-be-fooled-hungary-s-government-remains-a-threat-to-european-values-view;); <https://rsf.org/en/news/unprecedented-merger-poses-threat-survival-media-pluralism-hungary>

⁴⁶ Yilmaz and Turner (2019).

Key developments under the BJP government led by Prime Minister Modi in India are detailed in a special box above/below).

In **Serbia** it was declining electoral integrity alongside deteriorating academic, civil society, and media freedoms that among other things contributed to the backsliding into authoritarianism by 2013.⁴⁷ The quality of elections has been deteriorating since then and further worsened in 2020, when many opposition parties **boycotted** the parliamentary elections held amidst the pandemic.⁴⁸

The MAS (Movement for Socialism) party led by Evo Morales undermined independent journalism in **Bolivia** by passing legislation that limited media freedom.⁴⁹ It included the **Supreme Decree 181** that allowed government discretionary control over state funding to media outlets.⁵⁰ Increasing government censorship then preceded a steep decline in the quality of elections in 2019 when Evo Morales ran for a fourth term and subsequently had to leave the country following mass protests. From then until the 2020 election, Bolivia was in a turbulent phase but the quality of elections seems to have partly recovered in 2020.

Government censorship and hostility to non-partisan media is **steadily increasing** in **Brazil**, in particular after right-wing populist Bolsonaro became President in January 2019,⁵¹ including **government dissemination** of false information.⁵² In **Poland**, media laws from **2015/16** place new limitations on freedom of expression and the media.⁵³ Following the 2016 election of Patrice Talon as President, measures limiting political dissent and competition intensified in **Benin**. A **new Penal Code** adopted in 2018 penalised civil society organisations and opposition parties, in addition to a 2017 law on digital publications that targeted independent journalists.⁵⁴ Free and fair elections are declining in Benin. In 2019, **electoral laws** made participation in parliamentary elections prohibitively expensive and opposition activists and journalists were subject to arrest.⁵⁵

RAYS OF HOPE: TOP 10 ADVANCERS

This year we register 16 nations that made substantially meaningful and statistically significant advances on the LDI between 2010 and 2020. For the full list and the extent of changes, see **Figure 10** and **Figure 16** in this report.

Table 2 below lists the top 10 advancing countries on the LDI during the last decade. Of these ten nations, four transitioned to democracy during the last 10 years while two democracies and four autocracies improved in significant ways in their democratic qualities.

Georgia is the new addition to the list this year. The improvements compared to 10 years ago are especially pronounced in areas such as freedom from torture and freedom of expression. Yet Georgia's score on the LDI is in decline again since 2019, and there are **concerns** that further reversals could come. The recent arrest of an opposition leader in February 2021 raises **questions** about the state of the rule of law in Georgia, and its future.⁵⁶

TABLE 2: TOP-10 DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 2010–2020

	CHANGE	LDI 2010	LDI 2020	REGIME TYPE 2010	REGIME TYPE 2020
1 Tunisia	0.54	0.10	0.64	Electoral Autocracy	Electoral Democracy
2 Armenia	0.41	0.19	0.60	Electoral Autocracy	Electoral Autocracy
3 The Gambia	0.30	0.12	0.42	Electoral Autocracy	Electoral Democracy
4 Myanmar	0.24	0.03	0.27	Closed Autocracy	Electoral Autocracy
5 Niger	0.21	0.18	0.39	Closed Autocracy	Electoral Democracy
6 Madagascar	0.18	0.09	0.27	Closed Autocracy	Electoral Autocracy
7 Ecuador	0.18	0.31	0.48	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Democracy
8 Fiji	0.17	0.11	0.28	Closed Autocracy	Electoral Autocracy
9 Georgia	0.15	0.36	0.51	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Democracy
10 Sri Lanka	0.14	0.24	0.38	Electoral Autocracy	Electoral Democracy

The classification of regime type is not only based on the LDI score but also the Electoral Democracy Index, as well as the extent to which elections overall have been free and fair. See Lührmann et al (2018) for details.

As in last year's *Democracy Report*, **Tunisia** is the most prominent case of a successful transition to democracy over the past decade and continues to be the greatest advance on the LDI in the group. Eight more nations also reappear from last year: **Armenia, Ecuador, Fiji, The Gambia, Madagascar, Myanmar, Niger, Sri Lanka**. Their relative advances were similar as of year-end 2020 to that which we reported then for 2019.

The recent events in February 2021 when the **military seized control** in **Myanmar**, threw the process of democratization overboard. This unfortunate turn of events followed the general elections on 8th November 2020 won by Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy.⁵⁷ We also note the concerning developments in **Sri Lanka** and project that it might suffer from further declines due to its actions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as discussed earlier in this report.

47 The difference in reporting on Serbia compared to last year's Democracy Report is due to a change in the indicators used for the vertical and horizontal lines.

48 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53107011>

49 Sánchez-Sibony (2021).

50 <https://rsf.org/en/news/no-state-advertising-politicized-media-bolivia>

51 <https://rsf.org/en/news/brazil-quarterly-analysis-media-face-censorship-multiple-fronts>

52 <https://www.ft.com/content/ea62950e-89c0-4b8b-b458-05c90a55b81f>

53 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35257105>

54 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/04/benin-crackdown-on-protests-and-wave-of-arrests-fuel-tense-election-period/>

55 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-48084124>

56 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/georgia-police-storm-opposition-headquarters-to-arrest-leader-nika-melia/>; https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/georgia-democracy-putin-nika-melia/2021/02/26/0c16a3bc-7791-11eb-8115-9ad5e9c02117_story.html

57 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070>

Threat to Freedom of Expression Intensifies

- The threat to freedom of expression and the media intensifies – 32 countries are declining substantially and significantly, compared to only 19 just three years ago.**
- Freedom of expression and the media make 8 of the 10 indicators declining in the greatest number of countries over the past 10 years.**
- Repression of civil society is also intensifying. V-Dem data register substantial deterioration in 50 countries over the past ten years.**

Figure 12 bears evidence of the continuation of trends identified in several previous editions of the *Democracy Report* and also when it comes to varying democratic component indices. Many more countries are regressing significantly than those advancing on many key democratic aspects. In this figure we simply count how many countries register significant changes on key democratic indices over the last ten years. Indices above the diagonal line indicate that more countries improved than declined, while indices with more states registering negative changes are placed below the diagonal.

Freedom of expression, deliberation, rule of law and elections show the most substantial net declines in the last decade. Notably, every key component of democracy registers fewer or at most an equal number of countries improving compared to the 2020 *Democracy Report*.

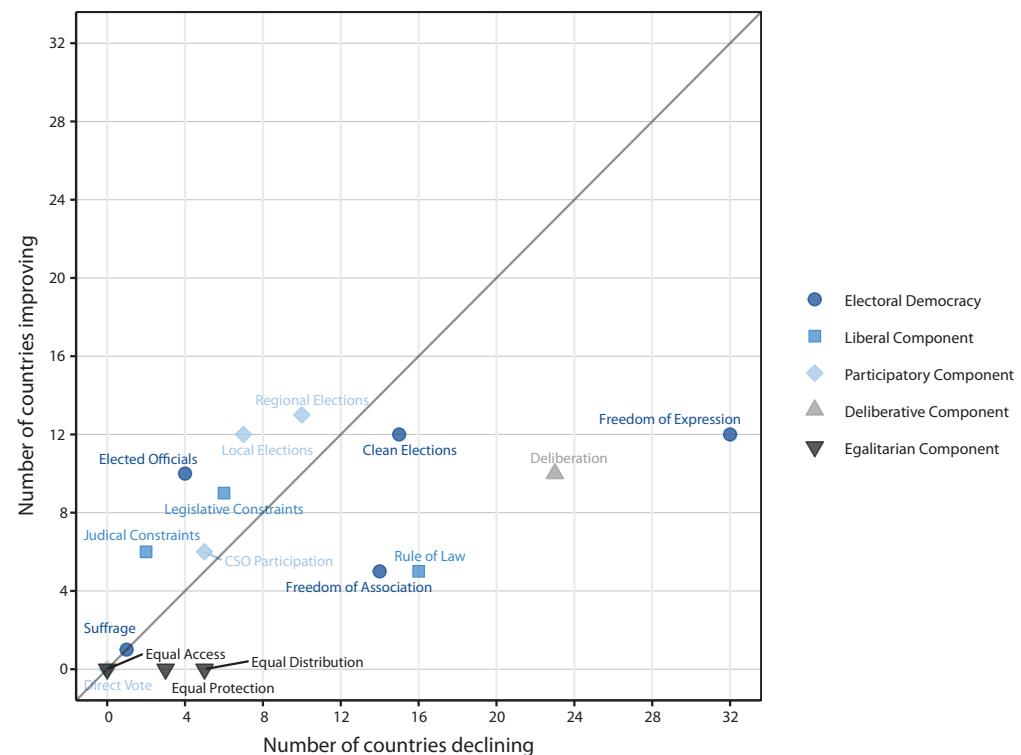
The broadscale attack on freedom of expression including the media continues with significant deterioration in a record 32 countries compared to 31 in last year's *Democracy Report* but only 19 nations in the 2018 report. This is exacerbated by a reduction in the number of countries advancing the rights of expressing opinions and unconstrained media from 16 in 2019 to just 12 in 2020.

Deliberation also shows a distressing development. This component captures the extent to which public speech, including counterarguments and respect for political opponents, is respected by political leaders. By 2020 it was declining in 23 countries over the last ten years. This is a minor reduction from 24 in 2019 but constitutes a continuation of the accelerated negative trend from years earlier in the decade. Declines include significant negative changes in the **United States of America** from 0.91 in 2016 to 0.61 in 2020 during the Trump administration.

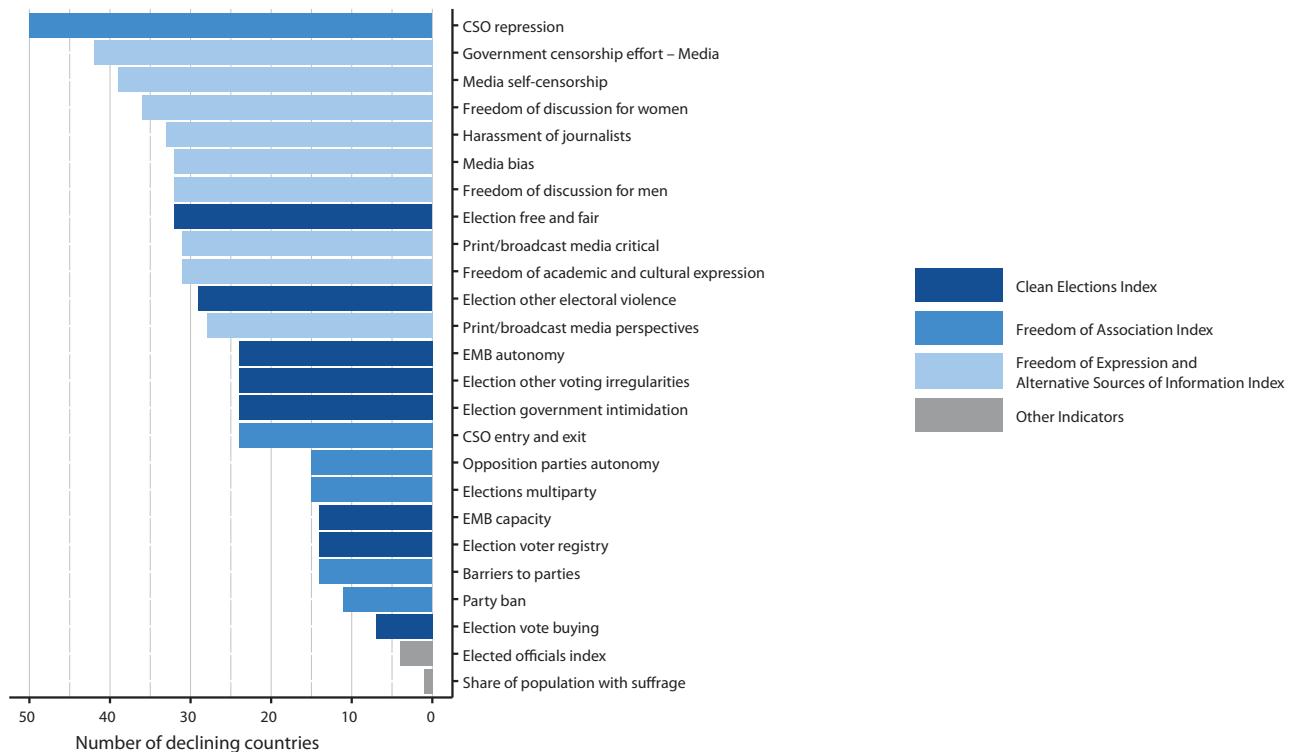
Also, the trend we reported on over the last couple of years for Rule of Law continues, with a slightly accelerated decline. The data shows a substantial worsening in respect for the rule of law by governments in 16 countries compared to only 11 in 2018. Ongoing decline in this area was compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 due to discriminatory measures and the derogation of non-derogable rights in some countries.

Freedom of association, in which the extent to which civil society can function is measured, followed the accelerating trend depicted for the areas above. This year, we registered substantial

FIGURE 12: KEY DEMOCRACY ASPECTS, SUBSTANTIAL AND SIGNIFICANT CHANGE, 2010–2020



An index changes substantially and significantly if its 2020 value is at least 0.05 points different from its 2010 value on a scale ranging from 0 to 1 and the confidence intervals do not overlap (see Methods section towards the end of this report).

FIGURE 13: INDICATORS OF DEMOCRACY DECLINING, SUBSTANTIALLY AND SIGNIFICANTLY, 2010–2020

We count an indicator as declining substantially and significantly if its 2020 value is at least 0.5 points lower than its 2010 value on a scale ranging from 0 to 4; and the confidence intervals do not overlap (see Methods section towards the end of this report), except elected officials and suffrage.

and significant declines in 14 countries compared to ten years ago. The corresponding figure in the 2019 *Democracy Report* was only eight.

Following a period of advancement during which all component indices related to elections continued to record improvements in more countries than where they had declined, the concerning downturn in the quality of elections first identified in last year's *Democracy Report* continues. The index measuring how clean elections are records a substantive decline in 15 countries and improvements in just 12.

The component indices of different aspects of democracy are each composed of a series of indicators. In Figure 13, we count the number of countries where V-Dem has registered significant and substantial declines between 2010 and 2020 on 25 core indicators.

The graph puts repression of civil society right up there in an uppermost position among the indicators worst affected by the

wave of autocratization over the past decade. The V-Dem data registers substantial and statistically significant increases in civil society repression in no less than 50 countries by 2020 compared to 2010. This is a dramatic increase from the findings in previous reports that found only 23 nations in decline on this indicator in the 2017 report and 25 in the 2019 report.

Similar to last year's report, we also find that many indicators directly measuring media's independence and ability to function are in marked decline, and that they make up eight of the ten most commonly declining indicators. Government efforts to censor media occurred in 42 countries, and media self-censorship in 39, for example. The broadscale attack on the media as an independent actor and provider of information critical to the functioning of any democracy is intensifying.

Ten Years After the Arab Uprisings

Sebastian Hellmeier, Jean Lachapelle and Staffan I. Lindberg

On 18 December 2010 the Arab uprisings commenced with **Mohamed Bouazizi's** self-immolation in protest against police corruption and maltreatment in Tunisia.¹ Pro-democratic mass mobilizations quickly spread to Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen and then fanned out across much of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Following what was often labelled as “revolutions”, protesters ousted decades-old dictators in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. In other countries the protests did not overthrow authoritarian regimes but prompted some concessions to the pro-democratic protesters. The Moroccan and Jordanian governments both amended their constitutions, the Algerian government ended an almost two-decade old state of emergency, and the government of Kuwait resigned in response to protests. This period saw rising hopes of a region-wide wave of democratization. Yet, while mass mobilization in favor of political liberalization emerged across the region, these hopes for more far-ranging political change were often dashed. Autocrats responded to mass mobilization with violent repression perhaps most forcefully in Bahrain and Syria. Civil war with the involvement of international forces eventually resulted in Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

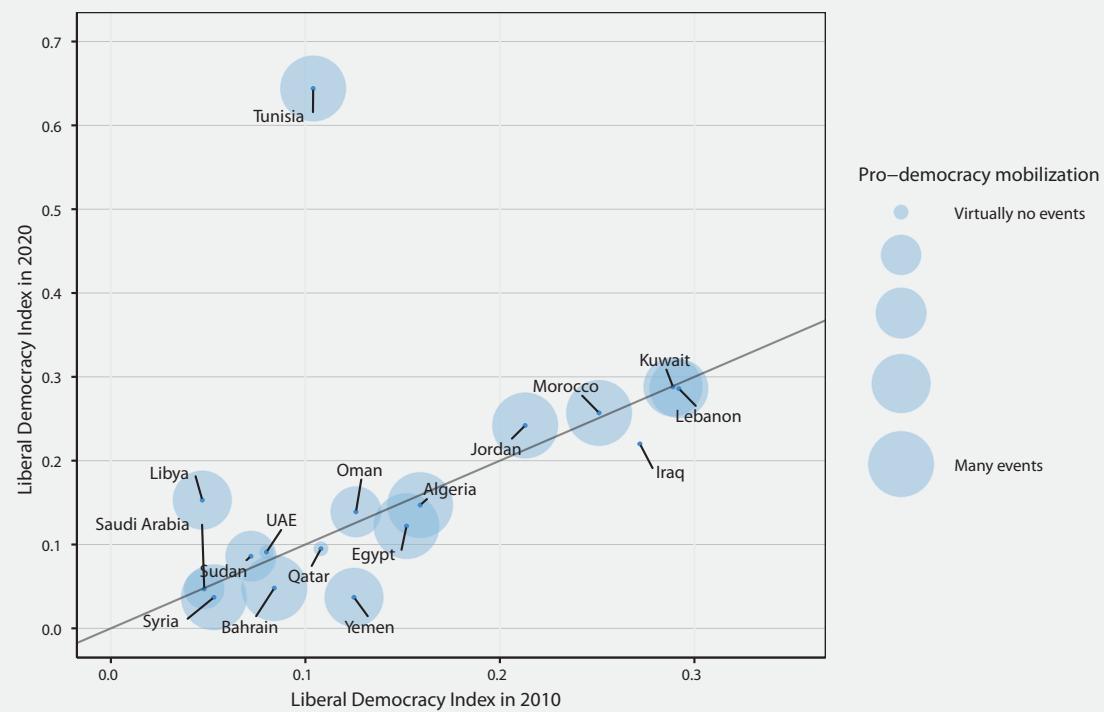
One decade has passed since the first demonstrations erupted and we use this anniversary as an opportunity to revisit the region ten years after these historical events. The figure in this box shows

the state of liberal democracy in the MENA region at the end of 2020 compared to the state before the wave of uprisings began in 2010. The size of the bubble for each country shows the maximum extent of pro-democratic mobilization in 2010-2012 with the exception of Iraq for which we lack reliable data.

All but one country – Tunisia – failed to democratize despite the desire for political change expressed in the uprisings. For instance, there are few if any improvements in Morocco compared to the situation in 2010. Although the reformed constitution recognizes new rights for its citizens such as the rights to life, and to physical and moral integrity, it does little to change the balance of power between the King and the elected legislature. In practice, Mohammed VI continues his reign for more than two decades. Likewise, Kuwaiti Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah ruled the country until his death in September 2020 without implementing meaningful democratic reforms in response to the protests after the government’s resignation in November 2011. The closed autocracies like Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates continued with business largely as usual throughout the period.

Only Tunisia went from being an autocracy to a democracy during the past ten years. After protesters ousted President Ben Ali on January 14th, a civilian-led interim government steered the

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN THE MENA REGION, 2010 AND 2020



This pro-democracy mobilization variable captures the extent to which events of mass mobilization for pro-democratic aims have been frequent and large.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohamed_Bouazizi; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-immolation>



Tahrir Square, Egypt. Wikimedia Commons.

country towards elections for a Constituent Assembly in October 2011. Despite deep tensions between Islamists and secularists and mounting insecurities, the Assembly adopted a new Constitution in January of 2014, paving the way for largely free and fair elections in late 2014 and again in 2019. Other countries experienced only marginal improvements. Jordan slightly improved its Liberal Democracy Index score after it implemented reforms that broadened electoral representation, but these reforms fell short of making elections truly competitive. Likewise, we note a slight improvement in Libya's score, which was a highly repressive autocracy under the rule of Muammar Gaddafi in 2010. Yet Libya still faces vast security challenges in the wake of a civil war even after the ceasefire in October 2020.

Some countries are faring worse than they did before the uprisings. Egypt's democracy score is slightly lower today than it was in 2010 on the eve of the Egyptian uprising. Former army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi has tightened his grip on the country since overthrowing President Mursi in 2013, who had been elected a year prior. Although the 2014 constitution is on paper more democratic than previous constitutions, human rights organizations

have raised the alarm over widespread torture by security forces and the escalating use of the death penalty. In 2019 the Egyptian parliament approved constitutional amendments that weakened restrictions on presidential term limits, giving Sisi the possibility of staying in power until 2030. The largest decline the LDI since 2010 among all the Arab countries, was seen for Yemen where following the demise of long-time president Ali Abdullah Saleh, a civil war with international involvement has been ravaging since 2014.

Renewed hopes for political liberalization are now resurfacing following a second wave of pro-democratic protests that in the last couple of years toppled leaders in both Algeria and Sudan. Thus, despite the fact that democracy has not improved much beyond Tunisia so far, pro-democratic mobilization continues to raise hopes.

From Year of Protest to Year of Lockdown

- From an all-time high in 2019, mass mobilization declined to its lowest level in over a decade.
- However, mass protests in countries such as Belarus, Nigeria and Thailand show that even a global pandemic and forceful state-imposed restrictions cannot dissuade pro-democracy forces.
- The decline in pro-democracy mass mobilization in 2020 may well prove to be short-lived.

The spread of Covid-19 and government responses to the pandemic challenged the organization of collective action. Participation at mass events is associated with considerable risk for activists. Governments put in place heavy restrictions on the freedom of assembly in 2020 by limiting the number of people allowed to gather in public and sometimes ordering curfews. While pro-democracy mass mobilizations naturally declined significantly, the developments in 2020 still demonstrated that pro-democratic forces cannot be deterred from pursuing their aspirations even by a pandemic or lockdowns.

We reported in the *Democracy Report* last year that 2019 saw unprecedented levels of street protests worldwide. The data seemed to tell a hopeful story about a counter-movement to the wave of autocratization. The pandemic then came to constrain

democratic rights in one particular way. Compared to the high level of mobilization we reported in last year's *Democracy Report*, Figure 14 shows a steep decline in the number of protest events in general and of pro-democracy protests in particular. The 2020 year of lockdown registers the lowest levels of mass mobilization in over a decade in the V-Dem data, and a substantial drop in protest events at the beginning of the global spread of the pandemic is corroborated by other studies.⁵⁸

Even so, the drop is perhaps smaller than expected. Numerous protests took place, and pro-democracy activists took to the streets despite the pandemic and state-imposed restrictions. The Covid-19 pandemic led to the emergence of new grievances with accompanying "pandemic protests", socially distanced protests by health care personnel, anti-lockdown protests, and even riots.⁵⁹

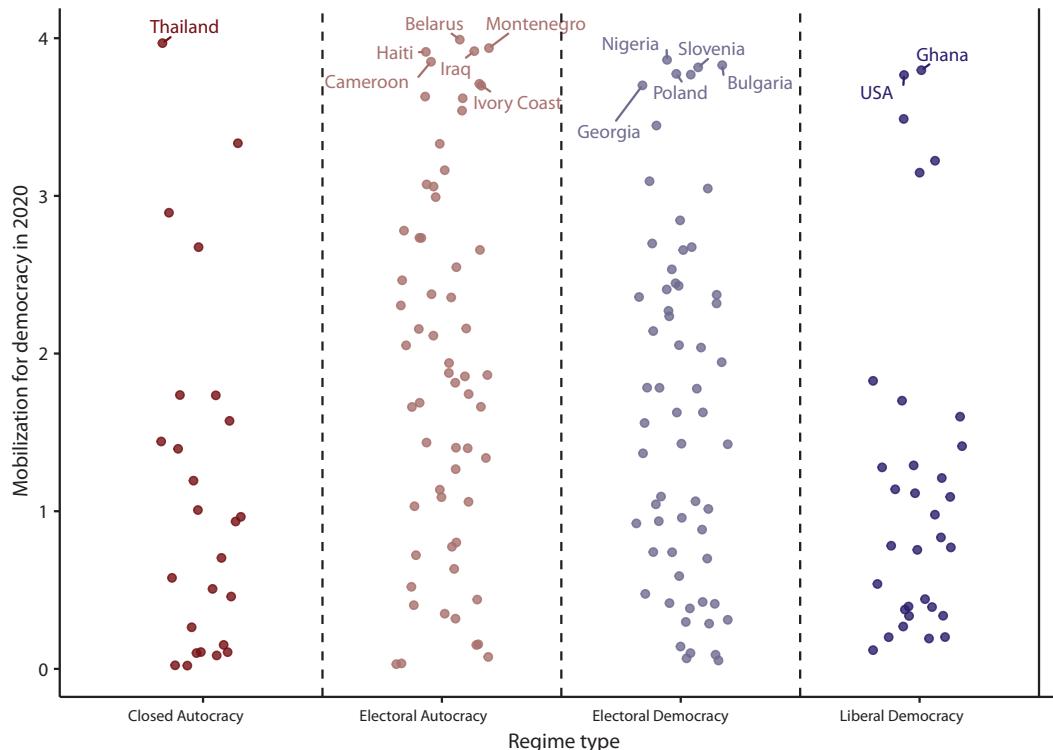
Figure 15 provides more detail on the countries where large-scale, pro-democracy protests took place in 2020. The upper part of the first two subdivisions in the graph features the closed and electoral autocracies where citizens mobilized in favor of democracy despite the pandemic. In the upper part of the last two sections are the names of electoral and liberal democracies with high levels of pro-democracy mobilization in 2020.

FIGURE 14: MOBILIZATION FOR DEMOCRACY AND AUTOCRACY, 1972–2020



⁵⁸ Bloem and Salemi (2020).

⁵⁹ Gerbaudo (2020, 63).

FIGURE 15: MOBILIZATION FOR DEMOCRACY IN 2020

This indicator of mass mobilization for democracy captures the extent to which events of mass mobilization for pro-democratic aims have been frequent and large.

Unprecedented pro-democracy mobilization erupted in August 2020 in **Belarus**. Demonstrators protested against the official results of the elections that “Europe’s last dictator” Aleksandr Lukashenko claimed he won in a landslide. Despite a violent crackdown by security forces, thousands took to the streets for months demanding the resignation of Lukashenko.⁶⁰

In **Thailand**, thousands of pro-democracy protesters demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chanocha, a new constitution, and a reform of the monarchy. Elevated to power in the 2014 military coup, Chanocha has rejected the demands, and some of the protestors face **criminal charges** under an antiquated lèse-majesté law that prohibits defaming the royal family.⁶¹

Young people in **Nigeria** mobilized against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) after several videos of police brutality went viral. The protests grew to a larger movement against bad governance under the Twitter hashtag #EndSARS. Although the government eventually disbanded the SARS police unit, both protests and **repression** of protestors including the use of lethal force continued.⁶²

The anti-government protests abounding in **Iraq** during 2019 subsided in the early part of the Covid-19 pandemic only to resume in October 2020. The protestors’ demands include political reforms to reduce rampant corruption and the creation of better economic opportunities for ordinary people. Violence led to the **death** of one of the leading female activists, the doctor Riham Yaqoob.⁶³

The **United States of America** saw the highest number of protests in recent **history** with more than half a million participants on June 6 2020 alone.⁶⁴ Spurred by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, the Black Lives Matter movement and its supporters took to the streets. The movement denounced police brutality and demanded far-reaching police reforms. The mass mobilization persisted for months in various parts of the country.

The events of last year show that even a global pandemic and forceful state restrictions cannot dissuade pro-democracy forces. Activists rose above the adverse conditions and several movements also found alternative ways of drawing attention to their cause. The decline in pro-democratic mass mobilization in 2020 may well prove to be short-lived.

⁶⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/13/belarus-unprecedented-crackdown>

⁶¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/01/world/asia/thailand-protests.html>

⁶² <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2020/10/21/peaceful-protesters-against-nigerian-police-violence-are-shot>

⁶³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53847648>

⁶⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>

V-Dem in Numbers

V-Dem is an international effort comprised of:

- ▶ **5** Principal Investigators
- ▶ **23** Personnel at the V-Dem Institute
- ▶ **18** Project Managers
- ▶ **33** Regional Managers
- ▶ **134** Country Coordinators
- ▶ **3,500** Country Experts

All working together to produce

29,759,876

data points in the v11 dataset

NEW MEASURES IN THE v11 DATASET

9

New Indicators on Regimes

WHERE IS V-DEM DATA USED?



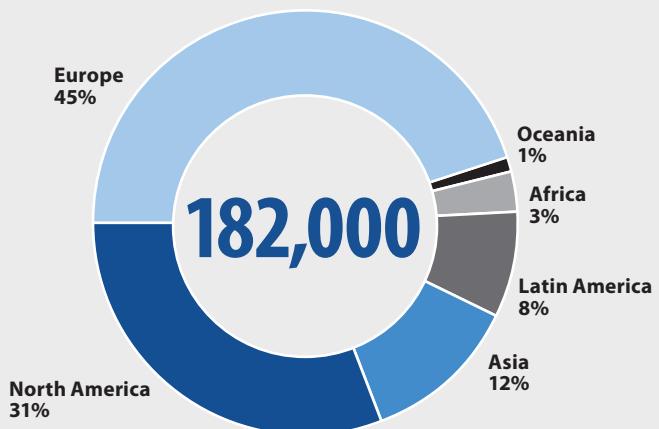
The V-Dem dataset has been downloaded by **users in 176+ countries** since 2016.



7 million graphs created using the online tools by users in 176+ countries since 2016.

While the majority of the dataset downloads in 2020 come from Europe and Americas, users from all regions of the world have accessed the data and used the online tools since 2016.

DATASET DOWNLOADS (2016–2020)



V-DEM PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS TO ACADEMIC AND POLICY COMMUNITIES

- ▶ **730+** presentations across the world by V-Dem scholars since 2007.
- ▶ **106 visiting scholars** presented at the V-Dem Institute since 2014.



TABLE 3: REGIMES OF THE WORLD, 2010–2020

The countries are sorted by regime type in 2020, and after that in alphabetical order.

They are classified based on the Regimes of the World measure.

We incorporate V-Dem's confidence estimates in order to account for the uncertainty and potential measurement error due to the nature of the data but also to underline that some countries are placed in the grey zone between regime types.

This builds on the regime-classification by Lührmann et al. (2018). While using V-Dem's data, this measure is not officially endorsed by the Steering Committee of V-Dem (only the main V-Dem democracy indices have such an endorsement).

LD Liberal Democracy

ED Electoral Democracy

EA Electoral Autocracy

CA Closed Autocracy

– indicates that taking uncertainty into account, the country could belong to the lower category

+ signifies that the country could also belong to the higher category

↑ indicates that the country sees a movement upwards from one level to another

↓ indicates that the country sees a movement downwards from one level to another

COUNTRY	2020	CHANGE FROM 2010
Austria	LD	
Belgium	LD	
Costa Rica	LD	
Estonia	LD	
Finland	LD	
France	LD	
Germany	LD	
Ireland	LD	
Israel	LD	
Japan	LD	
Luxembourg	LD	
Netherlands	LD	
New Zealand	LD	
Spain	LD	
Sweden	LD	
Switzerland	LD	
Taiwan	LD	
United Kingdom	LD	
USA	LD	
Australia	LD–	
Barbados	LD–	↑
Canada	LD–	
Cyprus	LD–	
Denmark	LD–	
Ghana	LD–	
Greece	LD–	
Iceland	LD–	
Italy	LD–	
Latvia	LD–	
Norway	LD–	
South Korea	LD–	
Uruguay	LD–	
Botswana	ED+	↓
Chile	ED+	↓
Lesotho	ED+	
Lithuania	ED+	↓
Malta	ED+	
Mauritius	ED+	↓
Namibia	ED+	
Portugal	ED+	↓
Senegal	ED+	
Seychelles	ED+	↑
Slovakia	ED+	↓
Slovenia	ED+	↓
South Africa	ED+	↓

COUNTRY	2020	CHANGE FROM 2010
Trinidad and Tobago	ED+	
Vanuatu	ED+	
Argentina	ED	
Brazil	ED	
Bulgaria	ED	
Burkina Faso	ED	
Cape Verde	ED	
Colombia	ED	
Croatia	ED	
Czech Republic	ED	↓
Dominican Republic	ED	
Ecuador	ED	
El Salvador	ED	
Georgia	ED	
Guatemala	ED	
Indonesia	ED	
Jamaica	ED	
Kosovo	ED	
Liberia	ED	
Maldives	ED	
Mexico	ED	
Moldova	ED	
Mongolia	ED	
Nepal	ED	
North Macedonia	ED	
Panama	ED	
Paraguay	ED	
Peru	ED	
Poland	ED	↓
Romania	ED	
S.Tomé & P.	ED	
Solomon Islands	ED	
Sri Lanka	ED	↑
Suriname	ED	
Timor-Leste	ED	
Tunisia	ED	↑
Albania	ED–	
Bhutan	ED–	
BiH	ED–	
Gambia	ED–	↑
Guinea-Bissau	ED–	↑
Guyana	ED–	
Malawi	ED–	
Niger	ED–	↑
Nigeria	ED–	↑

COUNTRY	2020	CHANGE FROM 2010
Sierra Leone	ED–	
Ukraine	ED–	
Armenia	EA+	
Hungary	EA+	↓
India	EA+	↓
Kenya	EA+	
Lebanon	EA+	↓
Madagascar	EA+	↑
Mali	EA+	↓
Montenegro	EA+	↓
Afghanistan	EA	
Algeria	EA	
Angola	EA	
Azerbaijan	EA	
Bangladesh	EA	
Belarus	EA	
Benin	EA	↓
Bolivia	EA	↓
Burundi	EA	
Cambodia	EA	
Cameroon	EA	
CAR	EA	
Chad	EA	
Comoros	EA	↓
Congo	EA	
Djibouti	EA	
DRC	EA	
Equatorial Guinea	EA	
Ethiopia	EA	
Fiji	EA	↑
Gabon	EA	
Haiti	EA	
Honduras	EA	
Iran	EA	
Iraq	EA	
Ivory Coast	EA	
Kazakhstan	EA	
Kyrgyzstan	EA	
Malaysia	EA	
Mauritania	EA	
Mozambique	EA	
Myanmar	EA	↑
Nicaragua	EA	
Pakistan	EA	
Palestine/West Bank	EA	

COUNTRY	2020	CHANGE FROM 2010
Papua New Guinea	EA	
Philippines	EA	↓
Russia	EA	
Rwanda	EA	
Serbia	EA	↓
Singapore	EA	
Somaliland	EA	
Tajikistan	EA	
Tanzania	EA	↓
Togo	EA	
Turkey	EA	↓
Uganda	EA	
Venezuela	EA	
Zambia	EA	↓
Zanzibar	EA	
Zimbabwe	EA	
Egypt	EA–	
Guinea	EA–	
Turkmenistan	EA–	
Kuwait	CA+	
Uzbekistan	CA+	↓
Vietnam	CA+	
Bahrain	CA	
China	CA	
Cuba	CA	
Eritrea	CA	
Eswatini	CA	
Hong Kong	CA	
Jordan	CA	
Laos	CA	
Libya	CA	
Morocco	CA	
North Korea	CA	
Oman	CA	
Palestine/Gaza	CA	
Qatar	CA	
Saudi Arabia	CA	
Somalia	CA	
Sudan	CA	↓
Syria	CA	↓
Thailand	CA	↓
UAE	CA	
Yemen	CA	↓

FIGURE 16: COUNTRIES BY SCORE ON V-DEM'S LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI), 2010 COMPARED TO 2020**Top 50% of countries**

- Score
- Confidence interval
- Autocratizing countries
- Democratizing countries
- 2010
- 2020

Red country names signify cases of significant and substantial autocratization.

Blue country names indicate cases of significant and substantial democratization.

The graph divides all countries' LDI scores into ranks of top 10% to 50% and bottom 50% to 10%. Lines indicate the confidence intervals around the point estimates.

Countries with overlapping confidence intervals are statistically indistinguishable.



Bottom 50% of countries

- Score
- Confidence interval
- Autocratizing countries
- Democratizing countries
- 2010
- 2020

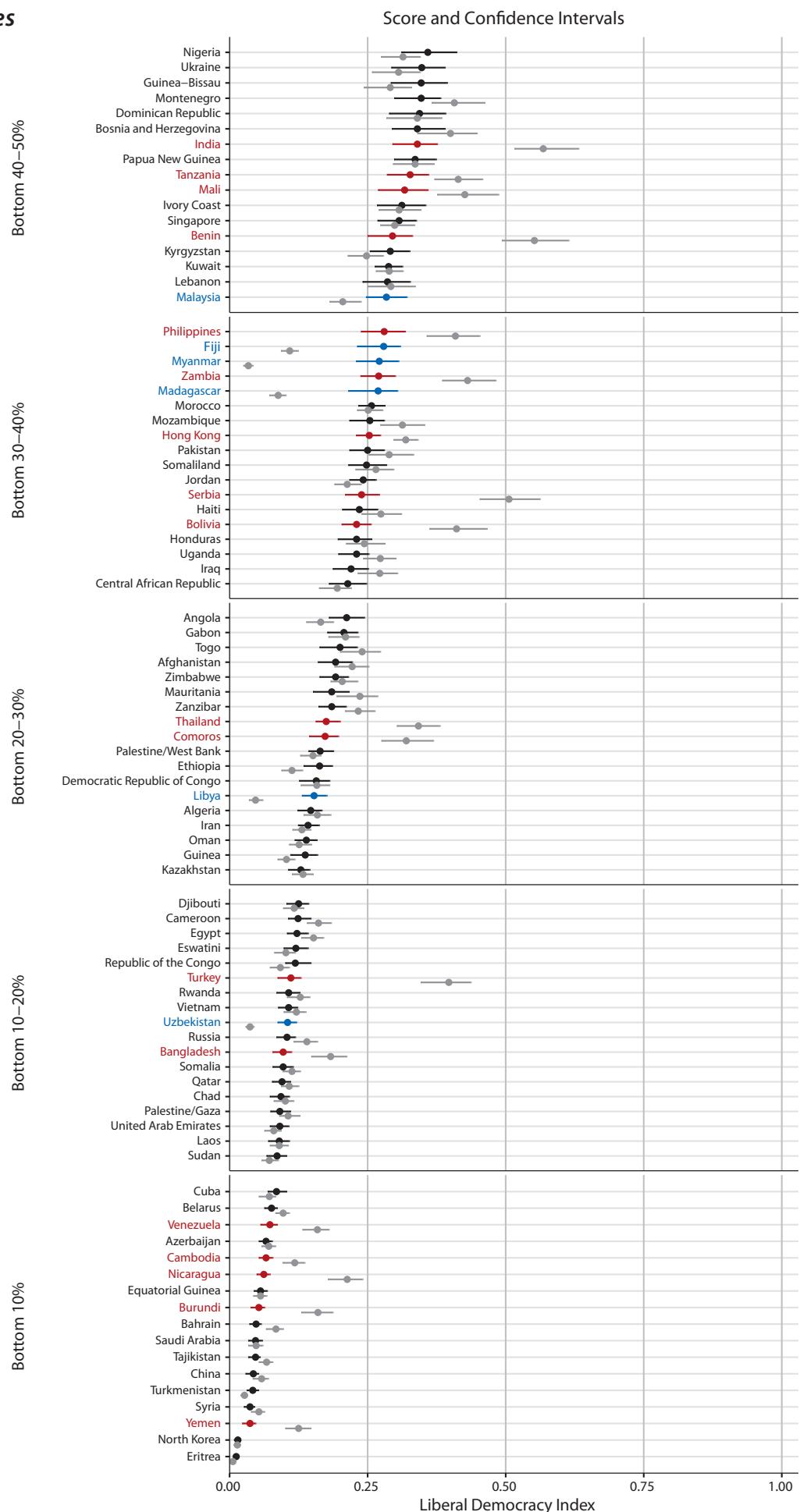


TABLE 4: COUNTRY SCORES FOR THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI) AND ALL COMPONENTS INDICES, IN 2020

↑ Indicates that the country's score has improved over the past 10 years, substantively and at a statistically significant level
 ↓ Indicates that the country's score has decreased over the past 10 years, substantively and at a statistically significant level
 SD+/- reports the standard deviation to indicate the level of uncertainty

COUNTRY	LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI)			ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)			LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX (LCI)			EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX (ECI)			PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX (PCI)			DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX (DCI)		
	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-
Denmark	1	0.88	0.042	1	0.91	0.038	1	0.98	0.014	1	0.97	0.025	9	0.71	0.013	4	0.97	0.64
Sweden	2	0.87	0.042	2	0.9	0.038	2	0.98	0.015	15	0.9	0.047	28	0.65	0.025	12	0.94	0.624
Norway	3	0.86	0.044	4	0.9	0.039	5	0.96	0.02	2	0.96	0.026	27	0.66	0.018	1	0.99	0.641
Costa Rica	4	0.85	0.042	3	0.9	0.036	10	0.95	0.024	16	0.9	0.051	20	0.67	0.034	6	0.96	0.64
Switzerland	5	0.85	0.048	6	0.89	0.042	6	0.96	0.024	3	0.94	0.041	1	0.87	0.018	3	0.98	0.649
New Zealand	6	0.85	0.044	5	0.89	0.038	9	0.96	0.026	22	0.88	0.057	5	0.73	0.036	34	0.86	0.629
Finland	7	0.84	0.049	12	0.88	0.044	3	0.97	0.022	11	0.92	0.041	25	0.66	0.02	14	0.93	0.634
Germany	8	0.83	0.048	11	0.88	0.043	8	0.96	0.022	6	0.93	0.039	23	0.66	0.013	2	0.98	0.639
Estonia	9	0.83	0.045	7	0.89	0.039	13	0.94	0.029	19	0.89	0.054	36	0.64	0.041	68	0.75	0.634
Netherlands	10	0.82	0.046	16	0.87	0.042	4	0.96	0.021	13	0.9	0.05	43	0.61	0.038	7	0.95	0.636
Belgium	11	0.82	0.049	8	0.89	0.042	18	0.92	0.038	5	0.93	0.039	33	0.65	0.024	9	0.95	0.638
Ireland	12	0.82	0.052	10	0.88	0.046	15	0.94	0.032	17	0.9	0.049	18	0.68	0.031	18	0.93	0.645
Spain	13	0.8	0.047	9	0.89	0.038	27	0.9	0.041	10	0.92	0.041	26	0.66	0.034	28	0.88	0.64
United Kingdom	14	0.8	0.049	15	0.87	0.044	19	0.92	0.032	29	0.84	0.062	16	0.68	0.025	35	0.86	0.627
France	15	0.8	0.051	13	0.88	0.044	22	0.91	0.037	26	0.87	0.058	38	0.63	0.037	19	0.92	0.637
Uruguay	16	0.8	0.048	19	0.86	0.042	16	0.93	0.031	30	0.84	0.063	2	0.78	0.043	38	0.85	0.636
South Korea	17	0.79	0.051	21	0.86	0.046	17	0.93	0.031	25	0.87	0.058	39	0.63	0.038	17	0.93	0.632
Portugal	18	0.79	0.049	14	0.88	0.042	25	0.9	0.037	27	0.87	0.056	44	0.61	0.046	27	0.88	0.632
Iceland	19	0.79	0.052	22	0.85	0.047	14	0.94	0.033	21	0.89	0.059	11	0.69	0.023	11	0.94	0.646
Australia	20	0.79	0.049	25	0.84	0.046	7	0.96	0.021	28	0.85	0.059	19	0.68	0.037	23	0.9	0.633
Italy	21	0.78	0.048	20	0.86	0.042	20	0.92	0.035	12	0.92	0.044	3	0.77	0.032	22	0.91	0.637
Luxembourg	22	0.78	0.053	18	0.87	0.045	26	0.9	0.042	4	0.94	0.04	42	0.61	0.068	5	0.97	0.64
Lithuania	23	0.76	0.057	30	0.82	0.055	11	0.95	0.025	23	0.88	0.054	6	0.72	0.046	30	0.87	0.63
Austria	24	0.76	0.055	24	0.84	0.052	24	0.9	0.037	8	0.92	0.047	15	0.68	0.027	37	0.85	0.624
Chile	25	0.76	0.051	34	0.81	0.049	12	0.95	0.024	81	0.66	0.085	31	0.65	0.04	31	0.87	0.628
Slovakia	26	0.76	0.055	26	0.84	0.05	21	0.92		49	0.76	0.074	12	0.69	0.045	61	0.77	0.626
Greece	27	0.74	0.053	23	0.84	0.045	36	0.88	0.047	33	0.84	0.065	22	0.67	0.038	16	0.93	0.642
Canada	28	0.74	0.056	17	0.87	0.045	47	0.84	0.057	24	0.88	0.056	30	0.65	0.02	26	0.89	0.64
Latvia	29	0.74	0.06	31	0.82	0.056	23	0.91	0.041	32	0.84	0.064	17	0.68	0.045	45	0.82	0.63
Japan	30	0.73	0.054	29	0.82	0.048	34	0.88	0.046	7	0.93	0.048	64	0.58	0.052	20	0.92	0.629
USA	31	0.73	0.054	33	0.81	0.05	30	0.9	0.04	59	0.73	0.073	24	0.66	0.014	106	0.61	0.622
Cyprus	32	0.72	0.056	28	0.82	0.051	35	0.88	0.047	18	0.89	0.053	69	0.57	0.062	71	0.74	0.641
Taiwan	33	0.72	0.054	32	0.82	0.05	33	0.88	0.044	9	0.92	0.046	4	0.74	0.033	25	0.89	0.636
Czech Republic	34	0.71	0.054	36	0.8	0.049	32	0.88	0.044	14	0.9	0.054	56	0.59	0.05	65	0.76	0.624
Jamaica	35	0.7	0.06	35	0.81	0.056	37	0.87	0.046	53	0.76	0.08	40	0.63	0.037	46	0.82	0.628
Peru	36	0.69	0.056	37	0.8	0.053	40	0.86	0.046	107	0.56	0.092	13	0.69	0.046	88	0.68	0.629
Cape Verde	37	0.69	0.057	40	0.78	0.055	28	0.9	0.039	46	0.77	0.075	89	0.54	0.06	44	0.82	0.629
Barbados	38	0.68	0.059	38	0.8	0.057	42	0.86	0.046	35	0.82	0.071	149	0.3	0.031	32	0.86	0.625
Argentina	39	0.67	0.061	27	0.83	0.052	57	0.79	0.06	50	0.76	0.073	54	0.59	0.048	50	0.81	0.628
Slovenia	40	0.65	0.057	46	0.75	0.056	38	0.87	0.049	41	0.79	0.075	10	0.69	0.048	78	0.71	0.624
Israel	41	0.65	0.059	49	0.74	0.06	31	0.89	0.042	37	0.8	0.072	65	0.58	0.052	69	0.74	0.628
Tunisia	42	0.64	0.06	51	0.73	0.062	29	0.9	0.035	48	0.77	0.07	52	0.6	0.046	10	0.95	0.639
Trinidad and Tobago	43	0.64	0.063	43	0.76	0.062	45	0.85	0.052	38	0.8	0.077	67	0.57	0.052	15	0.93	0.639
Croatia	44	0.64	0.058	44	0.75	0.056	43	0.85	0.051	52	0.76	0.078	32	0.65	0.053	72	0.73	0.626
Vanuatu	45	0.64	0.061	48	0.74	0.061	41	0.86	0.046	58	0.73	0.086	94	0.53	0.065	36	0.85	0.637
Malta	46	0.61	0.061	41	0.77	0.058	60	0.78	0.063	20	0.89	0.061	14	0.68	0.056	58	0.79	0.631
Armenia	47	0.6	0.059	39	0.79	0.052	75	0.73	0.068	40	0.79	0.072	103	0.51	0.066	55	0.8	0.631
Ghana	48	0.6	0.061	54	0.7	0.065	39	0.86	0.05	65	0.7	0.078	134	0.39	0.055	41	0.84	0.63
Suriname	49	0.6	0.066	50	0.74	0.067	52	0.81	0.058	72	0.69	0.084	86	0.54	0.06	49	0.81	0.634
S.Tomé & P.	50	0.59	0.06	55	0.7	0.062	44	0.85	0.053	68	0.69	0.079	72	0.57	0.055	70	0.74	0.627
Senegal	51	0.58	0.065	47	0.75	0.066	64	0.76	0.066	62	0.72	0.077	127	0.44	0.063	43	0.82	0.635
South Africa	52	0.58	0.06	53	0.7	0.064	49	0.82	0.052	89	0.63	0.077	81	0.55	0.056	29	0.88	0.639
Panama	53	0.56	0.061	45	0.75	0.059	81	0.71	0.068	90	0.62	0.095	76	0.56	0.061	67	0.75	0.637
Romania	54	0.55	0.06	42	0.76	0.055	50	0.81	0.055	79	0.66	0.089	7	0.72	0.056	127	0.5	0.633
Namibia	55	0.52	0.062	58	0.65	0.068	53	0.8	0.06	119	0.51	0.09	96	0.52	0.061	76	0.72	0.634
Brazil	56	0.51	0.058	56	0.69	0.059	79	0.71	0.065	140	0.4	0.086	63	0.58	0.049	136	0.46	0.634
Burkina Faso	57	0.51	0.063	52	0.7	0.065	86	0.7	0.072	97	0.59	0.082	83	0.54	0.044	53	0.8	0.641
Georgia	58	0.51	0.06	61	0.64	0.068	63	0.76	0.066	39	0.8	0.076	58	0.59	0.051	47	0.82	0.624
Mauritius	59	0.5	0.062	68	0.62	0.071	55	0.8	0.058	44	0.77	0.08	66	0.58	0.057	24	0.9	0.647
Mongolia	60	0.5	0.06	63	0.63	0.066	61	0.77	0.061	67	0.7	0.08	123	0.46	0.069	54	0.8	0.632
Lesotho	61	0.5	0.057	66	0.63	0.065	59	0.78	0.062	47	0.77	0.075	68	0.57	0.057	48	0.81	0.627
Bulgaria	62	0.49	0.056	74	0.6	0.063	54											

COUNTRY	LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI)			ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)			LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX (LCI)			EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX (ECI)			PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX (PCI)			DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX (DCI)		
	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-
Nigeria	91	0.36	0.051	88	0.54	0.063	1	0.61	0.072	127	0.48	0.086	57	0.59	0.05	99	0.63	0.624
Ukraine	92	0.35	0.05	86	0.54	0.066	107	0.57	0.067	77	0.67	0.083	55	0.59	0.049	62	0.77	0.63
Guinea-Bissau	93	0.35	0.052	89	0.54	0.066	103	0.58	0.076	136	0.44	0.091	144	0.32	0.056	146	0.35	0.634
Montenegro	94	0.35	0.044	100	0.45	0.057	85	0.7	0.068	63	0.72	0.082	73	0.56	0.058	81	0.7	0.63
Dominican Republic	95	0.34	0.052	76	0.59	0.07	115	0.55	0.066	144	0.38	0.086	48	0.6	0.043	64	0.77	0.639
BiH	96	0.34	0.049	85	0.54	0.062	112	0.56	0.075	85	0.64	0.089	77	0.55	0.055	120	0.54	0.636
India	97	0.34	0.042	101	0.45	0.055	1	0.69	0.068	124	0.48	0.088	91	0.54	0.06	126	0.51	0.628
Papua New Guinea	98	0.34	0.039	105	0.42	0.052	77	0.72	0.066	147	0.37	0.087	105	0.5	0.061	124	0.52	0.631
Tanzania	99	0.33	0.038	108	0.41	0.051	67	0.75	0.06	56	0.74	0.08	126	0.45	0.08	74	0.73	0.638
Mali	100	0.32	0.045	97	0.47	0.054	102	0.59	0.077	106	0.56	0.091	100	0.52	0.057	57	0.79	0.629
Ivory Coast	101	0.31	0.045	92	0.51	0.059	128	0.45	0.073	110	0.55	0.09	29	0.65	0.047	115	0.57	0.64
Singapore	102	0.31	0.037	114	0.39	0.045	87	0.69	0.072	42	0.78	0.076	172	0.13	0.057	59	0.79	0.626
Benin	103	0.3	0.042	102	0.44	0.057	1	0.59	0.071	54	0.76	0.074	115	0.49	0.065	107	0.6	0.623
Kyrgyzstan	104	0.29	0.037	112	0.4	0.046	99	0.6	0.074	93	0.61	0.092	119	0.47	0.071	129	0.49	0.629
Kuwait	105	0.29	0.025	130	0.32	0.027	69	0.74	0.067	86	0.64	0.087	164	0.18	0.058	80	0.71	0.632
Lebanon	106	0.29	0.044	99	0.46	0.058	118	0.54	0.077	133	0.45	0.093	113	0.49	0.065	85	0.69	0.636
Malaysia	107	0.28	0.038	110	0.4	0.053	98	0.61	0.074	75	0.69	0.088	101	0.52	0.061	95	0.64	0.634
Philippines	108	0.28	0.042	104	0.43	0.055	113	0.56	0.078	151	0.36	0.098	53	0.59	0.051	51	0.81	0.64
Fiji	109	0.28	0.04	106	0.42	0.054	106	0.58	0.076	73	0.69	0.085	139	0.36	0.06	92	0.66	0.634
Myanmar	110	0.27	0.039	103	0.44	0.05	105	0.58	0.077	123	0.5	0.094	79	0.55	0.06	63	0.77	0.628
Zambia	111	0.27	0.032	126	0.34	0.04	95	0.66	0.071	141	0.4	0.092	120	0.47	0.064	89	0.67	0.628
Madagascar	112	0.27	0.046	95	0.49	0.064	127	0.46	0.076	155	0.33	0.09	110	0.5	0.07	130	0.49	0.635
Morocco	113	0.26	0.025	136	0.28	0.024	80	0.71	0.069	111	0.55	0.09	122	0.46	0.075	66	0.76	0.628
Mozambique	114	0.25	0.032	117	0.37	0.041	108	0.57	0.073	116	0.53	0.085	109	0.5	0.061	109	0.58	0.625
Hong Kong	115	0.25	0.023	132	0.31	0.021	110	0.56	0.064	55	0.74	0.082	161	0.21	0.058	157	0.27	0.623
Pakistan	116	0.25	0.033	119	0.37	0.045	111	0.56	0.071	175	0.21	0.075	80	0.55	0.075	40	0.84	0.642
Somaliland	117	0.25	0.035	111	0.4	0.049	120	0.52	0.072	164	0.3	0.091	98	0.52	0.064	135	0.47	0.632
Jordan	118	0.24	0.024	140	0.27	0.024	91	0.67	0.072	84	0.65	0.088	151	0.3	0.07	102	0.62	0.623
Serbia	119	0.24	0.032	125	0.34	0.042	119	0.52	0.072	61	0.73	0.081	78	0.55	0.058	101	0.62	0.63
Haiti	120	0.23	0.034	113	0.39	0.049	123	0.49	0.066	177	0.17	0.068	125	0.45	0.064	113	0.58	0.63
Bolivia	121	0.23	0.028	129	0.32	0.028	114	0.55	0.071	117	0.52	0.087	34	0.64	0.052	128	0.49	0.626
Honduras	122	0.23	0.031	118	0.37	0.041	122	0.5	0.07	167	0.27	0.088	90	0.54	0.054	111	0.58	0.634
Uganda	123	0.23	0.028	131	0.31	0.035	104	0.58	0.072	143	0.38	0.091	107	0.5	0.066	105	0.61	0.623
Iraq	124	0.22	0.033	121	0.36	0.047	126	0.47	0.072	145	0.38	0.096	104	0.51	0.064	114	0.57	0.637
CAR	125	0.21	0.035	116	0.38	0.049	134	0.41	0.073	152	0.34	0.085	152	0.29	0.064	137	0.45	0.65
Angola	126	0.21	0.033	124	0.35	0.043	125	0.48	0.076	165	0.29	0.081	167	0.16	0.06	141	0.41	0.632
Gabon	127	0.21	0.028	115	0.38	0.044	132	0.42	0.059	57	0.73	0.086	59	0.59	0.053	90	0.67	0.633
Togo	128	0.2	0.035	107	0.42	0.055	139	0.36	0.071	51	0.76	0.077	97	0.52	0.066	73	0.73	0.63
Afghanistan	129	0.19	0.033	120	0.37	0.041	135	0.4	0.077	170	0.25	0.086	153	0.28	0.053	87	0.68	0.631
Zimbabwe	130	0.19	0.026	134	0.29	0.033	124	0.49	0.071	137	0.43	0.093	111	0.5	0.067	122	0.53	0.626
Mauritania	131	0.18	0.034	109	0.4	0.055	137	0.38	0.077	159	0.32	0.093	62	0.58	0.069	77	0.71	0.653
Zanzibar	132	0.18	0.025	145	0.25	0.027	121	0.51	0.076	91	0.62	0.091	140	0.36	0.085	84	0.69	0.648
Thailand	133	0.17	0.022	156	0.19	0.021	117	0.54	0.074	120	0.51	0.09	148	0.31	0.063	167	0.15	0.639
Comoros	134	0.17	0.028	122	0.36	0.043	141	0.35	0.066	87	0.64	0.09	61	0.58	0.057	93	0.65	0.63
Palestine/West Bank	135	0.16	0.022	144	0.26	0.02	129	0.44	0.066	99	0.59	0.101	102	0.51	0.061	98	0.63	0.658
Ethiopia	136	0.16	0.026	127	0.34	0.039	142	0.35	0.066	109	0.55	0.098	141	0.36	0.069	75	0.72	0.635
DRC	137	0.16	0.028	123	0.36	0.04	147	0.31	0.068	142	0.39	0.087	117	0.48	0.063	86	0.69	0.651
Libya	138	0.15	0.023	139	0.27	0.018	136	0.39	0.07	118	0.52	0.093	145	0.32	0.064	91	0.67	0.637
Algeria	139	0.15	0.022	137	0.28	0.033	140	0.36	0.063	70	0.69	0.084	155	0.24	0.064	131	0.48	0.626
Iran	140	0.14	0.02	157	0.19	0.022	131	0.43	0.065	108	0.56	0.093	171	0.14	0.059	144	0.37	0.649
Oman	141	0.14	0.021	164	0.18	0.016	130	0.44	0.071	94	0.61	0.081	136	0.38	0.066	166	0.15	0.635
Guinea	142	0.14	0.026	128	0.33	0.037	156	0.26	0.066	139	0.41	0.089	128	0.44	0.086	156	0.28	0.641
Kazakhstan	143	0.13	0.02	148	0.24	0.028	144	0.34	0.06	102	0.58	0.087	165	0.17	0.061	149	0.33	0.635
Djibouti	144	0.12	0.021	143	0.26	0.027	146	0.31	0.062	126	0.48	0.088	138	0.36	0.07	147	0.34	0.634
Cameroon	145	0.12	0.021	133	0.3	0.031	155	0.27	0.059	104	0.56	0.092	156	0.24	0.067	142	0.38	0.629
Egypt	146	0.12	0.02	161	0.18	0.016	138	0.37	0.069	157	0.32	0.085	157	0.23	0.053	143	0.37	0.628
Eswatini	147	0.12	0.022	170	0.14	0.017	133	0.42	0.082	166	0.28	0.093	154	0.25	0.089	159	0.23	0.641
Congo	148	0.12	0.023	147	0.25	0.026	150	0.3	0.071	150	0.36	0.093	82	0.55	0.065	112	0.58	0.634
Turkey	149	0.11	0.022	135	0.29	0.031	157	0.24	0.062	129	0.46	0.092	133	0.4	0.055	168	0.14	0.623
Rwanda	150	0.11	0.021	152	0.21	0.023	152	0.29	0.07	98	0.59	0.096	132	0.41	0.104	123	0.53	0.629
Vietnam	151	0.11	0.019	151	0.22	0.02</td												

What is Democracy Good for? Introducing “The Case for Democracy”

Vanessa A. Boese and Staffan I. Lindberg

As evidenced in this and previous years *Democracy Reports*, the world is currently experiencing a wave of autocratization, with one-third of the world’s population – 2.6 billion people – living in countries undergoing autocratization. Confronted with more and more overt attacks on democracy, world leaders have rejuvenated the idea of a global coalition of democracies. For instance, new US President Joe Biden announced his intention to convene an **International Democracy Summit**.¹ Boris Johnson has proposed a **D(emocracy)10** bringing together the G7 states with Australia, India and South Korea.² German foreign minister Heiko Maas recently suggested a **Marshall Plan for Democracy**,³ and Sweden launched the ‘Drive for Democracy’ as a new foreign policy priority.

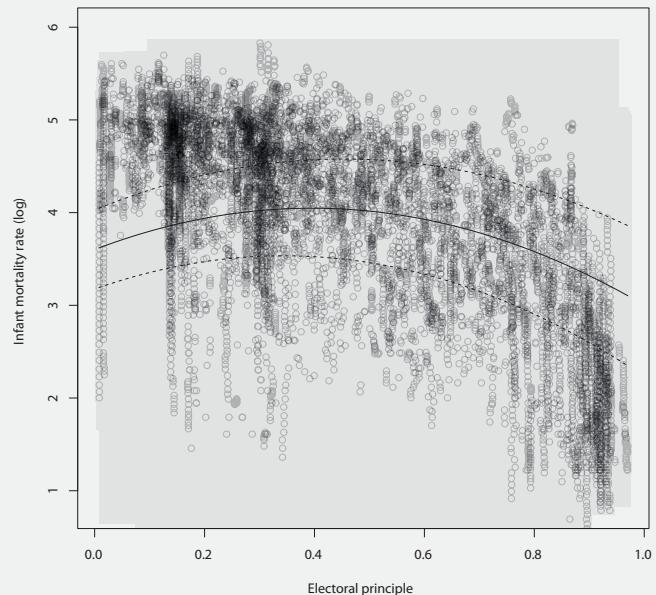
The V-Dem Institute is now launching a new program: *The Case for Democracy*. It is a drive to translate and distribute knowledge from the academic sphere to policymakers and practitioners on the dividends of democracy. Its goal is to actively distill and disseminate what we know about the benefits of democracy for economic and human development, health and socio-economic protections, environmental protection and climate action, as well as international and domestic security. Providing an evidence-based case for democracy is of utmost importance in the present era of “fake news” that is often generated in support of autocratization.

A successful defense of democracy, internationally and at home, is predicated on hard evidence on the ways that democracy is better than autocracy for its peoples beyond intrinsic values. Through a series of webinars, publications⁴ and eventually an on-site conference, the V-Dem Institute hopes to actively bring together top academics and policymakers in a dialogue based on state-of-the-art scientific research on the dividends of democracy for a series of development outcomes.

A recent publication from the V-Dem Institute demonstrates that democracy functions as an economic safety net - ensuring stable growth and a lower probability of economic crises.⁵ The team has previously evidenced that greater electoral democracy leads to a substantial reduction in infant mortality.⁶ In terms of democracies’ responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, a recent study from the V-Dem Institute shows that countries enacting the drastic measures violating international norms are typically worse at fighting the spread of Covid-19. A number of countries seem to be using the pandemic as a pretext for further autocratization.⁷

Thus, greater violations of democratic standards cannot be justified by better public health outcomes.

THE ESTIMATED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY AND MORTALITY RATE



Source: Wang, Mechkova, and Andersson (2019).

The next step for *The Case for Democracy* is the “Case for Democracy Week” – a series of five 1.5-hour webinars from March 22nd – 26th, 2021 presenting state-of-the-art research findings on the dividends of democracy for a series of development outcomes: 1) economic development, 2) human development and infrastructures, 3) human development and health, 4) security, and 5) combating climate change. Rohini Pande (Yale University), James Robinson (University of Chicago), Scott Gates (PRIO & University of Oslo), Amanda Murdie (University of Georgia), Thomas Bernauer (ETH & ISTP), and Thomas J. Bollyky (Council of Foreign Relations & Georgetown University) are among the list of speakers. The full list of speakers and preliminary program can be found on the V-Dem website [here](#).⁸ The sessions will be broadcast live on **V-Dem’s YouTube channel** where you can also watch them later.⁹

1 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>

2 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/10/g7-d10-democracy-trump-europe/>

3 <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-wants-us-eu-to-forge-marshall-plan-for-democracy/a-56181438>

4 Knutsen (2020).

5 Knutsen (2020).

6 Wang, Mechkova and Andersson (2019).

7 Maerz et al. (2020).

8 <https://www.v-dem.net/en/our-work/research-projects/case-democracy/>

9 <https://www.youtube.com/user/VDemProject>



Photo by Ink Drop, Shutterstock.

Deepening the dialogue on democracy's dividends between academics, policy makers and practitioners and providing evidence-based facts, will translate academic research into the real world and have a long-lasting impact on international democracy promotion and protection.

Follow us on [social media](#)¹⁰ to view the sessions from the "Case for Democracy Week" and to stay tuned for more activities to come as part of the broader *The Case for Democracy* program.

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/vdeminstitute/>; <https://twitter.com/vdeminstitute>

New Global Data on Political Parties: V-Party

Anna Lührmann, Juraj Medzihorsky, and Staffan I. Lindberg

Varieties of Party Identity and Organization (V-Party) is a new dataset from the V-Dem Institute, chronicling the policy positions and organizational structures of political parties across the world.¹ The largest ever resource of its kind, the data highlight shifts and trends within and between parties since 1970.

The data set includes nine distinctive indicators of the organizational capacity of parties such as local party offices, internal cohesion and party resources. An additional 17 expert-coded indicators offer unique prospects to study trends such as populism, anti-pluralism, party positions on cultural and economic issues, as well as clientelism.

The Anti-Pluralism Index² gauges parties' commitments to democratic norms. It is the first comparative measure of Juan Linz' famous "litmus test" that Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt propagated in their 2018 book on "How Democracies Die": Lack of commitment to democratic process, demonization of political opponents, disrespect for fundamental minority rights, and encouragement of political violence.³

DEVELOPMENT OF PARTIES IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES SINCE 2000 IN TERMS OF ANTI-PLURALISM AND ECONOMIC LEFT-RIGHT POSITIONING

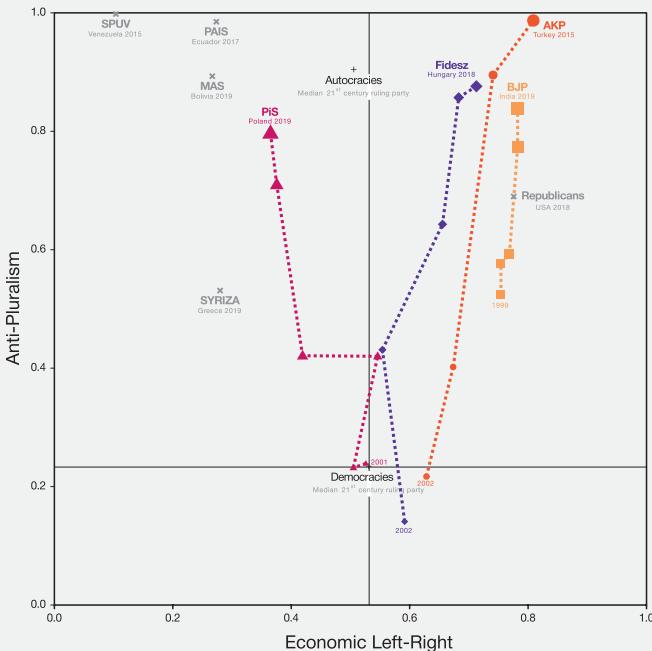


Figure 1 shows selected governing parties in autocratizing countries on the Anti-Pluralism Index. The Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS), the Hungarian Fidesz Party, and the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) were still loyal, democratic parties around 2000, while the Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) already assented to some level of anti-pluralism at that point. The data demonstrate how all four parties turned to unyielding anti-pluralism over the past 20 years, reminiscent of ruling parties in pure autocracies. In the wake of this, all four countries became increasingly autocratic and Turkey lost its status as democracy in 2014, followed by Hungary in 2018, and India by 2019. Only Poland still qualifies as a democracy.⁴ The US Republican Party has developed in a similar direction under Donald Trump (see reporting about V-Party data in [The Guardian](#) and [Washington Post](#)).⁵

The V-Party dataset is the result of a truly collaborative endeavor. Building on the experiences and the infrastructure of the V-Dem Project and Institute, we developed the questionnaire in a series of consultative meetings between 2017 and 2019. We joined forces with PartyFacts⁶ who provided factual data on all political parties represented in parliaments from 1900 to 2019, including their vote and seat shares.

In January 2020, 665 carefully selected V-Dem country experts assessed all political parties with a vote share of more than 5% in a legislative election between 1970 and 2019, across 169 countries. Observations capture 1,955 political parties across 1,560 elections – or 6,330 party-election units with 183,570 expert-coded data. Typically, at least four locally-based experts contributed to each question. Coder responses were aggregated using V-Dem's custom-built item-response theory model to ensure comparability across countries and time.⁷ The data set can be downloaded free of charge [here](#).⁸

1 Lührmann et al. (2020).

2 In V1 of the V-Party dataset this index was labelled "Illiberalism", in V2 (to be released in spring 2021) the label will be changed to "Anti-Pluralism". For more discussion of the concept see Lührmann, Medzihorsky, and Lindberg (2021).

3 Linz (1978), Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018).

4 See elsewhere in this report and Coppedge et al. (2021).

5 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/oct/26/republican-party-autocratic-hungary-turkey-study-trump>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/11/12/republican-party-trump-authoritarian-data/>

6 Döring and Regel (2019), Döring and Dupont (2020).

7 Pemstein et al. (2020).

8 Lührmann et al. (2020), https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/data/v-party-dataset/?edit_off=true

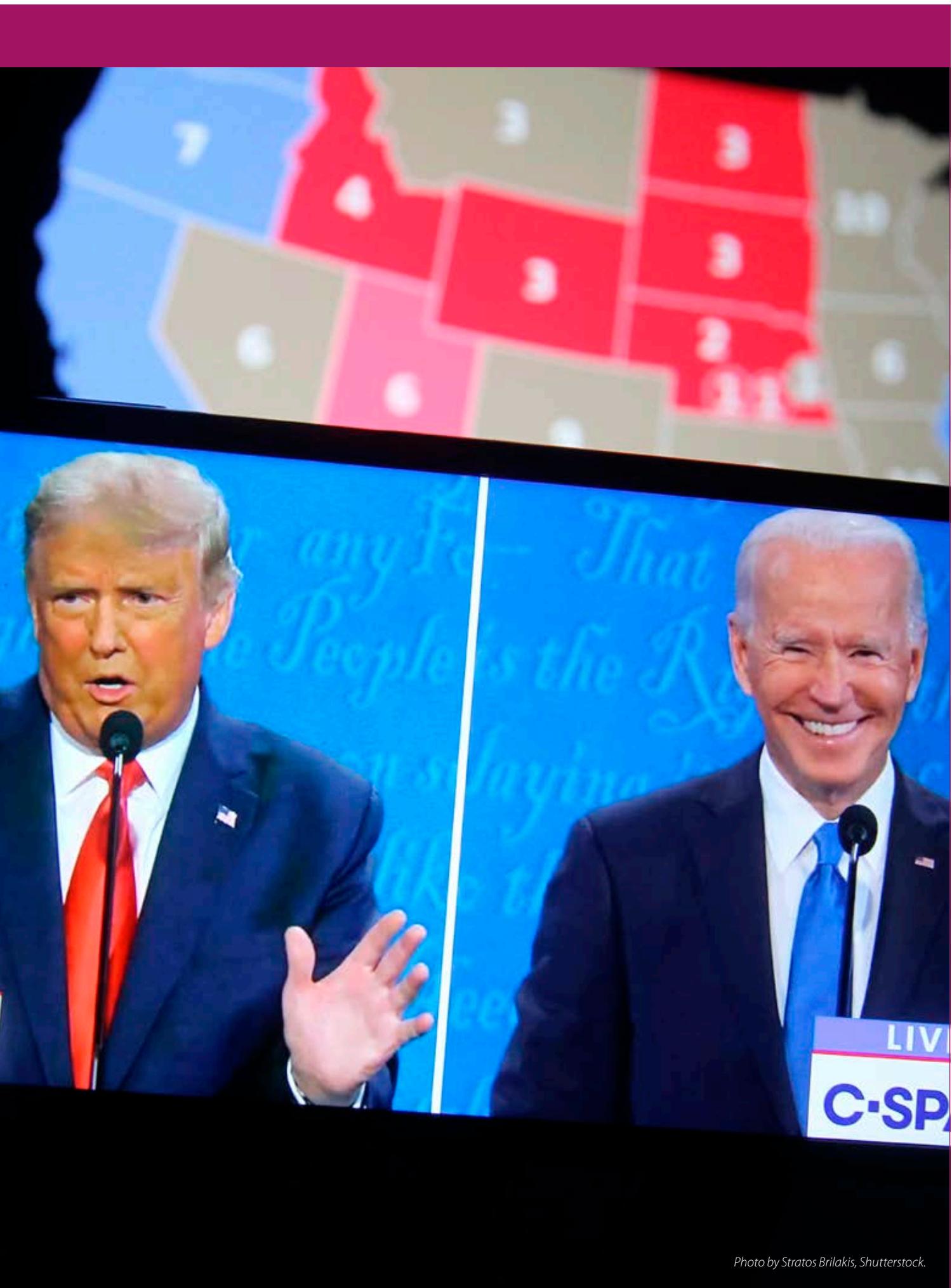
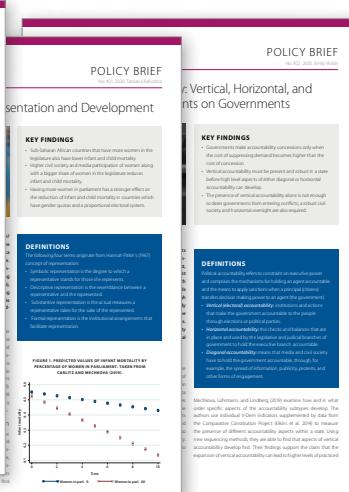


Photo by Stratos Brilakis, Shutterstock.



An Interactive Model of Democratic Peace

David Altman, Federico Royas-de-Galarreta, and Francisco Urdinez
2020 | *Journal of Peace Research*.

This article introduces the interactive model of democratic peace, arguing and empirically verifying that the interaction of the democratic level and democratic spread of two countries provide nuance to the likelihood of conflict between the two.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319883672>

State of the World 2019: Autocratization Surges, Resistance Grows

Seraphine Maerz, Anna Lührmann, Sandra Grahn, Sebastian Hellmeier, and Staffan I. Lindberg.
2020 | Feature article, *Democratization*, 27. #OpenAccess
Analyses the state of democracy in the world in 2019, demonstrating that the third wave of autocratization is accelerating and deepening.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1758670>

The Matthew Effect in Political Science: Head Start and Key Reforms Important for Democratization

Patrik Lindenfors, Matthew Wilson, and Staffan Lindberg.
2020 | *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*. #OpenAccess
Comparing successful and failed episodes of liberalization between 1900-2018, the authors find that liberalization in autocracies was more likely to succeed in countries that had more developed institutions, GDP and education.

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-00596-7>

Explaining Subnational Regime Variation: Country-Level Factors

Kelly M. McMann, Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, Matthew Maquire, and Staffan I. Lindberg.
2020 | *Comparative Politics*.
Using V-Dem data from 1900-2018, the article demonstrates that subnational regime variation exists in all world regions in both the present and past, as well as how and why such subnational variation is promoted.

<https://doi.org/10.5129/001041521X16007785801364>

How Democracies Prevail: Democratic Resilience as a Two-Stage Process

Vanessa A. Boese, Amanda B. Edgell, Sebastian Hellmeier, Seraphine F. Maerz, and Staffan I. Lindberg.
Forthcoming 2021. *Democratization*.
Conceptualizing democratic resilience as a two-stage process, the article introduces the Episodes of Regime Transformation dataset tracking autocratization since 1900, and also empirically tests what contributes to democratic regression and breakdown.

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V-Dem Indices

The Liberal Democracy Index

The V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) captures both liberal and electoral aspects of democracy based on the 71 indicators included in the Liberal Component Index (LCI) and the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI). The EDI reflects a relatively ambitious idea of electoral democracy where a number of institutional features

guarantee free and fair elections such as freedom of association and freedom of expression. The LCI goes even further and captures the limits placed on governments in terms of two key aspects: The protection of individual liberties, and the checks and balances between institutions.

FIGURE A1.1: THE V-DEM LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1900/1960–2020

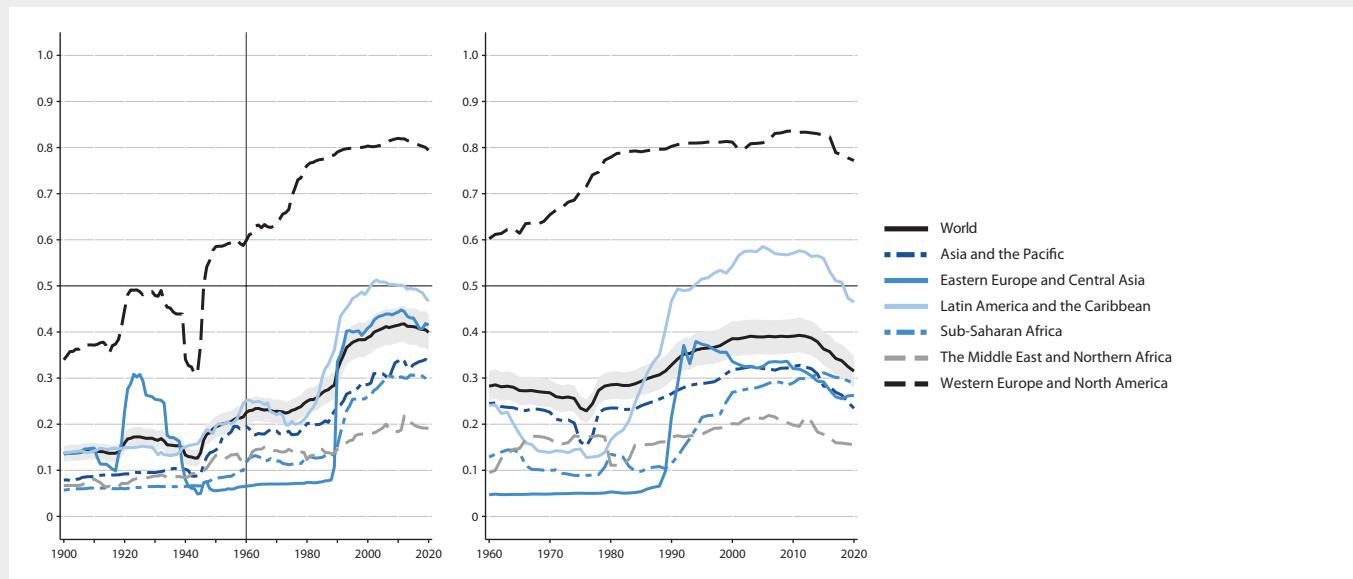
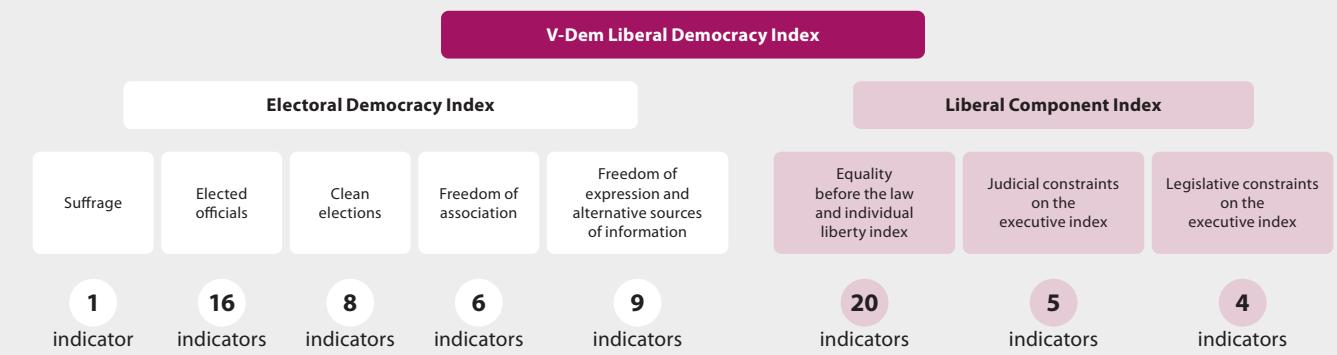


FIGURE A1.2: EXPLANATION OF THE V-DEM LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX



The Electoral Democracy Index

For several decades, scholars and practitioners alike depicted democracy in the world as though the extant measures really captured what is meant by the concept "electoral democracy". Yet, we have all known that they did not. V-Dem is the first systematic effort to measure the *de facto* existence of all the institutions in Robert Dahl's famous articulation of "polyarchy" as electoral

democracy. The V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) captures not only the extent to which regimes hold clean, free and fair elections, but also their actual freedom of expression, alternative sources of information and association, as well as male and female suffrage and the degree to which government policy is vested in elected political officials.

FIGURE A2.1: THE V-DEM ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1900/1960–2020

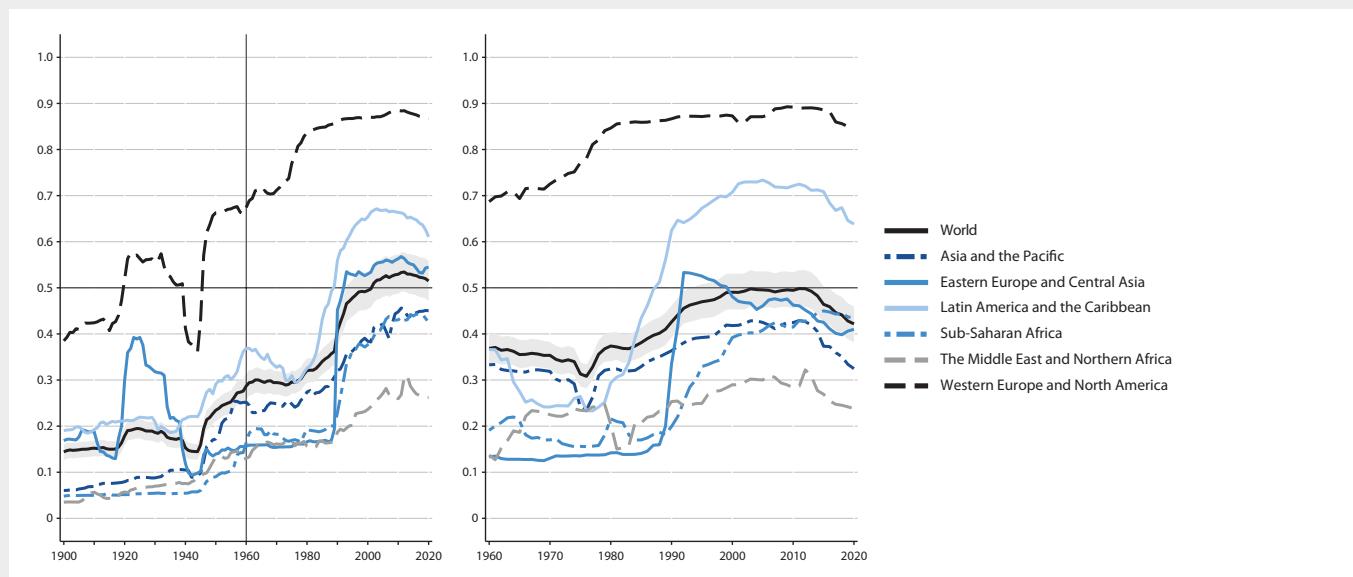
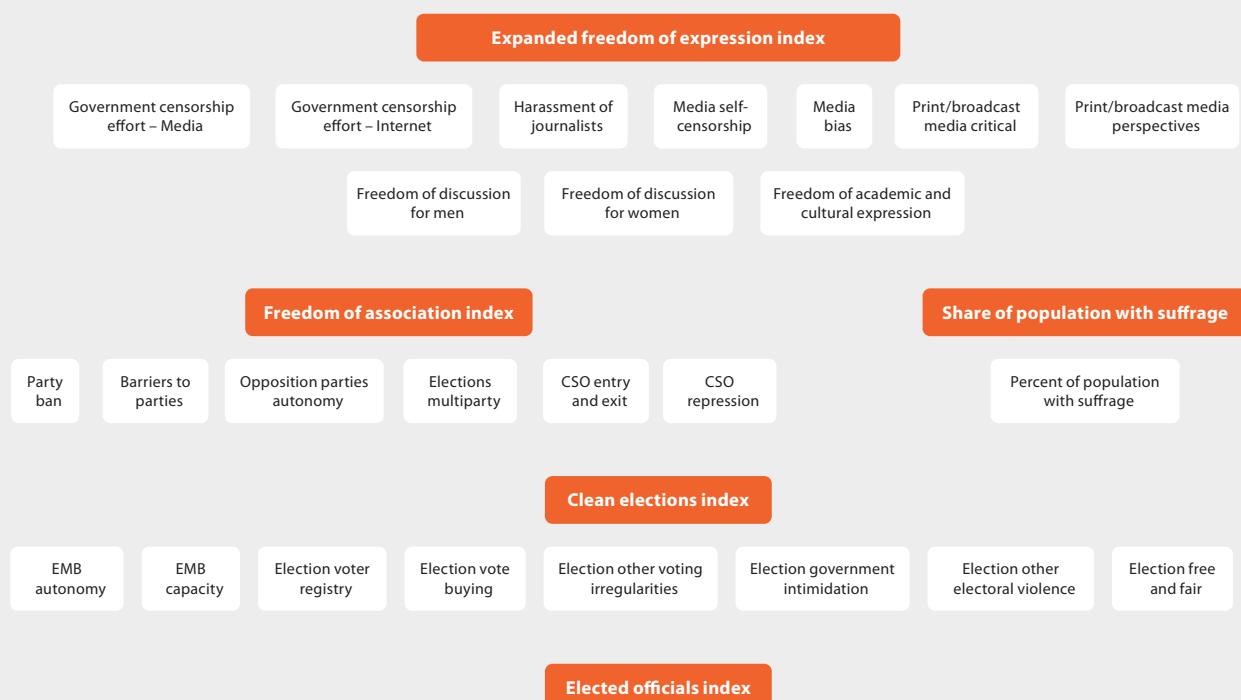


FIGURE A2.2: THE V-DEM ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX



The Liberal Component Index

In V-Dem's conceptual scheme the liberal principle of democracy embodies the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against both the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. It also captures the "horizontal" methods of accountability between more or less equally standing institutions that ensure the effective checks and balances between institutions and in particular limit the exercise of executive power. This is achieved by strong rule of law and constitutionally protected civil liberties,

independent judiciary and strong parliament that are able to hold the executive to account and limit its powers. The three indices that capture these dimensions are: the equality before the law and individual liberties (v2xcl_rol), judicial constraints on the executive (v2x_jucon), and legislative constraints on the executive (v2xlg_legcon). Taken together they measure the V-Dem Liberal Component Index (v2x Liberal).

FIGURE A3.1: THE V-DEM LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1900/1960–2020

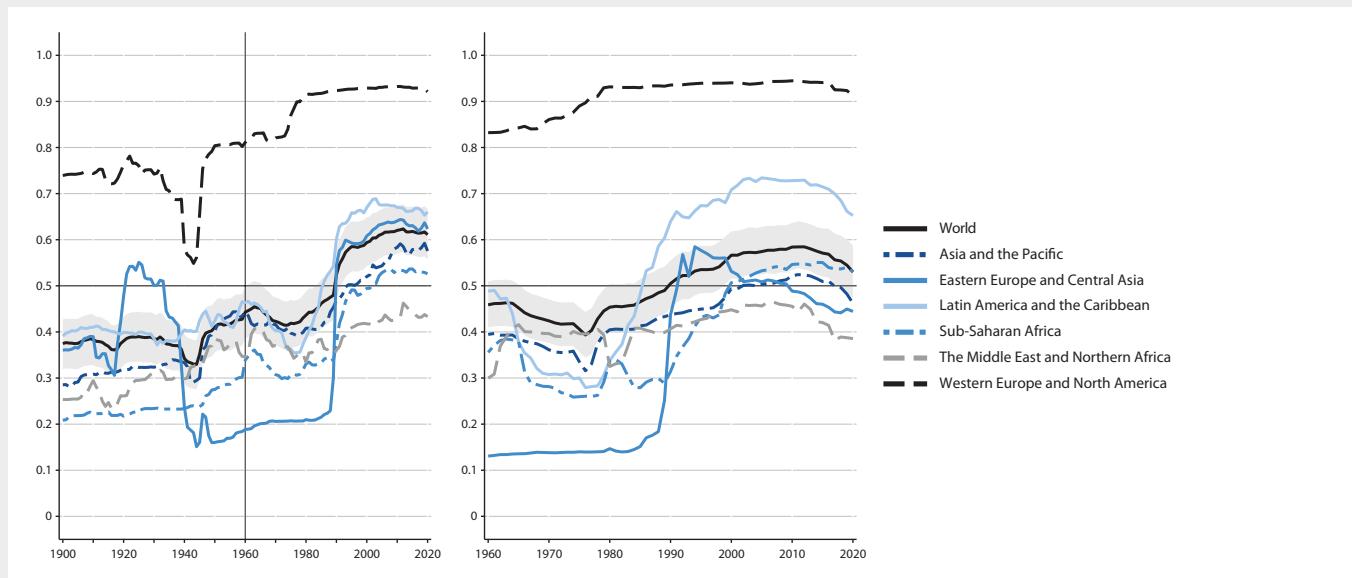
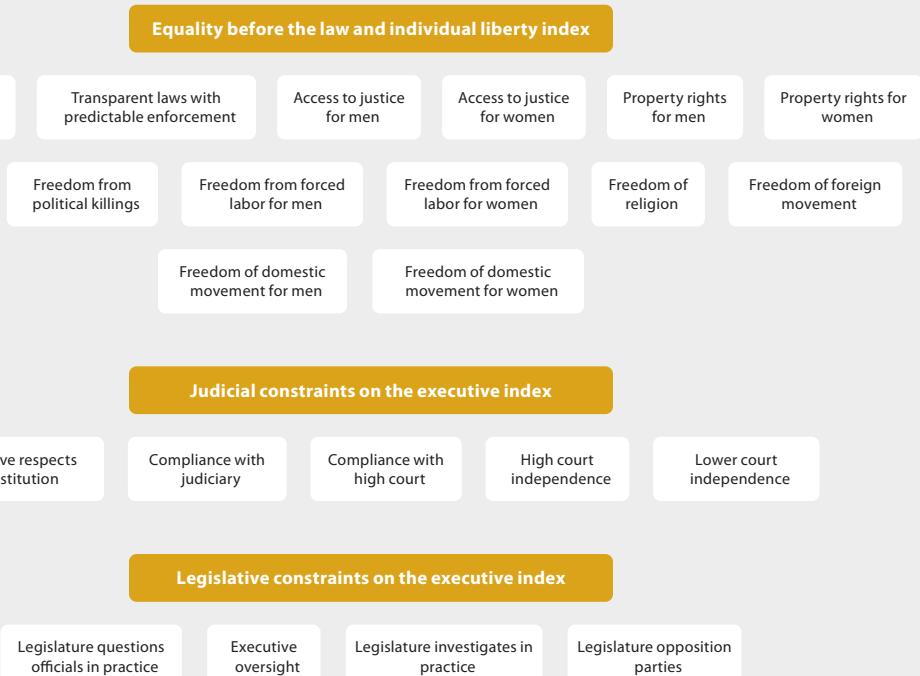


FIGURE A3.2: THE V-DEM LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX (LCI)



The Egalitarian Component Index

The egalitarian principle of democracy measures to what extent all social groups enjoy equal capabilities to participate in the political arena. It relies on the idea that democracy is a system of rule “by the people” where citizens participate in various ways, such as making informed voting decisions, expressing opinions, demonstrating, running for office or influencing policy-making in

other ways. The egalitarian principle of democracy is fundamentally related to political participation, as systematic inequalities in the rights and resources of citizens of specific social groups limit capabilities to participate in the political and governing processes. Therefore, a more equal distribution of resources across groups results in political equality and hence democracy.

FIGURE A4.1: THE V-DEM EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1900/1960–2020

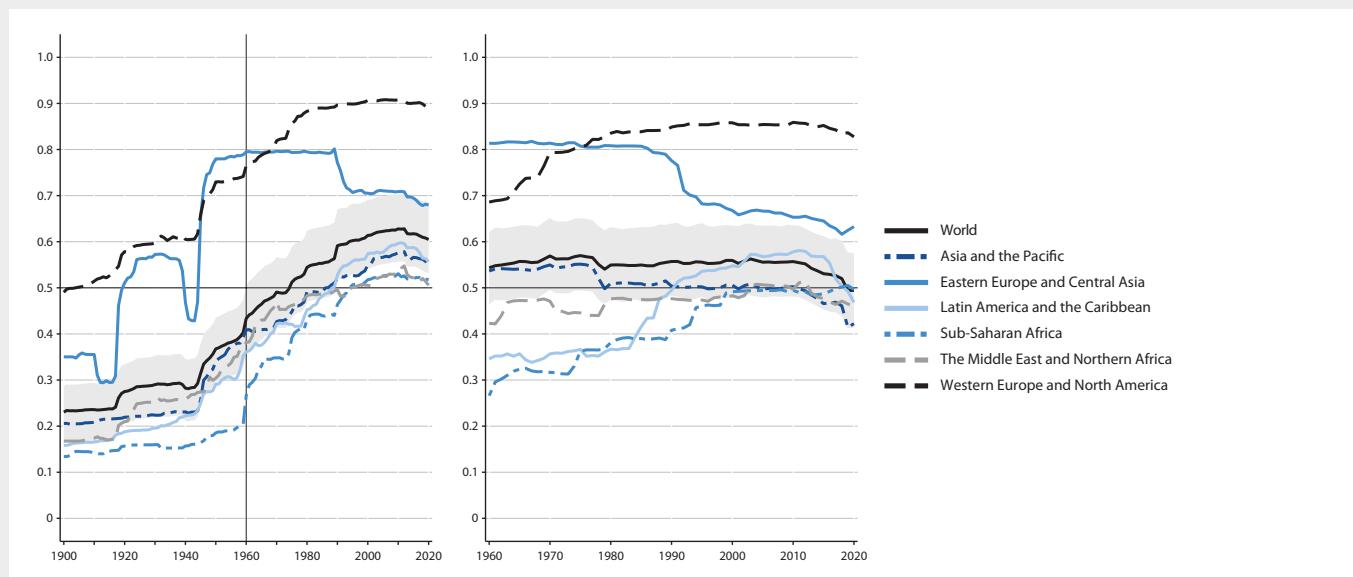
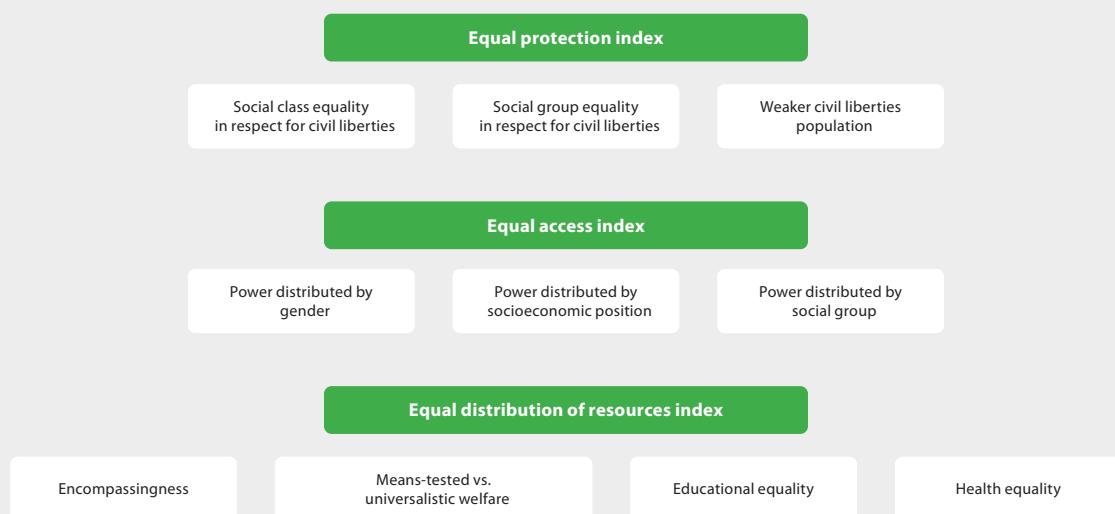


FIGURE A4.2: THE V-DEM EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX



The Participatory Component Index

The participatory principle of democracy emphasizes active participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral. This principle prefers direct rule by citizens as practicable. The V-Dem Participatory Component Index (PCI) takes into account four important aspects of citizen participation:

civil society organizations, mechanisms of direct democracy, and participation and representation through local and regional governments. Four different V-Dem indices capture these aspects and are the basis for the PCI.

FIGURE A5.1: THE V-DEM PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1900/1960–2020

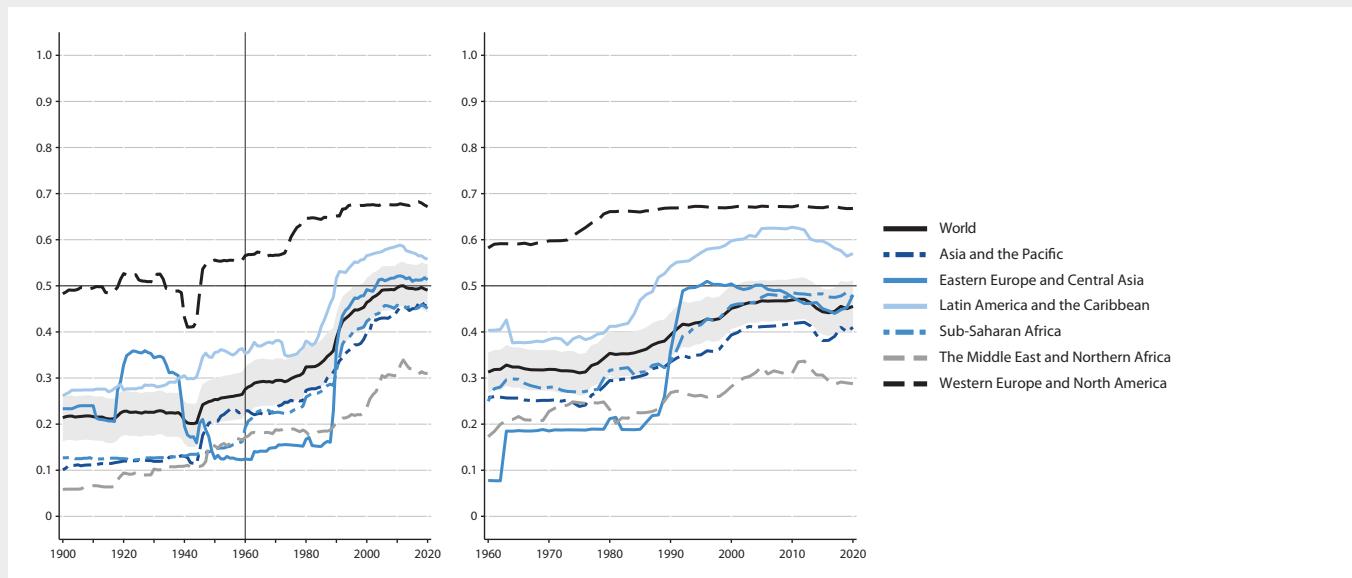
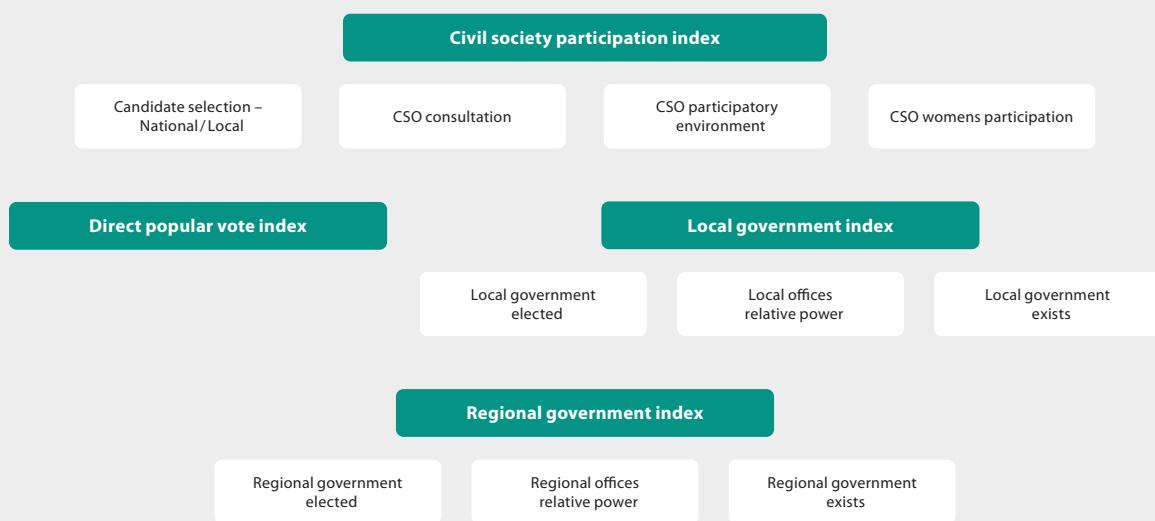


FIGURE A5.2: THE V-DEM PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX (PCI)



The Deliberative Component Index

The V-Dem Deliberative Component Index (DCI) captures to what extent the deliberative principle of democracy is achieved. It assesses the process by which decisions are reached in a polity. A deliberative process is one in which public reasoning, focused on the common good, motivates political decisions – as contrasted with emotional appeals, solidary attachments, parochial interests

or coercion. According to this principle, democracy requires more than an aggregation of existing preferences. There should also be respectful dialogue at all levels – from preference formation to final decision – among informed and competent participants who are open to persuasion.

FIGURE A6.1: THE V-DEM DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1900/1960–2020

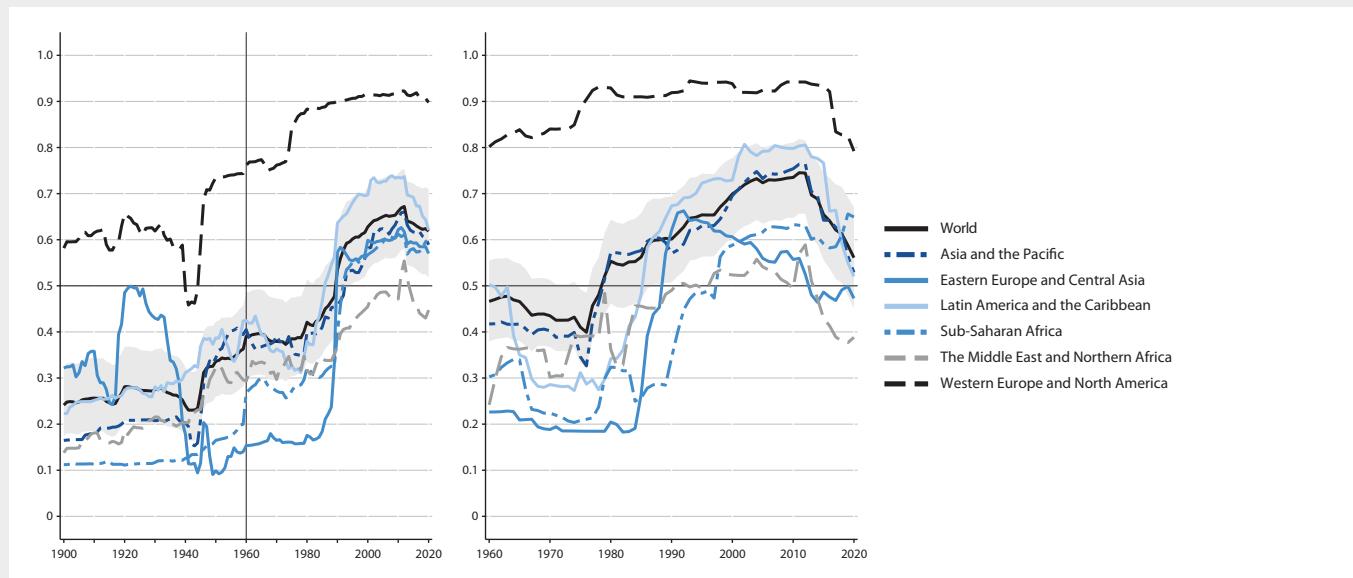


FIGURE A6.2: THE V-DEM DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX (DCI)





Pro-democracy protesters by the Democracy Monument in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo by BuleSky Studio, Shutterstock.

V-Dem Methodology: Aggregating Expert Assessments

Author: Kyle L. Marquardt

V-DEM USES INNOVATIVE METHODS TO aggregate expert judgments and thereby produce estimates of important concepts. We use experts because many key features of democracy are not directly observable. For example, it is easy to observe whether or not a legislature has the legal right to investigate an executive. However, assessing the extent to which the legislature actually does so requires evaluation by experts with extensive conceptual and case knowledge.

V-Dem typically gathers data from five experts per country-year observation, using a pool of over 3,500 country experts who provide judgment on different concepts and cases. Experts hail from almost every country in the world, allowing us to leverage diverse opinions.

Despite their clear value, expert-coded data pose multiple problems. Rating concepts requires judgment, which varies across experts and cases; it may also vary systematically across groups of experts. We address these concerns by aggregating expert-coded data with a measurement model, allowing us to account for uncertainty about estimates and potential biases.

The logic of the V-Dem measurement model is that an unobserved concept exists (e.g. a certain level of academic freedom and freedom of cultural expression) but we only see imperfect manifestations of this concept in the form of ordinal categories which experts use to code their judgments. By analyzing these manifest items (expert ratings) together, we can estimate the concept itself, converting the expert categories to continuous latent scale.

In the process, the model algorithmically estimates both the degree to which an expert is reliable relative to other experts, as well as the degree to which their perception of the response scale differs from other experts. Similarly, we use patterns of overlapping coding – both in the form of experts who code multiple countries and experts who code hypothetical cases (anchoring vignettes) – to estimate the degree to which differences in scale perception are systematic across experts who code different sets of cases. Given the iterative nature of the estimation process, these estimates are used to weight an expert's contribution to the estimation of the unobserved concept.

In the resulting V-Dem dataset, we present users with a best estimate of the value for an observation (the point estimate), as well as an uncertainty estimate (the credible regions, a Bayesian corollary of confidence intervals). More precisely, the output of the measurement model is an interval-level point estimate of the latent trait that typically varies from -5 to 5, and its associated measurement error. These estimates are the best for use in statistical analysis.

However, the interval-level estimates are difficult for some users to interpret substantively. We therefore also provide interval-level point estimates that we have linearly transformed back to the original coding scale that experts originally use to code each case. These estimates typically run from 0 to 4, and users can refer to the V-Dem codebook to substantively interpret them. Finally, we provide ordinal versions of each variable. Each of the latter two data versions are also accompanied by credible regions.

VERSIONS OF THE V-DEM INDICATORS

Suffix	Scale	Description	Recommended use
None	Interval	Original output of the V-Dem measurement model	Regression analysis
_osp	Interval	Linearized transformation of the measurement model output on the original scale	Substantive interpretation of graphs and data
_ord	Ordinal	Most likely ordinal value taking uncertainty estimates into account	Substantive interpretation of graphs and data
_codelow / _codehigh	Interval	One standard deviation above (_codehigh) and below (_codelow) the point estimate	Evaluating differences over time within units
_sd	Interval	Standard deviation of the interval estimate	Creating confidence intervals based on user needs

The result of this process is a set of versions of indicators of democratic institutions and concepts, which allow academics and policymakers alike to understand the different features of a polity. The box summarizes the output with which we provide users.

Key Terms

Point Estimate: A best estimate of a concept's value.

Confidence Intervals: Credible regions for which the upper and lower bounds represent a range of probable values for a point estimate. These bounds are based on the interval in which the measurement model places 68 percent of the probability mass for each score, which is generally approximately equivalent to the upper and lower bounds of one standard deviation from the median.

Significant Differences or Changes: When the upper and lower bounds of the confidence intervals for two point estimates do not overlap, we are confident that the difference between them is real and not a result of measurement error.

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V-Dem Codebook v11

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Aerial view of a city street featuring a large, colorful mural on the side of a building. The mural consists of the words "LA VIE DES NOIR·ES" in white, with "COMPTE" in blue, green, and red stacked above it. Below the main text, "#BLACKLIVESMATTER" is written in smaller letters. The building has a blue and grey facade. The surrounding area includes a parking lot with several cars and a street with some trees.

LA VIE DES NOIR·ES
#BLACKLIVESMATTER

Montreal, Canada. Photo by Martin Reisch on Unsplash.

Global Standards, Local Knowledge



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