

Codebook v.1.1

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Notes:

The data covers 142 countries and territories. It reflects the situation mainly between 6 and 13 April 2020 (for the precise date see the variable *time*). It was collected by the authors as well as the following contributors using a variety of official sources and news articles, which are reported in variables with the suffix *_source*: Oumar Ba, Lina Benabdallah, Lydia Finzel, Sandra Grahn, Berker Kavasoglu, Peter R. Licari, Haruo Nakagawa, Dragana Svraka, and Norihiko Yamada. We thank them for input and contributions of case-specific knowledge.

This is the first version of the data set and we welcome feedback and corrections to anna.luehrmann@v-dem.net

Recommended comparative sources:

<https://www.icnl.org/covid19tracker/>

<https://www.acaps.org/covid19-government-measures-dataset>

<https://coronanet-project.org/>

<https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/oxford-covid-19-government-response-tracker>

<https://www.garda.com/crisis24/coronavirus-updates?referer=map>

<https://www.democratic-decay.org/databases>

<https://www.idea.int/news-media/multimedia-reports/global-overview-covid-19-impact-elections>

Background and motivation

Emergency provisions - such as the ones in place in many countries during the current Covid-19 crisis - enable states to temporarily limit personal freedoms and checks and balances to react effectively in situations of crisis. However, previous research shows that some leaders abuse such tools to foster more permanent autocratization by (a) imposing measures that are disproportionate to the severity of crises and (b) keeping emergency provisions in place once the factual situation improves (see Lührmann and Rooney, 2019). How can states effectively respond to crises without undermining democratic standards, freedom and human rights? We aim to track state responses to the Covid-19 pandemic as illustrative of the varieties of emergency measures and their execution, addressing how these decisions affect short- and long-term prospects for the political regime and democracy.

Driven by the very real risk that the corona pandemic will be abused and contribute to further autocratization, our proposed project addresses the following questions: Which countries enacted what type of emergency provisions? To what extent were civil liberties and political institutions that provided constraints on executive power undermined or even suspended? Did the measures meet the UN standards of being “proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory”? Which countries went back to the status quo after the end of the crisis and what countries did not do so?

Our project has the aim to develop a “Democracy and Freedom in the Wake of Covid-19” online tracking tool. Based on a systematic and regularly updated analysis of enacted policies, this tool allows us to profile countries regarding their democracy and freedom-related Covid-19 measures, report on monthly or - depending on our capacities - even weekly changes and swiftly flag those countries that are abusing the current crisis to dismantle democracy and freedoms. Given the currently accelerating worldwide trend of autocratization (V-Dem Democracy Report 2020), we consider the close monitoring of such cases of “pandemic backsliding” to be a truly important and pressing issue. Our systematic and fact-checked data will be critical for social scientific research on the above-mentioned questions as well as an invaluable resource for policy makers, human rights advocates and journalists.

To build the “Democracy and Freedom during Covid-19” tool, we have started the basic version of the project with the help of factual coding. Provided we receive more funds, we will make use of cutting-edge computational methods to automatically collect and analyze official statements, speeches and other documents published online.

General instructions to coders

- The aim is to capture exceptions and deviations of the key aspects of democracy during the Covid-19 crisis which are included in V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index.
- We aim to capture the deviation from the status quo; thus, the questions do not aim to get at the level of these freedoms before the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis.
- When the codebook mentions "measures" or "emergency measures", we refer to emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.
- In general, all sources should be noted and there will be text fields for comments after almost every response. There will be a limitation on the min/max amount of words (including search terms).
- Coding should reflect the situation on the day coded.
- We are aware that a substantial subnational variation may exist in the measures addressing Covid-19 and their implementation. We ask one specific question on this topic. For all other questions, please consider the average situation across the country.
- Key terms are used in the same way as in the V-Dem project; for definitions refer to the V-Dem codebook (https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/28/14/28140582-43d6-4940-948f-a2df84a31893/v-dem_codebook_v10.pdf).

Section I. Pandemic Backsliding Index (PBI)

Pandemic Backsliding Index captures to what extent democratic standards are at the risk of declining during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The variable *pan_index* includes three categories:

- Green: Low risk
- Yellow: Medium risk
- Red: High risk

The table below details how the indicators of the dataset are used to form the categories. They are aggregated with the logic of sufficiency. This means that if one indicator falls in the higher category, the whole index is coded as falling in the higher category.

The variable *pan_index_black* includes a fourth category, which is coded if the [Regimes of the World](#)- measure (*v2x_regime*) is 0. Thus, it overrides all other codings.

- Black: Closed autocracy

	Low risk (green)	Medium risk (orange)	High risk (red)
<i>Expansion of executive power without sunset clause and oversight</i>	-	No end date (Q2=0) & No Federalism (Q5 smaller 2) & No Parliamentary oversight (Q13 larger or equal to 3)	-
<i>Q6. Discriminatory measures</i>	0 - No	1- De-facto	2 - De-jure
<i>Q7. Derogation of non-derogable rights</i>	0- No	0- No	Yes on any item (1 - Right to life (Article 6); 2 - Freedom from torture and cruel/inhuman treatment (Article 7); 3 - Prohibition of slavery and servitude (Article 8 I & II); 4 - Prohibition of imprisonment due to inability to fulfill a contractual obligation (Article 11); 5 - No conviction for a crime which was not a crime at the time of commitment (Article 15); 6 - Right as a person before the law (Article 16).) ¹
<i>Q10. Restrictions of media freedom</i>	0: No	1: Somewhat. The emergency measures put some limitations on how the media can report on Covid-19	2: To a large extent. The emergency measures put strict limitations on how the media can report on Covid-19 in ways that also negatively affect the media's ability to critically report on the government's actions more broadly.

¹ The ICCPR also mentions Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 17) as non-derogable right. While we agree that this right should remain non-derogable even during a global pandemic, it may appear proportionate under some circumstances to limit large gatherings (including religious services) in order to limit the spread of the virus. Therefore, we have not included it here.

			3: Almost completely. The emergency measures require that all or almost all media reporting on Covid-19 reflect the official state discourse, and critical reporting on other issues related to the government are more or less closed as a result as well.
<i>Q11. Punishments for violating the restrictions on media freedoms under the emergency provisions</i>	No	Yes, fines	3: Yes, imprisonment. 4: Yes, revoking of licenses.
<i>Q12. Limitations of electoral freedom and fairness</i>	No (q12_2== 0 & q12_9 == 0)	Yes - somewhat. (q12_2: Enhancing remote voting options only for a selected group of citizens).	Yes - severely. (q12_9: Campaign restrictions for opposition parties and candidates)
<i>Limitations of the role of the legislature</i>	Q13_0- Not at all. The lawmaking role of the national legislature is not affected. Q13_1- Very little. The legislature has given the executive the power to relatively widely interpret Covid-19 related laws, but not to rule by decree. Q13_2 - Somewhat. The executive has the right to rule by decree on several, narrowly Covid-19 related issues such as deciding on physical distance measures and measures to support the health system.	Q13_3 - To a large extent. The executive has the right to rule by decree on many issues, which may exceed Covid-19 related issues due to vague formulation in emergency laws.	Q13_4- Completely. The legislature has been dissolved/suspended/equivalent with reference to Covid-19. Q14_9 - The legislature has been dissolved/suspended/equivalent with reference to Covid-19.

<p>Q15. <i>Judicial oversight</i></p>	<p>Not at all or slightly limited. (q15 = 0 or 1)</p>	<p>2 - Somewhat. The High Court's power to conduct normal executive oversight over measures taken by the executive to address the Covid-19 pandemic are limited, but oversight in other areas is not affected.</p>	<p>3 - To a large extent. The emergency measures exclude measures related to Covid 19 from judicial oversight and the High Court's ability to conduct oversight in other areas is severely affected as well. 4- Completely. The High Court has been dissolved /suspended/equivalent with reference to Covid-19.</p>
<p>Q16. <i>Arbitrary and abusive enforcement</i></p>	<p>0: There are no emergency measures. 1: Very little. Security forces seem to have engaged in little to no violence to execute the emergency measures and there are no news reports about it.</p>	<p>2: Sometimes. A few isolated incidents of security forces engaging in some non-lethal violence have been reported.</p>	<p>3: Often. There are several reports of security forces engaging in violence to execute the emergency measures, and/or reports of deaths at the hands of security forces in response to Covid-19 enforcements. 4: Widespread. There are plenty and continued reports about use of violence, sometimes with lethal outcomes, by security forces when executing emergency measures taken with reference to Covid-19</p>
<p><i>Autocratization</i></p>	<p>The regular V-Dem data helps us to identify the 26 countries, in which democracy has been declining prior to the onset of the pandemic. We are in particular worried about those countries, because here the “immune system” of liberal-democratic institutions is already compromised, which makes them more vulnerable to abuses by a power-hungry executive during times of emergency. We use the V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) to identify such countries. The LDI assesses whether there are free and fair elections; whether leaders are constrained by the rule of law and oversight by parliament and the judiciary; and whether civil liberties are protected. If the LDI substantially and significantly declines over the last 10 years (v2x_libdem_t10_sub_bi=-1), we place the country one level higher on the Pandemic Backsliding Risk Index. For more details see:</p>		

https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/f0/5d/f05d46d8-626f-4b20-8e4e-53d4b134bfcf/democracy_report_2020_low.pdf

Section II. Indicators

Time (time)

Time stamp when coding was submitted.

Country name (country_name)

Country name from the V-Dem data set (Coppedge et al. 2019).

Regime development (v2x_libdem_t10_sub_bi)

How did the V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index develop over the last 10 years?

Clarification: For more details see the V-Dem Democracy Report 2020.

(https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/f0/5d/f05d46d8-626f-4b20-8e4e-53d4b134bfcf/democracy_report_2020_low.pdf)

“-1”- Declined substantially and significantly

“0”- No substantial and significant change

“1”- Improved substantially and significantly

q1. In this country, have national-level emergency measures been adopted or enacted that substantially alter the process of political decision making, the distribution of power between political institutions, and/or citizens' rights or freedoms during the Covid-19 crisis?

Clarification: This includes the declaration of a formal state of emergency, but is not limited to such.

0-No

1-Yes

q2. Do the main national-level Covid-19 related emergency measures have an officially declared time limit?

Clarification: Here we are concerned with the main national-level emergency measures that substantially alter the process of political decision making, distribution of power between political institutions, and/or citizens' rights or freedoms during the Covid-19 crisis. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

0- No

1- Yes.

q3. If yes, what is the current end date?

Date

q4. Did the lower chamber of the national legislature approve the main national-level emergency measures?

Clarification: Here we are concerned with the main national-level emergency measures that substantially alter the process of political decision making, distribution of power between political institutions, and/or citizens' rights or freedoms during the Covid-19 crisis. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

0- No.

1 - Yes.

q5. To what extent do the emergency measures referring to Covid-19 vary *de jure* at the sub-national level?

Clarification: "Emergency measures" refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

0-Almost no variation. The emergency measures are uniform or nearly uniform throughout the country.

1- A little. There are a few sub-national areas where the emergency measures differ.

2- Somewhat. There are some sub-national areas where the emergency measures differ.

3. Almost completely. The emergency measures vary across all or almost all of the sub-national areas of the country.

q6. Do emergency measures discriminate *de jure* "solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin" (ICCPR Art 4)?

Clarification: "Emergency measures" refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

0- No, not at all.

1- Not de-jure, but the measures are implemented in a discriminatory way.

2- Yes.

q7. Do the emergency measures *de jure* violate any of the following ICCPR provisions? (select all that apply)

Clarification: This addresses the text of the measures (de-jure). "Emergency measures" refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

0 - None

- 1 - Right to life (Article 6)
- 2 - Freedom from torture and cruel/inhuman treatment (Article 7)
- 3 - Prohibition of slavery and servitude (Article 8 I & II)
- 4 - Prohibition of imprisonment due to inability to fulfill a contractual obligation (Article 11)
- 5 - No conviction for a crime which was not a crime at the time of commitment (Article 15),
- 6 - Right as a person before the law (Article 16)
- 7 - Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 17)

q8. To what extent do the emergency measures limit freedom of assembly and the right to protest *de jure* in public places?

Clarification: Consider the national average. Here we are interested in how the *status quo* condition has been affected by the emergency measures. “Emergency measures” refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

0: Not at all. The emergency measures do not limit freedom of assembly and right to protest.

1: Very little. The emergency measures are mostly recommendations on avoiding “large gatherings”, but may include some legal restrictions (e.g. about max. 500-1,000 people).

2: Somewhat. The emergency measures somewhat restrict the amount of people who can gather (about max. 100 people).

3: To a substantial degree. The emergency measures severely restrict the amount of people who can gather (about max. 10 people).

4: Almost completely. People are only allowed to meet others outside of their household if it is strictly necessary (e.g. to allow for shopping, medical attention, important work).

q9. To what extent do the emergency measures limit freedom of domestic movement *de jure*?

Clarification: Consider the national average. Here we are interested in how the *status quo* condition has been affected by the emergency measures. This indicator specifies the extent to which all persons are able to move freely, in daytime and nighttime, in public thoroughfares, across regions within a country, and to establish permanent residency where they wish. “Emergency measures” refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

0: Not at all. The freedom of domestic movement is not affected by the emergency measures.

- 1: Very little. The government limits some few unnecessary movements but most restrictions are recommendations and voluntary.
- 2: Somewhat. The government limits domestic movement for many groups and/or a select area/city where the pandemic spreads quickly.
- 3: To a substantial degree. Far-reaching measures such as closure of regions and domestic travel bans are in place, and/or strict limits of movement during many hours of the day (e.g. curfews).
- 4: Almost completely (often called “lock down”). Domestic movement is only allowed for a small number of necessary activities approved by the authorities.

q10. To what extent do the emergency measures restrict media freedom?

Clarification: Consider the national average. Here we are interested in how the *status quo* condition has been affected by the emergency measures. “Emergency measures” refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

- 0: Not at all. Freedom of expression and media freedoms are not affected by the emergency measures
- 1: Somewhat. The emergency measures put some limitations on how the media can report on Covid-19
- 2: To a large extent. The emergency measures put strict limitations on how the media can report on Covid-19 in ways that also negatively affect the media’s ability to critically report on the government’s actions more broadly.
- 3: Almost completely. The emergency measures require that all or almost all media reporting on Covid-19 reflect the official state discourse, and critical reporting on other issues related to the government are more or less closed as a result as well.

q11. Is there a legally defined punishment for violating the restrictions on media freedoms under the emergency provisions?

Clarification: Legally defined punishments include those introduced by law or other orders with legal bearing (e.g. executive orders) that specifically relate to the violation of emergency restrictions on domestic movement. “Emergency measures” refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

(select all that apply)

- 0: No, there are no emergency provisions affecting media freedoms.
- 1: No, there are emergency restrictions without legally defined punishments.
- 2: Yes, fines.
- 3: Yes, imprisonment.
- 4: Yes, revoking of licenses.
- 5: Yes, other

q12. What sort of changes to the electoral process has the government implemented with reference to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Clarification: “Emergency measures” refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

(select all that apply)

0: None

1: Enhancing remote voting options for all citizens.

2: Enhancing remote voting options only for a selected group of citizens.

3: Mandatory remote voting, e.g. citizens *must* e-vote or vote by mail

4: Restricting access to polling stations, e.g. citizens are given specific voting time slots

5: Restricting access to vote collation centers

6: Reducing the number of poll workers

7: Barring domestic poll observers

8: Barring international poll observers

9: Campaign restrictions for opposition parties and candidates

10: Campaign restrictions for all parties and candidates

11: Postponement of national elections

12: Postponement of local/regional elections.

13: Other (text)

q13. To what extent is the lawmaking role of the legislature limited due to the emergency measures taken with reference to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Clarification: Here we are interested in how the *status quo* condition has been affected by the emergency measures. The lawmaking role of the national legislature includes the *de jure* and *de facto* powers to introduce and pass legislation in all policy areas. This question asks specifically how the emergency measures have affected the status quo lawmaking powers of the legislature. “Rule by decree” enables the government to pass laws without the approval of the legislature. “Emergency measures” refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency. Countries where there was no legislature to begin with, and where the legislature did not have a substantial role in lawmaking before the pandemic, should be coded as option “0”.

0- Not at all. The lawmaking role of the national legislature is not affected.

1- Very little. The legislature has given the executive the power to relatively widely interpret Covid-19 related laws, but not to rule by decree.

2 - Somewhat. The executive has the right to rule by decree on several, narrowly Covid-19 related issues such as deciding on physical distance measures and measures to support the health system.

3 - To a large extent. The executive has the right to rule by decree on many issues, which may exceed Covid-19 related issues due to vague formulation in emergency laws.

4- Completely. The legislature has been dissolved/suspended/equivalent with reference to Covid-19.

q14. Which of the following apply with regards to how the national legislature currently works?

Check all that apply.

- 0 - No changes to the legislature's procedures compared to before the crisis.
- 1 - The legislature regularly questions ministers on the measures taken to address the Covid-19 pandemic (in person or remotely).
- 2 - The end date of the main national emergency measures is subject to a legislative decision.
- 3 - The budget of national, Covid-19-related measures is subject to a legislative decision.
- 4 - The legislature meets less regularly than before the crisis.
- 5 - The plenary of the legislature does not meet, but one or more specialized committees do.
- 6 - The legislature meets in person, but less regularly than before the crisis.
- 7 - The legislature meets in person, but with fewer members than before the crisis.
- 8 - The legislature has introduced remote decision-making procedures.
- 9 - The legislature has been dissolved/suspended/equivalent with reference to Covid-19.
- 10 - No legislature exists or the legislature did not have a substantial role in lawmaking before the pandemic.

q15. To what extent is the High Court's power to exercise executive oversight limited due to measures taken addressing Covid-19?

Clarification: Here we are interested in how the *status quo* condition has been affected by the emergency measures. By High Court, we mean the constitutional court of your country or the highest ordinary court, whichever applies. The High Court's power to exercise executive oversight refers to its ability to question and investigate cases where the executive is suspected of engaging in unconstitutional, illegal, or unethical activity. This includes its ability to deliver a decision or report that is unfavorable to the executive. "Emergency measures" refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

- 0 - Not at all. The emergency measures do not affect the High Court's ability to conduct executive oversight.
- 1 - Very little. The High Court meets less regularly or similar, but still largely exercises oversight as normal.
- 2 - Somewhat. The High Court's power to conduct normal executive oversight over measures taken by the executive to address the Covid-19 pandemic are limited, but oversight in other areas is not affected.
- 3 - To a large extent. The emergency measures exclude measures related to Covid 19 from judicial oversight and the High Court's ability to conduct oversight in other areas is severely affected as well.

4- Completely. The High Court has been dissolved /suspended/equivalent with reference to Covid -19.

q16. How often have security forces, such as the civilian police or military, engaged in disproportionate physical violence to execute the emergency measures?

Clarification: Disproportionate physical violence refers to the use of force or intimidation, including the use of weapons or body parts to physically harm or kill another individual, forced unlawful confinement, or harassment. “Emergency measures” refer to all emergency or crisis measures taken with reference to Covid-19. These may include - but do not have to - the formal declaration of a state of emergency.

0: There are no emergency measures.

1: Very little. Security forces seem to have engaged in little to no violence to execute the emergency measures and there are no news reports about it.

2: Sometimes. A few isolated incidents of security forces engaging in some non-lethal violence have been reported.

3: Often. There are several reports of security forces engaging in violence to execute the emergency measures, and/or reports of deaths at the hands of security forces in response to Covid-19 enforcements.

4: Widespread. There are plenty and continued reports about use of violence, sometimes with lethal outcomes, by security forces when executing emergency measures taken with reference to Covid-19.

q17. In what aspects of the implementation of the emergency measures is the military involved?

0: Not at all.

1: Providing medical treatment and/or testing.

2: Enforcing measures to reduce physical distance (such as curfews, lockdown, limits on assemblies and stay-home policies).

3: Limitations on freedom of media and/or speech.

4: Tracing potentially infected people.

5: Economic response.

6: Other.

q18. Did the government pass or implement any other measures - not mentioned here until now - on the grounds of limiting the impact of Covid-19, which limit the quality of electoral or liberal democracy?

Clarification: This includes for instance the ad-hoc removal of judges, jailing well-known opposition figures, use of financial responses to strengthen loyalists and weaken opposition, etc.

0- No
1 - Yes

q19. If yes, please explain.

q20. General comments