Headquarters:

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

With support from:
Contents

1 Summary .................................................................................................................. 4
  1.1 V-Dem .................................................................................................................. 4
  1.2 Disclaimer ............................................................................................................ 4

2 Suggested Citation ..................................................................................................... 5

3 Datasets ..................................................................................................................... 6
  3.1 Country-Year: V-Dem Core .................................................................................. 6
  3.2 Country-Year: V-Dem .......................................................................................... 6
  3.3 Country-Year: V-Dem Extended .......................................................................... 6
  3.4 Country-Date: V-Dem .......................................................................................... 6
  3.5 Coder-Level-Dataset ............................................................................................ 6
  3.6 Note: Aggregation from Country-Date to Country-Year ....................................... 6

4 Countries .................................................................................................................. 7

5 Identifier Variables in the V-Dem Datasets ................................................................ 9
  5.1 Country Name (country_name) ............................................................................ 9
  5.2 Time-Specific Country Name (histname) .............................................................. 9
  5.3 V-Dem Country ID (country_id) .......................................................................... 9
  5.4 Country Name Abbreviation (country_text_id) ....................................................... 9
  5.5 Year (year) ........................................................................................................... 9
  5.6 Historical Date (historical_date) ......................................................................... 9
  5.7 Start of Coding Period (codingstart) .................................................................... 9
  5.8 Contemporary Start of Coding Period (codingstart_contemp) .............................. 9
  5.9 Historical Start of Coding Period (codingstart_hist) .......................................... 9
  5.10 Gap in Coding Period Starts (gapstart) ............................................................. 10
  5.11 Gap in Coding Period Ends (gapend) ............................................................... 10
  5.12 End of Coding Period (codingend) ................................................................... 10
  5.13 Historical End of Coding Period (codingend_contemp) ..................................... 10
  5.14 Historical End of Coding Period (codingend_hist) ........................................... 10
  5.15 V-Dem Project (project) .................................................................................... 10
  5.16 Historical V-Dem coding (historical) ............................................................... 10
  5.17 COW Code (COWcode) ................................................................................... 10
  5.18 Number of Coders per Country, Variable and Year/Date (v2*_nr) ..................... 10

6 Variable Types .......................................................................................................... 11
  6.1 Type A*: Variables coded by Research Assistants ............................................. 11
  6.2 Type A: Variables coded by Project Managers and Research Assistants .......... 11
  6.3 Type B: Variables coded by Country Coordinators or Research Assistants ....... 11
  6.4 Type C: Variables coded by Country Experts ..................................................... 11
  6.5 Type A + C: Variables coded by Country Experts and crosschecked by Research Assistants ........................................................................................................... 11
  6.6 Type D: Indices .................................................................................................... 11
  6.7 Type E: Non-V-Dem variables .............................................................................. 11

7 Variable Versions and Suffixes .................................................................................. 12
  7.1 Relative Scale ...................................................................................................... 12
7.2 Original Scale (*osp) .................................................. 12
7.3 Ordinal Scale (*ord) ................................................... 13

8 V-Dem High-Level Democracy Indices .................................. 14
  8.1 Electoral democracy index (D) (v2x_polyarchy) .................. 14
  8.2 Liberal democracy index (D) (v2x_libdem) ...................... 14
  8.3 Participatory democracy index (D) (v2x_partipdem) ............ 15
  8.4 Deliberative democracy index (D) (v2x_delibdem) .......... 15
  8.5 Egalitarian democracy index (D) (v2x_egaldem) ............ 15

9 Reference Documents ................................................... 17
  9.1 Codebook ............................................................. 17
  9.2 Methodology ........................................................ 17
  9.3 Country Units ........................................................ 17
  9.4 Structure of V-Dem Indices, Components, and Indicators ........ 17
  9.5 Organization and Management ..................................... 17
1 Summary

1.1 V-Dem

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) produces the largest global dataset on democracy with some 19 million data points for 201 countries from 1789 to 2017. Involving over 3,000 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.

1.2 Disclaimer

This quickstart guide is largely an extraction of text from the codebook, but is compiled as a means for a first quick look at the V-dem dataset. For reference, detailed explanations, cautionary notes, and information on all variables, please view the codebook and our other reference documents.
2 Suggested Citation

*Nota bene:* If a variable(s) drawn from the V-Dem dataset plays an important role in your project (published or unpublished), please use all the suggested citations below:

- **V-Dem Dataset:**

- **V-Dem Codebook:**

- **V-Dem Methodology:**

- **V-Dem Country Coding Units:**

- **V-Dem Organization and Management:**
3 Datasets

3.1 Country-Year: V-Dem Core
The five V-Dem Democracy Indices and the indicators constituting them.

3.2 Country-Year: V-Dem
All 350+ V-Dem indicators and indices
STATA-IC version excludes HPD intervals for the ordinal scale and standard deviation for the relative and original scale of the Measurement Model output.

3.3 Country-Year: V-Dem Extended
All 350+ V-Dem indicators and indices + over 300 other indicators from other data sources.

3.4 Country-Date: V-Dem
All 350+ V-Dem indicators and indices
STATA-IC version excludes HPD intervals for the ordinal scale and standard deviation for the relative and original scale of the Measurement Model output.

3.5 Coder-Level-Dataset
A Coder-Level-Dataset is currently provided upon request.

3.6 Note: Aggregation from Country-Date to Country-Year
C-variables, ratio/percentage variables, and High-Level/Mid-Level Democracy indices are aggregated from the country-date level to the country-year level by the day-weighted mean. Ordinal A-variables and A*-variables are aggregated by taking the last observation in the year with one exception: event-specific dichotomies or event-specific ordinal variables, which mostly concerns elections or election related data, are aggregated by max (meaning the highest observed value for a given year is retained) to reflect that an "event" of the coded type occurred within the year.
4 Countries

The following country units are included in the V-Dem Dataset and their year coverage. Some countries are coded prior to independence, and some have gaps in their coding periods, for a more detailed description of the country units and their year coverage see the V-Dem Country Coding Units document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
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<td>1789-2017</td>
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<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>1789-1867</td>
<td>Hanover</td>
<td>357</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
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<td>Hesse-Darmstadt</td>
<td>359</td>
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<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1919-2017</td>
<td>Hesse-Kassel</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>1789-1866</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burma/Myanmar</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Honduras</td>
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<td>Burundi</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1916-2017</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>167</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
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<td>108</td>
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<td>Iceland</td>
<td>168</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>56</td>
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<td>1920-2017</td>
<td>Iran</td>
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<td>1920-2017</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<td>1789-2017</td>
<td>Israel</td>
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<td>1948-2017</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
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<td>1861-2017</td>
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<td>153</td>
<td>1900-2017</td>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1900-2017</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>83</td>
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<td>154</td>
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<td>156</td>
<td>1900-2017</td>
<td>Korea, North</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1945-2017</td>
</tr>
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<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>1918-2017</td>
<td>Korea, South</td>
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<td>1789-2017</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1789-2017</td>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>1789–1867</td>
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<td>1903–2017</td>
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<td>124</td>
<td>1789–1917</td>
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<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>1939–2017</td>
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<td>125</td>
<td>1817–2017</td>
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<td>Sudan</td>
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<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>136</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Tuscany</td>
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<td>Two Sicilies</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>1789–1860</td>
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<td>209</td>
<td>1918–1948</td>
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<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>207</td>
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<td>1789–1870</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>1900–2017</td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
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<td>1825–2017</td>
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<td>Uzbekistan</td>
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<td>352</td>
<td>1789–1859</td>
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<td>2006–2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1789–2017</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1789–2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1789–2017</td>
<td>Württemberg</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>1789–1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1789–2017</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1789–2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1900–2017</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1911–2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1789–2017</td>
<td>Zanzibar</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1856–2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1789–2017</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1900–2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sao Tomé and Príncipe</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>1900–2017</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of countries**: 201
5 Identifier Variables in the V-Dem Datasets

5.1 Country Name (country_name)
Name of coded country. A V-Dem country is a political unit enjoying at least some degree of functional and/or formal sovereignty. For more details on country units consult the V-Dem Country Coding Units document. Response: Text.

5.2 Time-Specific Country Name (histname)
Time-specific name of coded country. Many countries go by different names in different time-periods, for example due to name changes, changes in territory, colonization, occupation, or independence. This variable contains a brief description of the identity of each polity that comprises a country’s history. This variable is based on the V-Dem Country Coding Units document. Response: Text.

5.3 V-Dem Country ID (country_id)
Unique country ID designated for each country. A list of countries and their corresponding IDs used in the V-Dem dataset can be found in the country table in the codebook, as well as in the V-Dem Country Coding Units document. Response: Numeric.

5.4 Country Name Abbreviation (country_text_id)
Abbreviated country names. Response: Text.

5.5 Year (year)
V-Dem year coded annually from 1789-2017. This variable is included in the V-Dem Country Year as well as Country Date datasets. Response: Date.

5.6 Historical Date (historical_date)
This variable is included in the V-Dem Country Date dataset. The default date is 31st December, as in 2017-12-31, referring to the time span from 01-01 to 12-31 in a respective year. Additionally, specific changes, such as the appointment of a Head of State, are coded on the specific date within a certain year. Thus, a code can change within a year, and will be reflected in the 12-31 date. Response: Date.

5.7 Start of Coding Period (codingstart)
V-Dem country coding starts in 1789, or from when a country first enjoyed at least some degree of functional and/or formal sovereignty. For detailed information, please see the V-Dem Country Coding Units document. Response: Date.

5.8 Contemporary Start of Coding Period (codingstart_contemp)
This variable indicates the coding start for the countries coded by Contemporary V-Dem. Response: Date.

5.9 Historical Start of Coding Period (codingstart_hist)
This variable indicates the coding start for the countries coded by Historical V-Dem. Response: Date.
5.10 Gap in Coding Period Starts (gapstart)

Time periods when a country does not fulfill V-Dem’s coding period criteria are not coded. The date that indicates the gap start is the last date coded before the gap. For more details about V-Dem country coding periods, please see the V-Dem Country Coding Units document. Response: Date.

5.11 Gap in Coding Period Ends (gapend)

The periods of when a country does not fulfill V-Dem’s coding period criteria are not coded. The date that indicates the gap end is the first date coded after the gap. For more details about V-Dem country coding periods, please see the V-Dem Country Coding Units document. Response: Date.

5.12 End of Coding Period (codingend)

V-Dem country coding ends in 2017, or from when a country formally stopped enjoying at least some degree of functional and/or formal sovereignty. For detailed information, please see the V-Dem Country Coding Units document. Response: Date.

5.13 Historical End of Coding Period (codingend_contemp)

This variable indicates when the coding ends for countries coded by the Contemporary V-Dem project. Response: Date.

5.14 Historical End of Coding Period (codingend_hist)

This variable indicates when the coding ends for countries coded by the Historical V-Dem Project. Response: Date.

5.15 V-Dem Project (project)

This variable indicates which V-Dem project coded that country-year: Contemporary V-Dem (0), Historical V-Dem (1), or both (2).

5.16 Historical V-Dem coding (historical)

This variable indicates if the Historical V-Dem project coded a country at any time: No (0), Yes (1).

5.17 COW Code (COWcode)

COW country codes according to the Correlates of War Project (2016). Response: Numeric.

5.18 Number of Coders per Country, Variable and Year/Date (v2*_nr)

The number of V-Dem Country Experts (regular coders, bridge- and lateral coders) who provided data on country, variable and year. V-Dem’s methodology is based on the assumption that we have a minimum of five Country Experts for every single country-variable-year. Sometimes, however, we end up with fewer than five Country Experts. From v7 of the Country-Year, and the Country-Date type datasets, we provide all data we have for full transparency. By providing the number of Country Experts for each country-variable-year/date, we suggest that users primarily base analyses on observations based on five or more coders. We strongly advise against using observations based on three or fewer coders. This concerns all C type variables. Response: Numeric.
6 Variable Types

The V-Dem Codebook divides variables into six different variable types:

6.1 Type A*: Variables coded by Research Assistants

This data is based on extant sources and is factual in nature. Country Experts indicate their confidence for this pre-coded data.

6.2 Type A: Variables coded by Project Managers and Research Assistants

This data is based on extant sources and is factual in nature.

6.3 Type B: Variables coded by Country Coordinators or Research Assistants

This person is typically a graduate student or recent graduate who is from the country in question. These variables are also factual in nature.

6.4 Type C: Variables coded by Country Experts

A Country Expert is typically a scholar or professional with deep knowledge of a country and of a particular political institution. Generally, that person is a citizen or resident of the country being coded. Multiple experts (usually 5 or more) code each variable. For more information about Country Experts, please see Methodology document.

6.5 Type A + C: Variables coded by Country Experts and crosschecked by Research Assistants

6.6 Type D: Indices

Variables composed of type A, B, or C variables. This data may be accomplished by adding a denominator (e.g., per capita), by creating a cumulative scale (Total number of...), or by aggregating larger concepts (e.g., components or indices of democracy).

6.7 Type E: Non-V-Dem variables

If we import a variable from another source without doing any original coding, except for perhaps imputing missing data, it is not considered a V-Dem product. These variables are found in the section of the Codebook labeled "Background Factors" or "Other Democracy Indices and Indicators." If, however, we gather data from a number of sources and combine them in a more than purely mechanical fashion (requiring some judgment on our part), we regard this as a V-Dem product and classify it as type A, B, or C. All "E" variables are included in the codebook except those drawn from sources that have more than 30 variables such as Archigos (Goemans et al.), BDM (Bueno de Mesquita et al.), Henisz/POLCON (2000, 2002), Miller (Democratic Pieces), Performance of Nations (Kugler and Tammen), PEI (Norris et al.), PIPE (Przeworski et al.), QoG (Quality of Government). For these variables, we ask users to consult separate codebooks, as listed above.
7 Variable Versions and Suffixes

The V-Dem Dataset contains three versions of the variables coded by country experts (type C variables):

7.1 Relative Scale

"Relative Scale" — Measurement Model Output:
This version has no special suffix (e.g. v2elmulp). This version of the variables provides country-year (country-date in the alternative dataset) point estimates from the V-Dem measurement model (see Pemstein et al. 2017). The measurement model aggregates the ratings provided by multiple country experts and, taking disagreement and measurement error into account, produces a probability distribution over country-year scores on a standardized interval scale (see the V-Dem Methodology document). The point estimates are the median values of these distributions for each country-year. The scale of a measurement model variable is similar to a normal ("Z") score (e.g. typically between -5 and 5, with 0 approximately representing the mean for all country-years in the sample) though it does not necessarily follow a normal distribution. For most purposes, these are the preferred versions of the variables for time series regression and other estimation strategies.

"Relative Scale Measure of Uncertainty" — Measurement Model Highest Posterior Density (HPD) Intervals:
This version has the suffixes: "codelow" and "codehigh" (e.g. v2elmulp_codelow and v2elmulp_codehigh). These two kinds of variables ["code low" and "code high"] demarcate the interval in which the measurement model places 68 percent of the probability mass for each country-year score, which is approximately equivalent to one standard deviation upper and lower bounds. If the underlying posterior distribution is skewed, the HPDs reflect this with unequal distances between the point estimate and the high and low estimates. We also provide a standard calculation for standard deviation which is marked with the suffix "sd" (e.g., v2elmulp_sd). The SD might be used to compute the standard frequentist confidence intervals.

7.2 Original Scale (*osp)

"Original Scale" — Linearized Original Scale Posterior Prediction:
This version has the suffix ".osp." (e.g. v2elmulp osp). In this version of the variables, we have linearly translated the measurement model point estimates back to the original ordinal scale of each variable (e.g. 0-4 for v2elmulp osp) as an interval measure. The decimals in the osp version indicate the distance between the point estimate from the linearized measurement model posterior prediction and the threshold for reaching the next level on the original ordinal scale. Thus, a osp value of 1.25 indicates that the median measurement model posterior predicted value was closer to the ordinal value of 1 than 2 on the original scale. Since there is no conventional theoretical justification for linearly mapping ordinal posterior predictions onto an interval scale, these scores should primarily be used for heuristic purposes. However, since the osp version maps onto the coding criteria found in the V-Dem Codebook, and is strongly correlated with the Measurement Model output (typically at .98 or higher), some users may find the osp version useful in estimating quantities such as marginal effects with a clear substantive interpretation. Using the "Ordinal Scale" estimates—or incorporating the properties of ordinal probit models into the estimation procedure—is generally preferable to using the osp estimates in statistical analyses. That said, if a user uses osp data in statistical analyses it is imperative that she first confirm that the results are compatible with estimations using Measurement Model output.

"Original Scale Measure of Uncertainty" — Linearized Original Scale HPD Intervals:
This version has the suffixes - "codelow" and "codehigh" (e.g. v2elmulp_osp_codelow and v2elmulp_osp_codehigh). We estimate these quantities in a similar manner as the Measurement Model Highest Posterior Density Intervals. These two variables ["code low" and "code high"] demarcate the interval in which the measurement model places 70 percent of the probability mass for each country-year score, which is approximately equivalent to one standard deviation upper and lower bounds. If the underlying posterior distribution is skewed, the HPDs reflect this with unequal distances between
the point estimate and the high and low estimates. We also provide a standard calculation for standard deviation which is marked with the suffix "sd" (e.g., v2elmulpar_sd). The SD might be used to compute the standard frequentist confidence intervals.

7.3 Ordinal Scale (*ord)

"Ordinal Scale" — Measurement Model Estimates of Original Scale Value:
This version has the suffix ",ord" (e.g. v2elmulpar_ord). This method translates the measurement model estimates back to the original ordinal scale of a variable (as represented in the Codebook) after taking coder disagreement and measurement error into account. More precisely, it represents the most likely ordinal value on the original codebook scale into which a country-year would fall, given the average coder’s usage of that scale. More specifically, we assign each country-year a value that corresponds to its integerized median ordinal highest posterior probability category over Measurement Model output.

"Ordinal Scale Measure of Uncertainty" — Original Scale Value HPD Intervals:
This version has the suffixes - "codelow" and "codehigh" (e.g. v2elmulpar_ord_codelow and v2elmulpar_ord_codehigh). We estimate these values in a similar manner as the Measurement Model Highest Posterior Density Intervals. These two variables ["code low" and "code high"] demarcate the interval in which the measurement model places 70 percent of the probability mass for each country-year score, which is approximately equivalent to one standard deviation upper and lower bounds. If the underlying posterior distribution is skewed, the HPDs reflect this with unequal distances between the point estimate and the high and low estimates. We also provide a standard calculation for standard deviation which is marked with the suffix "sd" (e.g. v2elmulpar_sd). The SD might be used to compute the standard frequentist confidence intervals.
8 V-Dem High-Level Democracy Indices

The entries for all V-Dem variables in our dataset are available in our codebook.

8.1 Electoral democracy index (D) (v2x_polyarchy)

Project Manager(s): Jan Teorell

Question: To what extent is the ideal of electoral democracy in its fullest sense achieved?

Clarification: The electoral principle of democracy seeks to embody the core value of making rulers responsive to citizens, achieved through electoral competition for the electorate’s approval under circumstances when suffrage is extensive; political and civil society organizations can operate freely; elections are clean and not marred by fraud or systematic irregularities; and elections affect the composition of the chief executive of the country. In between elections, there is freedom of expression and an independent media capable of presenting alternative views on matters of political relevance. In the V-Dem conceptual scheme, electoral democracy is understood as an essential element of any other conception of representative democracy — liberal, participatory, deliberative, egalitarian, or some other.

Scale: Interval, from low to high (0-1).

Source(s): v2x_freexp_altinf v2x_frassoc_thick v2x_suffr v2xel_frefair v2x_elecoff

Data release: 6-8. Release 1-5 used a different, preliminary aggregation formula.

Aggregation: The index is formed by taking the average of, on the one hand, the weighted average of the indices measuring freedom of association thick (v2x_frassoc_thick), clean elections (v2xel_frefair), freedom of expression (v2x_freexp_altinf), elected officials (v2x_elecoff), and suffrage (v2x_suffr) and, on the other, the five-way multiplicative interaction between those indices. This is half way between a straight average and strict multiplication, meaning the average of the two. It is thus a compromise between the two most well known aggregation formulas in the literature, both allowing partial “compensation” in one sub-component for lack of polyarchy in the others, but also punishing countries not strong in one sub-component according to the “weakest link” argument. The aggregation is done at the level of Dahl’s sub-components with the one exception of the non-electoral component. The index is aggregated using this formula:

\[
v2x\text{\textunderscore polyarchy} = 0.5 \times MPI + 0.5 \times API
\]

\[
= 0.5 \times (v2x\text{\textunderscore elecoff} \times v2xel\text{\textunderscore frefair} \times v2x\text{\textunderscore frassoc\textunderscore thick}\text{\textunderscore }v2x\text{\textunderscore suffr} \times v2x\text{\textunderscore freexp\textunderscore altinf})
\]

\[
+ 0.5 \times \left((1/8) \times v2x\text{\textunderscore elecoff} + (1/4) \times v2xel\text{\textunderscore frefair}
\right) + (1/4) \times v2x\text{\textunderscore frassoc\textunderscore thick} + (1/8) \times v2x\text{\textunderscore suffr}
\]

\[
+ (1/4) \times v2x\text{\textunderscore freexp\textunderscore altinf)
\]

Citation: Teorell et al. (2016, V-Dem Working Paper Series 2016:25); V-Dem Codebook (see suggested citation at the top of this document).

8.2 Liberal democracy index (D) (v2x_libdem)

Project Manager(s): Jan Teorell

Question: To what extent is the ideal of liberal democracy achieved?

Clarification: The liberal principle of democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The liberal model takes a "negative" view of political power insofar as it judges the quality of democracy by the limits placed on government. This is achieved by constitutionally protected civil liberties, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power. To make this a measure of liberal democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account.

Scale: Interval, from low to high (0-1).

Source(s): v2x_liberal v2x_polyarchy
Data release: 4-8. Release 1, 2, and 3 used a different, preliminary aggregation formula.

Aggregation: The index is aggregated using this formula:

\[ v_{2x_\text{partipdem}} = 0.25 \times v_{2x_\text{polyarchy}}^{1.585} + 0.25 \times v_{2x_\text{liberal}} + 0.5 \times v_{2x_\text{partip}} + 0.5 \times v_{2x_\text{polyarchy}}^{1.585} \times v_{2x_\text{liberal}} \]

Citation: Coppedge et al. (2015, V-Dem Working Paper Series 2015:6); V-Dem Codebook (see suggested citation at the top of this document).

8.3 Participatory democracy index (D) (v2x_partipdem)

Project Manager(s): Jan Teorell

Question: To what extent is the ideal of participatory democracy achieved?

Clarification: The participatory principle of democracy emphasizes active participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral. It is motivated by uneasiness about a bedrock practice of electoral democracy: delegating authority to representatives. Thus, direct rule by citizens is preferred, wherever practicable. This model of democracy thus takes suffrage for granted, emphasizing engagement in civil society organizations, direct democracy, and subnational elected bodies. To make it a measure of participatory democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account.

Scale: Interval, from low to high (0-1).

Source(s): v2x_polyarchy v2x_partip

Data release: 4-8. Release 1-3 used a different, preliminary aggregation formula.

Aggregation: The index is aggregated using this formula:

\[ v_{2x_\text{partipdem}} = 0.25 \times v_{2x_\text{polyarchy}}^{1.585} + 0.25 \times v_{2x_\text{partip}} + 0.5 \times v_{2x_\text{polyarchy}}^{1.585} \times v_{2x_\text{partip}} \]

Citation: Coppedge et al. (2015, V-Dem Working Paper Series 2015:6); V-Dem Codebook (see suggested citation at the top of this document).

8.4 Deliberative democracy index (D) (v2x_delibdem)

Project Manager(s): Jan Teorell

Question: To what extent is the ideal of deliberative democracy achieved?

Clarification: The deliberative principle of democracy focuses on 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. To make it a measure of not only the deliberative principle but also of democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account.

Scale: Interval, from low to high (0-1).

Source(s): v2x_delib v2x_polyarchy

Data release: 4-8. Release 1-3 used a different, preliminary aggregation formula.

Aggregation: The index is aggregated using this formula:

\[ v_{2x_\text{delibdem}} = 0.25 \times v_{2x_\text{polyarchy}}^{1.585} + 0.25 \times v_{2x_\text{delib}} + 0.5 \times v_{2x_\text{polyarchy}}^{1.585} \times v_{2x_\text{delib}} \]

Citation: Coppedge et al. (2015, V-Dem Working Paper Series 2015:6); V-Dem Codebook (see suggested citation at the top of this document).

8.5 Egalitarian democracy index (D) (v2x_egaldem)

Project Manager(s): Rachel Sigman, Staffan Lindberg

Question: To what extent is the ideal of egalitarian democracy achieved?
**Clarification:** The egalitarian principle of democracy holds that material and immaterial inequalities inhibit the exercise of formal rights and liberties, and diminish the ability of citizens from all social groups to participate. Egalitarian democracy is achieved when 1 rights and freedoms of individuals are protected equally across all social groups; and 2 resources are distributed equally across all social groups; 3 groups and individuals enjoy equal access to power. To make it a measure of egalitarian democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account.

**Scale:** Interval, from low to high (0-1).

**Source(s):** \( v_{2x_{egal}} v_{2x_{polyarchy}} \)

**Data release:** 5-8. Release 1-4 used a different, preliminary aggregation formula.

**Aggregation:** The index is aggregated using this formula:

\[
v_{2x_{egaldem}} = .25 \times v_{2x_{polyarchy}^{1.585}} + .25 \times v_{2x_{egal}} + .5 \times v_{2x_{polyarchy}^{1.585}} \times v_{2x_{egal}}
\]

**Citation:** Sigman et al. (2015, V-Dem Working Paper Series 2015:22); Coppedge et al. 2015, V-Dem Working Paper Series 2015:6; V-Dem Codebook (see suggested citation at the top of this document).
9  Reference Documents

9.1 Codebook

The codebook is available at:
https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/64/ad/64ad9308-45fa-473e-8e2b-e1c0e4e421e6/v-dem_codebook_v8.pdf

9.2 Methodology

The Methodology document is available at:
https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/5a/f1/5af198e9-f3e8-4619-b9fd-a8387fde22a5/v-dem_methodology_v8.pdf

9.3 Country Units

The detailed Country Units document is available at:
https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/40/b4/40b4e124-de8d-4102-87dc-aaeb768ad4ee/v-dem_country_coding_units_v8.pdf

9.4 Structure of V-Dem Indices, Components, and Indicators

The Structure of V-Dem Indices, Components, and Indicators document is available at:

9.5 Organization and Management

The Organization and Management document is available at: