The Pandemic Backsliding Project
Instructions to Coders

Data Entry

You will receive a spreadsheet containing three rows for each of the countries you are assigned to code. The first row of this spreadsheet provides the variable names for which the cells should be coded in that column. These correspond to the variable definitions and response categories provided in the Pandemic backsliding v5 codebook.
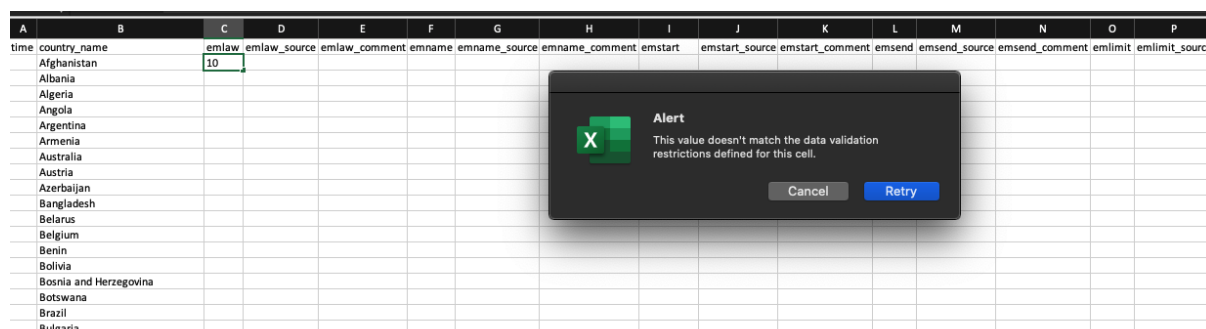
Do not change the names of any variables in the first row.
Do not change anything in columns A, C, or D.

Your spreadsheet will be stored in your personalized Dropbox folder. Feel free to store other resources in this folder as needed.

Only use Microsoft Excel software to complete your spreadsheet!

Follow the response categories listed in the Pandemic Backsliding v5 codebook to make an assessment of the most accurate situation in each period for that country. Then enter this value into the corresponding cell for that variable in the provided spreadsheet.

Microsoft Excel will provide an error message if a value is entered that does not conform to the codebook scale for that indicator:

Your sources and comments should be entered in the assigned cell for sources/comments in the Mar-Dec row for each country. Do not change data entries in this row, the R script will do that automatically based on the coding for each of the sub-periods (Mar-Jun, Jul-Sep, Oct-Dec).

When stating your sources in the "_source" columns, only enter links. Any comments about the sources or their contents should be entered in the "_comment" columns. Please use at least two sources for each question!

When a country has been completed, remember to code the "time" column with the date you completed it, in year-month-day format. Example: 2020-06-05, for June 5th.

Making a coding decision

While we have made every effort to make the coding for this project straightforward and fact-based, you will be required to ultimately make a judgment about how to code each indicator for each country you are assigned. Coders should follow the question and response categories in the codebook as closely as possible when choosing a response option.

When in doubt, read the codebook entry again. Pay close attention to the "clarification" for additional information on definitions and what does (not) count in certain items. *Carefully note the wording in the clarification and each of the response options.* *Read them again if you find it difficult to choose an option for a particular case. If you find that none of the options fit, ask others for advice.*

Coders should follow the protocols outlined below to ensure that only credible and reliable sources are used when making coding decisions. For each observation coded, coders will provide a link to the source used in the "_source" column, and a description of how they arrived at their coding decision using the "_comments" column (in the Mar-Dec row for each country).

When in doubt, it is usually better to code something as less (rather than more) severe. Or consult others for help (see below).

Rules for specific situations

When coding previous versions of this dataset, certain situations have occurred that have been difficult to code. Here are some rules for commonly recurring situations:

Continuation of violations
- If many cases of the referred type of violations have been observed, it should be assumed to continue unless proven otherwise. That is, you need to have some sort of proof that the violations have ceased to occur in order to code it as not continuing.
- If there is a single isolated event, it should be assumed *not* to have continued unless proven otherwise. That is, you need to have proof that it continued (e.g. new occurrences) in order to code it as continuing.
- Please explain in the comments that this type of violation appears to be recurring and that you did not find evidence of it discontinuing, or that it seems to be an isolated event and you did not find indications that the violations have continued.

The "govdis" variable and hydroxychloroquine

- On June 17th, 2020, the World Health Organization decided to discontinue trials with hydroxychloroquine, after finding that the substance "does not result in the reduction of mortality of hospitalised COVID-19 patients, when compared with standard of care" (https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-hydroxychloroquine). This means that government information indicating that hydroxychloroquine can be used to treat Covid-19 should ONLY be regarded as misinformation if it was communicated after June 17th 2020.
- Please always mention in the comments when hydroxychloroquine is involved, why you chose to include it or exclude it in the coding, by referring to the date that the WHO announced it would discontinue trials with the substance: June 17th 2020.

Media variables and private citizens

- For conceptual clarity, we only include professional journalists and their work, including professional blogs/social media accounts, in our coding. Do not consider blogs or social media accounts by private citizens when coding these variables.

For other difficult situations, please use the resources listed below to get support in your coding decision.

Getting help with difficult cases

After consulting the reliable sources listed below, you may still encounter some indicators for some countries that are difficult to code. For this reason, we have set up the following resources for getting help:

Ask <<NAME OF RESEARCHER>>
You can always ask Sandra if you are uncertain about your coding decision. She/he can help to clarify how the coding rules should be applied in different contexts, and offer a second opinion on difficult cases. You can also...

...Use the Slack channel
We have created a Slack channel ("pandem_coding") for you to pose general questions during the coding process to other coders and the management team. This is a great way to find additional sources and information efficiently.
If the issue still cannot be resolved…

...Contact the management team
The management team members each have their own area expertise that might be helpful with particularly difficult cases. We also have a network of contacts to whom we can reach out for additional help. You can contact the team members via Slack, either in a private message or by using the @ function in the "pandem_coding" channel. You can also reach the team members via their email addresses:

Sources

Factual coding requires consultation of accurate and relatively unbiased sources. Many organizations and media outlets have an ideological agenda, and it is often unclear how this agenda affects their reporting of events. We have compiled this protocol for accessing credible sources of information when coding for the Pandemic Backsliding Project. These are ranked here in level of preference. **Please always refer to at least two different sources!**

#1: Official government sources

Rule: Check first with official government websites including the parliament, executive, and other government agencies. Where the ruling regime may have incentives to misreport some information, always cross-check the findings with other reliable sources below.

Examples:
Governments'/parliaments' websites
Government agencies

#2: Academic databases

Rule: Large data from international, non-political projects, or scholars/research groups.

Examples:
ParlGov (www.parlgov.org)
CoronaNet (www.coronanet-project.org)
ACAPS (The Assessment Capacities Project) (www.acaps.org)
International IDEA (www.idea.int)
Democracy Reporting International (https://democracy-reporting.org/dri_publications/the-rule-of-law-stress-test-eu-member-states-responses-to-covid-19/)

#3: Trusted State-run, Inter-governmental, or Private Organizations

Rule: Large international organisations with states as members, or trusted state- or privately driven organisations.

Examples:
European Union
UNHCR
OHCHR (https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx)
United Nations
The Constitute Project (www.constituteproject.org)
IFES Election Guide (http://www.electionguide.org/)
ECPMF (European Centre for Press and Media Freedom) (https://www.ecpmf.eu/)
GardaWorld (www.garda.com/crisis24/coronavirus-updates)
U.S. Embassy websites (https://www.usembassy.gov)

#4: Other Trusted Independent Organisations

Rule: Large, international, non-political, non-governmental organisations. Be aware these organizations can sometimes have reputations (e.g. HRW) that limit the credibility of their

reporting within certain local contexts (e.g. Rwanda). Always try to combine this type with at least one other source type.

Examples:
Reporters Without Borders
Doctors Without Borders
Amnesty International
World Health Organisation
Human Rights Watch (HRW)
ICNL (International Center for Non-Profit Law)
IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) : https://www.ipu.org/country-compilation-parliamentary-responses-pandemic#G
IPI (International Press Institute)
Civicus
NDI (The National Democratic Institute)
IRI (International Republican Institute)
IDEA
Inter Pares (IDEA projects on Parliaments: https://www.inter-pares.eu/inter-pares-parliamentary-data-tracker)

#5: Trusted Media Outlets
Rule: Large international media outlets, or very large national outlets that are not politically affiliated. Note: Only cite fact-based reporting; do not cite opinion, op-ed, or commentary pieces!

Examples:
Reuters
Financial Times
The Guardian
The Economist
BBC
AFP (Agence France Presse)
AP (Associated Press)
New York Times (US)
Washington Post (US)
Le Monde (France)
Le Figaro (France)
El Pais (Spain)
AllAfrica (Sub-Saharan African countries)