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 over 31 million data points for 202 countries from 1789 to 2022. Involving almost 4,000 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.

V-Dem and the V-Dem Institute gratefully acknowledges our funders’ support over the years. To learn more about our funders, please visit: https://v-dem.net/about/funders

The Democracy Report is a signature publication of the V-Dem Institute and the views and opinions expressed herein do not reflect an official position of the larger V-Dem Project or the V-Dem Steering Committee.

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


V-Dem Data and Management Team: Susanna Burmeister, Lisa Gastaldi, Sandre Grahn, Melina Liehmann, Natalia Natsika, Josefine Pernes, Oskar Ryden, Maria Verkhovtseva, and Johannes von Romer.

Editors: Evie Papada and Staffan I. Lindberg.

Proof-Reading: Katherine Stuart, ToEnglish Pty Ltd.

Design: Nils Pennlert, Newsroom.

Printing: Stema Specialtryck AB.

Cover photo: Barcelona, Spain, September 16, 2022. A woman raises her hand with red paint during a demonstration in support of Iranian women following the death of Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini in Iran. Photo: Getty Images.


March 2023

Copyright ©2023 by V-Dem Institute. All rights reserved.
Table of Contents

Word from the Team 5

Executive Summary 6
1 | Democracy in the World 2022 9
2 | Democratizers and Autocratizers 19
3 | The Major Autocratizers 23
4 | The Major Democratizers 27
5 | Autocratization Shifting the Balance of Power 33

Regimes of the World 39
Country Scores 42
Publications from the V-Dem Team 46
V-Dem Methodology 48
V-Dem Indices 50
V-Dem in Numbers

V-DEM IS AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT COMPRISED OF

5 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS
19 PERSONNEL AT THE V-DEM INSTITUTE
23 PROJECT MANAGERS
33 REGIONAL MANAGERS
134 COUNTRY COORDINATORS
4,000 COUNTRY EXPERTS

ALL WORKING TOGETHER TO PRODUCE
31,000,000 DATA POINTS IN THE V13 DATASET

WHERE IS V-DEM DATA USED?

The V-Dem dataset has been downloaded by users 320,000 times in 200+ countries since 2016.

17 million graphs created using the online tools by users in 200+ countries since 2016.

Global Standards, Local Knowledge: more than 63% of the data is provided by local experts born in/ residing in the country they are coding.

DATASET DOWNLOADS (2016–2022)

320,000

V-DEM PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS TO ACADEMIC AND POLICY COMMUNITIES

7 DEMOCRACY REPORTS
37 POLICY BRIEFS
122 JOURNAL ARTICLES
136 WORKING PAPERS
850+
PRESENTATIONS across the world by V-Dem scholars since 2007.
100+
VISITING SCHOLARS presented at the V-Dem Institute since 2014.
We are pleased to present the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute’s seventh annual Democracy Report 2023: Defiance in the Face of Autocratization. Readers of the report will recognize some of the ongoing challenges democracies face but also observe new cases where agents have reclaimed democracy and stopped negative trends.

The first section of the report shows global levels of democracy sliding back and advances made over the past 35 years diminishing. Most of the drastic changes have taken place within the last ten years, while there are large regional variations in relation to the levels of democracy people experience. The second section offers analyses on the geographies and population sizes of democratizing and autocratizing countries. In the third section we focus on the countries undergoing autocratization, and on the indicators deteriorating the most, including in relation to media censorship, repression of civil society organizations, and academic freedom. While disinformation, polarization, and autocratization reinforce each other, democracies reduce the spread of disinformation. This is a sign of hope, of better times ahead. And this is precisely the message carried forward in the fourth section, where we switch our focus to examples of countries that managed to push back and where democracy resurfaces again. Scattered over the world, these success stories share common elements that may bear implications for international democracy support and protection efforts. The final section of this year’s report offers a new perspective on shifting global balances of economic and trade power as a result of autocratization.

Over the past year, V-Dem has expanded on existing collaborations and entered new ones. A new initiative is in partnership with colleagues at the University of Glasgow to produce the Varieties of Indoctrination (V-Indoc) dataset, focusing on the politicization of education and the media. Since 2019, V-Dem has been hosting Demscore, a newly established (inter)national infrastructure bringing together some of the world’s leading contextual research infrastructures and databases. We have also been busy updating our website and launching the V-Party Explorer, a new graphic tool that gives access to data on political parties. Finally, the Democracy Report will be published in Spanish for the first time this year. It coincides with the launch of a new Regional Center for Latin America, led by Professor David Altman, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. The Spanish edition will come out a couple of months after the English version is launched.

Varieties of Democracy is an international collaboration involving almost 4,000 scholars from over 180 countries. Including the tremendous support and contributions of Country Experts, Country Coordinators, Regional Managers, and Project Managers. Without all of them, V-Dem would not be possible. The new version 13 of the V-Dem dataset contains 31 million data points and covers 202 countries from 1789 to 2022. We invite you to visit https://www.v-dem.net, download the data and try out the innovative graphing tools.

V-Dem Institute is hosted at the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg. It serves as the headquarters for the international V-Dem project, but we also pursue independent projects. The Democracy Report is one such endeavor. We hope that you will find it useful.

Finally, we are increasingly aware that the knowledge we produce is relevant to non-academic audiences. V-Dem’s data and analyses from the V-Dem Institute feeds into numerous international and regional policy processes, independent policy initiatives, consultations, and program evaluations. To boost the V-dem Institute’s policy-related work, we have recruited a policy analyst: Evie Papada.

The V-Dem Institute Team
Executive Summary

1. Democracy in the World 2022

- Advances in global levels of democracy made over the last 35 years have been wiped out.
- 72% of the world’s population – 5.7 billion people – live in autocracies by 2022.

Global Level is Back to 1986

- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2022 is down to 1986 levels.
- The decline is most dramatic in the Asia-Pacific region, which is back to levels last recorded in 1978.
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, are back to levels last seen around the end of the Cold War.

More Dictatorships than Liberal Democracies

- The world has more closed autocracies than liberal democracies – for the first time in more than two decades.
- 28% of the population – 2.2 billion people – live in closed autocracies.
- 13% of the population – 1 billion people – live in liberal democracies.

Drastic Changes in Last Ten Years

- Freedom of Expression is deteriorating in 35 countries in 2022 – ten years ago it was only 7.
- Government censorship of the media is worsening in 47 countries.
- Government repression of civil society organizations is worsening in 37 countries.
- Quality of elections is worsening in 30 countries.

2. Democratizers and Autocratizers

- The number of democratizing countries is down to 14 with only 2% of the world’s population. They have not been so few since 1973 – 50 years ago.
- All regions are affected – but Africa harbors the largest number of democratizing (N=5) as well as autocratizing (N=12) countries.

A New Record of 42 Countries Autocratizing

- A record 42 autocratizers with 43% of the world’s population – up from 33 countries and 36% of the population last year.

3. The Major Autocratizers

- Democracy broke down in 7 out of the top 10 autocratizers in the last 10 years.
- Democracy also failed in 5 out of the top 10 autocratizers in the shorter 3-year perspective.
- In 2 democracies – Brazil and Poland – autocratization stalled before democracy broke down.
- Armenia, Greece, and Mauritius are democracies in steep decline.

What Autocrats Attack

- Censorship of the media and repression of CSOs increases and academic freedom declines in more than 25 of the autocratizing countries.
- Academic and cultural freedom, and freedom of discussion also rank among the top institutions attacked by autocratizing rulers.

Disinformation, Polarization, and Autocratization

- Disinformation, polarization, and autocratization reinforce each other.
- Top democratizers conversely reduce the spread of disinformation substantially, and to some extent also polarization.
4. The Major Democratizers

- 8 of the top 10 democratizing countries over the last 10 years are now democracies.
- 4 of the top 10 democratizers in the short-term 3-year perspective have transitioned from autocracy to democracy.
- 8 democracies are ‘bouncing back’ – making rare U-turns restoring democracy after a period of autocratization.

IN FOCUS: 8 Democracies Bouncing Back

- Five elements unite most of the 8 cases:
  - Large-scale popular mobilization against incumbent.
  - Judiciary reversing executive take-over.
  - Unified opposition coalescing with civil society.
  - Critical elections and key events bringing alternation in power.
  - International democracy support and protection.

5. Autocratization Shifting the Balance of Power

- The global balance of economic power is shifting. An increasing number of autocracies now account for 46% of global GDP.
- The global balance of trade power is also tilting in favor of autocracies. The share of world trade between democracies has declined from 74% in 1998 to 47% in 2022.
- Autocracies are becoming less and less dependent on democracies for both their exports and imports. Democracies’ dependence on autocracies has doubled in the last 30 years.
Ukraine, June 12, 2022. A Ukrainian soldier walks inside a destroyed barn by Russian shelling near the frontline of the Zaporizhzhia province, Ukraine. Harvest can not be collected in the area because the constant combats between Russian and Ukrainian armies in the fields.

Photo: Getty Images
1 | Democracy in the World 2022

- The level of democracy for the average global citizen by 2022 is back to 1986.
- Democracy has deteriorated in many regions. Asia-Pacific is now down to levels of 1978.
- There are more closed autocracies than liberal democracies – for the first time in more than two decades.
- 72% of the world’s population – 5.7 billion people – live in autocracies by 2022.\(^2\)
- Freedom of expression is deteriorating in 35 countries in 2022 - ten years ago it was only 7 countries.
- Government censorship of the media is worsening in 47 countries over last ten years.
- Government repression of civil society organizations is worsening in 37 countries.

The state of democracy in 2022 is depicted on the map in Figure 2, based on the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI).\(^1\) Democracy is most widespread in the regions of Western Europe and North America, as well as parts of Latin America, Oceania, and East Asia.

Autocracy in varying degrees dominates in a large cluster of countries situated in and around the Middle East and North Africa, Central and South Asia, as well as substantial parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Global Level of Democracy is Back to 1986

- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2022 is down to 1986 levels.
- More than 35 years of global advances in democracy have been wiped out in the last decade.
- The decline is most dramatic in the Asia-Pacific region, which is back to levels last recorded in 1978.
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, are back to levels last seen around the end of the Cold War.

In a decade, the level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen has deteriorated to levels last seen in 1986 – more than 35 years ago. The red line in Figure 3 (right panel) traces the level of democracy in 2022 back in time to show this.

1986 was the year of the Chernobyl accident and the Reykjavik Summit between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. In 2022,

---

1 The Democracy Report 2023 is based on V-Dem dataset v13. With each annual update, V-Dem improves the quality of the data and engage a larger number of experts, which may lead to correction of scores reported in previous years’ reports.

2 Percentages are rounded throughout the report. Population figures comes from the World Bank included in the v13 of the V-Dem dataset.

3 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) levels of democracy. The electoral component is measured by the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) that captures the extent to which all elements of Robert Dahl’s (1971) 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, respect for civil liberties, the rule of law, and the independence of the legislature and the judiciary. Dahl, R.A. 1971. Polyarchy: participation and opposition. New Haven: Yale University Press.
many observers think that a new Cold War era is in the making. The war in Ukraine adds credence to this view.4

Going by country-based averages (Figure 3, left panel), the decline in democracy across the world is less marked and still within the confidence intervals, but noticeable. By this metric, the levels recorded in 2022 were last seen in 1997 as indicated by the red line in the left panel.

Yet, both the country-based averages (left panel), and the population-weighted version (right panel) in Figure 3 demonstrate that the world remains more democratic today than in the early 1970s. Substantial gains made during the “third wave of democratization” remain. That is worth remembering.

**AUTOCRATIZATION IN ALL REGIONS**

The current wave of autocratization spans all regions of the world. Democratic declines in the population-weighted measures are particularly evident in the Asia Pacific region and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The trend is also noticeable in Latin America and the Caribbean, even though it remains one of the most democratic regions.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the degree of liberal democracy enjoyed by the average citizen is now down to levels last seen in 1978 – 45 years ago. It was the year when Deng Xiaoping initiated the liberalization of the Chinese economy, and one year after Indira Gandhi’s state of emergency was lifted in India, restoring the country’s democracy. The average level is affected by declines in populous countries such as India.

Population-weighted average levels of democracy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia have gradually regressed down to the pre-1990 level.5 Post-communist countries such as Hungary and Serbia have returned to electoral autocracy, while intensified oppression under Vladimir Putin means Russia now has LDI-scores similar to the Soviet Union era.

The 2022 regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean is lower than at any point in time since 1989.6 That year, the first democratic elections for the executive took place in Brazil and in Chile since the beginning of their respective military regimes’ control.

---

**FIGURE 3. LIBERAL DEMOCRACY BY COUNTRY AVERAGES AND POPULATION WEIGHTS, 1972–2022**

The black lines represent global averages on the LDI with the grey area marking the confidence intervals. The left panel is based on conventional country averages. The right panel shows average levels of democracy weighted by population.
More Closed Autocracies than Liberal Democracies

- The world has more closed autocracies than liberal democracies – for the first time in more than two decades.
- 72% of the world’s population – 5.7 billion people – now live in autocracies – an increase from 46% ten years ago.
- 28% of the population – 2.2 billion people – live in closed autocracies.
- 13% of the population – 1 billion people – live in liberal democracies.

Overall, the world is almost evenly divided between 90 democracies and 89 autocracies at the end of 2022 – very similar to our reporting in last year’s Democracy Report.7

Yet, the world now harbors more closed autocracies than liberal democracies – for the first time since 1995. The number of liberal democracies declines from a peak of 44 in 2009 to 32 in 2022.

By contrast, the number of closed autocracies is going up from a low of 22 in 2012 up to 33 in 2022. This highlights the serious consequences of the current wave of autocratization.

Figure 4 (left panel) demonstrates these facts using the Regimes of the World typology (see box) that is based on V-Dem data. This fourfold categorization supplements the LDI and allow us to demonstrate broad global trends in terms of autocracy and democracy.

Nine new countries have descended into closed autocracies in just the last two years: Afghanistan, Chad, Guinea, Haiti, Iran, Mali, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This is another sign of how significant the present global wave of autocratization is.

Both electoral democracies and electoral autocracies have increased in numbers during the last 50 years. Over the last decade, they have been taking turns as the most common type of regime.

Overall, electoral autocracies are increasing markedly, from 35 in 1978 to 56 in 2022, making them the second most common type of regime. The decline in numbers of closed autocracies until 2010 explains much of this upward trend. Many closed autocracies liberalized and started to hold multiparty elections in the 1980s and 1990s. Some became electoral democracies, but many stalled as electoral autocracies, for example, Algeria and Pakistan. The recent surge in autocratization is turning countries back into closed autocracies, for example, Mali and Thailand.

Electoral democracies increased from a mere 16 in 1972 to 58 in 2022, making it the most common regime type this year. The most recent years’ increase may appear to be positive but to a large extent it is a consequence of liberal democracies undergoing autocratization. This is analyzed in further depth in Section 3.

---

**FIGURE 4. REGIME TYPES BY NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AND SHARE OF POPULATION, 1972–2022**

Figure 4 plots the number of countries (left panel) and the share of the world’s population (right panel) by regime type. Naturally, some uncertainty remains about the exact regime classification of some countries in some years. See footnote 7, and Table 1 in the last part of the report.

---

7 Naturally, uncertainty remains about regimes that exhibit similar degrees of authoritarian and democratic traits and thus are close to the threshold between democracy and autocracy.

In 2022, such uncertainty applied to 16 countries. Thus, the number of autocracies in the world might range from 84 to 100 countries, with 89 being our best estimate. For more details, refer to the variable v2x_regime_amb in the V-Dem dataset, v13.
Democracy

Is it possible to measure democracy? V-Dem is a unique approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy distinguishing between multiple core principles of democracy: electoral, liberal, majoritarian, consensual, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian. The main V-Dem dataset includes over 60 indices and 500 indicators. On the website, you also find other datasets from associated projects such as the Varieties of Parties (V-Party), the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT), the Digital Society Project (DSP), and the Varieties of Indoctrination (V-Indoc).

The V-Dem Institute’s Democracy Report centers on the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI). It combines the ‘core’ institutions of electoral democracy with the liberal dimension: constraints on the executive by the legislature and the judiciary, and the rule of law ensuring respect for civil liberties.

In the Democracy Report, we often weigh levels of democracy by population size (in contrast to simple averages across number of countries). This is because democracy means rule by and for the people. How many people in the world enjoy democratic freedoms and rights is therefore critical when describing trends.

Visit the website and explore the data, for example, by using our online graphing tools: https://v-dem.net.

Regimes of the World – Democratization and Autocratization

Democratization means that a country is making moves away from autocracy and toward democracy. Autocratization is the opposite, meaning any move away from democracy toward autocracy (see Figure 1).

It follows that democratization can happen in an autocracy without the country becoming a democracy, or inversely autocratization can occur in a democracy that does not become an autocracy. This report uses a simplified approach to capturing these movements based on significant and substantial changes in a country’s LDI score between 2012 and 2022 (see Footnote 7 in the main text of the report).

In the Democracy Report, we also distinguish between four types of regimes: Closed and Electoral Autocracies, and Electoral and Liberal Democracies. For this, we use the Regimes of the World (RoW) indicator. It allows for compact analysis of distinct regime changes and differences between autocracies and democracies in a way that the LDI does not.

The RoW typology and indicator are published in Lührmann et al. 2018. “Regimes of the World (RoW)” Politics and Governance 6(1). It builds on V-Dem data as well as the liberal and electoral democracy indices. It is one of several “independent” indices and indicators found in the V-Dem data set but which are not part of the core that is endorsed by the V-Dem Steering Committee and the V-Dem international team.
MOST PEOPLE LIVE IN AUTOCRACIES

According to V-Dem data, 72% of the world’s population – 5.7 billion people – now live in electoral or closed autocracies. That is an increase from 46% ten years ago. This fact shown in Figure 4 (right panel) is another reminder of how the wave of autocratization is unfolding across the world.

A plurality – 44% of the world’s population, or 3.5 billion people – reside in electoral autocracies, which include populous countries such as India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, The Philippines, and Türkiye.

Closed autocracies with sizeable populations include China, Iran, Myanmar, and Vietnam. This regime type accounts for 28% of the world’s population, or 2.2 billion people.

By contrast and despite being the most common regime type in the world, 58 electoral democracies host only 16% of the world’s population.

The 33 liberal democracies also have comparatively small populations and are home to a mere 13% of the world’s population. Perhaps tellingly, the three largest democracies in terms of population size – United States, Indonesia, and Brazil – are all autocratizers in the last ten years.

LARGE REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

How many people enjoy freedoms and rights in democracies or are subjected to oppression in autocracies varies significantly across regions.

Starting from the bottom-right corner of Figure 5, MENA is the most autocratic of the regions, with 98% of its population residing in autocracies and the remaining two percent living in Israel.

In the most populous region, Asia and the Pacific, almost nine out of ten individuals – or 89% – reside in autocracies and are denied some or all democratic rights and freedoms. This includes closed autocracies such as China and electoral autocracies like India. Only 11% live in liberal democracies like Japan and South Korea, or electoral democracies such as Indonesia, Mongolia, and Nepal.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, a vast majority of people (68%) reside in electoral autocracies and a total of 79% live in autocracies such as Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Tanzania. Only

---

8 Percentages are rounded throughout the report. The 72% mentioned here builds aggregating rounded figures for liberal and electoral democracies on Figure 4. Population figures come from the World Bank included in v13 of the V-Dem dataset.
21% live in electoral democracies, such as South Africa and Ghana, while The Seychelles is the only liberal democracy in the region. Eastern Europe and Central Asia are also dominated by electoral autocracies: 63% of the population live in countries like Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan; 22% of the population are found in electoral democracies such as Bulgaria and Georgia; and 5% reside in the liberal democracies Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, and Slovakia.

The vast majority of Latin Americans (83%) live in electoral democracies such as Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico. Autocracies in the region are comparatively small countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, making up 12% of the region’s inhabitants.

In Western Europe and North America, most citizens (92%) live in liberal democracies, and the remaining eight percent in electoral democracies.9

Drastic Changes in Ten Years

- Freedom of Expression is deteriorating in 35 countries in 2022 – ten years ago it was only 7.
- Rule of law and the quality of elections are also facing declines in many countries.
- Government censorship of the media is worsening in 47 countries.
- Government repression of civil society organizations is worsening in 37 countries.
- Quality of elections is worsening in 30 countries.

Governments in 40 countries are increasing their control over civil society organizations’ (CSOs) existence (‘entry and exit’), and in 37 countries repression of CSOs is ramping up.

Ten years ago, all aspects of liberal democracy were improving in more countries than they were declining in. By 2022, the situation is completely overturned.

Iranians Fight for Democracy

On September 16, 2022, 22-year-old Mahsa Amini succumbed to injuries inflicted by Iran’s Morality Police. Her death sparked the most massive protests against the regime that Iran has seen in the last four decades.1 Protests were met with a violent crackdown by security forces.

Iranian protesters are persistent and articulate in their demands for change, bridging differences among ethnic and religious groups, ages, genders, and social classes.2 Mass mobilization followed by increased repression typically induces higher levels of polarization.3

Figure 1 captures these recent developments in Iran: Civil society repression has intensified, and politically motivated killings have increased.4 Iranian security forces are using excessive and unlawful lethal force. During the ‘Bloody Friday’ crackdown on September 30, security forces opened fire on protesters and bystanders leading to the killing of at least 12 people – reported to be the highest number of people killed in a single day during the protests so far.5

The indicators in Figure 1 also demonstrate the very large increase in mobilization for democracy over the past year, along with a sharp rise in political polarization. While repression under high levels of polarization can strengthen autocratic regimes,4 such a sharp division and conflict might also create an opportunity for democratization.7

Figure 1. Worsening Repression and Rising Mobilization in Iran, 2021–2022

5 https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/22/iran-bloody-friday-crackdown-years-deadliest

9 Electoral democracies in this region include Austria, Canada, and Portugal. These countries are just below the threshold for ‘liberal democracy’ according to the RoW methodology, and in the upper bound of the ‘electoral democracy’ category. One should thus be careful with the interpretation. Austria falls below the cutoff regarding transparent laws with predictable enforcement, Canada has declined on access to justice for women leading to the reclassification from liberal to electoral democracy in 2022. Portugal is just below the threshold on access to justice for men. Moreover, the uncertainty bounds for both Austria and Portugal cross the RoW thresholds, meaning that their classification should be viewed with extra caution.
Figure 6 provides the evidence. The left panel shows the number of countries in the world in which each component index had improved or declined by 2012, compared to ten years earlier. The right panel shows the same result for 2022.

The worst affected area is freedom of expression, which includes media freedom. It was improving in 14 countries while declining in only seven by 2012. Ten years later, 35 countries limit freedom of expression substantially and statistically significant more than ten years ago, while only eleven have expanded it.

The deliberative component is the next to worst affected. It is getting worse in 32 countries in 2022, compared to only seven in 2012. This measure includes indicators of respect for opposition, pluralism, and counterarguments. As we showed in last year’s Democracy Report, it equates closely with measurements of polarization that is detrimental to democracy. We analyze the relationship between polarization and autocratization further in Section 3 below.

The quality of elections is subject to a similar and almost complete reversal. 24 countries were improving and eight declining in 2012. By 2022 the numbers were turned upside down: Election quality was improving in only 12 countries while deteriorating in 23 countries.

The rule of law is deteriorating in 19 countries and improving in three. Back in 2012 it was getting worse in only two countries. Given the importance of the rule of law in constraining presidents and ruling parties from undermining democratic rights and freedoms, this is a distressing development.

For freedom of association there are now three times more countries declining (N=17) than advancing (N=5). The worsening of constraints on the executive by the judiciary and the legislature displayed in Figure 6 are less dramatic but still noteworthy.

**TEASING OUT THE DETAILS**

A greater number of countries register substantial and significant worsening at a more detailed level (Figure 7), compared to the component indices in Figure 6. This demonstrates that many countries have begun to encroach on some specific democratic rights and freedoms that are not captured in the more “birds-eye” view that aggregated indices provide.

Figure 7 on the top 20 indicators that are worsening in most countries over the past ten years, also tells us something about the rights and freedoms that autocratizers like to attack and undermine first.
Aspects of freedom of expression and the media are the ones ‘wanna-be dictators’ attack the most and often first. At the very top of the list, we find government censorship of the media which is worsening in 47 countries.

Figure 7 also shows that the harassment of journalists is getting worse in 36 countries, freedom of expression for women is declining in 34 countries, and media bias is spurring autocratization in 33 countries.

Civil society is similarly under increasing pressure. In 40 countries, governments are increasing their control over civil society organizations’ (CSOs) existence (‘entry and exit’), and in 37 countries repression of CSOs is ramping up.

Civil society constitutes a fundamental defense against autocratic rule with its capacity to mobilize people against the government. This makes infringements on the rights and freedoms of CSOs a perilous danger to democratic rule. It is also a typical area that autocratic rulers tend to constrain further, just like Putin has done in Russia over the years.

In more than 30 countries, the range of consultation by government, the extent to which society is engaged in deliberation on policy, the level of respect for counterarguments, and the extent to which government provides reasoned justification for their actions, are worsening substantially.

As last year’s Democracy Report analyzed in detail, this showcases that polarization is increasing in many countries across the world. We follow up on that analysis also this year in Section 3 below.

In addition, 25 or more countries have undermined transparent laws with predictable enforcement, freedom of movement between countries, executive oversight, and the impartiality of the administration, compared to ten years ago.

Notably, elections are increasingly being manipulated across the world. Now 30 countries are declining on this critical indicator, free and fair elections. A few years back, we found very few instances of governments undermining election quality.
Greece on a Slippery Slope

Greece is downgraded from a liberal to an electoral democracy in 2022. The decline is characterized by a gradual deterioration of institutional checks and balances that are core to the principle of liberal democracy and ensure that the executive is constrained.

Figure 1 displays the top 10 declining indicators of the Liberal Democracy-and Deliberative Component indices between 2017 and 2022.

The legislature and to a lesser degree the judiciary, conventional bastions of democracy, are weakening significantly in Greece.

The de facto ability of the legislature to investigate the executive’s actions is eroding the most, followed by the government’s range of consultation with other societal actors, and the government’s compliance with the high court.

Figure 1 also shows encroachments on the freedom of expression, such as an increase in harassment of journalists and government media censorship.

A major recent event in Greece was the phone-tapping scandal exposed in 2022: Wiretaps by the National Intelligence Service of a long list of the government’s political enemies, allies, and investigative journalists. Court investigations, and inquiries by parliamentary committees and independent authorities have been delayed for months and are yet to present their findings. For example, the Special Permanent Committee on Institutions and Transparency on which the incumbent government have a majority, is blocking key witnesses and decided that the Committee’s meetings and concluding reports will remain confidential.

Another area of concern is the “executive state” law enacted by the current administration under Kyriakos Mitsotakis. The law (4622/2019) establishes a hyper-concentration of powers in the hands of the executive. It also put the National Intelligence Service (EYP), the national broadcaster ERT, and the public news agency ANA-MPA under the prime minister’s supervision. This speaks to the decline in critical reporting and the rise of self-censorship in media. Greece is now also ranking last among EU member states in the World Press Freedom Index in 2022.

Variables include the indicators from both the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) and the Deliberative Component Index (DCI) that exhibit changes of more than 0.25 between 2017 and 2022.

2 https://ipi.media/greece-full-scale-of-surveillance-on-journalists-must-be-unearthed/
5 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/30/greece-to-launch-parliamentary-inquiry-into-spy-scandal
6 https://euobserver.com/opinion/156645
7 https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/08/greece-problematic-surveillance-bill
Chiang Mai, Thailand, February 3, 2023. Activists paint sunflowers during "Drawing Hope" (or Wad Wang) activity at Tha Phae Gate to send encouragement to Tantawan Tuatulanon and Orawan Phuphong, pro-democracy activists who started a hunger strike after they were detained in prison.

Photo: Shutterstock
2 | Democratizers and Autocratizers

- A record of 42 autocratizers with 43% of the world’s population – up from 33 countries and 36% of the population last year.
- The number of democratizing countries is down to 14 with only 2% of the world’s population. There have not been so few since 1973 – 50 years ago.
- All regions are affected – but Africa harbors the largest number of democratizing (N=5) as well as autocratizing (N=12) countries.

This part of the Democracy Report 2023 departs from the focus on the state (level of democracy, type of regime) countries are in. The analyses below look at the world from a perspective of the direction in which countries are changing: democratizing or autocratizing?

The world map in Figure 8 shows which countries are in a period of democratization (blue) or autocratization (red) over the last ten years, by our metric. Greater intensity of the colors indicates a more substantial change towards democracy or autocracy.

A New Record of 42 Countries Autocratizing

Only 14 countries are democratizing. This level was last seen in 1973 at the end of the Vietnam War and the year General Pinochet took power in Chile. The 14 democratizing nations are small and host a tiny 2% of the world’s population.

This year registers a new record of 42 autocratizing countries. This is up by nine from the 33 reported in last year’s Democracy Report that then set a historical record.

The increase in the number of countries undergoing autocratization in recent years places the autocratization wave in stark relief.

Figure 9 details these patterns of autocratization and democratization. The left panel (dashed blue line) shows how the number of democratizing countries increased from the 1970s and then peaked at 71 in 1999. A noticeable decline started shortly after, and continues into 2022.

The red line in the left panel of Figure 9 shows that the number of autocratizing countries was 28 in 1972. It then declined to three at its lowest point in 1999 when the current wave of autocratization began in earnest.

What is notable as the wave of autocratization progresses is that not only democratic countries such as Brazil, Ghana, Greece, Poland, and the United States of America are engulfed in...
Autocratization. Autocratization often goes beyond democratic weakening and breakdown to deepen even further after countries like El Salvador, Hungary, or India turn into electoral autocracies. Other autocracies that are autocratizing further include Burkina Faso, Philippines, and Russia.

At the same time, there are now eight countries that recently did U-turns following an episode of autocratization and restored previous levels of democracy. We analyze these cases in Section 4.

BY WORLD POPULATION AND POWER

The now 42 autocratizing countries are populous, home to 43% of the world’s population. For comparison, only 3% of the population lived in countries that were autocratizing at the start of the wave of autocratization in 1999 (red line in Figure 9, right panel).

Another significant point is that many of the world’s autocratizing countries are influential regional and global powers, and economically powerful. It is all but obvious how a major power like Russia has directly influenced many of the former Soviet Republics in the last twenty years to stall democratic aspirations. Recently, that ambition led to a large-scale war on European soil. Autocratization has serious consequences.

The fact that many autocratizing countries are large and powerful countries makes the current wave of autocratization more worrying from the perspective of the remaining democracies. This year’s Democracy Report includes a dedicated, in-depth analysis of the shifting balance of economic power and associated security concerns that follow from the current wave of autocratization. It can be found in Section 5.

ACROSS REGIONS

The 14 democratizing and the 42 autocratizing countries are found across all regions of the world, as shown in Figure 10.
substantially: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, The Philippines, and Thailand.

In Latin America, three countries improved on the LDI between 2012 and 2022: Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Honduras. More than double that number – eight countries – are autocratizers: Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Two democratizing countries are found in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Armenia and Georgia. Almost four times as many – seven countries – declined substantially: Belarus, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Poland, Russia, and Serbia.

In MENA, no country is democratizing while four countries are autocratizing: Libya, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Yemen.

Similarly, no country across North America and Western Europe improved on the LDI over the last ten years but two autocratized to a significant degree: Greece and the United States of America.
Brazil: Lula’s Electoral Success and Democratic Prospects

This is the fourth consecutive Democracy Report featuring Brazil among the top 10 autocratizers in the world. Figure 1 shows how its Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) score dropped substantially after 2015 and hit a low in 2019 barely above the 0.5 mark (right-hand side scale).

The LDI score improves somewhat in this year’s data (0.528), following Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva’s victory over Jair Bolsonaro in the 2022 presidential election. That may signal a reversal of Brazil’s period of autocratization.

Polarization and mobilization are central to recent developments in Brazil and its seven-year-long autocratization episode. Figure 1 demonstrates that mobilization for both democracy and autocracy rapidly increased in the post-pandemic period and peaked during Bolsonaro’s re-election campaign in 2022.

Leading up to Bolsonaro coming to power in 2018, political polarization increased with the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff in 2016. The far right mobilized heavily in favor of autocratization, and the LDI started to decline. Developments led Jair Bolsonaro to an electoral victory in 2018.

In the meantime, anti-Bolsonaro protests gained significant traction and left-wing movements advocating for women’s rights and environmental protection surfaced as principal regime challengers. Bolsonaro’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic also led to anti-government protests. These movements together emerged as democracy strongholds against far-right wing supporters.

During the 2022 election year, indicators of the clean election index deteriorated (Figure 2), including the incumbent government’s intimidation and electoral violence.

Lula’s victory resulted in post-electoral violence. Like the January 6 Capitol attack in the United States, Bolsonaro’s supporters stormed Congress and demanded military intervention on January 8, 2023. Retired as well as active military officials participated in this attempted coup.

While polarization remains at high levels that could continue to destabilize democracy in Brazil, data displayed in Figure 2 shows slight signs of melioration. Essential democratic institutions, such as executive oversight, improved between 2021 and 2022.

President Lula will continue to face challenges to unify the country but has a track record of respecting democratic institutions during his previous tenure in office.
Democracy broke down in seven of the top 10 autocratizing countries in the last ten years (Figure 12, left panel): El Salvador, Hungary, India, Serbia, Thailand, Türkiye, and Tunisia. Three countries remain democracies in 2022: Brazil, Mauritius, and Poland. Even among the top 10 autocratizers in the shorter-term perspective of the last three years (Figure 12, right panel), democracy broke down in five: Burkina Faso, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mali, and Tunisia.

Taken together, these simple facts make the specter of additional democracies entering an episode of autocratization worrying. Scientific evidence also finds that almost 80% of democracies break down if they start autocratizing.11

Three countries – El Salvador, Mauritius, and Tunisia – appear as top autocratizers in both panels. This means that the process of moving away from democracy started long ago but continues to a significant degree also into 2022.

Tunisia’s rapid changes over the past two years have brought it to both top lists. President Kais Saied dissolved parliament in 2021 and continues to reshape the political system in his personal favor.12 In El Salvador, the ruling government under President Nayib Bukele and his populist ruling party Great Alliance for National Unity (GANA) intensified its crackdown on journalists and media freedom.13 El Salvador and Tunisia are no longer democracies, and democracy seems to hang by a thread in Mauritius.

In seven countries, the process of autocratization appears to have stalled. Brazil and Poland had halted the trend of autocratization before democracy broke down. Brazil’s 2022 presidential election led to the removal of incumbent Bolsonaro from office and will possibly initiate a democratic reversal after new President Lula assumed power on January 1st this year (see box for further details).

The ongoing war in Ukraine impacts Poland’s geopolitical standing and may influence internal processes as well. There are internal forces pushing back against autocratization in Poland, such as widespread protests against the near-total ban on abortion and new restrictive media laws.14 Yet, the final outcome is uncertain.
The process of autocratization seems to have slowed down considerably or even stalled in Hungary, India, Serbia, Thailand, and Türkiye but after turning into autocracies. All five remain autocracies. Hungary’s 2022 parliamentary elections secured another victory for long-time autocratizer Viktor Orbán and his right-wing, Christian-nationalist Fidesz party, and revealed their manipulation of electoral rules. Serbia’s 2022 election similarly had irregularities that favored the incumbent right-wing government. In India, the ruling right-wing, Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helm continues to suppress religious freedom. Türkiye continues to repress free speech and political competition, as exemplified by a new law in 2022 criminalizing the spreading of “false information”. Finally, Thailand is found among the top 10 autocratizers over the last decade following the military take-over in 2014 and the harsh repression in its wake.

**TOP 10 IN LAST 3 YEARS ONLY**

Afghanistan, Armenia, Burkina Faso, Greece, Guatemala, Mali, and Myanmar only appear as top autocratizers in the three-year perspective (right panel in Figure 12). They are countries that started to autocratize only recently.

In Armenia, the government under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is severely restricting press freedom and prosecutes journalists speaking out against the government amid the ongoing war with Azerbaijan.

In Greece, press freedom is becoming a growing concern. Journalists are regularly prevented from reporting on a number of issues including migration (see box for further details).

Among other things in Guatemala, the undermining of corruption investigations coupled with attacks on the judicial system turned it into an electoral autocracy.

Afghanistan and Myanmar descended from electoral to closed autocracies following the Taliban takeover and a military coup, respectively.

Burkina Faso was the scene of not just one but two coups in 2022 after ongoing clashes with Jihadists. It lost its fledgling democracy and the situation in the West African country is rapidly deteriorating.

Violence against civilians is on the rise in Mali, following the arrival of Russian mercenaries in support of the military regime that did away with democracy.

In several countries, the initial take-overs have been followed by a continued decline in a series of rights and basic freedoms. They exemplify what we also point to elsewhere in this report: Autocratization often does not stop. For many countries, it not only means losing democracy, but further deterioration where citizens are denied even basic human rights.

### Drilling Down: What Autocrats Attack

- Censorship of the media and repression of CSOs increases and academic freedom declines in more than 25 of the autocratizing countries.
- Academic and cultural freedom, and freedom of discussion also rank among the top institutions attacked by autocratizing rulers.
Media censorship and the repression of civil society organizations (CSOs) are what rulers in autocratizing countries engage in most frequently, and to the greatest degree. These are closely followed by restrictions on academic and cultural expression (see also box on the Academic Freedom Index). All three institutions have worsened substantially in more than 25 countries over the past ten years (Figure 13).

Government censorship of the media, for instance, worsened the most in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Hong Kong, Mauritius, and Poland, over the past ten years. Afghanistan experienced rapid declines on this indicator after the Taliban take-over. Mauritius – once hailed as the only liberal democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa – recently introduced several regulations that restrict the work of broadcasting companies and journalists. In Poland, the government has taken control of public media and uses it to spread its own messages.

Drilling down to the individual indicators changing the most across the group of autocratizing countries in the last 10 years reveals details about the process of autocratization (see Figure 13).

The data also show substantial and statistically significant deterioration in freedom of discussion for women as well as for men in 24 and 22 countries, respectively. For instance, freedom of academic and cultural expression was severely weakened in Indonesia, Russia, and Uruguay.

In 22 autocratizing countries, public deliberations on policy changes have become narrower in scope both at the elite and the population level. In Burundi, Myanmar, and Serbia, for instance, the range of actors invited to deliberate on policy changes has become significantly and substantially more limited.

Indicators measuring the quality of elections also declined in a substantial number of countries even though several autocratizing countries are closed autocracies, such as Myanmar and Nicaragua, that do not hold competitive elections at all.

**Disinformation, Polarization, and Autocratization**

- Disinformation, polarization, and autocratization reinforce each other.
- Top democratizers conversely reduce the spread of disinformation substantially, and to some extent also polarization.

Disinformation and toxic levels of polarization are global trends reinforcing and worsening autocratization.

![Figure 13](https://rsf.org/en/mauritian-parliament-imposes-tougher-regulations-broadcast-media) https://rsf.org/en/country/poland

23 We define disinformation as purposefully created information that “has the function of misleading” Fallis, D. 2015. *What is disinformation?* Library Trends 63(3); and toxic polarization as a division of society into Us versus Them camps who deeply distrust the other group, see Democracy Report 2022 for further details.
Figure 14 provides some evidence of this. Autocratizing governments are those that are increasing their use of disinformation the most. They use it to steer citizens’ preferences, cause further divisions, and strengthen their support. Disinformation is like a stick used by anti-pluralist parties to stir up polarization in countries such as Brazil, Poland, Russia, Türkiye, and the United States (see also Figure 15).

Figure 14 demonstrates that political polarization is also escalating the most in autocratizing countries. Those countries witnessing the most dramatic increases include top autocratizers such as Afghanistan, Brazil, India, and Myanmar (Figure 15).

Toxic levels of polarization hinder cooperation among elites and induce citizens to abandon democratic principles to keep their leader in power and get their preferred policy. That way, toxic levels of polarization often increase support for autocratic leaders and empower their illiberal agendas. Disinformation, polarization, and autocratization thus reinforce each other.

The opposite also holds true. Governments’ spread of disinformation decreased the most in democratizing countries. Top democratizers like Dominican Republic, The Gambia, and the Seychelles, as well as countries in which democracy bounced back (see Section 4 for further details), such as Maldives and Zambia, show the greatest decreases in their governments’ use of disinformation strategies.

Levels of polarization also decreased in democratizers, such as Fiji, but the extent of change was more limited. These two opposite trends seem to indicate that disinformation and political polarization may be serious threats to democracy and democratic resilience.

To counter autocratization, pro-democratic actors could pursue strategies such as dialogues and civic education seeking to reduce political polarization and to increase citizens’ resistance to the spread of disinformation.

FIGURE 14. GOVERNMENT’S DISSEMINATION OF FALSE INFORMATION, AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION, 2012–2022

The figure shows change in levels between 2012 and 2022. “Government Disinformation” measures how often governments and their agents use social media to disseminate misleading viewpoints or false information to influence their population. “Political Polarization” measures the extent to which society is polarized into antagonistic and political camps where political differences affect social relationships beyond political discussions.

FIGURE 15. CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT’S DISSEMINATION OF FALSE INFORMATION, AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION BY COUNTRIES, 2012–2022

Disinformation (left panel) and polarization (right panel) increased in countries above the diagonal line and decreased in countries below it. Countries are labeled if the difference between 2012 and 2022 was significantly and substantially meaningful.


27 See Democracy Report 2022 for further details.

The Major Democratizers

- 8 of the top 10 democratizing countries over the last 10 years are now democracies.
- 4 of the top 10 democratizers in the short-term 3-year perspective have transitioned from autocracy to democracy.
- 8 democracies are ‘bouncing back’ – making rare U-turns restoring democracy after a period of autocratization.
- Lessons learnt – five elements were key in the 8 bounce-back cases:
  - Large-scale popular mobilization against incumbent.
  - Judiciary reversing executive take-over.
  - Unified opposition coalescing with civil society.
  - Critical elections and key events bringing alternation in power.
  - International democracy support and protection.

Out of the top 10 democratizing countries in the last 10 years, eight were autocracies in 2012. By 2022 the situation is reversed: eight out of these ten are democracies in 2022.

These are good news for democracy. Yet, most of the democratizers are small countries with limited influence on the global scene in contrast to the many populous, powerful countries that are autocratizing and discussed above in Section 3.

The left-hand panel of Figure 16 displays the trajectories for all top 10 democratizers over the last 10 years. This panel also demonstrates that six countries made transitions to democracy over the last ten years.

The Seychelles transitioned and continues its upward trajectory after becoming a liberal democracy. Armenia, The Gambia, Honduras, Nepal, and Sri Lanka progressed from the status of electoral autocracies in 2012 to qualify as electoral democracies before 2022. Georgia was already classified as an electoral democracy in 2012 but has improved further.

Fiji and Madagascar are the two countries among the top 10 democratizers that remain autocracies but have improved substantially and significantly on the LDI. Fiji has also moved out of the group of closed autocracies and became an electoral autocracy.

**FIGURE 16. TOP 10 DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES (10-YEARS AND 3-YEARS)**

Figure 16 plots values of the LDI for the 10 countries with the highest LDI increase in the last 10 years (left panel), and in the last 3 years (right panel).
**TOP 10 IN LAST 3 YEARS**

Among the top 10 democratizers in the last three years (Figure 16, right panel), seven new and thus more recent democratizers feature: **Bolivia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Malawi, Moldova, and Zambia**.

Three of the top 10 democratizers over the last ten years are also among the top 10 democratizers in the past three years – **The Gambia, Honduras and the Seychelles**.

Four out of the top 10 democratizers transitioned to democracy over the past three years – **Bolivia, Honduras, Malawi, and Zambia**.

In **The Gambia**, the situation continues to improve since the 2016 electoral defeat of the autocratic President Yahya Jammeh, and subsequent presidential elections in 2021 were deemed to be free and fair.29

In **Honduras**, civil liberties are improving and electoral reforms in 2021 are bearing fruit. The civilized presidential transfer of power in 2021 consolidated the country’s democratic progress.30

Notably, **Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Moldova** are European nations. In last year’s Democracy Report, we reported in a special section on the EU that it was facing its own wave of autocratization with six of its member states (20%) undergoing autocratization. It is positive that several countries in Europe are now moving in a more democratic direction.

With transitions back to electoral democracy in two cases and one U-turn before democratic breakdown, **Bolivia, Moldova, and Zambia** joined an exclusive group of democracies bouncing back in the face of the global wave of autocratization. Cases like these raise some hope for a future reversal of the last 20 years’ downward trend towards autocratization.

**In Focus: 8 Democracies Bouncing Back**

In the face of the global wave of autocratization, data shows that no less than eight countries are bouncing back and making U-turns.

Figure 17 renders the trajectories of these eight countries: **Bolivia, Moldova, Ecuador, Maldives, North Macedonia, Slovenia, South Korea, and Zambia**.

These are eight unique cases of democratic resilience and reversal after a period of substantial autocratization over the last 20 years. These democracies managed to rebound after a period of

---


autocratization, becoming more democratic and regaining much of what had been eroded. In four of these countries, democracy even broke down as a result of autocratization but got re-instated: Bolivia, Maldives, North Macedonia, and Zambia.

Moreover, these eight cases are scattered over four world regions, and differ substantially in their initial levels of democracy. Bolivia was on a slow path to autocratization during the tenure of President Evo Morales. 2019 marked a turning point when widespread electoral fraud, intense mass mobilization from the opposition, pressure from the international community, and the loss of the army’s support ultimately led to Morales’ resignation. With the fair and free 2020 presidential election and the wide acceptance of the results, the country made its democratic comeback. Whether it remains a democracy under President Luis Arce remains to be seen.

In Ecuador, institutions were undermined under President Rafael Correa (2007-2017) resulting in extensive executive powers and weak independent checks on his powers from the judiciary and the legislature. The re-introduction of presidential term limits by Correa’s successor Menin Moreno was key to preserving democracy. Ecuador is also gradually overcoming the destructive polarization initiated during Correa’s administration. A series of peaceful elections with candidates emphasizing national unity over divisions, are testament to that.

Maldives autocratized substantially under the rule of President Abdulla Yameen, who came to power in 2013 after two years of prolonged political crisis. Dwindling support led to a win by challenger Ibrahim Solih in the 2018 presidential election. Repression was relaxed and the new president repealed anti-defamation legislation. Democracy returned after the free and fair parliamentary elections in 2019 that resulted in a landslide victory for President Solih’s Maldivian Democratic Party.

In Moldova, democracy deteriorated due to widespread corruption and oligarchic control over politics. A major 2014 embezzlement scandal exposed the extensive political corruption and oligarchic capture of state and media institutions, which led to widespread public protests. After a series of short-lived governments, the opposition coalition led by the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) won control over the presidency. In 2021, the constitutional court ruled that snap elections should be held. Parliament attempted to obstruct this by initiating a COVID-19 state of emergency and replaced one of the judges in the constitutional court. Both actions were deemed unconstitutional and ultimately failed. Free and fair elections in July 2021 gave the democratic opposition a majority in parliament. Democracy has gained in strength since.

North Macedonia took on a path to autocratization in 2007 under Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. With drastically shrinking space for independent media and civil society organizations among other things, North Macedonia descended into electoral autocracy. After the 2014 elections, the largest opposition party (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, SDSM) boycotted parliament. In alliance with civil society organizations, they instigated a popular mobilization in 2015 following the disclosure of a massive illegal wiretapping campaign by the government. The constitutional court then played an important role in halting autocratization by suspending the elections scheduled for 2016, which would have seen a full-blown victory for the government after the opposition announced a boycott. Additionally, the EU and the US exerted pressure on both parties to resume negotiations that ultimately paved the way for a transfer of power following the 2016 elections.

Starting in 2020, former Prime Minister Janez Janša in Slovenia seemed to be mimicking Hungary’s Victor Orbán by restricting press freedoms and neglecting compliance with the judiciary. Janša lost power in the 2022 elections. Civil society organizations played a critical role in the executive turnover by mobilizing large protests against the government’s autocratic tendencies. Voter turnout reached 70% – a significant increase of 18 percentage points. Riding on pro-democratic mobilization, the newly elected Prime Minister Robert Golob and Slovenia’s first female President and former human rights lawyer Nataša Pirc Musar, vowed to restore liberal democracy. Slovenia also became the first Eastern European country to recognize same-sex marriage.

Although South Korea remained a liberal democracy throughout the last 20 years, it was in an episode of autocratization between 2008 and 2016 that intensified in particular under President Park
Geun-hye’s tenure between 2013 and 2017. This development manifested itself primarily in restrictions on press freedoms and bolstering of the public image of the government and ruling party. After Park Geun-hye was linked to corruption, significant segments of the population turned against her and there were large-scale protests in 2016. Those put pressure on the legislature to impeach her and the constitutional court upheld the conviction on 10 March 2017. Liberal democracy was fully restored after that.

Zambia’s autocratization began with the electoral success of former President Edgar Lungu from the Patriotic Front (PF) in 2014. His reign was characterized by curtailment of freedoms of assembly and expression, for example the shutting down of the major newspaper The Post and the use of the police force against opposition gatherings. Eventually, a robust and dense network of civil society actors, including the Zambian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Council of Churches of Zambia, organized a pro-democratic mobilization and actively resisted Lungu’s attempts to make constitutional amendments. This resulted in electoral victory for the opposition leader from the United Party for National Development (UPND), Hakainde Hichilema, in 2021. Despite initial resistance, Lungu peacefully handed over power in the face of intense pressure that also came from Europe and the United States. Zambia returned to democratic rule with full freedoms of assembly and expression, as exemplified by the 2022 court ruling that the closure of The Post newspaper was illegal.

These eight cases exemplify how autocratization can be stopped and reversed. The Democracy Report therefore provides an initial overview of what seems to be important for getting democracy back on track, and what lessons can be learnt.

---

**FIGURE 18. COMMON ELEMENTS IN 8 DEMOCRACIES BOUNCING BACK, 2012–2022**

The left y-axis shows the 0-1 scale for the Judicial Constraints index. The right y-axis shows the 0-4 range of the Mobilization for Democracy Indicator. The vertical line shows the timing of a critical change in the head of government and/or head of state.

---

50 https://rsf.org/en/analyse_regionale/635
54 https://rsf.org/en/analyse_regionale/635
LESSONS LEARNT FROM 8 CASES
BOUNCING BACK
Five elements were key in the 8 cases:

- Large-scale popular mobilization against incumbent.
- Judiciary reversing executive take-over.
- Unified opposition coalescing with civil society
- Critical elections and key events bringing alternation in power.
- International democracy support and protection.

Figure 18 shows the changes in popular mobilization for democracy and judicial constraints on the executive over the past 10 years. It illustrates some of the elements found across many of the eight bouncing-back cases.

First, the emergence of a large, unified, and sustained pro-democracy mobilization appears to be key. Figure 18 captures how levels of pro-democratic popular mobilization go up in the period of bouncing back. Bolivia, Maldives, Moldova, North Macedonia, Slovenia, South Korea, and Zambia hit the highest level of mobilization during and at the end of the period of democratic regression – seven out of eight cases. In South Korea, rallies were attended by up to 2.3 million people, making them some of the largest protests in the country’s history. In Bolivia, the opposition organized largely peaceful protests right from the beginning of Morales’ tenure, demonstrating enormous endurance. One factor that seems to motivate people to protest is corruption. In at least three countries – Moldova, North Macedonia, and South Korea – mobilization was explicitly linked to corruption charges against members of the government. Pro-democratic mobilization was also decisive in many cases for increasing voter turnout and facilitating the democratic opposition coming to power via critical elections (discussed below).

Second, judicial independence eventually constraining the executive played a decisive role in at least four of the cases: Ecuador, Moldova, North Macedonia, and South Korea. The specific actions of courts and judges naturally varied across these countries and their specific contexts, but in various ways were contributing to reversing autocratization. Upholding the decision to go ahead with snap elections despite Parliament’s attempt to halt them and to unseat a constitutional court judge was instrumental in achieving the pro-democratic majority in parliament in Moldova. The constitutional court in North Macedonia took a decisive step in suspending the scheduled June 2016 elections, in South Korea the judiciary needed nudging from popular protests in order to act; and courts withstood pressures in Ecuador and then charged Correa and other members of his government once they were out of power. This points to the important role that an independent judiciary play in reversing executive takeover and turning it around, which is also documented elsewhere.52

Third, the actions of the opposition also have important ramifications. A unified coalition of opposition actors in alliance with civil society seems to be a key element that can also strengthen the factors identified above. Opposition coalitions in alliance with civil society made democratic reversals possible in at least seven cases: Bolivia, Ecuador, Moldova, North Macedonia, Slovenia, South Korea, and Zambia.

Bolivia and Ecuador also showed that moderate opposition strategies that rely on organizing peaceful protests and engaging with institutional challenges through parliamentary and legal means can keep the door open for overturning the government. This lesson also echoes findings in recent research.56 North Macedonia’s opposition boycotts allowed it to raise awareness of the government’s course of autocratization and use the time to strengthen its links to civil society. Thus, opposition parties can play a critical role in translating popular discontent into changes at the ballot and in initiating democratic reforms.57

Fourth, elections or other key events can be a critical instrument for a democratic bounce back. In five countries – Maldives, Moldova, North Macedonia, Slovenia, and Zambia – elections gave the majority of votes to pro-democratic parties, which was crucial for initiating or continuing the turnaround toward more democracy. For example, in Slovenia elections ensured the removal of Prime Minister Janez Janša, stopping his initiated autocratization. After the removal of the respective presidents Abdulla Yameen and Edgar Lungu in the Maldives and Zambia, there were immediate improvements. The latter cases also show the power of elections even in autocratic settings where the electoral playing field is heavily tilted in favor of the incumbent. In Ecuador and Bolivia, the democratic bounce back began when the terms of office of Correa and Morales ended. In South Korea, the level of democracy significantly increased after the impeachment of Park Geun-hye.

Finally, international democracy support and protection can contribute to halting and reversing autocratization, which is also suggested elsewhere.58 In at least five of our featured cases, this was important: Bolivia, Ecuador, North Macedonia, Slovenia, and Zambia. In Ecuador, some media corporations and civil society organizations appealed against domestic legal decisions to international institutions like the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The EU put pressure on autocratizers in Slovenia and facilitated negotiations between polarized political parties in North Macedonia, for example.

The lessons learnt from these eight cases highlight that democracies can bounce back and not only avert democratic breakdown once autocratization has started but also stage a democratic comeback from an electoral autocracy. Autocratization is not an irreversible path. Democracy can bounce back.

Danish Defense shows the gas leaking at Nord Stream 2 seen from the Danish F-16 interceptor.
Photo: Shutterstock
5 | Autocratization Shifting the Balance of Power

The global balance of economic power is shifting. Economic wealth and control of trade are means of hard power that in turn shapes global political power. Autocracies’ increasing economic weight can pose global security risks for democracies. The weakening of democracies’ relative economic power may also undermine their position to stand up for human rights and democratic freedoms around the world.

First, the expanding number of autocracies along with economic superpower China now account for almost half of world GDP (adjusted for purchasing power parity) – up from 24% in 1992 to 46% in 2022.

Second, the global balance of trade power is tilting in favor of autocracies. Trade between democracies fell from 74% of world trade in 1998 down to 47% in 2022, while an increasing share is accounted for by trade with and between autocracies.

Third, democracies are becoming increasingly dependent on autocracies for both exports and imports. The Russian war against Ukraine demonstrates how consequential as a security risk trade dependence on autocracies can be. Europe quickly found itself in a difficult situation, and trade dependencies can be used to exert political pressure.

**Shifting Global Balance of Economic Power**

The global balance of economic power is shifting. Autocracies are becoming more powerful economically, and their numbers are growing.

Conversely, democracies are gradually declining in their share of global economic wealth. If these trends continue, autocracies will surpass democracies in economic power over the next decades.

Figure 19 illustrates this shift. As of 2022, autocracies account for almost half of global GDP. Closed autocracies generated 25% of global GDP in 2022 and an additional 21% is attributable to electoral autocracies. This represents a doubling since the end of the Cold War.

Meanwhile, democracies produced over 75% of the world’s GDP at the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union – then the most powerful autocracy in the world politically – generated slightly above 10% and China about 4%. The remaining autocracies were barely visible in the statistics. In terms of economic wealth, democracies were a lot more powerful than autocracies. By 2022, democracies’ share of world GDP has shrunk to 54%.

A closed autocracy is now the largest economy in the world: China’s share of global GDP rose from 4.4% in 1992 to 18.5% in 2022, surpassing the United States.

Other autocracies are also on the rise. Vietnam (a closed autocracy) almost quadrupled its share of world GDP over the last 30 years, while Qatar’s share more than doubled. Electoral

---

59 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated in local currency units. To compare the GDP of economies across the world, differences in national price levels need to be accounted for and local currencies need to be converted to a common currency. This is done using purchasing power parity (PPP) that seek to equalize the purchasing power of different currencies, by eliminating the differences in price levels between countries. We use this measure of GDP throughout this section. All economic data for this section come from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
autocracies like Angola, Egypt, Malaysia, and Pakistan are also expanding their shares of the world economy substantially.

The ongoing ‘third wave’ of autocratization\(^{60}\) is accelerating this trend in so far as countries turn from democracies to autocracies. India, that descended into electoral autocracy in recent years, has more than doubled its share of the global economy since 1992. It now accounts for 7.2% of global GDP, which corresponds to one-third of the share of GDP generated by all electoral autocracies.

Türkiye is another country that went from democracy to autocracy and increased its share of global GDP from 1.3% to 2.1%. Bangladesh, Nigeria, and The Philippines are other countries that are part of this trend.

**Balance of Power Tilting in Global Trade**

The global balance of trade power is also tilting in favor of autocracies. Democracies are becoming less and less reliant on each other for trade, relying more on autocracies.

Using 7 million data points from the IMF, we estimated the change in trade patterns between democracies and autocracies since 1992.\(^{61}\) Figure 20 (blue line) shows that trade between democracies as a share of total world trade has declined from 74% at its highest in 1998 to 47% in 2022.

Meanwhile, democracies’ trade dependency on autocracies is increasing (dotted red line in Figure 20). It grew from a low of 21% of world trade in 1999 to 35% in 2022.

Autocracies are becoming more and more reliant on trade among themselves. The relative share of between-autocracies trade has more than tripled since 1992 and now accounts for almost 18% of world trade.

At the same time, trade between autocracies and democracies is growing, increasing interdependencies.

China accounts for a significant part of these trade pattern changes. Its share of global trade is now almost 15% and the role of other autocracies in global trade is also growing.

**Export/Import Dependencies as a Security Issue**

Autocracies are becoming less and less dependent on democracies for both their exports and imports. This is a combined effect of autocracies’ growing trade and more large countries becoming autocracies. Meanwhile, democracies’ dependence on autocracies is increasing.

---


\(^{61}\) We aggregate the IMF Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS) dataset on the direction of trade flows with the V-Dem Regimes of the World (RoW) index from v13 dataset.
Figure 21 (left panel) shows that autocracies’ dependence on exporting to democracies went down from 71% in 1999 to 55% in 2022. During the same period, democracies’ dependence on autocracies for export of their goods and services more than doubled – from 11% to 23%. In part, this change stems from some previous democracies becoming autocracies.

The pattern is similar for imports (Figure 21, right panel). Democracies’ dependence on autocracies for imports more than doubled from a low of 14% in 1998 to 31% by 2022.

In the same period, autocracies’ dependence on democracies for their imports dropped substantially from 70% to 52%.

One possibility is that some autocratic countries may have recognized trade dependence on democracies as a security concern for them long ago.

Meanwhile, democracies actively pursued closer economic relations with autocracies after the end of the Cold War. The idea that increasing trade would contribute to political liberalization (‘change through trade’) was suggested already in the 1970s, and Germany pursued it with regards to Russia even after the invasion of Crimea in 2014.

Beyond the pure numbers, autocracies are key links in many global supply chains. For example, Vietnam is a pivotal link in the global manufacturing supply chain; autocracies in the Middle East, and countries like Angola and Venezuela are suppliers of oil and gas; China, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Russia are vital sources of rare earth minerals, such as lithium, nickel, and cobalt.\textsuperscript{62} China is a concern also when it comes to vulnerabilities emerging from switching to renewable energy.\textsuperscript{63}

Russia’s weaponization of fossil fuel exports in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine made the political implications of trade dependencies for democracies visible. Concerns over the national security implications of trade dependencies on autocracies are now high on the agenda among many democracies across the world.

Finally, several rounds of Western sanctions on Russia, first in 2014 and then in 2022 and now in 2023, may have a demonstrative effect on autocracies and autocratizing countries worldwide: Export/import dependencies on democracies means being vulnerable to sanctions. That could further accentuate current trends.

In conclusion, the global wave of autocratization should be a central issue in discussions of economic and trade security among democracies.

\textbf{FIGURE 21. EXPORT/IMPORT DEPENDENCIES BETWEEN DEMOCRACIES AND AUTOCRACIES, 1992–2022}

Russia One Year after Invasion

After the invasion of Ukraine, Russia’s LDI score fell from an already very low rate of 0.10 in 2021 to 0.07 in 2022. The year of the war marked the biggest one-year score decline during Vladimir Putin’s rule.

Figure 1 shows the top 20 changing indicators for Russia over the past year. Russia scored low on many of these indicators even before the war. Even so, political repression steadily worsened after the invasion, leaving virtually no corner of society untouched.

WARTIME MEDIA AND INTERNET CENSORSHIP

Days after the announcement of the invasion of Ukraine, Russia’s parliament approved legislation that outlawed the spread of ‘false information’ about the ‘special military operation’.1 Almost all remaining independent media were banned, including the iconic liberal radio station Ekho Moskvy, TV channel Dozhd, and the pro-democratic newspaper Novaya Gazeta led by the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize co-winner Dmitry Muratov. Other independent journalists reporting on the situation in Ukraine were either forced out or jailed.

The year of war was also the most repressive in Russia’s history in terms of crackdowns on Internet free speech. More than 247,000 websites were blocked, some 9,000 of them on the grounds of censorship.2 Facebook, Instagram and multiple foreign media websites such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle, Radio Liberty, and Voice of America, are now banned.

CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESSION

The crackdown on civil society intensified even though many critical organizations had already been dismantled before the war, including Alexey Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation. Russia’s most prominent civil rights group and the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize co-winner Memorial was shut down shortly before the war. It chronicled political repression in the Soviet Union and modern Russia and sharply condemned the invasion of Ukraine.3 The Moscow Helsinki Group was dissolved amid a Kremlin campaign to muzzle criticism of the war – it was the oldest and one of the last independent human rights organizations.4

ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT STIFLED

Anti-war protests emerging across the country were violently repressed almost immediately. Almost 6,000 protesters were detained after only the third day of protests,5 and many are facing jail sentences of up to 15 years. The State Duma passed a record 653 laws6 criminalizing speech around the war or “invasion”, and any public actions aimed at “discrediting” the Russian army. Anti-war protests on a mass scale fizzled out within just weeks of the beginning of the war.

FIGURE 1. TOP 20 CHANGING INDICATORS, RUSSIA, 2021–2022

2 https://roskomsvoboda.org/post/o-blokirovkah/
3 https://www.npr.org/2022/12/10/1142087351/russia-nobel-peace-prize-memorial-war-ukraine
4 The legal process against MHG started in 2022. All its activities were banned. The liquidation was ordered on January 25, 2023.
6 https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/01/04/come-to-your-senses
There is a global shift toward less academic freedom for the average global citizen. Substantial declines span all regions and affect not only autocracies but even liberal democracies.

The global retreat in academic freedom affects more than 50% of the world’s population, or 4 billion people. Universities and scholars in 22 countries enjoy significantly less freedom today than 10 years ago.

Academic freedom has improved in only five small countries with a mere 0.7% of the world’s population. Figure 1 demonstrates this trend. The world’s most populous countries lost substantial amounts of academic freedom.

Figure 1 also shows that academic freedom is decreasing in liberal democracies that have traditionally been academic powerhouses in North America and Western Europe, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, declines are clearly related to autocratization, notably in Belarus, Hungary, Poland, and Russia. Developments in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, on the other hand, give reason for some optimism: these two countries are among the five advancers in the last decade.

Similarly, declines in academic freedom are linked to autocratization in Latin American countries such as Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Uruguay. The latter lost a record of 0.5 points in a decade.

The situation is even worse in the Asia-Pacific region. Both the number of countries and the size of the population impacted outnumber those in Latin America. While Afghanistan and Hong Kong lost the second and third most globally, the substantial declines in China and India affected 2.8 billion people.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the findings are mixed. The AFI declined in Comoros and Mauretania and advanced in Gambia and the Seychelles.

The Academic Freedom Index (AFI) is the first conceptually thorough assessment of academic freedom worldwide and a times series dataset going back to 1900. It aggregates five indicators: freedom to research and teach; freedom of academic exchange and dissemination; institutional autonomy; campus integrity; and freedom of academic and cultural expression. The AFI project is a collaborative effort initially launched in 2019 between researchers at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU), the V-Dem Institute, the Scholars at Risk Network, and the V-Dem Foundation. The project aims to inform stakeholders, provide monitoring yardsticks, alter incentive structures, challenge university rankings, facilitate research, and ultimately promote academic freedom. See the project’s website https://academic-freedom-index.net, or the page on the V-Dem website https://www.v-dem.net/our-work/research-programs/academic-freedom/.

**FIGURE 1. ACADEMIC FREEDOM INDEX, CHANGES 2012–2022**

Note: Academic freedom increased in countries above the diagonal line and decreased in countries or territories below it. Countries are labelled if the difference between 2012 and 2022 was statistically significant and substantially meaningful. The size of the points indicates the population size of the countries/territories (data from the World Bank).

For an update, see https://doi.org/10.25593/opus4-fau-21630
We are delighted to announce the launch of the V-Dem Latin American Regional Center, hosted at the Universidad Católica de Chile under the coordination of David Altman including our regional coordinators, acting as a steering committee:

- Sandra Botero, Universidad del Rosario, Bogotá
- Carlos Gervasoni, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires
- José Antonio Aguilar, CIDE, México
- Jorge Vargas Culel, Estado de la Nación, San José
- Nara Pavão, Universidad Federal de Pernambuco, Recife
- Daniel Chasquetti, Universidad de la República, Montevideo
- Martin Tanaka, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú, Lima

Following the steps of our predecessors, the V-Dem LatAm RC aims to:

- Serve as the knowledge hub on democracy and autocratization in the region.
- Foster collaboration among scholars, practitioners, and journalists on democracy promotion.
- Hold academic conferences and policy-oriented workshops in coordination with national associations on democracy and democracy promotion.
- Produce knowledge about the state of democracy in Latin America using the V-Dem database.
- Maintain the Regional Center website that publishes the above-mentioned materials.

We are also thrilled to announce that the first activity of V-Dem LatAm Center is translating this Democracy Report into Spanish, expanding the Report’s audience to about 650 million potential readers. The assistance for this endeavor comes from the Kellogg Institute for International Studies of the University of Notre Dame, Open Society Foundations, and the Swedish Embassy in Bogota.

From a Southern Cone perspective, 2023 is a significant year to launch the regional center and translate the Democracy Report: Uruguay and Chile are commemorating 50 years of their coups d’etat (June and September), and Argentina is celebrating its 40 years of re-democratization in December.

Finally, 2023 is a special year for V-Dem as we can trace our roots back to a workshop on democracy co-organized by Axel Hadenius and David Altman in Santiago, Chile, in 2003. In that context, we had the first conversation on this topic among several of the future leaders of the V-Dem team (Altman, Lindberg, Coppedge, and Teorell). That conference finished with the inconclusive but still powerful idea that something had to be done, even though it was several years before anything concrete materialized.
The countries are sorted by regime type in 2022, 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. The typology and indicator are published in Lührmann et al. 2018. Regimes of the World (RoW), politics and Governance 6(1). 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).

### **TABLE 1: REGIMES OF THE WORLD, 2012–2022**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>CHANGE FROM 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### **LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES**

LD: Liberal Democracy

### **ELECTORAL DEMOCRACIES**

ED: Electoral Democracy

### **ELECTORAL AUTOCRACIES**

EA: Electoral Autocracy

### **CLOSED AUTOCRACIES**

CA: Closed Autocracy

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

* – indicates 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
### Table 2. History of Regimes of the World by Country-Year, 1972–2022

The countries are divided by political region. Regions with higher density of population living in democracies are placed in higher position. The figure shows the history of Regimes of the World (RoW) in the last 50 years, 1972-2022, for each country. Each tile corresponds to one year and we use the PanelView R package developed by Mou, Liu, and Xu (2022) to visualize the history of RoW. The typology and indicator are published in Lührmann et al. 2018. Regimes of the World (RoW), politics and Governance 6(1).

**Legend:**
- **Closed Autocracy**
- **Electoral Autocracy**
- **Electoral Democracy**
- **Liberal Democracy**
Figure 1. COUNTRIES BY SCORE ON V-DEM’S LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI), 2012 COMPARED TO 2022

Top 50% of countries

Figure 1 shows every country’s rating on the LDI in 2022 in rank order, as well as the change over the last 10 years. Country names highlighted in blue highlight the 15 countries with significant democratization and red country names reveal which 33 countries have undergone substantial autocratization. Countries are also divided into groups from the top 10 to 50% to the bottom 50 to 10%.

Score and Confidence Intervals

Liberal Democracy Index

0.00 0.25 0.50 0.75 1.00

2012 2022

Autocratizing countries
Democratizing countries
### COUNTRY SCORES

#### Bottom 50% of countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>Autocratizing countries</th>
<th>Democratizing countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Bottom 40−50%**
  - Angola
  - Thailand
  - Zimbabwe
  - Iraq
  - Gabon
  - Guinea-Bissau
  - Tunisia
  - Kyrgyzstan
  - Zanzibar
  - Ukraine
  - Togo
  - Guinea

- **Bottom 30−40%**
  - Vietnam
  - Rwanda
  - Türkiye
  - Egypt
  - Hong Kong
  - Djibouti
  - Algeria
  - Cameroon
  - Palestine/West Bank

- **Bottom 20−30%**
  - Venezuela
  - Cambodia
  - Russia
  - Sudan
  - Palestine/Gaza
  - United Arab Emirates
  - Eswatini
  - Guinea
  - Somalia

- **Bottom 10−20%**
  - North Korea
  - Eritrea
  - Afghanistan
  - Chad
  - Syria
  - Nicaragua
  - Turkmenistan
  - China

- **Bottom 10%**
  - Afghanistan
  - Chad
  - Syria
  - Nicaragua
  - Turkmenistan
  - China

---

**Liberal Democracy Index**

- Score
- Confidence interval
- Autocratizing countries
- Democratizing countries
- 2012
- 2022

---

0.00 0.25 0.50 0.75 1.00
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Dem. Report 2023 Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score SD+/-</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score SD+/-</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score SD+/-</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score SD+/-</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score SD+/-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Democracy</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Elections</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Civic</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rule of Law</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partic. Dem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delib. Dem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>SD+/-</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Country Scores for the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) and All Components, 2022**

- **Democracy Report 2023** indicates that the country's score has increased over the past 10 years, substantively and at a statistically significant level.
- **Democracy Decrease** 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Liberal Democracy Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>0.82</th>
<th>0.054</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>0.79</th>
<th>0.072</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>0.76</th>
<th>0.056</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>03.06</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index (LDI)**
Publications from the V-Dem Team

Why Democracies Develop and Decline
Michael Coppedge, Amanda B. Edgell, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Staffan I. Lindberg (Eds.)
2022 | Cambridge University Press

- Cambridge University Press published Michael Coppedge, Amanda Edgell, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Staffan I. Lindberg, eds. Why Democracies Develop and Decline in June 2022. This book uses V-Dem data to retest all the leading hypotheses about the causes of democracy levels, upturns, and downturns. It also proposes a novel theoretical framework that orders the best explanatory factors into causal sequences, clarifying which ones have the most direct effects and which ones matter indirectly.

Each chapter adjudicates what we know about democratization, revising some of the conventional wisdom while buttressing some well-known arguments. A descriptive chapter on democratization trends extends back as far as 1789. As creators of V-Dem data, the chapter authors know how to exploit the data set’s strengths without pushing the analysis beyond what the data will support.

Chapters 3-7 examine a nearly comprehensive set of hypotheses, which include geography (climate, irrigation, mountains, islands, harbors) and demography (European migration, colonialism, religion, language, population, ethnic diversity, international influences (war, depression, contiguity, alliances, colonial ties), economic factors (income, education, urbanization, natural resources wealth and dependence, industrialization, resource mobility, economic growth, inflation, unemployment, land inequality, income inequality, wage share of income), institutions (state capacity, type of executive, parties and party systems), and social movements (organizational capacity, mobilization, pro- and anti-system movements, peaceful and violent movements).

The final chapter builds on the strongest findings from each of the preceding chapters, distilling them into an original theoretical framework that suggests how the forces of the distant past and the present work together to generate democratization that follows a punctuated equilibrium pattern.

In addition to the editors, the contributors to the volume include Svend-Erik Skaaning, John Gerring, Sirianne Dahlum, Allen Hicken, Michael Bernhard, Benjamin Denison, Paul Friesen, Lucia Tiscornia, Yang Xu, Samuel Baltz, and Fabricio Vasselai.

Featured Publications

2023 – forthcoming

Episodes of Regime Transformation
Seraphine F. Maerz, Amanda Edgell, Matthew C. Wilson, Sebastian Hellmeier, and Staffan I. Lindberg.
- Provides a new conceptualization of regime transformation as substantial and sustained changes in democratic institutions and practices, allowing studies to address both democratization and autocratization as related obverse processes. The article therefore introduces the episodes of regime transformation (ERT) dataset, spanning over 120 years, compares it to existing datasets and discusses its application in peace research.

Signaling Autocratization: Linz’s Litmus Test Indicators, and the Anti-Pluralism Index
Juraj Medzihorsky and Staffan I. Lindberg.
- Provides the first empirical test on potential early-warning signs of autocratizing leaders and parties, making use of the V-Party dataset, a new expert-coded data set on virtually all relevant political parties from 1970 to 2019.

2022

The Academic Freedom Index and Its indicators: Introduction to new global time-series V-Dem data
Janika Spannagel and Katrin Kinzelbach
2022 | Quality & Quantity
- Introduces the new expert-coded dataset including the Academic Freedom Index and its indicators, allowing for the first conceptually thorough assessment of academic freedom worldwide. The article further discusses the indexes advantages, provides details on the conceptualization of the indicators and offers a content and convergent validation of the results.

State of the world 2021: autocratization changing its nature?
Vanessa A. Boese, Martin Lundstedt, Kelly Morrison, Yuko Sato, and Staffan I. Lindberg.
2022 | Democratization (29)6: 983-1013
- Analyses the state of democracy in the world in 2021, demonstrating a global downturn in democracy and a continuing trend towards autocratization. The authors also document the changing nature of autocratization, with increasing polarization damaging democracies and misinformation on the rise. Finally, the article points to an unprecedented rise in coups signaling a shift towards more emboldened autocratic actors.
Additional Publications

2022


V-Dem Working Papers and Reports

V-DEM WORKING PAPERS

2022


V-DEM POLICY BRIEFS

2022


V-DEM COUNTRY BRIEFS

2022

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 3,700 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 the ordinal categories which experts use to code their judgments. Our model converts these manifest items (expert ratings) to a single continuous latent scale and thereby estimates values of the concept.

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 of reliability and scale perception 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 coding scale that experts originally used to code each case. These estimates typically run from 0 to 4; users can refer to the V-Dem codebook to substantively interpret them. Finally, we provide ordinal versions of each variable for applications in which users require ordered categorical values. Each of the latter two data versions are also accompanied by credible regions.

### Versions of the V-Dem Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Recommended use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>osp</td>
<td>Interval</td>
<td>Linearized transformation of the model estimates on the original scale</td>
<td>Substantive interpretation of graphs and data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ord</td>
<td>Ordinal</td>
<td>Most likely ordinal value of model estimates on the original scale</td>
<td>Substantive interpretation of graphs and data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_codehigh / _codelow</td>
<td>Interval</td>
<td>One standard deviation above (_codehigh) and below (_codelow) a point estimate</td>
<td>Evaluating differences over time within units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sd</td>
<td>Interval</td>
<td>Standard deviation of the interval estimate</td>
<td>Creating confidence intervals based on user needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 not a result of measurement error.

### References


DEMSCORE (Democracy, Environment, Migration, Social policy, Conflict, and Representation) is building a world-leading hub for contextual data with user-friendly access to documentation, and online visualization tools. The data, provided by some of the world’s leading research infrastructures, is open access and free to use worldwide.

DEMSCORE facilitates large-scale comparative analyses on the grand challenges of today’s societies, including those caused by population aging, rapidly changing migration patterns, increased social inequalities, accelerating globalization, recurrent financial crises, political deadlocks, violent conflict, and the rise of populism. The interdisciplinary nature of DEMSCORE data is essential to advance adequate policy responses to such complex, and interrelated societal challenges facing the world today.

Users are offered harmonized social science data of the highest quality merged using an innovative and systematic data harmonization methodology. It maximizes usability in the measurement of contextual data with over 20,000+ variables across nearly all countries in the world, from 1789 to the present.

A fully normalized, joint PostgreSQL database, sophisticated programming, and a web-based interface make it possible to select a series of variables from all six partnering data-infrastructures, and get a custom-designed dataset and codebook generated automatically in a matter of seconds. This makes DEMSCORE an enormously time efficient resource compared to merging several datasets by hand.

To find out more, and download your own dataset, visit: http://www.demscore.se
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 A1.2. EXPLANATION OF THE V-DEM LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX**

- **V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index**
  - **Liberal Component Index**
    - Equality before the law and individual liberty index
    - Judicial constraints on the executive index
    - Legislative constraints on the executive index
  - **Electoral Democracy Index**
    - Suffrage
    - Elected officials
    - Clean elections
    - Freedom of association
    - Freedom of expression and alternative sources of information

1 indicator  
16 indicators  
8 indicators  
6 indicators  
9 indicators  
20 indicators  
5 indicators  
4 indicators
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, 1902/1962–2022

FIGURE A2.2. THE V-DEM ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)
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 A3.2. 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, 1902/1962–2022**

**FIGURE A4.2. THE V-DEM EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX (ECI)**

- Equal protection index
  - Social class equality in respect for civil liberties
  - Social group equality in respect for civil liberties
  - Weaker civil liberties population

- Equal access index
  - Power distributed by gender
  - Power distributed by socioeconomic position
  - Power distributed by social group

- Equal distribution of resources index
  - Encompassingness
  - Means-tested vs. universalistic welfare
  - Educational equality
  - Health equality
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, 1902/1962–2022

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