

DEMOCRACY REPORT 2023

# Defiance in the Face of Autocratization



# 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

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# 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.

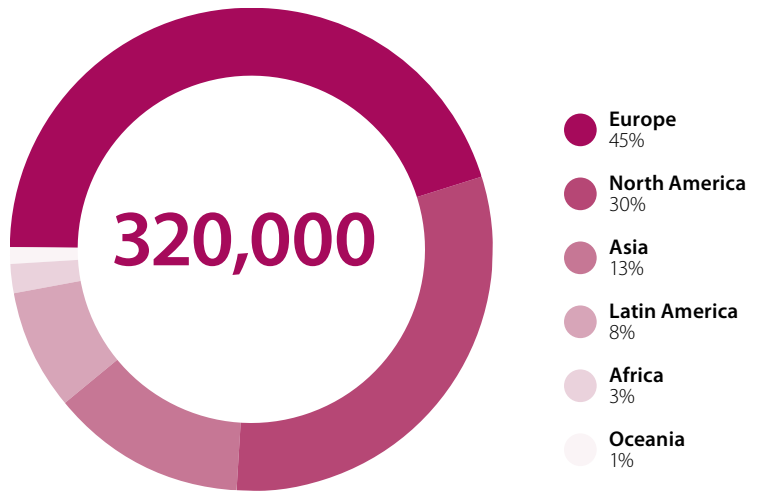


**17 million graphs** created using the online tools by users in **200+ countries** since 2016.



**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)



## 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.

# Word from the Team

**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*



*Not pictured: Lisa Gastaldi, Ana Good God, Natalia Natsika, Josefine Pernes, and Felix Wiebrecht.*

# 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.

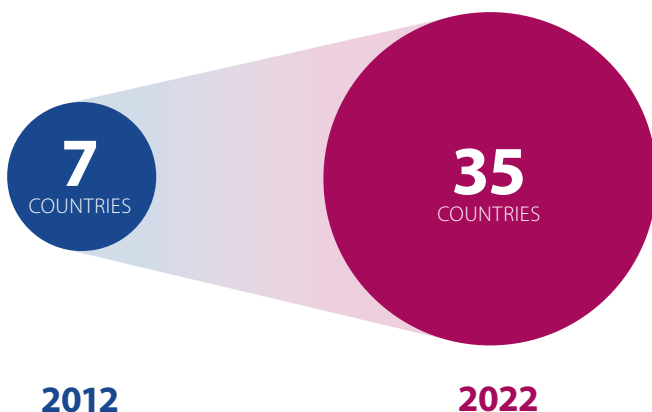
### More Dictatorships than Liberal Democracies

- 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.

#### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DETERIORATING



## 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.

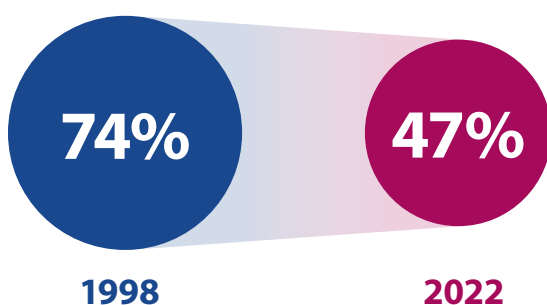
### IN FOCUS: 8 Democracies Bouncing Back

- 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.

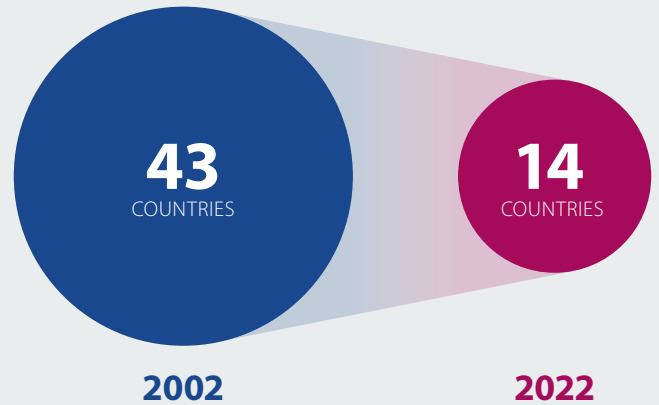
## 5. Autocratization Shifting the Balance of Power

- 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.

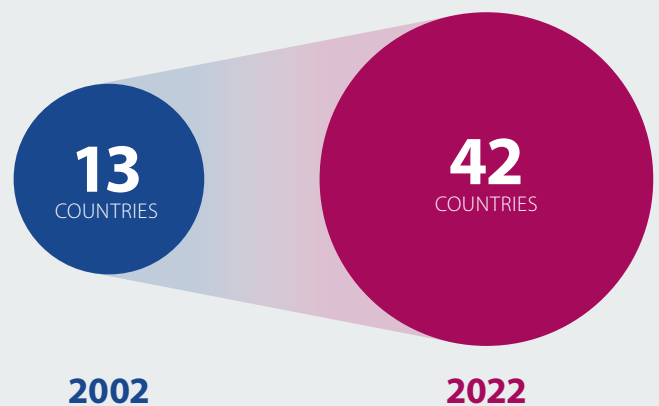
### SHARE OF WORLD TRADE BETWEEN DEMOCRACIES



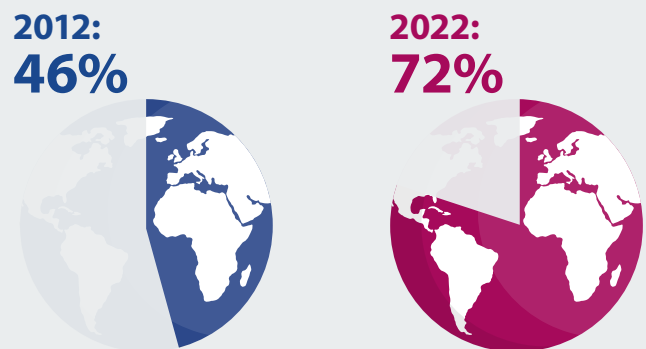
### NUMBER OF COUNTRIES DEMOCRATIZING



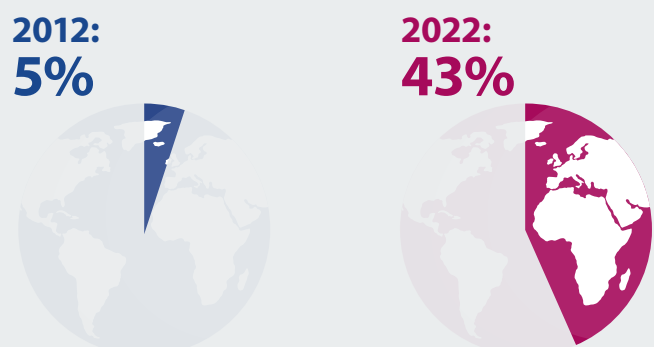
### NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AUTOCRATIZING



### SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRACIES



### SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES





*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<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.

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

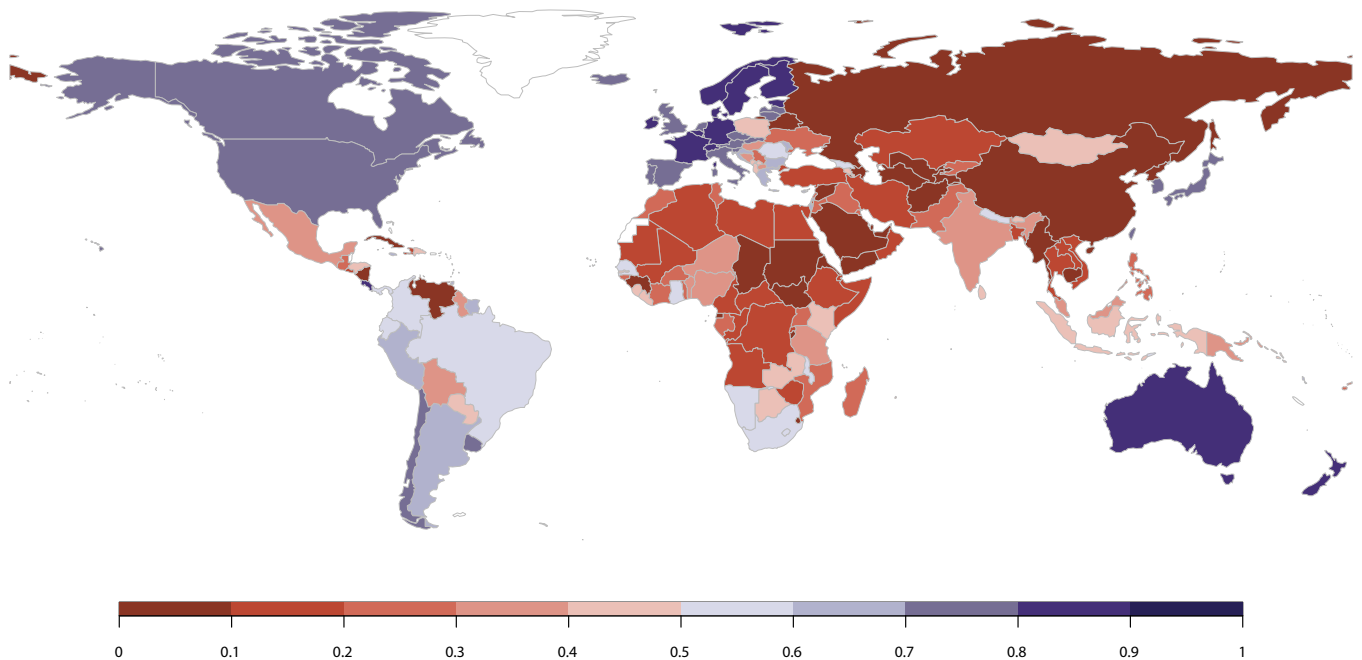
- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2022 is down to 1986 levels.
- More than 35 years of global advances in democracy have been wiped out in the last decade.
- The decline is most dramatic in the Asia-Pacific region, which is back to levels last recorded in 1978.
- Eastern 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 Reykjavík Summit between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. In 2022,

The state of democracy in 2022 is depicted on the map in Figure 2, based on the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI).<sup>3</sup> Democracy is most widespread in the regions of Western Europe and North America, as well as parts of Latin America, Oceania, and East Asia.

**FIGURE 2. STATE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY (LDI), 2022**



<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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**.

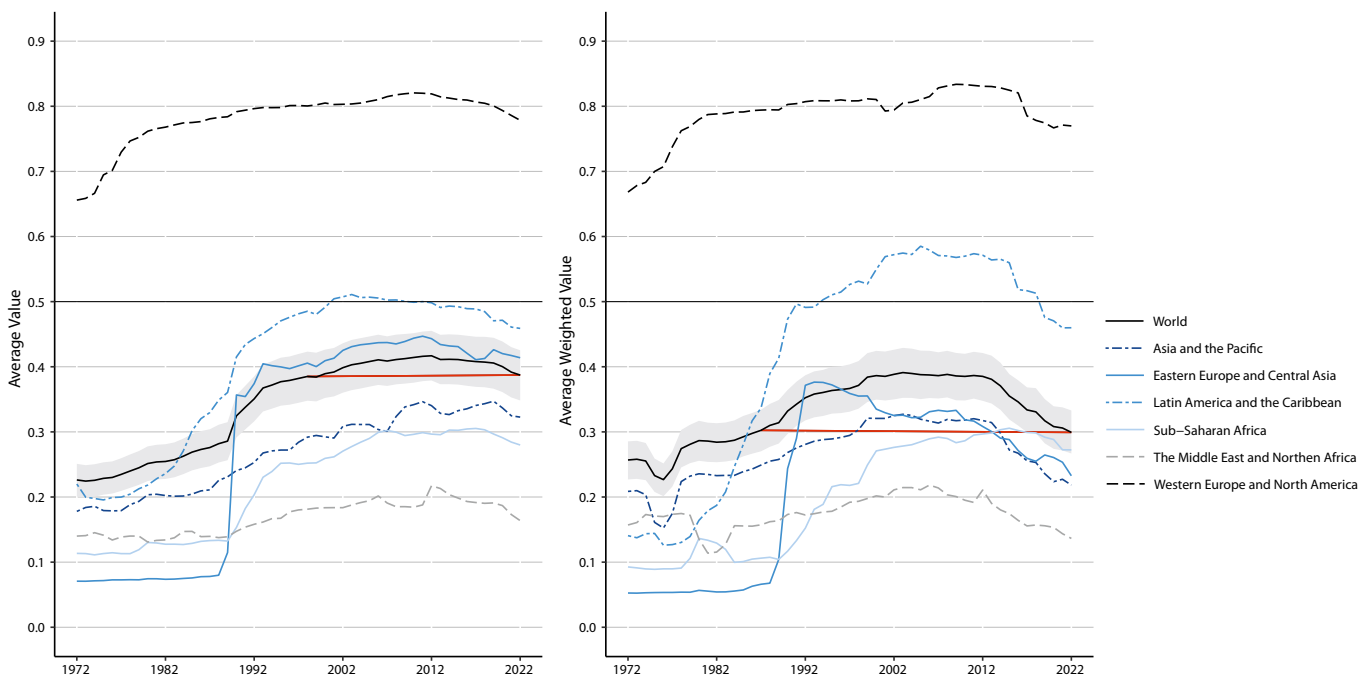
## Why Population-Weighted Measures?

Since democracy is *rule by the people*, it matters how many people are enjoying democratic rights and freedoms around the world. The population-weighted metric is therefore more indicative of the levels of democracy experienced by people worldwide than straight averages across countries. Country-averages give the same weight to advances in a small country like the Seychelles (one of the top performers) as to declines in a huge country like India (one of the worst autocratizers in the last 10 years). When speaking of ‘how much’ of the world lives in a democracy, and how much of it is undergoing a democratic decline, we do not think that advances in a small country compensate for declines in a large one. That is why we focus more on population-weighted metrics while also reporting the averages that give equal weight to all nations.

Population-weighted average levels of democracy in **Eastern Europe and Central Asia** have gradually regressed down to the pre-1990 level.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.

4 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/27/new-cold-war-nato-summit-united-states-russia-ukraine-china/>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/2/24/and-so-cold-war-ii-begins>

5 The LDI score in 2022 is 0.233, which falls between 0.104 (in 1989) and 0.244 (in 1990).

6 The LDI score in 2022 is 0.460, which falls between 0.413 (in 1989) and 0.473 (in 1990).

## 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*.<sup>7</sup>

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.

<sup>7</sup> 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>.



Amritsar, India, February 20, 2022. A polling officer applies indelible ink on the index finger of a voter at a polling station during the Punjab state assembly elections. Photo: Getty Images

## Regimes of the World – Democratization and Autocratization

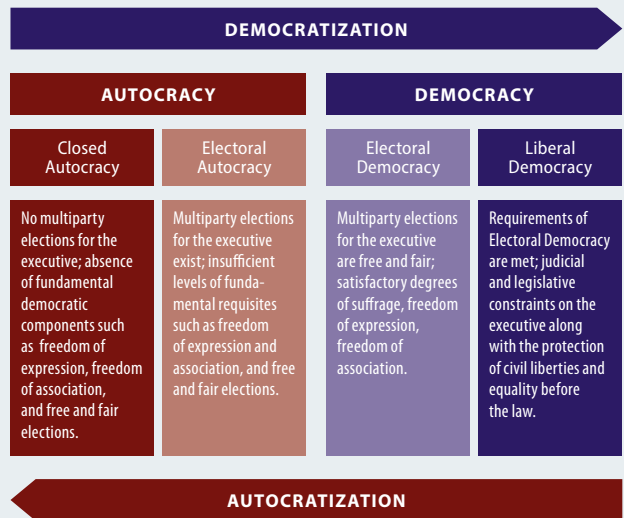
**Democratization** means that a country is making moves away from autocracy and toward democracy. **Autocratization** is the opposite, meaning any move away from democracy toward autocracy (see Figure 1).

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.

FIGURE 1. REGIMES AND REGIME CHANGE



**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.<sup>8</sup> 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

**FIGURE 5. REGIONAL SHARES OF POPULATION BY REGIME TYPE**

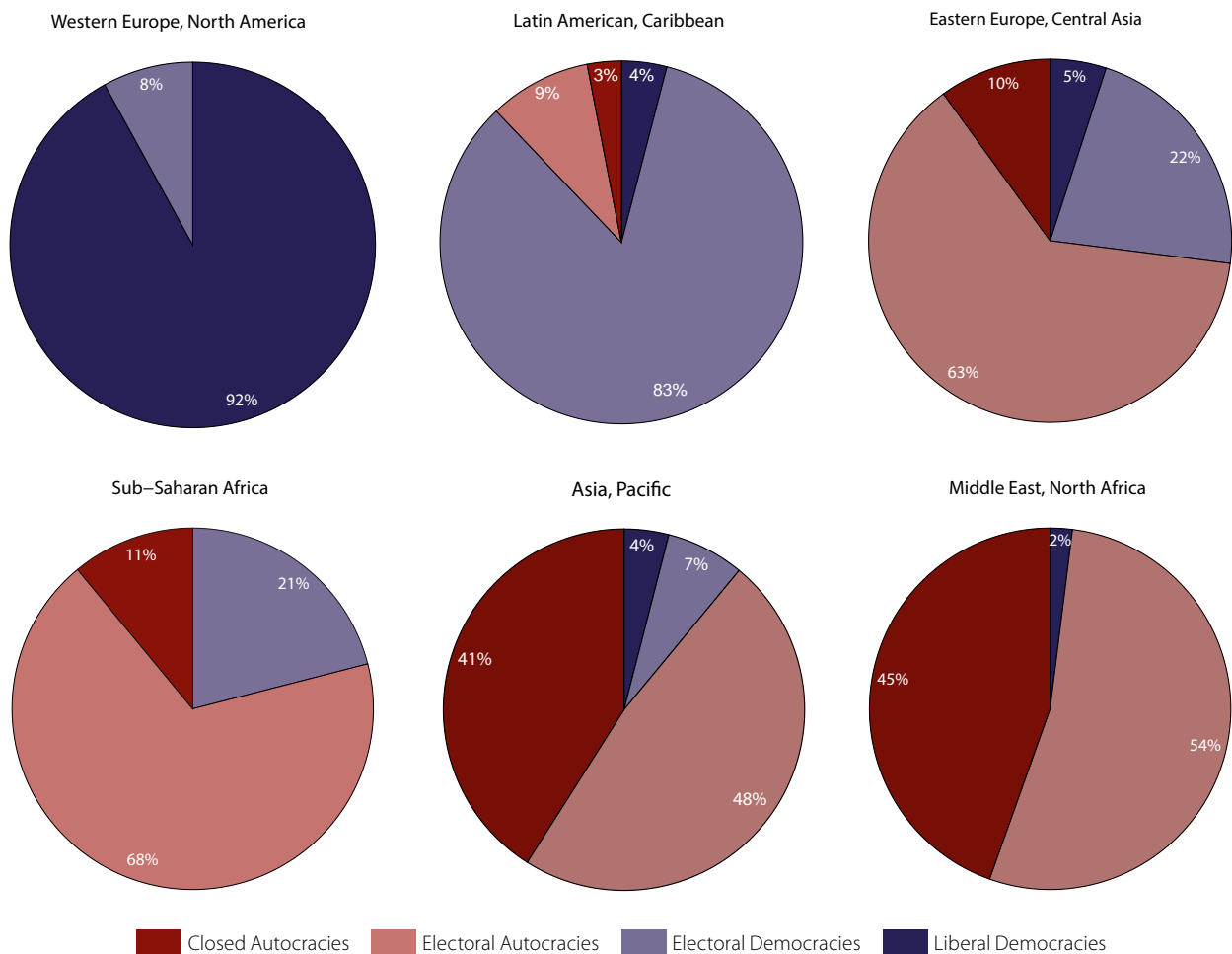


Figure 5 plots the share of the population living in liberal democracies, electoral democracies, electoral autocracies, and closed autocracies by regions of the world.

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

## 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

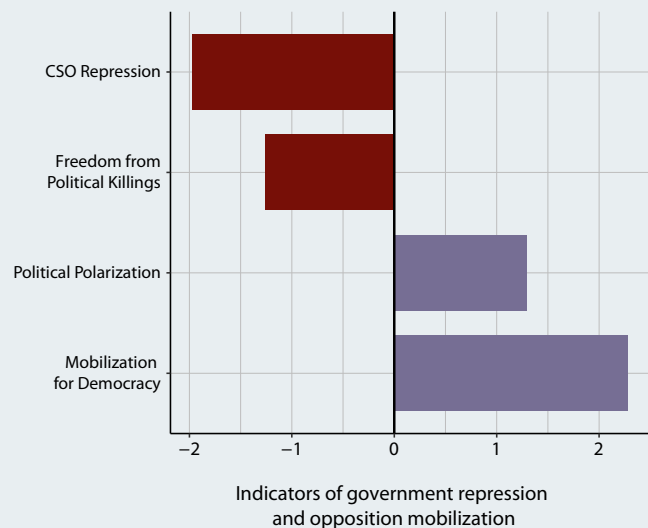
On September 16, 2022, 22-year-old Mahsa Amini succumbed to injuries inflicted by Iran's Morality Police. Her death sparked the most massive protests against the regime that Iran has seen in the last four decades.<sup>1</sup> Protests were met with a violent crackdown by security forces.

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

Figure 1 captures these recent developments in Iran: Civil society repression has intensified, and politically motivated killings have increased.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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,<sup>6</sup> such a sharp division and conflict might also create an opportunity for democratization.<sup>7</sup>

**FIGURE 1. WORSENING REPRESSION AND RISING MOBILIZATION IN IRAN, 2021–2022**



1 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63240911>

2 <https://www.en-hrana.org/a-comprehensive-report-of-the-first-82-days-of-nationwide-protests-in-iran/2/#id01>

3 Nugent, E. R. (2020). *The psychology of repression and polarization*. *World Politics*, 72(2).

4 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-64173733>

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

6 Lachapelle, J. (2022). *Repression reconsidered: bystander effects and legitimization in authoritarian regimes*. *Comparative Politics*, 54(4), 695-716.

7 Haggard, S., and Kaufman, R. R. (2016). *Dictators and democrats*. In: *Dictators and Democrats*. Princeton University Press.

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.

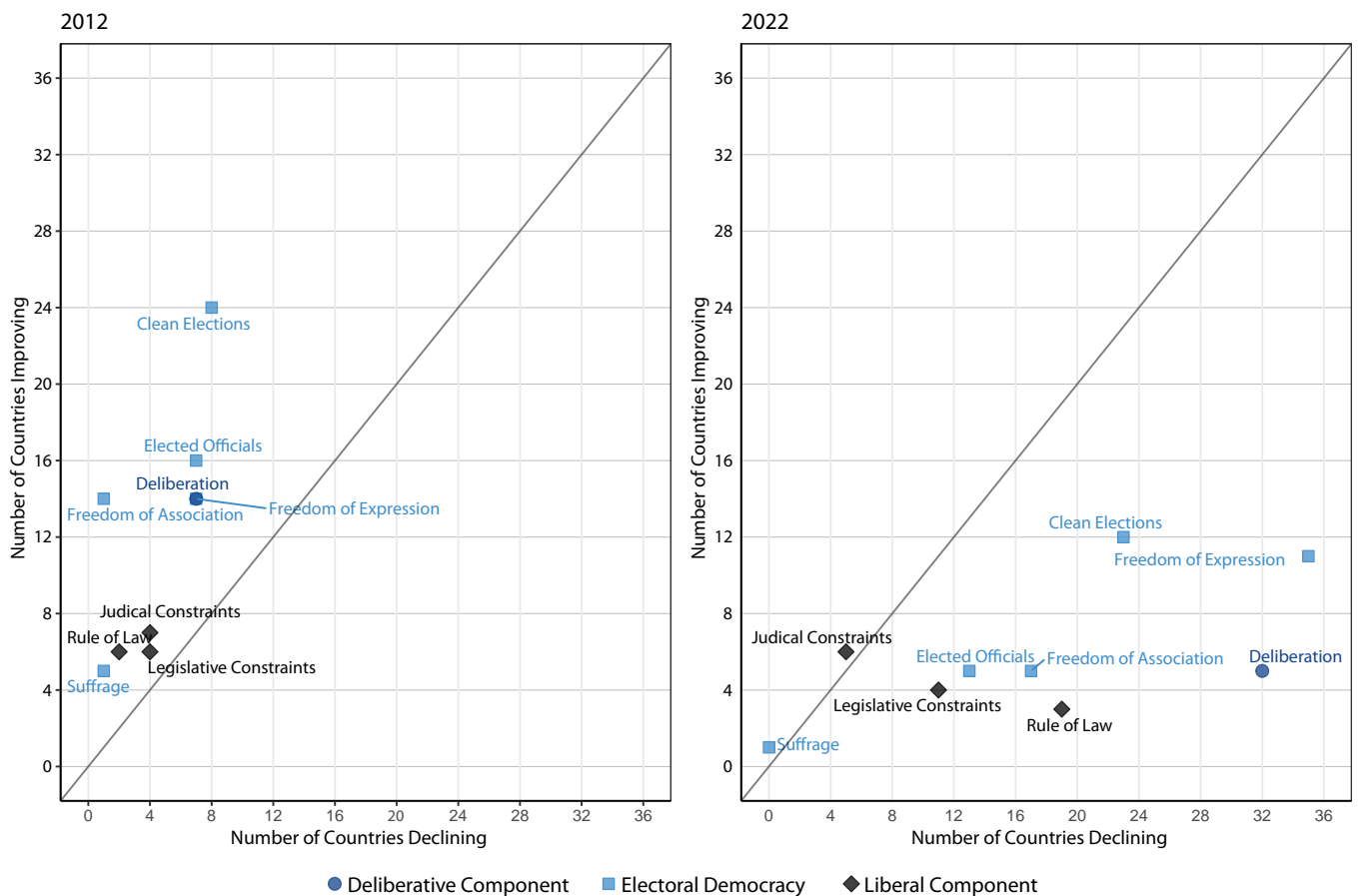
For freedom of association there are now three times more countries declining (N=17) than advancing (N=5). The worsening of constraints on the executive by the judiciary and the legislature displayed in Figure 6 are less dramatic but still noteworthy.

**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.

**FIGURE 6. DEMOCRATIC ASPECTS IMPROVING AND DECLINING, 2012 AND 2022**



For indices measuring components of democracy, Figure 6 shows the number of countries improving and declining significantly and substantially. The left panel compares changes between 2012 and 2002 and the right panel compares changes between 2022 and 2012.

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.

**FIGURE 7. TOP-20 DECLINING INDICATORS, 2012–2022**

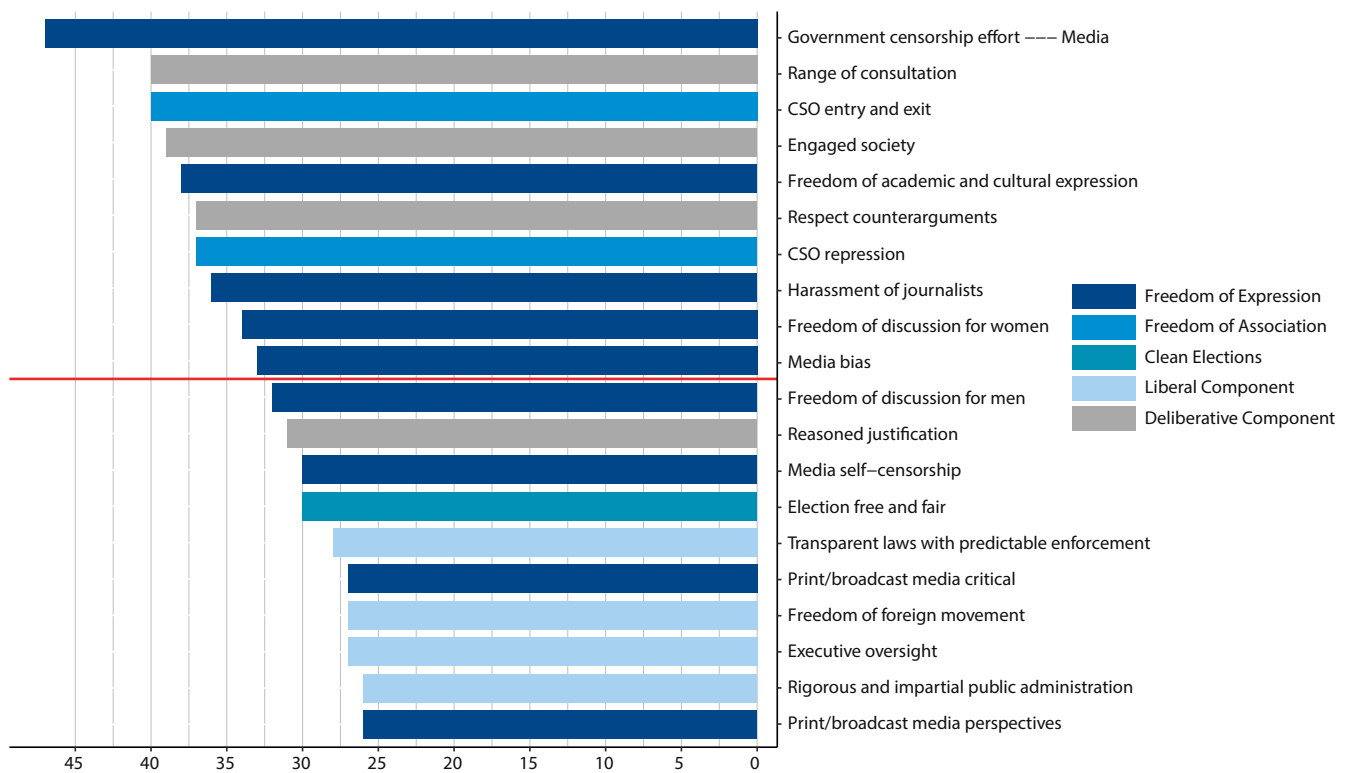


Figure 7 plots the twenty indicators that decline significantly and substantively in the most countries between 2012 and 2022. The red line marks the top 10 indicators.



## 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.

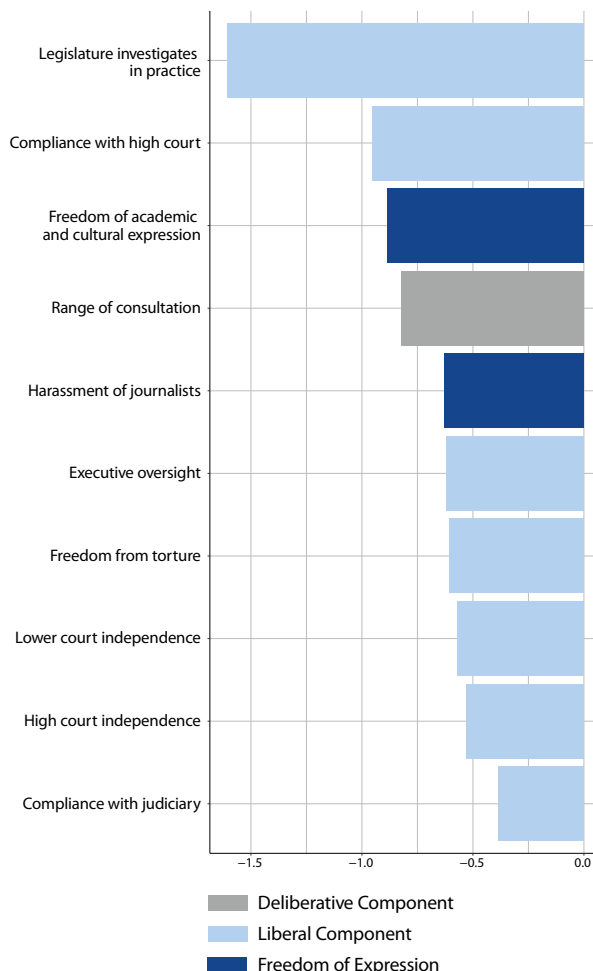
A major recent event in Greece was the phone-tapping scandal exposed in 2022: Wiretaps by the National Intelligence Service of a long list of the government’s political enemies, allies, and investigative journalists.<sup>1</sup> Court investigations<sup>2</sup>, and inquiries by parliamentary committees and independent authorities<sup>3</sup> have been delayed for months and are yet to present their findings.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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)<sup>6</sup>, the national broadcaster ERT, and the public news agency ANA-MPA<sup>7</sup> 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<sup>8</sup>.



The Greek parliament.  
Photo: AdobeStock

**FIGURE 1. TOP 10 DECLINING INDICATORS OF LDI AND DCI, GREECE, 2017–2022**



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.

1 <https://ipi.media/greece-journalist-thanasis-koukakis-surveilled-for-10-weeks-with-powerful-new-spyware-tool/>  
<https://ipi.media/greece-full-scale-of-surveillance-on-journalists-must-be-uneathed/>  
[https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/greek-watertap-mitsotakis-authoritarianism-cannot-be-tolerated-anymore/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/greek-watertap-mitsotakis-authoritarianism-cannot-be-tolerated-anymore/)  
2 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/top-greek-court-orders-probe-into-wiretap-scandal-report/>  
3 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/30/greece-to-launch-parliamentary-inquiry-into-spy-scandal>  
4 <https://euobserver.com/opinion/156645>  
5 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/08/greece-problematic-surveillance-bill>  
6 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62822366>  
7 <https://govwatch.gr/en/finds/public-service-broadcasting-placed-under-the-control-of-the-prime-minister/>  
8 <https://govwatch.gr/en/pagkosmosios-deiktis-eleytherias-toy-typoy-2022-i-katiforiki-poreia-tis-elladas-synechizetai/>



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.<sup>10</sup> 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

**FIGURE 8. COUNTRIES DEMOCRATIZING VS. AUTOCRATIZING, 2012-2022**

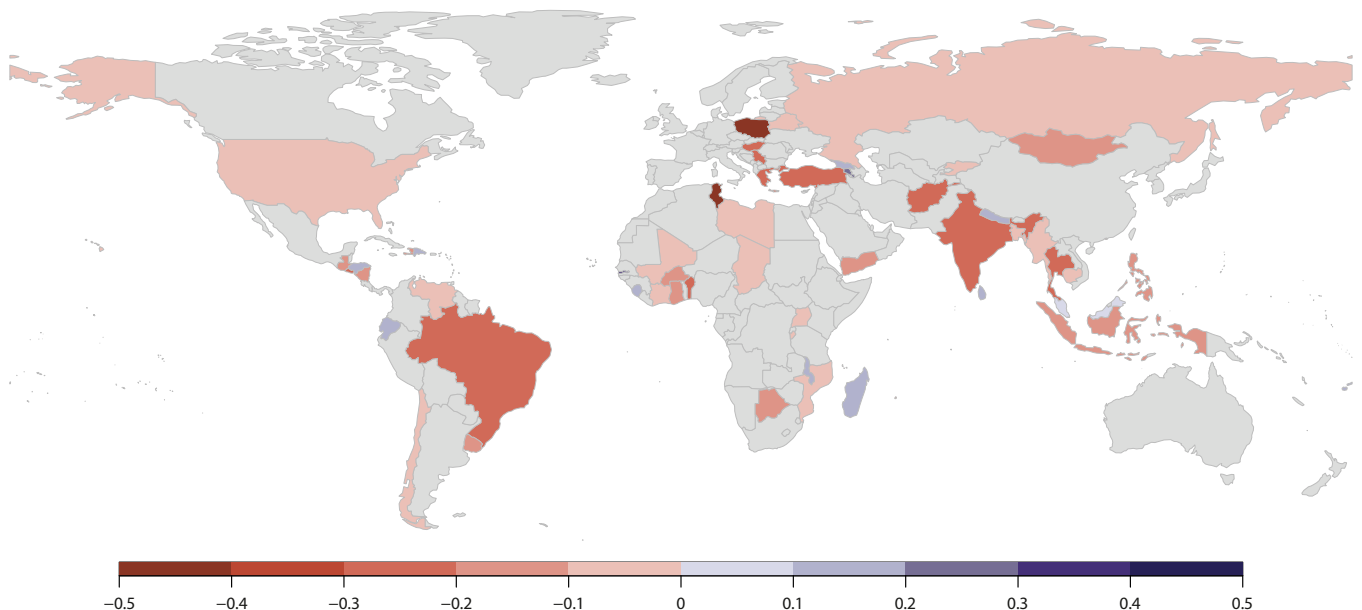


Figure 8 shows where the LDI has improved (blue) or declined (red) substantially and significantly over the past decade. Countries in gray had no substantial and significant change on the LDI during this period.

<sup>10</sup> The *Democracy Report* uses a simplified metric to capture which countries are autocratizing or democratizing. It measures the difference between the country score on the liberal democracy index (LDI) in 2022 and 2012. A country is autocratizing or democratizing if the difference is statistically significant (the confidence intervals do not overlap) and substantial (the difference is greater than 0.05). The metric builds on the ideas in Lüthmann, A. and S.I. Lindberg. 2019. *A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here*. *Democratization* 26(7), but is simplified and uses the LDI. For a more recent extension, see the "Episodes of Regime Transformation" project on Github (<https://github.com/vdeminstitute/ert>); and Maerz, S.F. et al. forthcoming 2023. *A Framework for Understanding Regime Transformation: Introducing the ERT Dataset*. *Journal of Peace Research*.

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.

**FIGURE 10. DEMOCRATIZERS VS. AUTOCRATIZERS, 2012-2022**

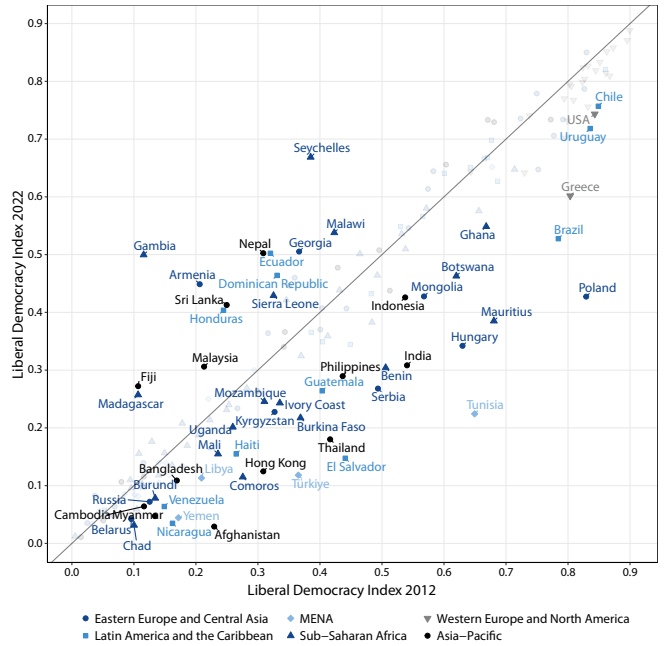


Figure 10 displays country scores on the LDI in 2012 (x-axis) and 2022 (y-axis). Countries above the diagonal line have become more democratic whereas countries below the diagonal line have become more autocratic. Country names are highlighted if the difference between 2012 and 2022 is significant and substantial.

The largest number of countries (N=5) making democratic progress over the last ten years is in Sub-Saharan Africa: **Madagascar, Malawi, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia**. But more than twice as many – twelve countries – are autocratizers: **Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Comoros, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, and Uganda**.

Four of the countries that are democratizing since 2012 are in the Asia-Pacific region: **Fiji, Malaysia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka**. Again, more than twice as many – nine countries – have declined

**FIGURE 9. AUTOCRATIZING VS. DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 1972-2022**

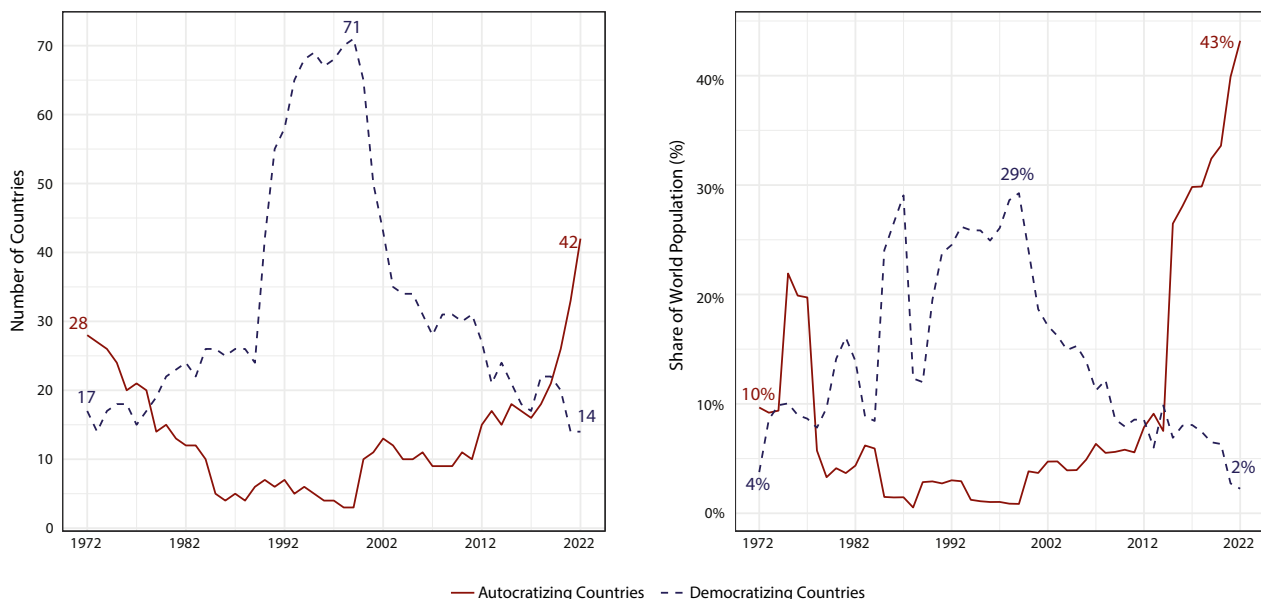


Figure 9 shows patterns of democratization and autocratization over the last 50 years. The left panel displays the number of countries in each category, and the right panel shows the share of the world’s population living in autocratizing or democratizing countries.

**FIGURE 11. DEMOCRATIZATION AND AUTOCRATIZATION ACROSS REGIONS, 2012–2022**

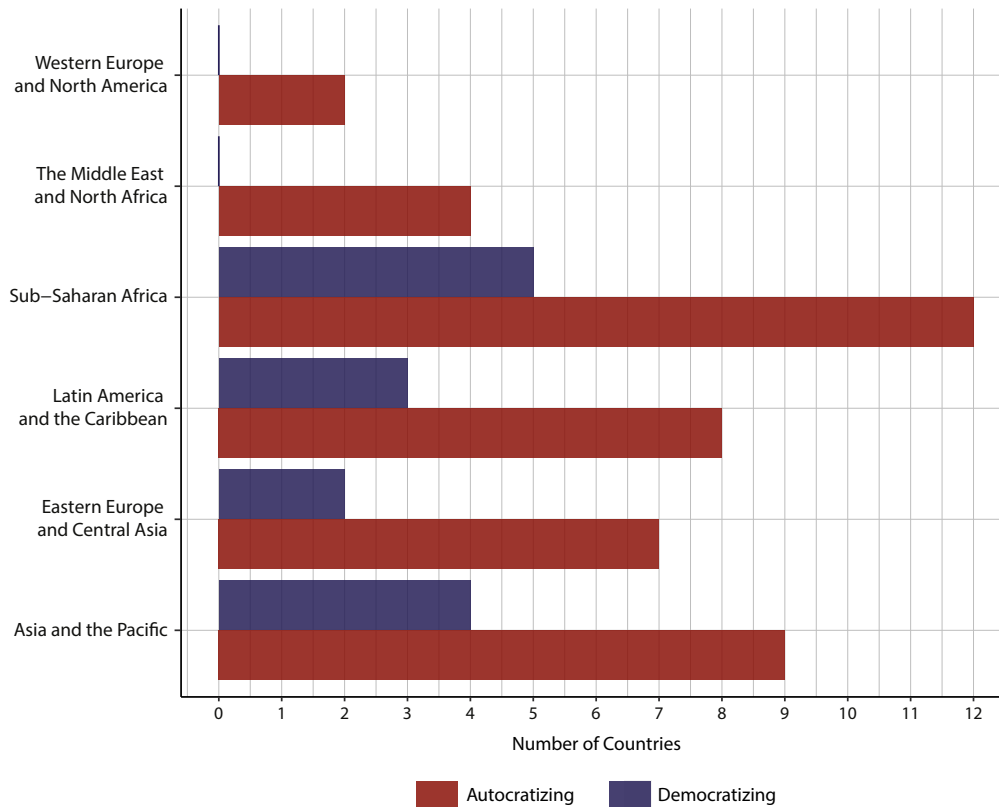


Figure 11 plots the number of countries that are democratizing and autocratizing in each region.

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.

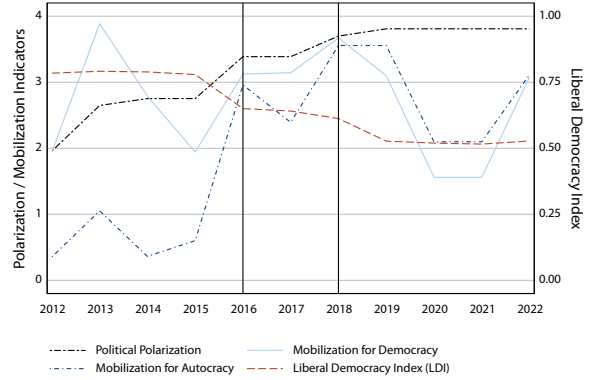
Leading up to Bolsonaro coming to power in 2018, political polarization increased with the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff in 2016.<sup>1</sup> The far right mobilized heavily in favor of autocratization, and the LDI started to decline. Developments led Jair Bolsonaro to an electoral victory in 2018.

In the meantime, anti-Bolsonaro protests gained significant traction and left-wing movements advocating for women's rights<sup>2</sup> and environmental protection<sup>3</sup> surfaced as principal regime challengers. Bolsonaro's response to the COVID-19 pandemic also led to anti-government protests.<sup>4</sup> These movements together emerged as democracy strongholds against far-right wing supporters.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> Retired as well as active military officials participated in this attempted coup.<sup>7</sup>

**FIGURE 1. POLARIZATION AND AUTOCRATIZATION IN BRAZIL 2012-2022**

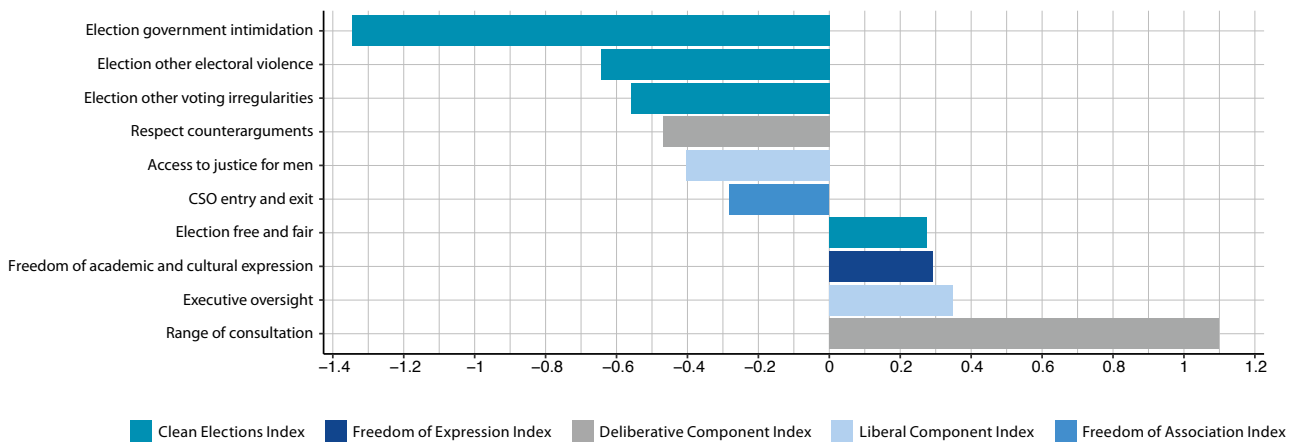


The left y-axis shows the score for the indicators on polarization and mobilization. The right y-axis shows the scale for the LDI (0-1). Large scores for indicators mean higher levels of polarization and mobilization. The vertical lines indicate the timing of the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff (in 2016) and the electoral victory of Jair Bolsonaro (in 2018).

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.

**FIGURE 2. DEGREE OF CHANGE ON INDICATORS OF LDI AND DCI, BRAZIL 2021-2022**



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 2021 and 2022.

1 <https://time.com/4476011/brazil-dilma-rousseff-crisis-impeachment/>  
 2 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/9/30/brazil-thousands-of-women-rally-against-far-right-bolsonaro>  
 3 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/09/brazil-protest-environment-indigenous-bolsonaro>  
 4 <https://items.ssrc.org/covid-19-and-the-social-sciences/covid-19-fieldnotes/brazils-contentious-pandemic/>  
 5 [https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-how-brazils-democracy-stepped-back-from-the-cliff/?mkt\\_tok=ODEzLVhZVS00MjIAAAGlqsJPjeNf\\_DwpkIAYGc8e9pTr2y0ahf9f9JO9nFQkwS1cgsrSFLQh8Aa4ln\\_kmSWGvuDXzwa93K0IHMwvxKIR7caE9RiFCRvs\\_xj6Q](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-how-brazils-democracy-stepped-back-from-the-cliff/?mkt_tok=ODEzLVhZVS00MjIAAAGlqsJPjeNf_DwpkIAYGc8e9pTr2y0ahf9f9JO9nFQkwS1cgsrSFLQh8Aa4ln_kmSWGvuDXzwa93K0IHMwvxKIR7caE9RiFCRvs_xj6Q)  
 6 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-64204860> This incident is not reflected in any V-Dem's democracy scores in 2022.  
 7 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-64362096> More than 1,500 participants in the riots have arrested, and the military officials involved in the incident were dismissed, including the country's army chief. Bolsonaro himself is under investigation in relation to the storming in addition to other charges. <https://www.ft.com/content/a70ce7bb-fc9a-4e35-bf2d-3a8a62013110>

# 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.

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.<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> **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.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the final outcome is uncertain.

**FIGURE 12. TOP 10 AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES (10-YEARS VS. 3-YEARS)**

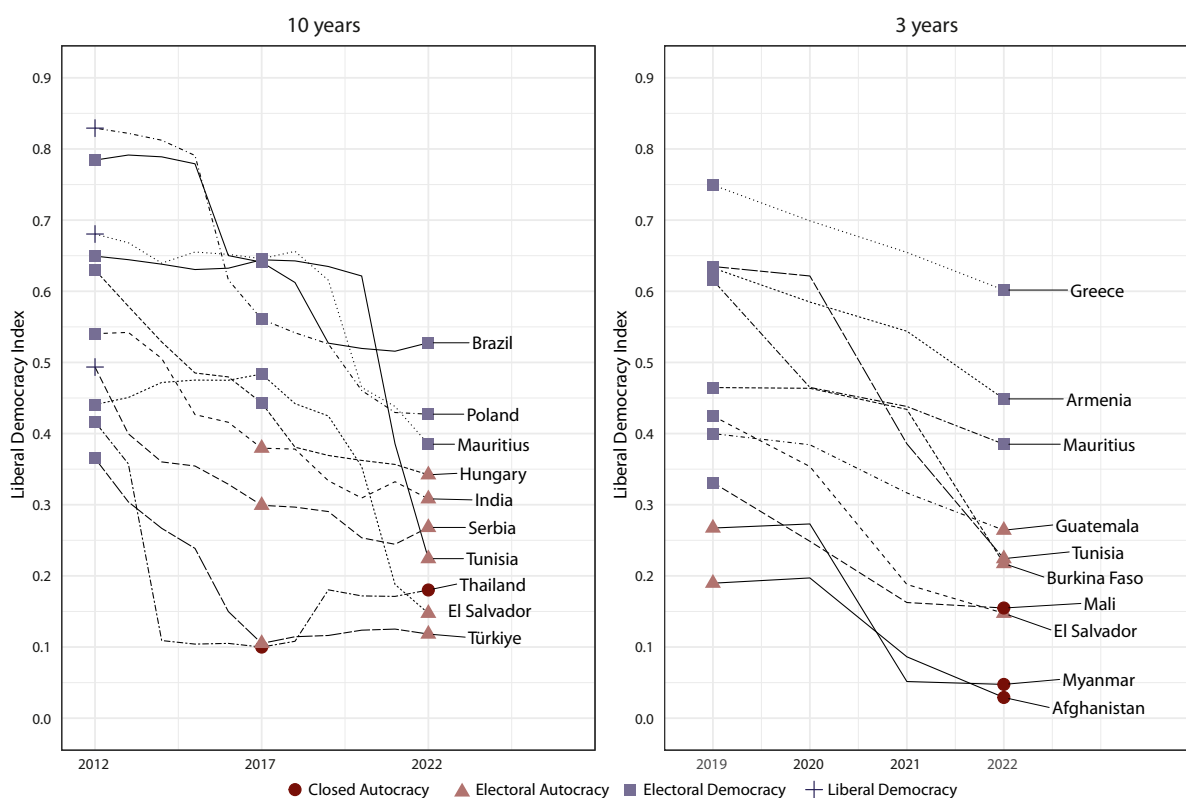


Figure 12 plots values of the LDI for the 10 countries with the greatest decreases in the last 10 years (left panel), and 3 years (right panel).

11 This is based on analyses of the last 120 years, see Boese, V. et al. 2021. How democracies prevail: Democratic resilience as a two-stage process. *Democratization* 28(5)

12 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/14/thousands-protest-against-tunisian-president-kais-saied-seizure-of-near-total-power>

13 <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-06-09/nayib-bukele-el-salvador-el-faro-journalists>

14 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/29/third-night-of-protests-in-poland-after-abortion-ban-takes-effect>; <https://www.euractiv.com/section/media/news/free-media-thousands-protest-polish-media-law/>

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.<sup>15</sup> **Serbia's** 2022 election similarly had irregularities that favored the incumbent right-wing government.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> **Türkiye** continues to repress free speech and political competition, as exemplified by a new law in 2022 criminalizing the spreading of “false information”.<sup>18</sup> 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**.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

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.**



Banjul, Gambia, December 4, 2021. Officials at a polling station prepare to count votes in Gambia's presidential election. This was the first presidential election in Gambia since the long-standing dictator Yahya Jammeh was ousted from power in 2017. Photo: Getty Images

15 <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/how-viktor-orban-wins/>

16 [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/0/524385\\_0.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/0/524385_0.pdf)

17 <https://www.uscifr.gov/release-statements/uscifr-releases-report-religious-freedom-india>

18 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/turkey>

19 <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/democracy-in-armenia-one-step-forward-two-steps-back/>

20 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/18/colombia-guatemala-row-minister-un-corruption-inquiry>

21 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/5/coup-in-burkina-faso-what-you-need-to-know>

22 <https://apnews.com/article/politics-mali-government-russia-violence-10ba966bceb2dc732cb170b16258e5a6>



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.<sup>23</sup> In **Poland**, the government has taken control of public media and uses it to spread its own messages.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> are global trends reinforcing and worsening autocratization.

**FIGURE 13. TOP-20 DECLINING INDICATORS, 2012–2022**

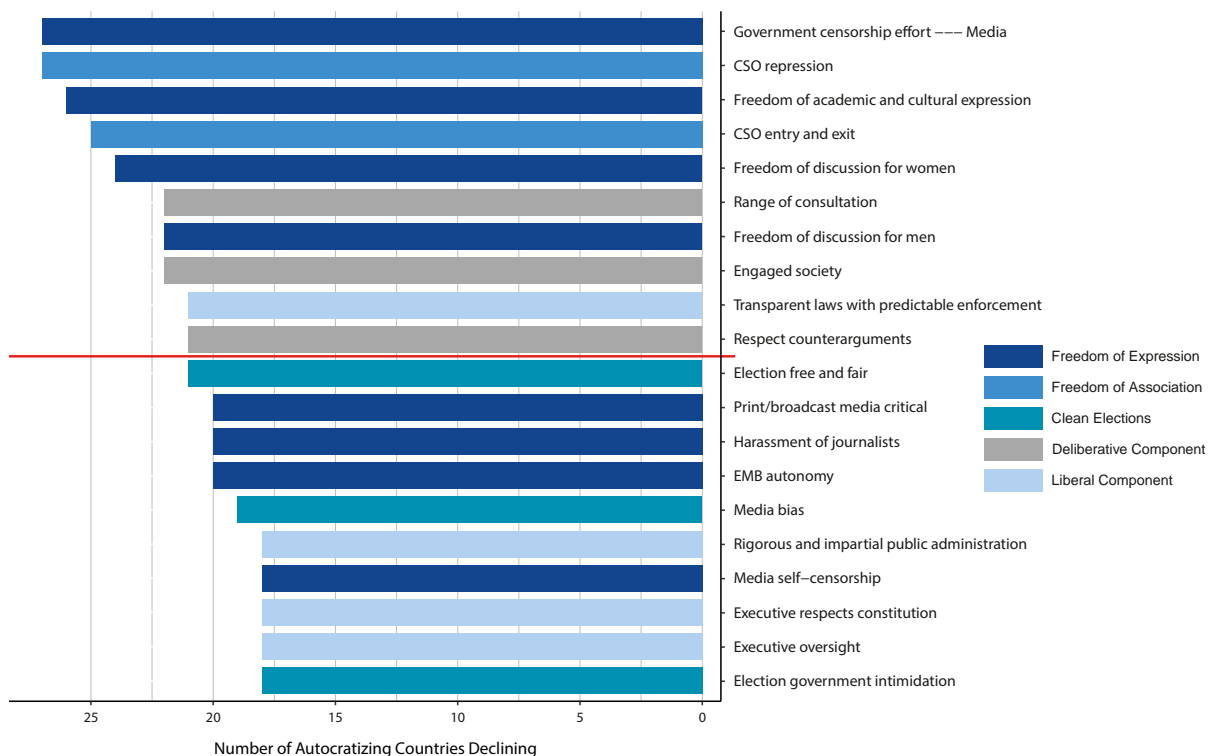


Figure 13 plots the number of autocratizing countries declining significantly and substantially on the top 20 indicators. The red line marks the top 10 indicators. An indicator is declining substantially and significantly if its 2022 value is at least 0.5 points lower than its 2012 value on a scale ranging from 0 to 4 (for most variables) or 0 to 5, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

<sup>23</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/mauritian-parliament-imposes-tougher-regulations-broadcast-media>

<sup>24</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/country/poland>

<sup>25</sup> 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 is 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.<sup>26</sup> 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).

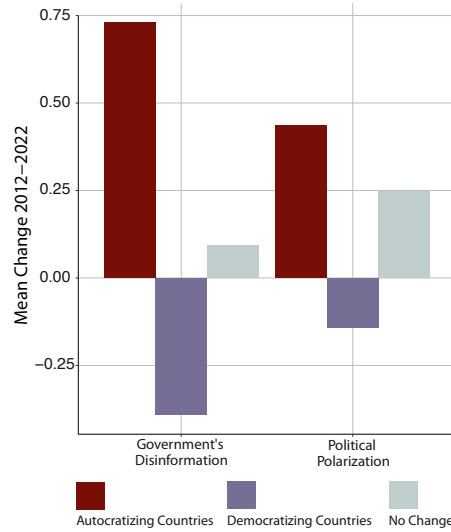
Figure 14 demonstrates that political polarization is also escalating the most in autocratizing countries. Those countries witnessing the most dramatic increases include top autocratizers such as **Afghanistan, Brazil, India, and Myanmar** (Figure 15).

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.<sup>27</sup> 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

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

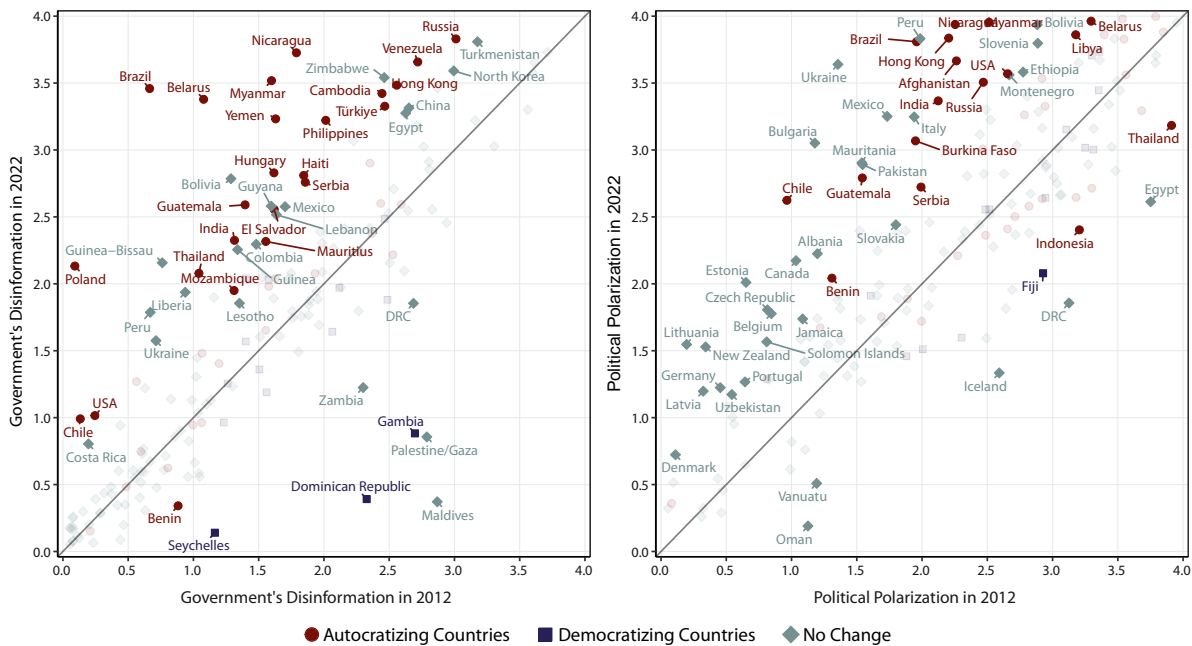


The figure shows change in levels between 2012 and 2022. "Government Disinformation" measures how often governments and their agents use social media to disseminate misleading viewpoints or false information to influence their population. "Political Polarization" measures the extent to which society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

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.<sup>28</sup>

**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.

26 Guriev, S. and Treisman, D. (2022) *Spin Dictators: The Challenging Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century*. Princeton University Press.

27 See *Democracy Report 2022* for further details.

28 McCoy, J., & Somer, M. (2021). *Overcoming polarization*. *Journal of Democracy*, 32(1); Kahne, J., & Bowyer, B. (2017). *Educating for democracy in a partisan age: Confronting the challenges of motivated reasoning and misinformation*. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1).

## 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.
- 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)

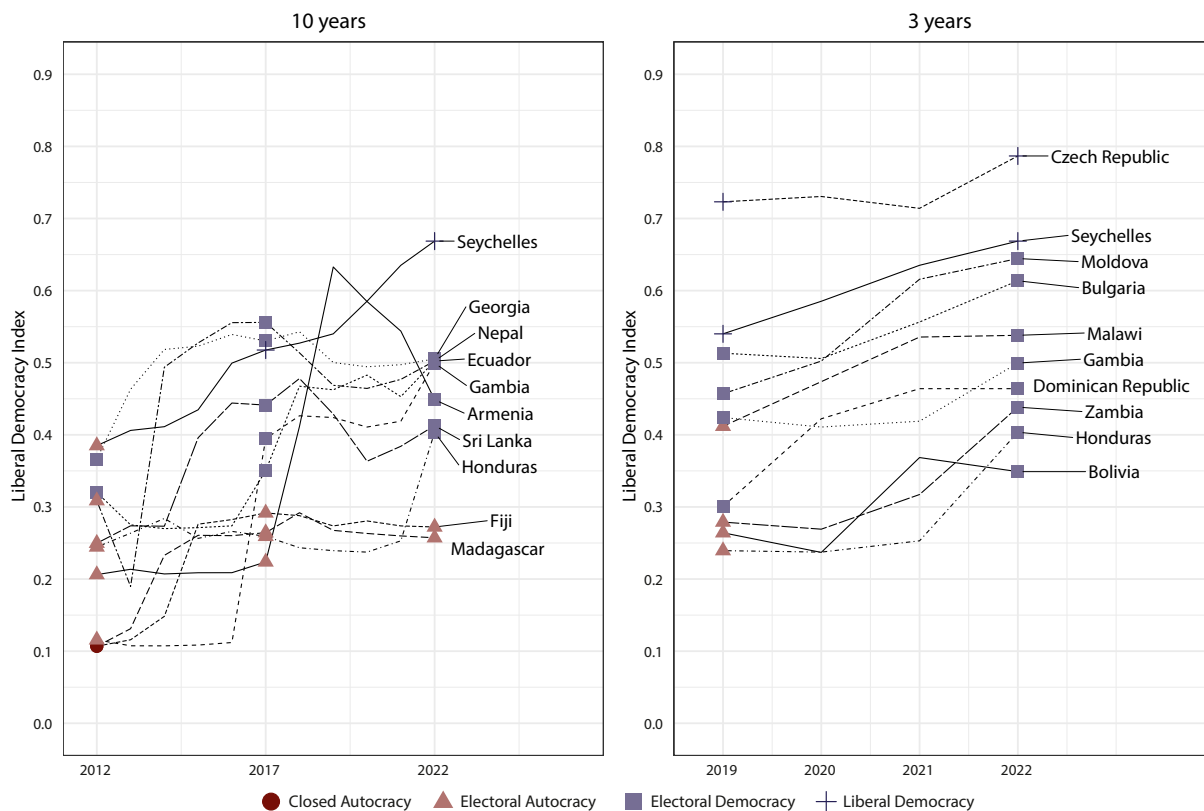


Figure 16 plots values of the LDI for the 10 countries with the highest LDI increase in the last 10 years (left panel), and in the last 3 years (right panel).

**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.<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup>

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.

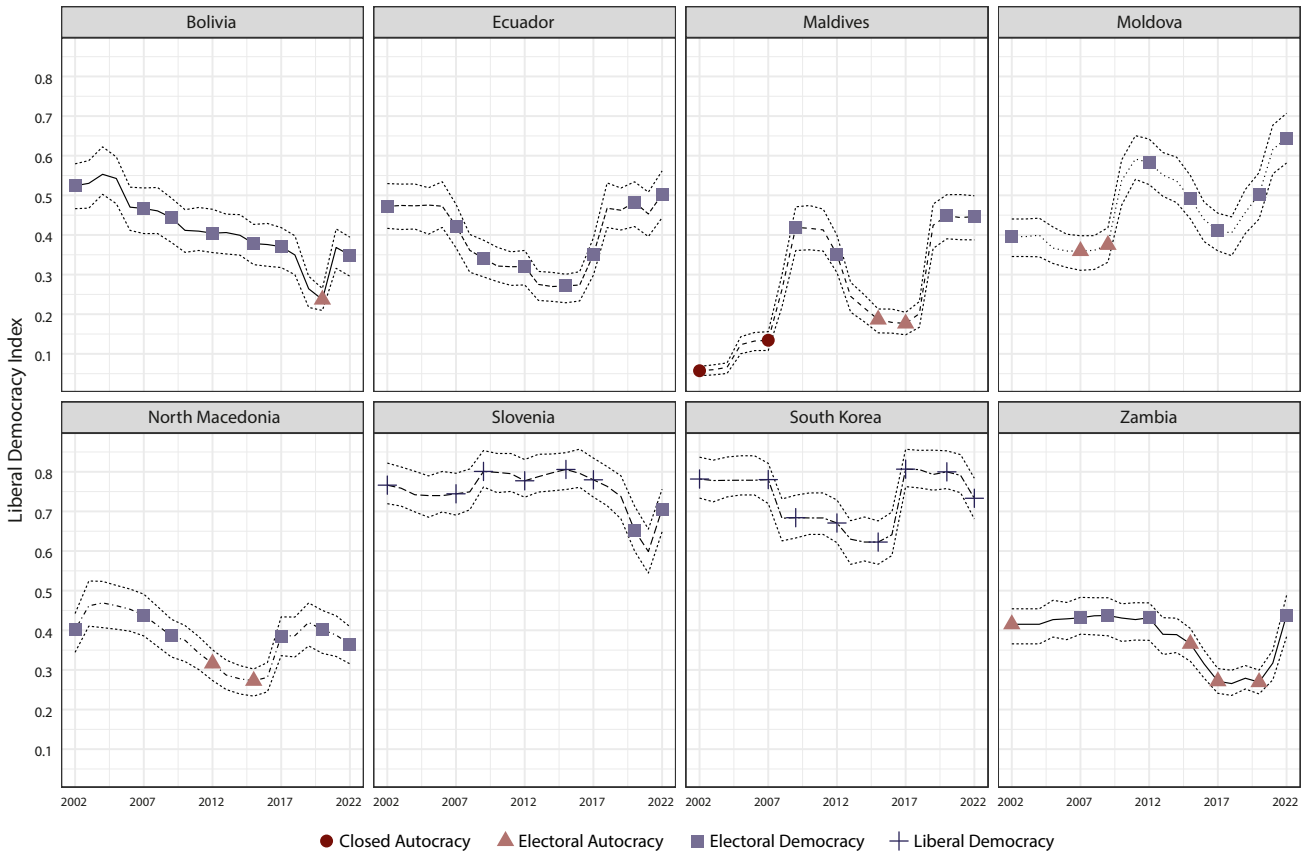
**In Focus: 8 Democracies Bouncing Back**

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

**FIGURE 17. DEMOCRACIES THAT BOUNCED BACK, 2002–2022**



This figure shows the eight countries that a) were democracies at some point over the past 20 years, b) first registered a significant and substantial decline on the LDI followed by c) a significant and substantial increase. Difference is statistically significant if confidence intervals do not overlap and substantial if the difference is greater than 0.05.

29 <https://thecommonwealth.org/press-release/commonwealth-releases-final-observer-report-gambias-2021-presidential-election>  
 30 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/01/honduras-to-get-first-female-president-after-ruling-party-concedes-defeat>

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,<sup>31</sup> and the loss of the army's support ultimately led to Morales' resignation.<sup>32</sup> With the free and fair 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.<sup>33</sup> The re-introduction of presidential term limits by Correa's successor Lenín Moreno was key to preserving democracy.<sup>34</sup> Ecuador is also gradually overcoming the destructive polarization initiated during Correa's administration.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup>

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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> After the 2014 elections, the largest opposition party (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, SDSM) boycotted parliament.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> After that, democracy levels started to improve.

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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> Voter turnout reached 70% – a significant increase of 18 percentage points. Riding on pro-democratic mobilization,<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup>

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

31 Lehoucq, F. (2020). Bolivia's Citizen Revolt. *Journal of Democracy*, 31(3).

32 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-bolivian-government-is-on-a-lawless-course-its-democracy-must-be-preserved/2021/03/18/3b816a4e-880b-11eb-8a8b-5cf82c3dffe4\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-bolivian-government-is-on-a-lawless-course-its-democracy-must-be-preserved/2021/03/18/3b816a4e-880b-11eb-8a8b-5cf82c3dffe4_story.html)

33 Laebens, M.G. and Lüthmann, A. 2021. What halts democratic erosion? The changing role of accountability. *Democratization* 28(5).

34 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/05/ecuador-votes-to-limit-presidents-terms-in-blow-to-rafael-correa>

35 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/04/15/five-things-ecuador-s-election-shows-about-latin-american-politics-pub-84328>

36 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-maldives-election-idUSBRE9AG09L20131117>

37 [https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/documents/MaldivesFinalReport\\_13-06-19.pdf?VersionId=\\_z.LyIxtXReilJgvhIQCKL5HPgQtX6f](https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/documents/MaldivesFinalReport_13-06-19.pdf?VersionId=_z.LyIxtXReilJgvhIQCKL5HPgQtX6f)

38 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/moldova/nations-transit/2016>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/30/world/europe/moldova-parliament-dismisses-government-amid-bank-scandal.html>

39 <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/5/508979.pdf>

40 <https://www.boell.de/en/2016/12/14/macedonia-captured-society#1>

41 Tomini, L., Gibril, S., and Bochev, V. 2023. Standing up against autocratization across political regimes: a comparative analysis of resistance actors and strategies. *Democratization* 30(1).

42 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-3271233>

43 Tomini, L., et al. Standing up. See above.

44 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/26/slovenia-jansa-golob-backsliding-democracy/>

45 <https://www.dw.com/en/what-political-newcomer-robert-golob-election-win-means-for-slovenia/a-61594261>

46 <https://www.idea.int/blog/slovenian-elections-win-democracy-loss-populism-europe>

47 <https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/02/02/slovenia-same-sex-marriage/>

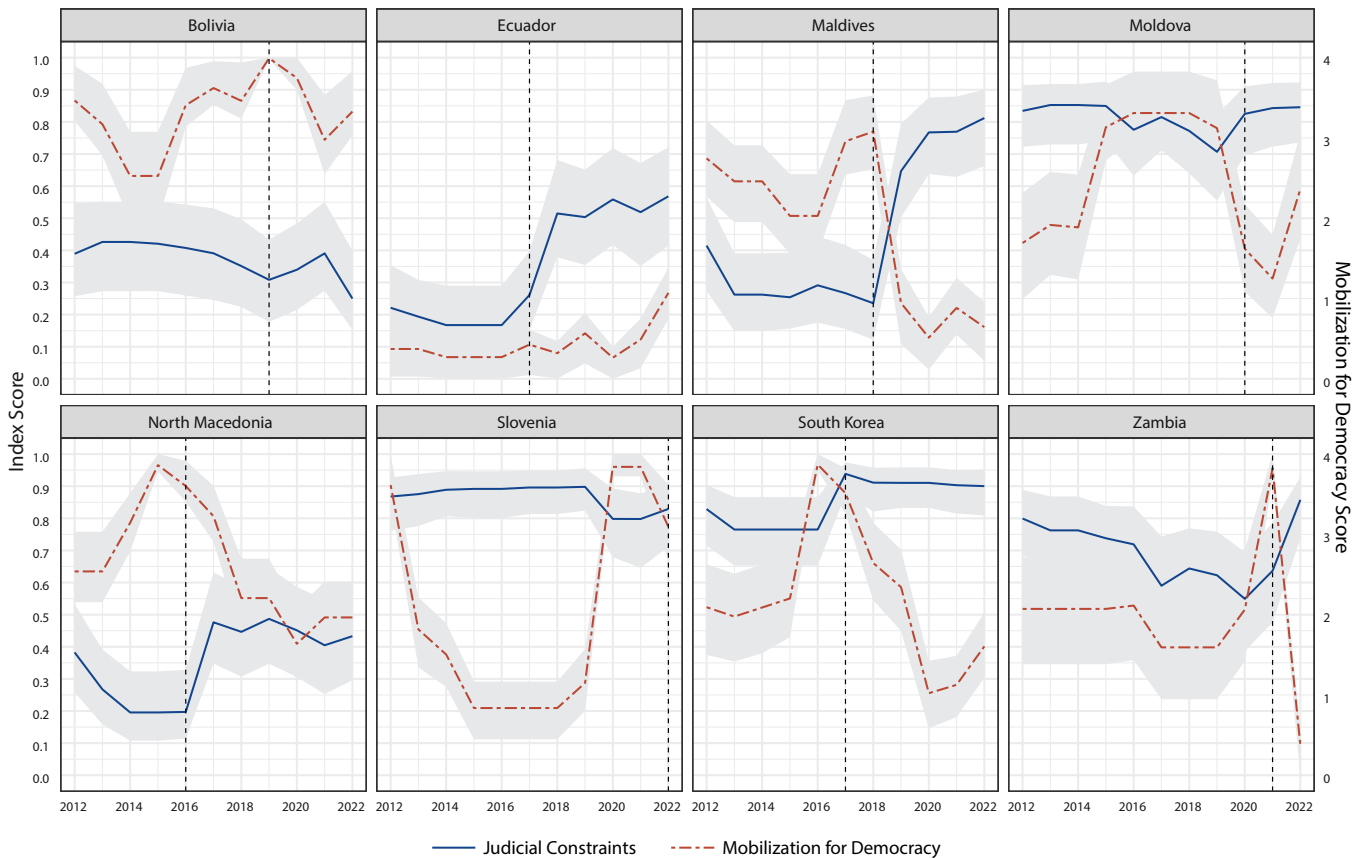
Geun-hye’s tenure between 2013 and 2017. This development manifested itself primarily in restrictions on press freedoms and bolstering of the public image of the government and ruling party.<sup>48</sup> After Park Geun-hye was linked to corruption, significant segments of the population turned against 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.<sup>49</sup> 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<sup>50</sup> and the use of the police force against opposition gatherings.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> Despite initial resistance, Lungu peacefully handed over power in the face of intense pressure that also came from Europe and the United States.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup>

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.

48 Laebens, M.G. and Lührmann, A. 2021. *What halts democratic erosion?* See above.  
 49 Shin, G.-W. and Moon, R. 2017. *South Korea After Impeachment*. *Journal of Democracy* 28(4).  
 50 [https://rsf.org/en/analyse\\_regionale/635](https://rsf.org/en/analyse_regionale/635)  
 51 [https://www.eods.eu/library/eu\\_eom\\_zambia\\_2021\\_-\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.eods.eu/library/eu_eom_zambia_2021_-_final_report.pdf)  
 52 [https://www.eods.eu/library/eu\\_eom\\_zambia\\_2021\\_-\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.eods.eu/library/eu_eom_zambia_2021_-_final_report.pdf)  
 53 Resnick, D. 2022. *How Zambia's Opposition Won*. *Journal of Democracy*, 33(1), 70-84.  
 54 [https://rsf.org/en/analyse\\_regionale/635](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 take-over and turning it around, which is also documented elsewhere.<sup>55</sup>

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.<sup>56</sup> **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.<sup>57</sup>

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.<sup>58</sup> 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.

55 Boese, V.A. et al. 2021. *How Democracies Prevail: Democratic Resilience as a Two-Stage Process*. *Democratization* 28(5).

56 Cleary, R. and Öztürk, A. 2022. *When Does Backsliding Lead to Breakdown? Uncertainty and Opposition Strategies in Democracies at Risk*. *Perspectives on Politics* 20(1); Gamboa, L. 2022. *Resisting Backsliding*. Cambridge University Press.

57 Sato, Y., & Wahman, M. 2019. *Elite coordination and popular protest: the joint effect on democratic change*. *Democratization*, 26(8)

58 Leininger, L. 2022. *International Democracy Promotion in Times of Autocratization: From Supporting to Protecting Democracy*. IDOS: Discussion Paper 21/2022.



*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 between autocracies and democracies 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.
- Whereas exports and imports of autocracies are becoming less dependent on democracies, democracies' dependence on autocracies has doubled in the last 30 years.

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)<sup>59</sup> – 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.

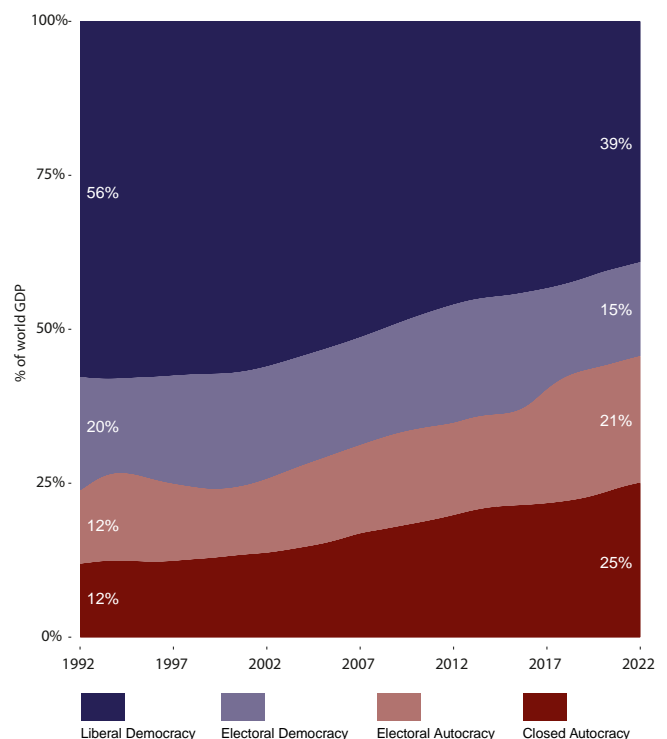
Figure 19 illustrates this shift. As of 2022, autocracies account for almost half of global GDP. Closed autocracies generated 25% of global GDP in 2022 and an additional 21% is attributable to electoral autocracies. This represents a doubling since the end of the Cold War.

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

FIGURE 19: SHARE OF WORLD GDP, BY REGIME TYPE 1992–2022



<sup>59</sup> 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<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> 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.

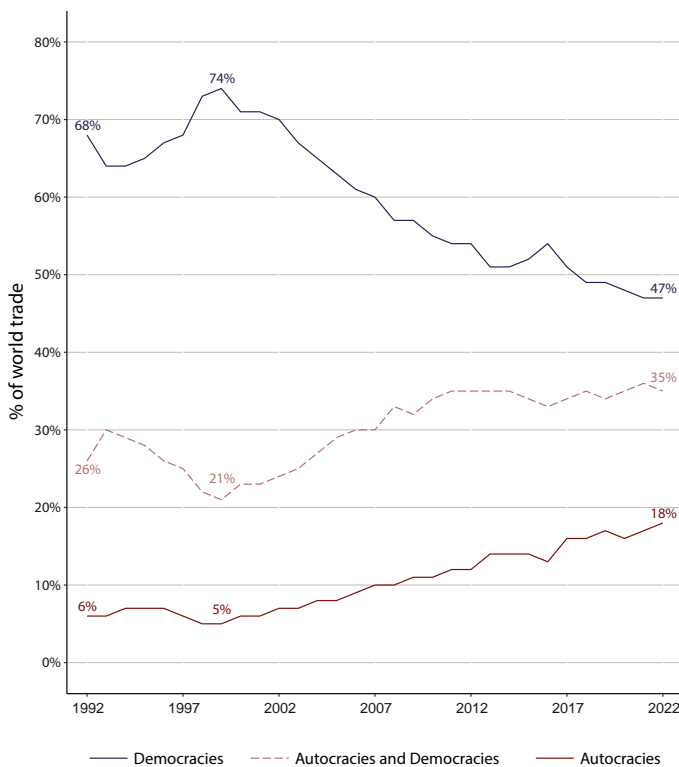
At the same time, trade between autocracies and democracies is growing, increasing interdependencies.

**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.

**FIGURE 20. SHARE OF WORLD TRADE BETWEEN DEMOCRACIES AND AUTOCRACIES, 1992–2022**



60 Lührmann, A. and S.I. Lindberg. 2019. *A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here*. *Democratization* 26(7).

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

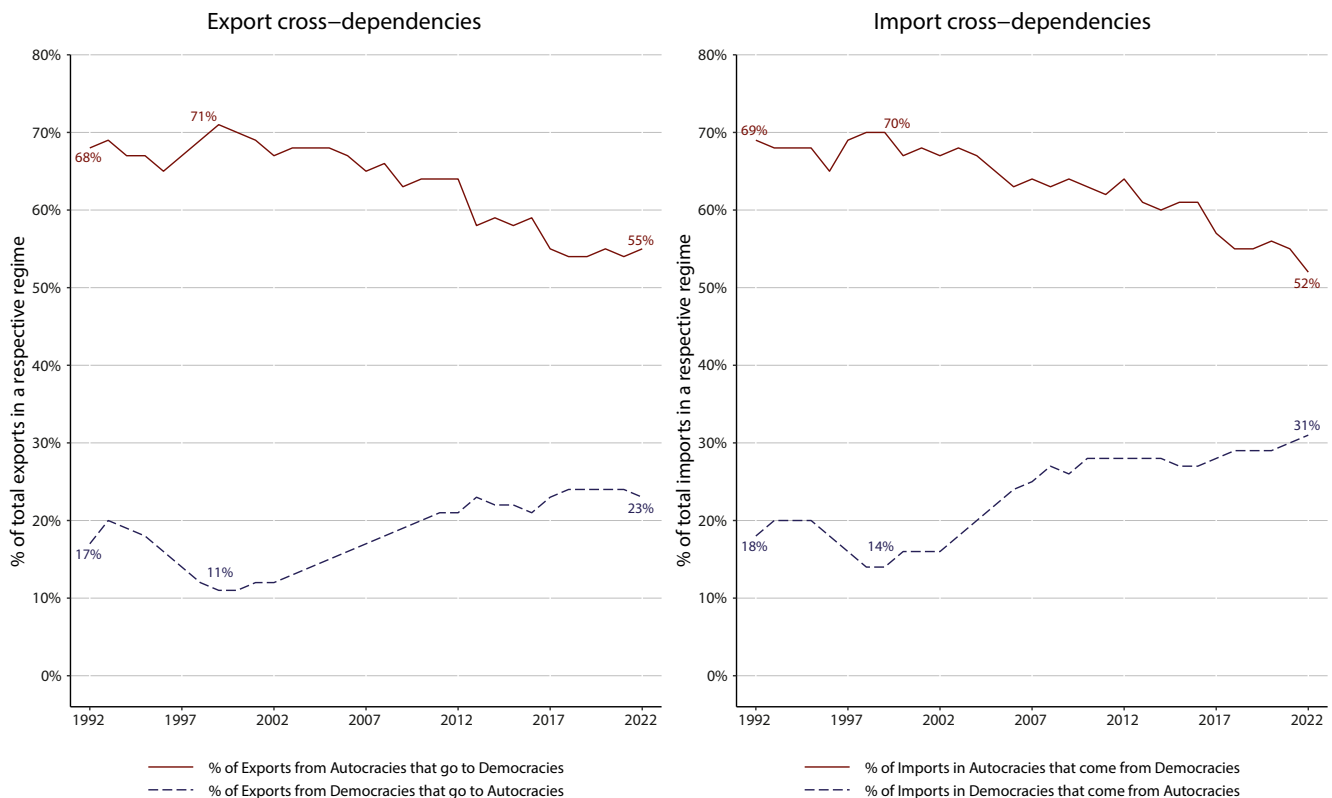
East, and countries like **Angola** and **Venezuela** are suppliers of oil and gas; **China**, **Democratic Republic of Congo**, and **Russia** are vital sources of rare earth minerals, such as lithium, nickel, and cobalt.<sup>62</sup> China is a concern also when it comes to vulnerabilities emerging from switching to renewable energy.<sup>63</sup>

**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.

**FIGURE 21. EXPORT/IMPORT DEPENDENCIES BETWEEN DEMOCRACIES AND AUTOCRACIES, 1992–2022**



62 <https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/russian-invasion-of-ukraine-may-drive-eu-back-to-china-as-source-for-rare-earths-69217025>  
 63 [https://d3mbhodo1l6ikf.cloudfront.net/2023/Munich%20Security%20Report%202023/MunichSecurityReport2023\\_Re\\_vision.pdf](https://d3mbhodo1l6ikf.cloudfront.net/2023/Munich%20Security%20Report%202023/MunichSecurityReport2023_Re_vision.pdf)

# 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’.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Facebook, Instagram and multiple foreign media websites such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle, Radio Liberty, and Voice of America, are now banned.

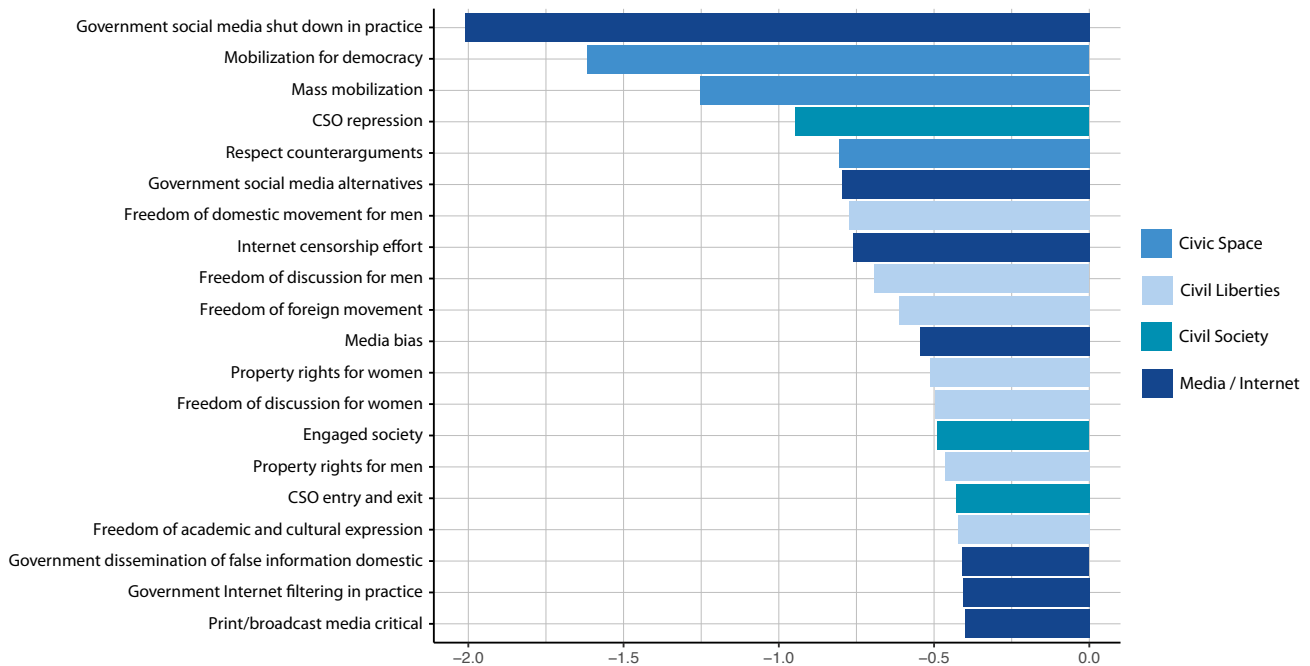
## CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESSION

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

## 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,<sup>5</sup> and many are facing jail sentences of up to 15 years. The State Duma passed a record 653 laws<sup>6</sup> 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



1 <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-introduce-jail-terms-spreading-fake-information-about-army-2022-03-04/>

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.

5 [https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/ukraine-russia-news-02-27-22/h\\_b9f792057cdb10388841d3fa2e971da5](https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/ukraine-russia-news-02-27-22/h_b9f792057cdb10388841d3fa2e971da5)

6 <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/01/04/come-to-your-senses>

## Academic Freedom Index

Lars Pelke and Katrin Kinzelbach

There is a global shift toward less academic freedom for the average global citizen. Substantive 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.

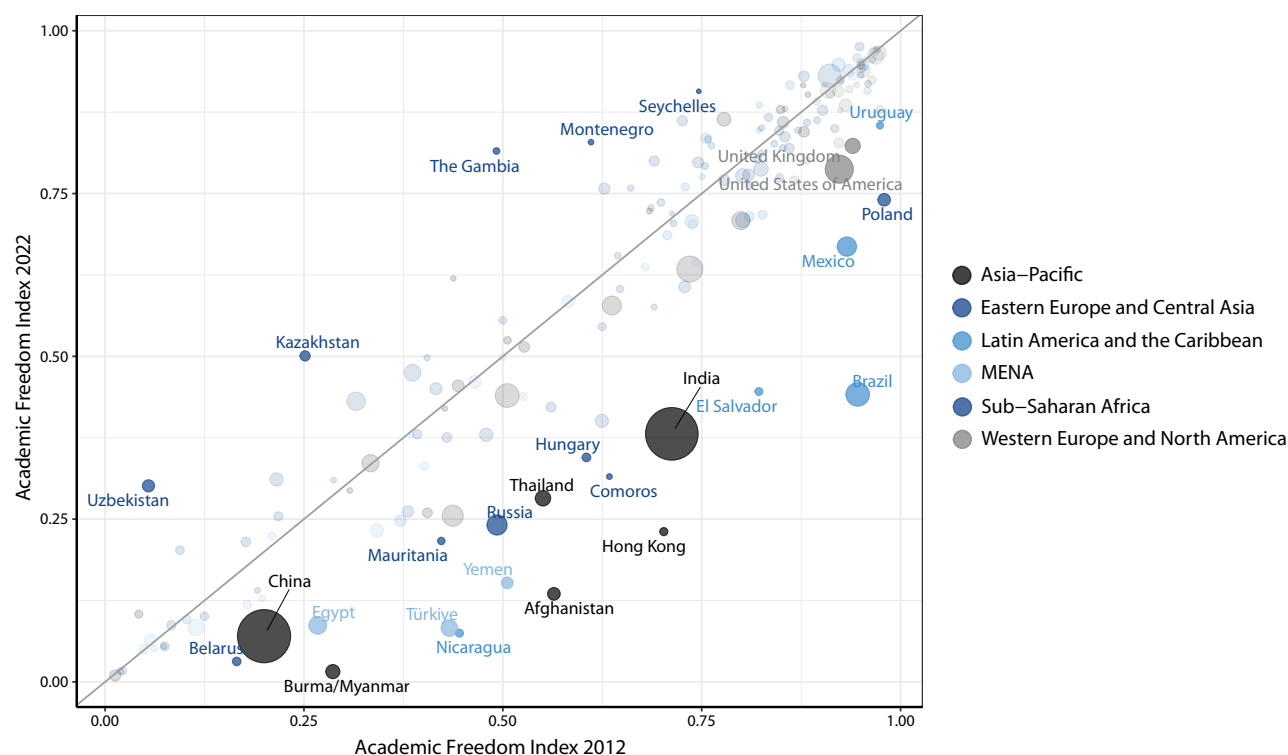
Similarly, declines in academic freedom are linked to autocratization in Latin American countries such as **Brazil**, **El Salvador**, **Mexico**, **Nicaragua**, and **Uruguay**. The latter lost a record of 0.5 points in a decade.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi). At present, V-Dem and FAU continue to implement the project with a grant from the German Volkswagen 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).

## V-Dem Latin American Regional Center & Spanish Edition of *Democracy Report 2023*

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 Cullel, 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.



Brasília, Brazil, January 1, 2023. Supporters of President Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva display a Brazilian flag during the presidential inauguration ceremony at Planalto Palace. At the age of 77 and after having spent 580 days in jail between 2018 and 2019, Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva starts his third period as president of Brazil. Photo: Getty Images

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

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 Lüthmann 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).

**LD** Liberal Democracy  
**ED** Electoral Democracy  
**EA** Electoral Autocracy  
**CA** Closed Autocracy  
 – indicates that taking uncertainty into account, the country could belong to the lower category  
 + signifies that the country could also belong to the higher category  
 ⬆ indicates that the country sees a movement upwards from one level to another  
 ⬇ indicates that the country sees a movement downwards from one level to another

**LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES**

COUNTRY	2022	CHANGE FROM 2012
Australia	LD	
Barbados	LD-	⬆
Belgium	LD	
Chile	LD-	
Costa Rica	LD	
Cyprus	LD-	
Czech Republic	LD	⬆
Denmark	LD	
Estonia	LD	
Finland	LD	
France	LD-	
Germany	LD	
Iceland	LD	
Ireland	LD	
Israel	LD	
Italy	LD-	
Japan	LD	
Latvia	LD	
Luxembourg	LD	
Netherlands	LD	
New Zealand	LD	
Norway	LD-	
Seychelles	LD	⬆
Slovakia	LD-	
South Korea	LD	
Spain	LD	
Sweden	LD	
Switzerland	LD	
Taiwan	LD	
United Kingdom	LD-	
Uruguay	LD-	
USA	LD	

**ELECTORAL DEMOCRACIES**

COUNTRY	2022	CHANGE FROM 2012
Argentina	ED	
Armenia	ED	⬆
Austria	ED+	⬇
Bhutan	ED-	
Bolivia	ED	
Botswana	ED	⬇
BiH	ED-	
Brazil	ED	
Bulgaria	ED	
Canada	ED	⬇
Cape Verde	ED	
Colombia	ED	⬇
Croatia	ED+	
Dominican Republic	ED	
Ecuador	ED	
Gambia	ED	⬆
Georgia	ED	
Ghana	ED+	⬇
Greece	ED+	⬇
Guyana	ED-	
Honduras	ED-	⬆
Indonesia	ED	
Jamaica	ED+	
Kenya	ED-	⬆
Kosovo	ED	⬆
Lesotho	ED	
Liberia	ED	
Lithuania	ED+	⬇
Malawi	ED+	
Maldives	ED	
Malta	ED+	
Mauritius	ED-	⬇
Mexico	ED	
Moldova	ED+	
Mongolia	ED	
Montenegro	ED-	
Namibia	ED+	
Nepal	ED	⬆
Niger	ED-	
North Macedonia	ED-	⬆
Panama	ED	
Paraguay	ED	
Peru	ED	
Poland	ED	⬇
Portugal	ED+	⬇
Romania	ED	
S.Tomé & P.	ED+	
Senegal	ED+	
Sierra Leone	ED-	
Slovenia	ED+	⬇
Solomon Islands	ED	
South Africa	ED	⬇
Sri Lanka	ED	⬆
Suriname	ED	
Timor-Leste	ED	
Trinidad and Tobago	ED+	⬇
Vanuatu	ED+	
Zambia	ED-	

**ELECTORAL AUTOCRACIES**

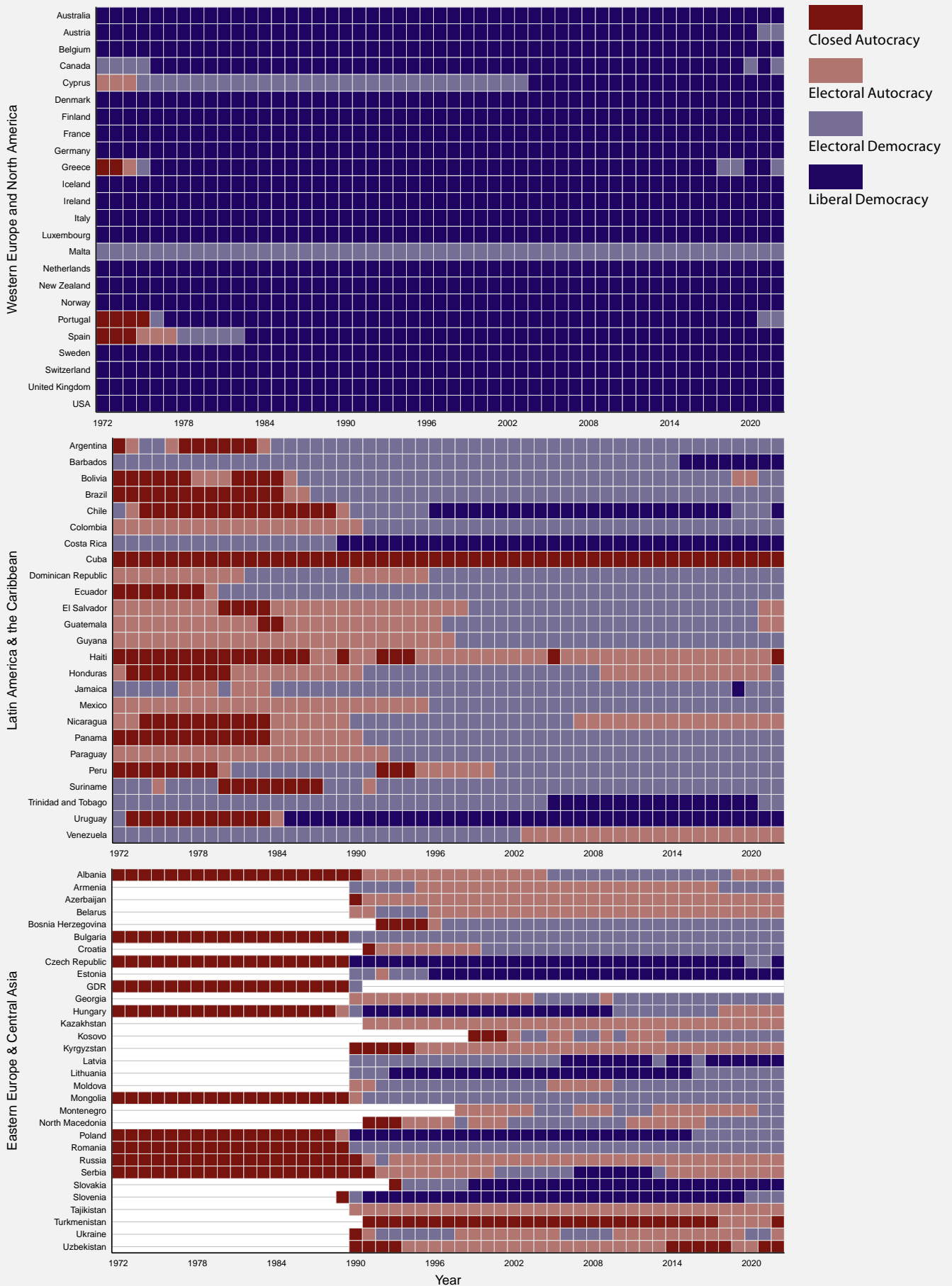
COUNTRY	2022	CHANGE FROM 2012
Albania	EA+	⬇
Algeria	EA	
Angola	EA	
Azerbaijan	EA	
Bangladesh	EA	
Belarus	EA	
Benin	EA+	⬇
Burkina Faso	EA	⬇
Burundi	EA	
Cambodia	EA	
Cameroon	EA	
CAR	EA	
Comoros	EA	
Congo	EA	
Djibouti	EA	
DRC	EA	
Egypt	EA-	
El Salvador	EA	⬇
Equatorial Guinea	EA	
Ethiopia	EA	
Fiji	EA	⬆
Gabon	EA	
Guatemala	EA	⬇
Guinea-Bissau	EA	
Hungary	EA	⬇
India	EA	⬇
Iraq	EA	
Ivory Coast	EA	
Kazakhstan	EA	
Kyrgyzstan	EA	
Lebanon	EA	
Madagascar	EA+	
Malaysia	EA	
Mauritania	EA	
Mozambique	EA	
Nicaragua	EA-	
Nigeria	EA+	⬇
Papua New Guinea	EA+	
Pakistan	EA	
Palestine/West Bank	EA	
Philippines	EA	⬇
Russia	EA	
Rwanda	EA	
Serbia	EA	⬇
Singapore	EA	
Somaliland	EA	
Tajikistan	EA	
Tanzania	EA	
Togo	EA	
Tunisia	EA	⬇
Türkiye	EA	⬇
Uganda	EA	
Ukraine	EA	
Venezuela	EA	
Zanzibar	EA	
Zimbabwe	EA	⬇

**CLOSED AUTOCRACIES**

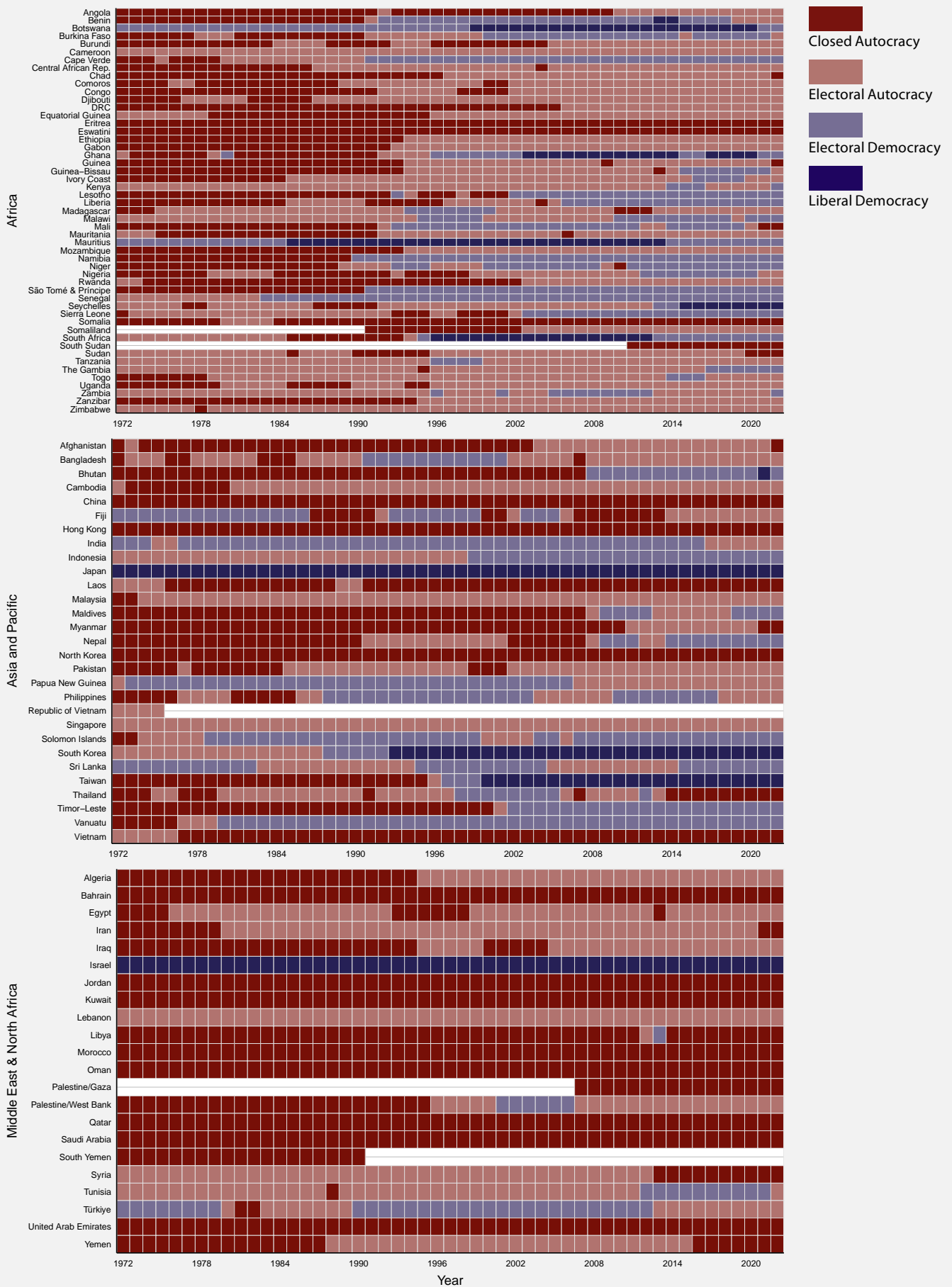
COUNTRY	2022	CHANGE FROM 2012
Afghanistan	CA	⬇
Bahrain	CA	
Chad	CA	⬇
China	CA	
Cuba	CA	
Eritrea	CA	
Eswatini	CA	
Guinea	CA	⬇
Haiti	CA+	⬇
Hong Kong	CA	
Iran	CA	⬇
Jordan	CA	
Kuwait	CA+	
Laos	CA	
Libya	CA	⬇
Mali	CA	⬇
Morocco	CA	
Myanmar	CA	⬇
North Korea	CA	
Oman	CA	
Palestine/Gaza	CA	
Qatar	CA	
Saudi Arabia	CA	
Somalia	CA	
South Sudan	CA	
Sudan	CA	⬇
Syria	CA	⬇
Thailand	CA	⬇
Turkmenistan	CA+	
UAE	CA	
Uzbekistan	CA+	⬇
Vietnam	CA	
Yemen	CA	⬇

**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 typography and indicator are published in Lüthmann et al. 2018. Regimes of the World (RoW), politics and Governance 6(1).



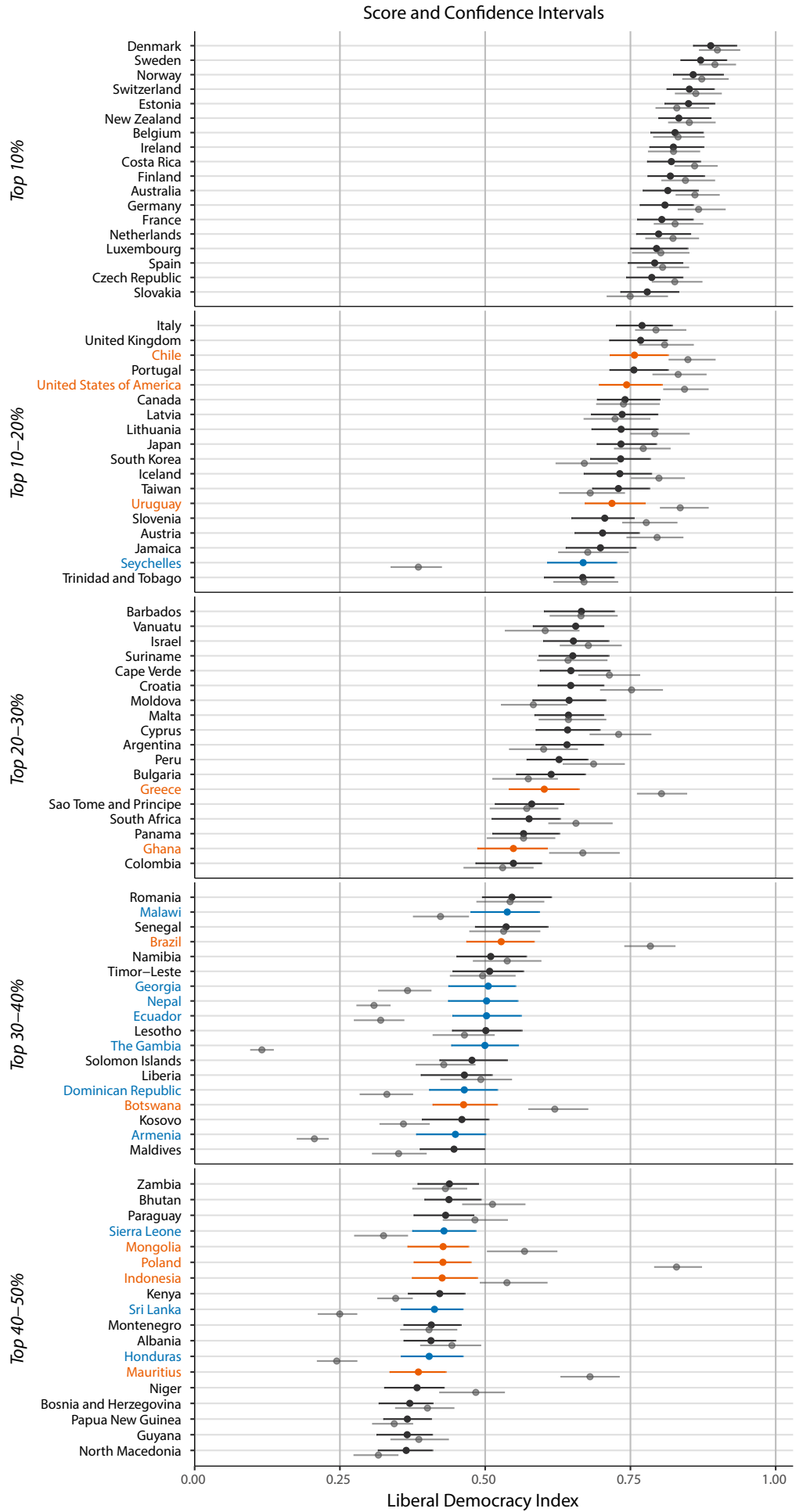




**FIGURE 1. COUNTRIES BY SCORE ON V-DEM'S LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI), 2012 COMPARED TO 2022**

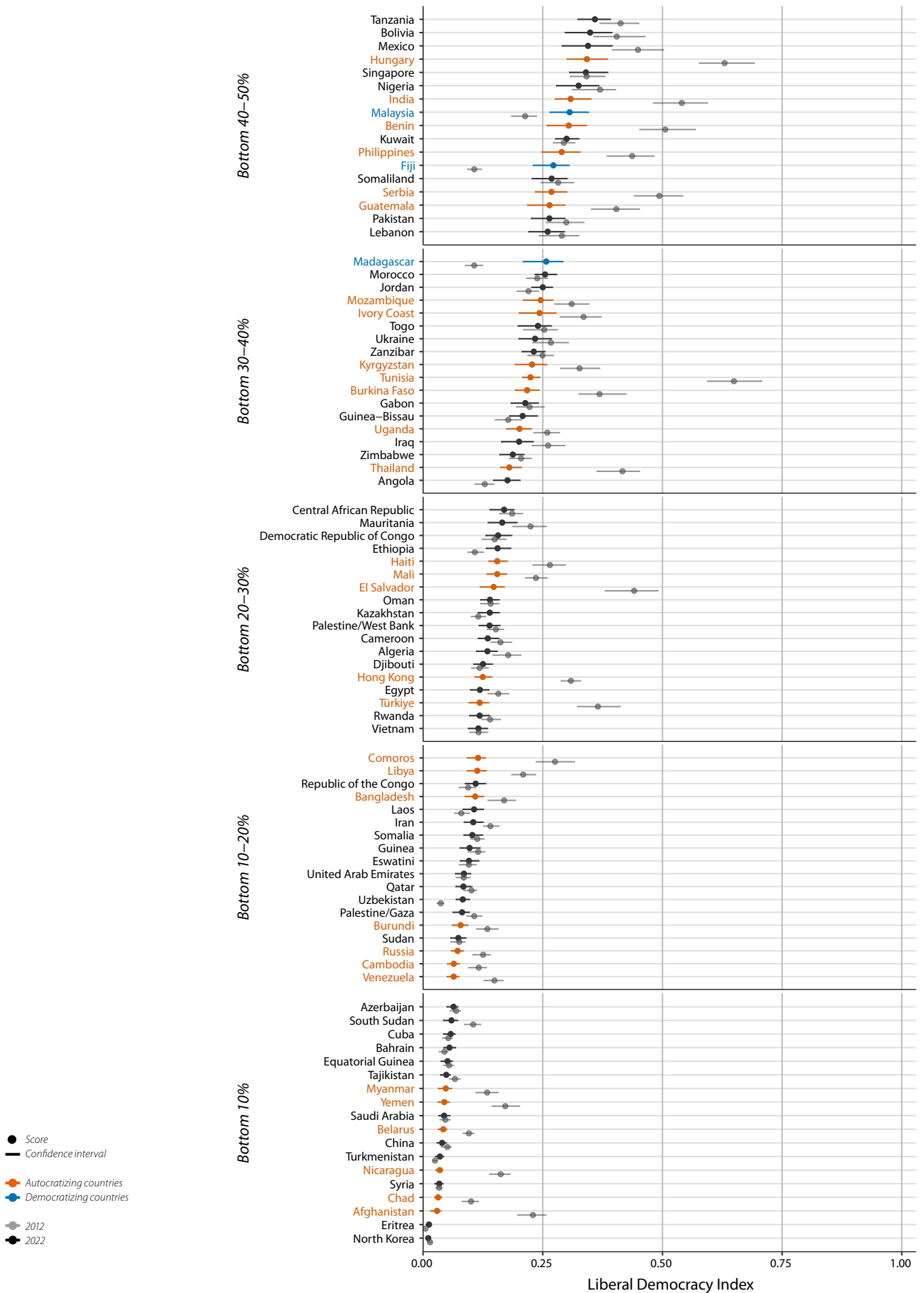
**Top 50% of countries**

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%.




Bottom 50% of countries

Score and Confidence Intervals



**TABLE 3. COUNTRY SCORES FOR THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI) AND ALL COMPONENTS INDICES, 2022**

 Indicates that the country's score has improved over the past 10 years, substantively and at a statistically significant level

 Indicates that the country's score has decreased over the past 10 years, substantively and at a statistically significant level

**SD+/-** reports the standard deviation to indicate the level of uncertainty

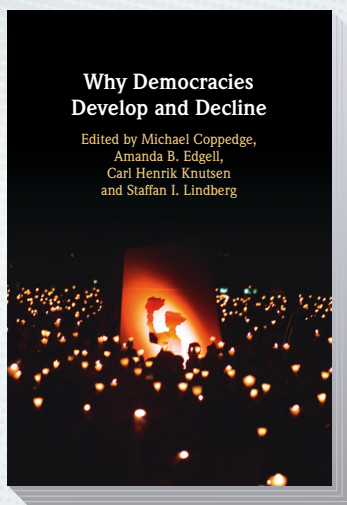
COUNTRY	LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI)			ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)			LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX (LCI)			EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX (ECI)			PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX (PCI)			DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX (DCI)		
	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-
Denmark	1	0.89	0.04	1	0.92	0.036	2	0.98	0.012	2	0.97	0.024	5	0.71	0.018	5	0.97	0.637
Sweden	2	0.87	0.042	3	0.9	0.038	1	0.98	0.011	13	0.9	0.044	27	0.65	0.026	23	0.9	0.626
Norway	3	0.86	0.045	4	0.9	0.041	4	0.97	0.018	1	0.97	0.024	28	0.65	0.018	1	0.99	0.64
Switzerland	4	0.85	0.044	2	0.9	0.038	8	0.96	0.025	6	0.93	0.04	1	0.88	0.02	2	0.98	0.645
Estonia	5	0.85	0.045	5	0.89	0.04	6	0.96	0.021	17	0.89	0.053	38	0.63	0.037	48	0.83	0.634
New Zealand	6	0.83	0.046	8	0.89	0.039	11	0.95	0.025	19	0.88	0.056	6	0.71	0.04	33	0.88	0.63
Belgium	7	0.83	0.046	6	0.89	0.041	14	0.94	0.031	5	0.93	0.038	30	0.65	0.025	17	0.92	0.636
Ireland	8	0.82	0.048	7	0.89	0.04	15	0.93	0.033	18	0.89	0.052	26	0.65	0.039	18	0.92	0.637
Costa Rica	9	0.82	0.047	12	0.87	0.042	9	0.96	0.023	20	0.88	0.054	14	0.67	0.033	7	0.96	0.634
Finland	10	0.82	0.05	13	0.86	0.046	5	0.96	0.023	11	0.91	0.043	25	0.65	0.02	10	0.93	0.634
Australia	11	0.81	0.048	14	0.86	0.045	3	0.97	0.019	31	0.84	0.061	18	0.66	0.044	13	0.93	0.635
Germany	12	0.81	0.047	15	0.86	0.043	7	0.96	0.021	4	0.94	0.038	15	0.66	0.012	3	0.98	0.629
France	13	0.8	0.05	10	0.88	0.043	18	0.92	0.033	26	0.85	0.061	40	0.63	0.038	11	0.93	0.637
Netherlands	14	0.8	0.049	17	0.85	0.045	10	0.96	0.023	14	0.9	0.046	48	0.61	0.04	6	0.96	0.639
Luxembourg	15	0.79	0.05	9	0.88	0.042	26	0.91	0.04	3	0.95	0.039	58	0.59	0.066	4	0.97	0.637
Spain	16	0.79	0.048	11	0.87	0.039	24	0.91	0.041	40	0.8	0.069	29	0.65	0.032	30	0.88	0.629
Czech Republic	17	0.79	0.049	16	0.86	0.043	16	0.93	0.031	12	0.91	0.05	57	0.59	0.047	35	0.87	0.63
Slovakia	18	0.78	0.051	20	0.85	0.048	17	0.93	0.03	39	0.81	0.066	17	0.66	0.046	92	0.66	0.626
Italy	19	0.77	0.05	21	0.85	0.045	19	0.92	0.033	7	0.93	0.041	4	0.76	0.033	15	0.92	0.64
United Kingdom	20	0.77	0.051	22	0.84	0.047	21	0.92	0.032	34	0.83	0.069	20	0.66	0.028	39	0.87	0.631
Chile	21	0.76	0.051	30	0.81	0.049	12	0.95	0.022	60	0.72	0.076	24	0.65	0.04	8	0.96	0.638
Portugal	22	0.76	0.051	18	0.85	0.045	31	0.89	0.04	27	0.85	0.06	42	0.62	0.04	31	0.88	0.63
USA	23	0.74	0.055	27	0.82	0.051	22	0.92	0.035	74	0.66	0.086	19	0.66	0.015	36	0.87	0.634
Canada	24	0.74	0.056	19	0.85	0.047	38	0.87	0.048	51	0.76	0.075	22	0.65	0.024	50	0.83	0.63
Latvia	25	0.74	0.057	26	0.82	0.052	28	0.9	0.043	30	0.84	0.062	16	0.66	0.043	46	0.84	0.629
Lithuania	26	0.73	0.057	35	0.79	0.055	13	0.95	0.025	22	0.86	0.055	7	0.7	0.043	55	0.8	0.624
Japan	27	0.73	0.052	23	0.83	0.046	35	0.88	0.044	8	0.93	0.044	75	0.56	0.052	22	0.9	0.63
South Korea	28	0.73	0.054	29	0.81	0.051	23	0.91	0.037	24	0.86	0.059	54	0.59	0.045	45	0.84	0.628
Iceland	29	0.73	0.058	28	0.82	0.054	27	0.9	0.04	16	0.9	0.05	9	0.69	0.022	29	0.88	0.643
Taiwan	30	0.73	0.05	24	0.83	0.045	37	0.88	0.044	10	0.91	0.05	3	0.76	0.029	25	0.89	0.635
Uruguay	31	0.72	0.053	31	0.81	0.047	29	0.9	0.041	48	0.77	0.072	2	0.77	0.038	51	0.82	0.633
Slovenia	32	0.71	0.054	32	0.8	0.051	32	0.89	0.041	25	0.86	0.061	10	0.68	0.045	24	0.89	0.631
Austria	33	0.7	0.056	34	0.8	0.054	33	0.89	0.041	9	0.91	0.054	23	0.65	0.038	44	0.84	0.636
Jamaica	34	0.7	0.062	33	0.8	0.059	36	0.88	0.044	37	0.82	0.069	50	0.6	0.044	42	0.85	0.634
Seychelles	35	0.67	0.059	44	0.75	0.059	30	0.9	0.042	32	0.83	0.066	145	0.29	0.045	14	0.93	0.641
Trinidad and Tobago	36	0.67	0.06	36	0.78	0.058	43	0.85	0.047	42	0.79	0.073	65	0.57	0.048	12	0.93	0.643
Barbados	37	0.67	0.061	38	0.78	0.059	42	0.85	0.049	33	0.83	0.066	144	0.29	0.037	26	0.89	0.624
Vanuatu	38	0.66	0.06	41	0.77	0.06	44	0.85	0.048	54	0.75	0.082	85	0.55	0.063	61	0.78	0.641
Israel	39	0.65	0.056	49	0.72	0.058	20	0.92	0.034	36	0.82	0.066	52	0.6	0.045	40	0.85	0.642
Suriname	40	0.65	0.06	42	0.77	0.059	46	0.84	0.051	64	0.71	0.08	60	0.58	0.051	65	0.77	0.634
Cape Verde	41	0.65	0.06	45	0.75	0.059	40	0.87	0.047	58	0.73	0.081	83	0.55	0.058	49	0.83	0.632
Croatia	42	0.65	0.057	47	0.74	0.058	34	0.89	0.04	49	0.76	0.074	32	0.64	0.051	64	0.77	0.632
Moldova	43	0.64	0.062	43	0.76	0.061	41	0.86	0.048	53	0.75	0.075	31	0.64	0.049	19	0.92	0.64
Malta	44	0.64	0.06	37	0.78	0.055	52	0.81	0.058	15	0.9	0.054	12	0.67	0.05	54	0.8	0.629
Cyprus	45	0.64	0.057	39	0.78	0.052	51	0.82	0.059	21	0.87	0.059	92	0.54	0.061	57	0.8	0.644
Argentina	46	0.64	0.058	25	0.83	0.051	72	0.74	0.063	56	0.74	0.073	45	0.62	0.032	67	0.76	0.632
Peru	47	0.63	0.054	46	0.75	0.054	49	0.83	0.048	114	0.53	0.091	33	0.64	0.05	115	0.53	0.636
Bulgaria	48	0.61	0.059	54	0.69	0.063	25	0.91	0.037	43	0.78	0.071	13	0.67	0.051	37	0.87	0.636
Greece	49	0.6	0.06	40	0.78	0.052	73	0.74	0.07	29	0.84	0.062	34	0.64	0.047	27	0.89	0.631
S.Tomé & P.	50	0.58	0.059	56	0.68	0.064	45	0.85	0.048	69	0.67	0.082	69	0.57	0.053	75	0.73	0.627
South Africa	51	0.58	0.059	55	0.69	0.062	48	0.84	0.051	77	0.65	0.082	81	0.56	0.052	28	0.88	0.63
Panama	52	0.57	0.059	48	0.74	0.056	71	0.75	0.068	110	0.54	0.091	101	0.52	0.063	71	0.75	0.626
Ghana	53	0.55	0.059	67	0.64	0.066	39	0.87	0.047	132	0.41	0.077	132	0.41	0.052	47	0.84	0.635
Colombia	54	0.55	0.057	51	0.69	0.058	63	0.77	0.059	130	0.46	0.093	36	0.63	0.051	66	0.77	0.631
Romania	55	0.55	0.058	53	0.69	0.06	61	0.78	0.062	76	0.65	0.088	8	0.69	0.061	134	0.41	0.627
Malawi	56	0.54	0.059	64	0.64	0.067	47	0.84	0.049	116	0.52	0.087	68	0.57	0.047	58	0.79	0.625
Senegal	57	0.54	0.063	52	0.69	0.066	66	0.75	0.065	59	0.72	0.075	115	0.47	0.068	53	0.81	0.63
Brazil	58	0.53	0.057	58	0.68	0.062	68	0.75	0.055	144	0.36	0.088	74	0.56	0.054	106	0.6	0.634
Namibia	59	0.51	0.06	65	0.64	0.067	57	0.79	0.063	139	0.41	0.1	95	0.54	0.058	80	0.72	0.635
Timor-Leste	60	0.51	0.061	50	0.7	0.063	89	0.69	0.07	104	0.56	0.087	80	0.56	0.057	85	0.68	0.629
Georgia	61	0.51	0.061	60	0.65	0.065	69	0.75	0.065	45	0.78	0.073	63	0.58	0.049	52	0.82	0.632
Nepal	62	0.5	0.061	62	0.64	0.069	65	0.76	0.06	97	0.59	0.084	46	0.62	0.039	114	0.55	0.635
Ecuador	63	0.5	0.06	59	0.66	0.063	76	0.73	0.065	106	0.56	0.092	11	0.67	0.048	91	0.66	0.641
Lesotho	64	0.5	0.06	63	0.64	0.067	64	0.76	0.063	46	0.77	0.073	72	0.57	0.056	72	0.75	0.623
Gambia	65	0.5	0.058	68	0.62	0.064	55	0.79	0.061	82	0.64	0.083	62	0.58	0.053	84	0.7	0.629
Solomon Islands	66	0.48	0.058	70	0.62	0.067	70	0.75	0.061	124	0.47	0.084	99	0.52	0.065	122	0.5	0.63
Liberia	67	0.46	0.06	66	0.64	0.067	87	0.7	0.075	99	0.58	0.086	113	0.47	0.037	101	0.62	0.655
Dominican Republic	68	0.46	0.059	57	0.68	0.068	95	0.63	0.061	132	0.45	0.087	37	0.63	0.033	20	0.91	0.646
Botswana	69	0.46	0.056	77	0.58	0.067	59	0.78	0.058	80	0.65	0.086	51	0.6	0.045	107	0.59	0.635
Kosovo	70	0.46	0.058	69	0.62	0.067	82	0.71	0.065	71	0.66	0.09	107	0.5	0.06	97	0.63	0.629
Armenia	71	0.45	0.059	61	0.65	0.065	93	0.64	0.072	28	0.84	0.						

COUNTRY	LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI)			ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)			LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX (LCI)			EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX (ECI)			PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX (PCI)			DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX (DCI)		
	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-
Tanzania	91	0.36	0.036	107	0.4	0.048	50	0.82	0.054	41	0.79	0.072	79	0.56	0.056	70	0.76	0.63
Bolivia	92	0.35	0.05	71	0.6	0.063	114	0.51	0.07	89	0.62	0.082	21	0.66	0.043	120	0.52	0.634
Mexico	93	0.34	0.055	72	0.6	0.067	115	0.5	0.079	126	0.47	0.086	49	0.61	0.057	116	0.53	0.631
Hungary	94	0.34	0.043	96	0.45	0.056	86	0.7	0.066	73	0.66	0.081	53	0.59	0.06	141	0.37	0.622
Singapore	95	0.34	0.04	101	0.43	0.052	77	0.73	0.065	44	0.78	0.073	167	0.15	0.057	63	0.78	0.625
Nigeria	96	0.32	0.047	91	0.49	0.06	102	0.59	0.073	134	0.44	0.083	47	0.61	0.038	109	0.59	0.623
India	97	0.31	0.039	108	0.4	0.052	90	0.69	0.066	123	0.48	0.093	73	0.57	0.054	95	0.64	0.626
Malaysia	98	0.31	0.042	97	0.44	0.056	99	0.61	0.071	65	0.7	0.085	111	0.49	0.06	88	0.67	0.627
Benin	99	0.3	0.043	95	0.45	0.058	100	0.6	0.071	61	0.72	0.078	106	0.5	0.063	108	0.59	0.628
Kuwait	100	0.3	0.025	122	0.32	0.03	58	0.78	0.058	98	0.59	0.084	160	0.18	0.06	86	0.67	0.639
Philippines	101	0.29	0.042	100	0.44	0.055	103	0.58	0.078	148	0.34	0.093	55	0.59	0.052	62	0.78	0.64
Fiji	102	0.27	0.039	105	0.41	0.053	106	0.57	0.075	93	0.6	0.091	123	0.43	0.045	93	0.65	0.634
Somaliland	103	0.27	0.038	102	0.43	0.052	110	0.53	0.074	157	0.29	0.087	104	0.51	0.065	117	0.52	0.626
Serbia	104	0.27	0.034	116	0.36	0.044	97	0.62	0.07	50	0.76	0.072	67	0.57	0.059	121	0.51	0.63
Guatemala	105	0.26	0.041	99	0.44	0.056	113	0.51	0.079	159	0.28	0.085	110	0.49	0.064	133	0.44	0.627
Pakistan	106	0.26	0.036	110	0.39	0.047	104	0.57	0.075	162	0.27	0.083	82	0.55	0.057	74	0.74	0.642
Lebanon	107	0.26	0.039	104	0.42	0.052	112	0.52	0.076	115	0.52	0.088	112	0.48	0.068	90	0.66	0.632
Madagascar	108	0.26	0.043	92	0.49	0.06	124	0.43	0.073	151	0.33	0.089	102	0.52	0.065	127	0.48	0.635
Morocco	109	0.25	0.023	134	0.26	0.024	79	0.72	0.066	101	0.58	0.093	125	0.42	0.073	79	0.73	0.627
Jordan	110	0.25	0.022	135	0.26	0.024	81	0.71	0.063	107	0.55	0.091	143	0.29	0.073	99	0.62	0.625
Mozambique	111	0.25	0.032	117	0.36	0.042	107	0.56	0.073	108	0.55	0.083	100	0.52	0.06	124	0.5	0.625
Ivory Coast	112	0.24	0.039	98	0.44	0.057	120	0.45	0.071	118	0.5	0.092	41	0.62	0.049	34	0.87	0.633
Togo	113	0.24	0.036	103	0.42	0.054	119	0.46	0.07	75	0.65	0.094	91	0.54	0.059	60	0.79	0.63
Ukraine	114	0.23	0.036	106	0.4	0.053	118	0.47	0.071	66	0.7	0.086	70	0.57	0.051	56	0.8	0.637
Zanzibar	115	0.23	0.025	128	0.28	0.029	98	0.62	0.069	67	0.69	0.083	122	0.44	0.075	77	0.73	0.643
Kyrgyzstan	116	0.23	0.034	111	0.38	0.048	116	0.48	0.073	120	0.49	0.098	129	0.41	0.082	98	0.63	0.631
Tunisia	117	0.22	0.019	123	0.31	0.018	105	0.57	0.05	38	0.81	0.061	78	0.56	0.059	59	0.79	0.628
Burkina Faso	118	0.22	0.025	125	0.3	0.016	108	0.55	0.071	96	0.59	0.085	121	0.45	0.071	78	0.73	0.63
Gabon	119	0.21	0.03	113	0.37	0.046	121	0.45	0.061	81	0.65	0.094	64	0.57	0.054	94	0.65	0.636
Guinea-Bissau	120	0.21	0.03	114	0.37	0.033	125	0.42	0.067	128	0.46	0.092	138	0.34	0.052	135	0.4	0.628
Uganda	121	0.2	0.026	129	0.28	0.031	111	0.52	0.074	138	0.43	0.096	119	0.45	0.067	81	0.72	0.623
Iraq	122	0.2	0.034	115	0.37	0.05	126	0.42	0.077	141	0.4	0.093	127	0.42	0.071	123	0.5	0.638
Zimbabwe	123	0.19	0.026	126	0.29	0.031	117	0.48	0.07	122	0.48	0.092	66	0.57	0.053	112	0.56	0.626
Thailand	124	0.18	0.022	147	0.21	0.021	109	0.55	0.073	121	0.49	0.086	141	0.3	0.067	159	0.18	0.64
Angola	125	0.18	0.029	118	0.34	0.042	130	0.38	0.071	161	0.28	0.08	159	0.2	0.062	142	0.34	0.63
CAR	126	0.17	0.026	121	0.32	0.033	129	0.38	0.071	149	0.34	0.084	151	0.27	0.057	139	0.38	0.646
Mauritania	127	0.17	0.032	109	0.4	0.054	148	0.29	0.068	171	0.21	0.08	77	0.56	0.078	105	0.61	0.653
DRC	128	0.16	0.028	119	0.34	0.039	138	0.32	0.069	140	0.4	0.098	128	0.42	0.066	89	0.66	0.663
Ethiopia	129	0.16	0.027	120	0.32	0.041	135	0.34	0.068	111	0.54	0.094	135	0.38	0.062	87	0.67	0.631
Haiti	130	0.15	0.02	138	0.25	0.019	127	0.42	0.065	176	0.14	0.061	147	0.27	0.063	103	0.62	0.639
Mali	131	0.15	0.021	139	0.24	0.016	123	0.43	0.068	100	0.58	0.076	108	0.5	0.055	68	0.76	0.637
El Salvador	132	0.15	0.027	112	0.38	0.046	152	0.26	0.058	166	0.25	0.08	120	0.45	0.063	148	0.27	0.64
Oman	133	0.14	0.02	159	0.17	0.017	122	0.45	0.071	90	0.61	0.082	136	0.38	0.068	161	0.17	0.631
Kazakhstan	134	0.14	0.023	132	0.28	0.034	136	0.34	0.063	91	0.61	0.095	155	0.26	0.061	132	0.45	0.63
Palestine/West Bank	135	0.14	0.022	136	0.26	0.02	133	0.36	0.068	95	0.6	0.09	116	0.47	0.074	138	0.39	0.662
Cameroon	136	0.14	0.023	124	0.3	0.03	145	0.31	0.063	125	0.47	0.087	150	0.27	0.062	151	0.26	0.637
Algeria	137	0.13	0.023	130	0.28	0.035	141	0.32	0.064	63	0.71	0.083	157	0.24	0.063	130	0.47	0.624
Djibouti	138	0.13	0.021	137	0.26	0.028	142	0.31	0.062	113	0.53	0.092	133	0.4	0.073	136	0.4	0.624
Hong Kong	139	0.12	0.018	162	0.16	0.021	128	0.4	0.063	79	0.65	0.08	161	0.17	0.057	166	0.13	0.635
Egypt	140	0.12	0.02	154	0.18	0.015	132	0.36	0.07	163	0.27	0.087	149	0.27	0.054	149	0.27	0.628
Türkiye	141	0.12	0.022	133	0.28	0.03	151	0.27	0.063	105	0.56	0.091	126	0.42	0.062	163	0.17	0.628
Rwanda	142	0.12	0.022	141	0.23	0.026	140	0.32	0.07	86	0.63	0.094	109	0.5	0.067	96	0.64	0.62
Vietnam	143	0.12	0.02	161	0.16	0.019	131	0.37	0.071	78	0.65	0.094	96	0.53	0.062	110	0.59	0.629
Comoros	144	0.11	0.02	127	0.28	0.026	154	0.25	0.057	94	0.6	0.091	89	0.54	0.064	125	0.49	0.628
Libya	145	0.11	0.02	144	0.21	0.018	143	0.31	0.067	135	0.44	0.093	118	0.46	0.077	83	0.71	0.627
Congo	146	0.11	0.022	140	0.24	0.025	149	0.28	0.068	145	0.36	0.095	90	0.54	0.066	113	0.55	0.638
Bangladesh	147	0.11	0.02	131	0.28	0.03	155	0.24	0.057	165	0.25	0.082	142	0.3	0.072	145	0.29	0.631
Laos	148	0.11	0.021	167	0.13	0.015	134	0.35	0.077	136	0.43	0.098	134	0.39	0.055	160	0.17	0.636
Iran	149	0.1	0.02	151	0.18	0.021	144	0.31	0.067	112	0.53	0.093	172	0.11	0.055	150	0.26	0.644
Somalia	150	0.1	0.02	160	0.16	0.02	139	0.32	0.068	168	0.24	0.076	148	0.27	0.066	131	0.47	0.631
Guinea	151	0.1	0.021	148	0.19	0.019	150	0.27	0.071	142	0.39	0.084	94	0.54	0.064	155	0.22	0.634
Eswatini	152	0.1	0.02	171	0.12	0.015	137	0.32	0.073	174	0.19	0.074	152	0.26	0.097	168	0.11	0.646
UAE	153	0.09	0.016	172	0.1	0.018	147	0.3	0.059	117	0.5	0.083	175	0.09	0.058	144	0.29	0.634
Qatar	154	0.08	0.017	174	0.09	0.016	146	0.3	0.063	146	0.36	0.051	177	0.07	0.043	137	0.39	0.625
Uzbekistan	155	0.08	0.015	142	0.22	0.023	158	0.2	0.046	131	0.45	0.089	170	0.13	0.057	129	0.47	0.621
Palestine/Gaza	156	0.08	0.017	166	0.14	0.017	153	0.26	0.062	103	0.57	0.096	131	0.41	0.087	154	0.22	0.645
Burundi	157	0.08	0.017	149	0.19	0.018	156	0.21	0.058	155	0.31	0.09	156	0.24	0.097	157	0.21	0.641
Sudan	158	0.07	0.016	158	0.17	0.018	157	0.21	0.056	156	0.31	0.092	153	0.26	0.076	162	0.17	0.654
Russia	159	0.07	0.014	145	0.21	0.022	160	0.17	0.043	133	0.44	0.092	130	0.41	0.06	158	0.18	0.636
Cambodia	160	0.06	0.014	146	0.21	0.02	165	0.15	0.045	167	0.25	0.08	140	0.33	0.06	164	0.16	0.625
Venezuela	161	0.06	0.013	143														

# 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.

2023 | Forthcoming in *Journal of Peace Research* (earlier version published as *V-Dem Working Paper No. 113*)

► 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.

2023 | Forthcoming in *Party Politics* (earlier version published as *V-Dem Working Paper No. 116*)

► 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

Vanessa A. Boese, Scott Gates, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Håvard Møkleiv Nygård, and Håvard Strand. **Patterns of Democracy over Space and Time.** *International Studies Quarterly* 66(3): 1-19.

Vanessa A. Boese and Matthew C. Wilson. 2022. **Contestation and Participation: Concepts, Measurement, and Inference.** *International Area Studies Review.*

Daniela Donno, Kelly Morrison, and Burcu Savun. 2022. **Not All Elections Are Created Equal: Election Quality and Civil Conflict.** *Journal of Politics* 84(1).

John Gerring, Haakon Gjerlow, and Carl Henrik Knutsen. 2022. **Regimes and Industrialization.** *World Development* 152.

John Gerring, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Jonas Berge. 2022. **Does Democracy Matter?** *Annual Review of Political Science* 25(1): 357-375.

Sirianne Dahlum, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Valeriya Mechkova. 2022. **Women's political empowerment and economic growth.** *World Development* 156, p. 105822.

Layla Hashemi, Steven Lloyd Wilson, and Constanza Sanhueza Petrarca. 2022. **Investigating the Iranian Twittersphere: Five Hundred Days of Farsi Twitter: An Overview of What Farsi Twitter Looks like, What We Know about It, and Why It Matters.** *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media* 2.

Jean Lachapelle and Sebastian Hellmeier. 2022. **Pathways to Democracy after Authoritarian Breakdown. Comparative Case Selection and Lessons from the Past.** *International Political Science Review.*

Martin Lundstedt and Amanda B. Edgell. 2022. **Electoral Management and vote-buying.** *Electoral Studies* 79, 102521.

Kelly McMann, Daniel Pemstein, Brigitte Seim, Jan Teorell, and Staffan Lindberg. 2022. **Assessing Data Quality: An Approach and an Application.** *Political Analysis* 30(3).

Eda Keremoglu, Sebastian Hellmeier and Nils B. Weidmann. 2022. **Thin-skinned Leaders: Regime Legitimation, Protest Issues and Repression in Autocracies.** *Political Science Research and Methods* 10 (1): 136-152.

Marina Povitkina and Sverker Carlsson Jagers. 2022. **Environmental commitments in different types of democracies: The role of liberal, social-liberal, and deliberative politics.** *Global Environmental Change* 74.

Saskia P. Ruth-Lovell, and Sandra Grahn. 2022. **Threat or corrective to democracy? The relationship between populism and different models of democracy.** *European Journal of Political Research.*

Yuko Sato and Moisés Arce. 2022. **Resistance to Populism.** *Democratization* 29(6): 1137-1156.

Janika Spannagel and Katrin Kinzelbach. 2022. **The Academic Freedom Index and its indicators: Introduction to new global time-series V-Dem data.** *Quality & Quantity.*

Johannes Vüllers and Sebastian Hellmeier. 2022. **Does Counter-Mobilization Contain Right-Wing Populist Movements? Evidence from Germany.** *European Journal of Political Research* 61 (1): 21-45.

Matthew C. Wilson, Juraj Medzihorsky, Seraphine F. Maerz, Patrik Lindenfors, Amanda B. Edgell, Vanessa A. Boese, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2022. **Episodes of Liberalization in Autocracies: A New Approach to Quantitatively Studying Democratization.** *Political Science Research and Methods*, 1-20.

## V-Dem Working Papers and Reports

### V-DEM WORKING PAPERS

#### 2022

Yuko Sato, Martin Lundstedt, Kelly Morrison, Vanessa A. Boese, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2022. **Institutional Order in Episodes of Autocratization.** *V-Dem Working Paper*, 133.

Noah Buckley, Kyle L. Marquardt, Ora John Reuter, and Katerina Tertychnaya. 2022. **Endogenous Popularity: How Perceptions of Support Affect the Popularity of Authoritarian Regimes.** *V-Dem Working Paper*, 132.

Vanessa A. Boese and Markus Eberhardt. 2022. **Which Institutions Rule? Unbundling the Democracy-Growth Nexus.** *V-Dem Working Paper*, 131.

Vanessa A. Boese and Matthew Wilson. 2022. **A Short History of Contestation and Participation.** *V-Dem Working Paper*, 130.

Sebastian Hellmeier and Michael Bernhard. 2022. **Mass Mobilization and Regime Change. Evidence From a New Measure of Mobilization for Democracy and Autocracy From 1900 to 2020.** *V-Dem Working Paper*, 128.

Carl Henrik Knutsen and Palina Kolvani. 2022. **Fighting the Disease or Manipulating the Data? Democracy, State Capacity, and the COVID-19 Pandemic.** *V-Dem Working Paper*, 127.

### V-DEM POLICY BRIEFS

#### 2022

Evie Papada and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2022. **Case for Democracy: Does Democracy Promote Gender Equality?** *University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Policy Brief*, 37.

Evie Papada, Marina Pavlova, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2022. **Case for Democracy: Can Democracy limit Corruption?** *University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Policy Brief*, 36.

Varieties of Democracy Institute. 2022. **Case for Democracy: Does Democracy Have Dividends for Education?** *University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Policy Brief*, 35.

Varieties of Democracy Institute. 2022. **Case for Democracy: Democracies Produce More Transparent and Higher-Quality Data.** *University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Policy Brief*, 34.

Varieties of Democracy Institute. 2022. **Case for Democracy: Does Democracy Improve Public Goods Provision?** *University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Policy Brief*, 33.

### V-DEM COUNTRY BRIEFS

#### 2022

Varieties of Democracy Institute. 2022. **Country Brief: Uganda.** *University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Country Brief*, 11.

# 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

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

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

## KEY TERMS

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

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

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

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**Comparative Policy Laboratory (COMPLAB)**  
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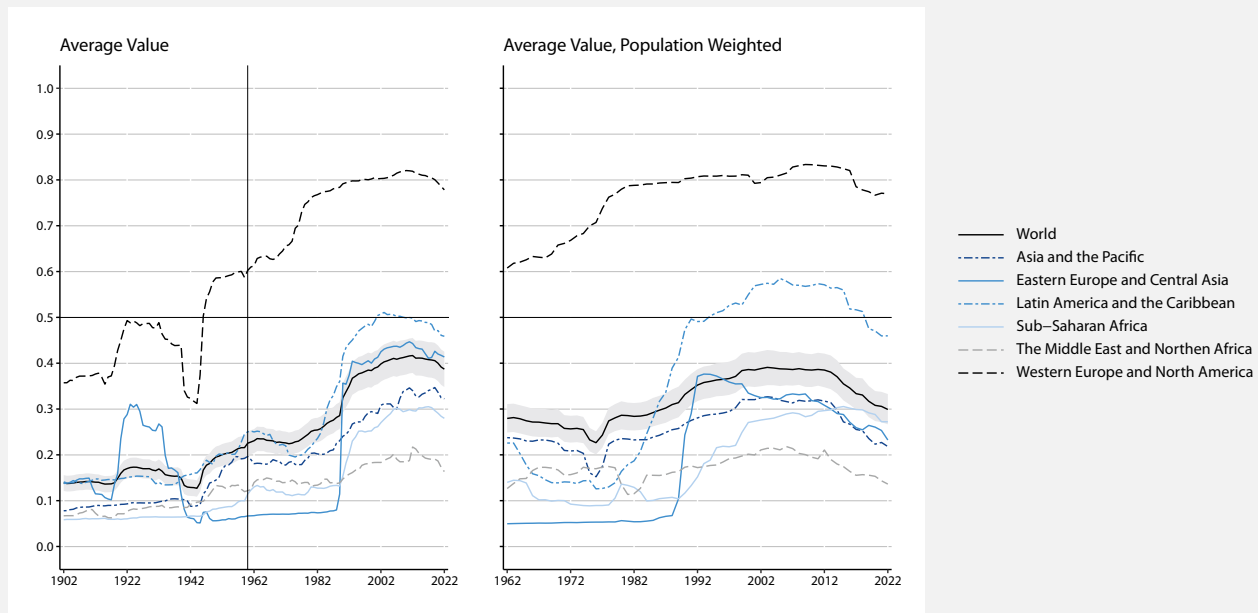
# V-Dem Indices

## The Liberal Democracy Index

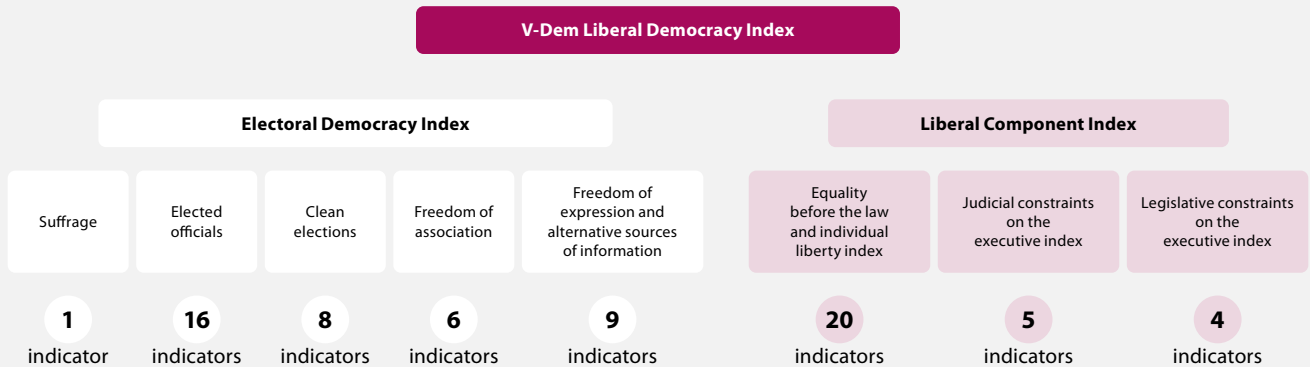
The V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) captures both liberal and electoral aspects of democracy based on the 71 indicators included in the Liberal Component Index (LCI) and the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI). The EDI reflects a relatively ambitious idea of electoral democracy where a number of institutional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

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

**FIGURE A1.1. THE V-DEM LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1902/1962–2022**



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

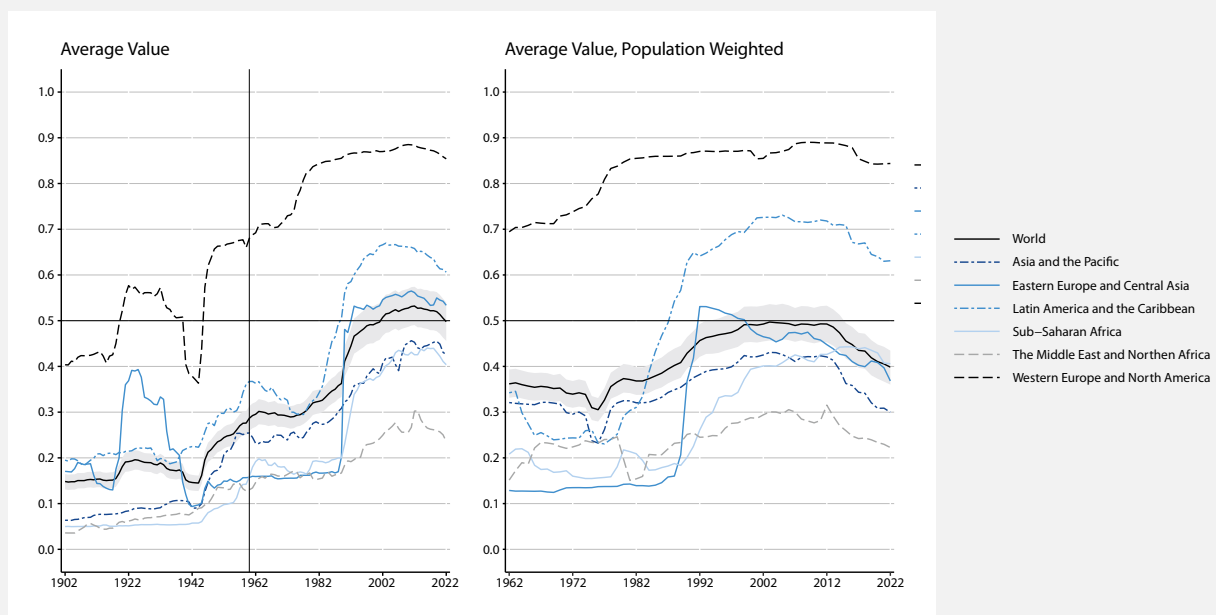


# The Electoral Democracy Index

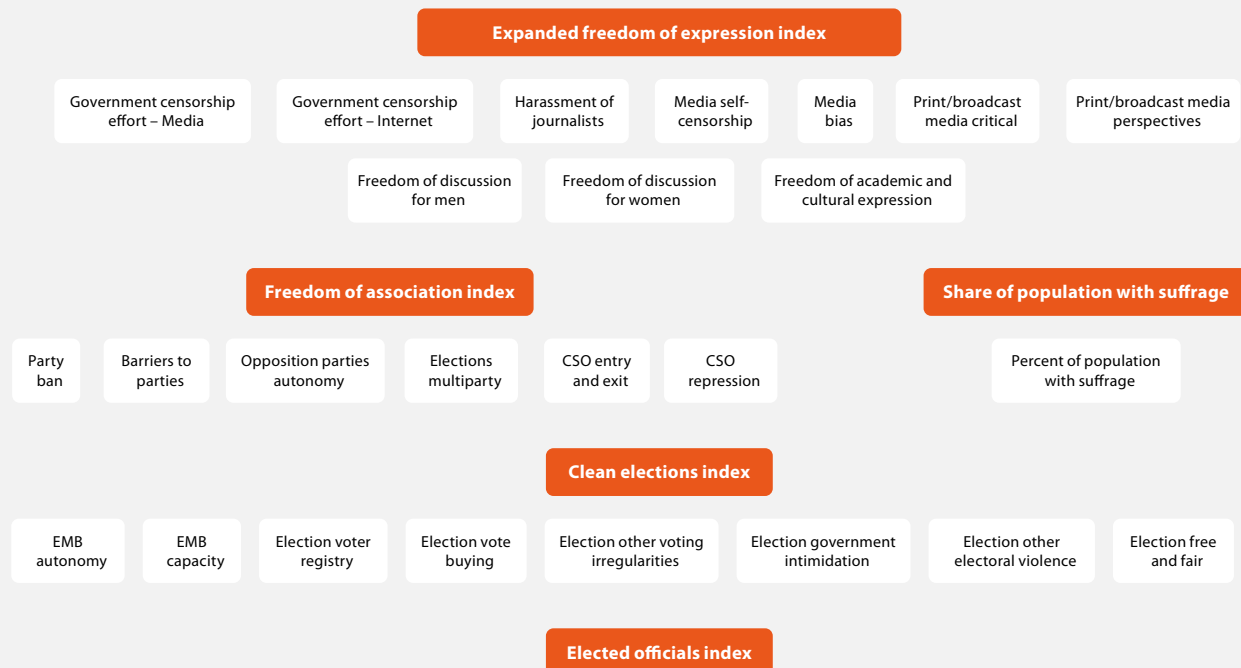
For several decades, scholars and practitioners alike depicted democracy in the world as though the extant measures really captured what is meant by the concept “electoral democracy”. Yet, we have all known that they did not. V-Dem is the first systematic effort to measure the *de facto* existence of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

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

**FIGURE A2.1. THE V-DEM ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1902/1962–2022**



**FIGURE A2.2. THE V-DEM ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)**

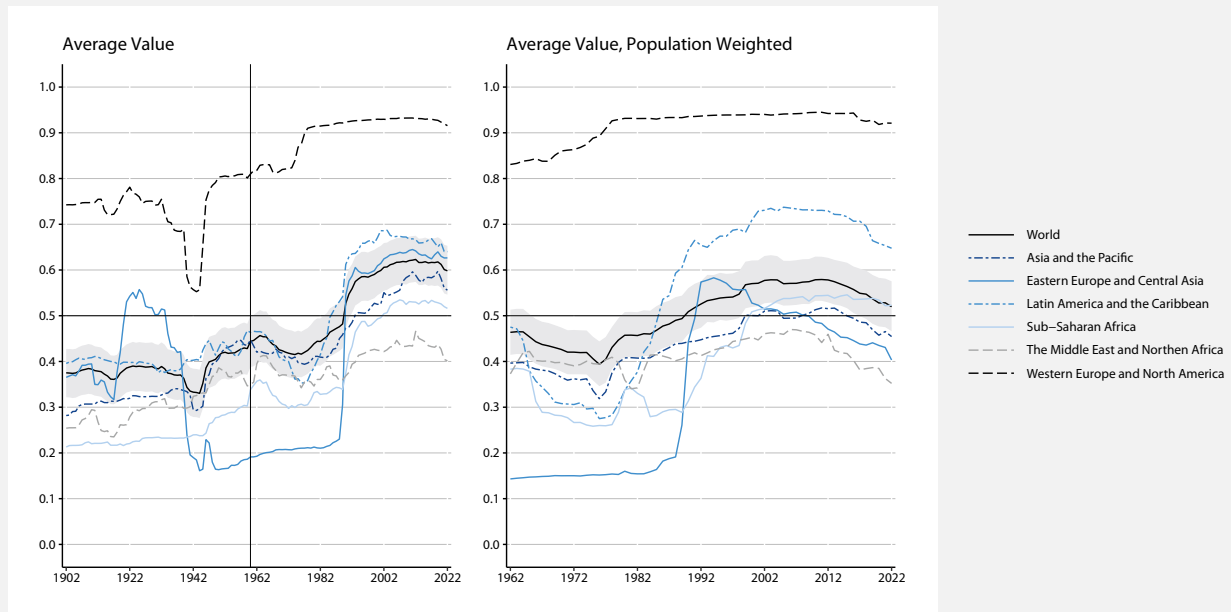


# The Liberal Component Index

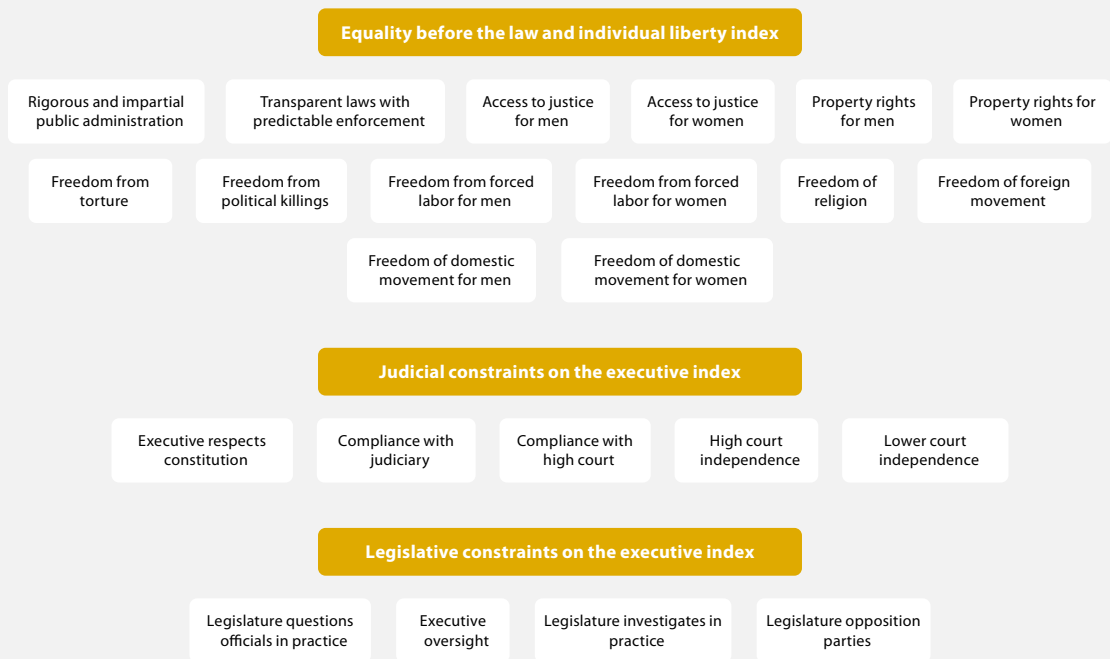
In V-Dem’s conceptual scheme the liberal principle of democracy embodies the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against both the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. It also captures the “horizontal” methods of accountability between more or less equally standing 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 A3.1. THE V-DEM LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1902/1962–2022**



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

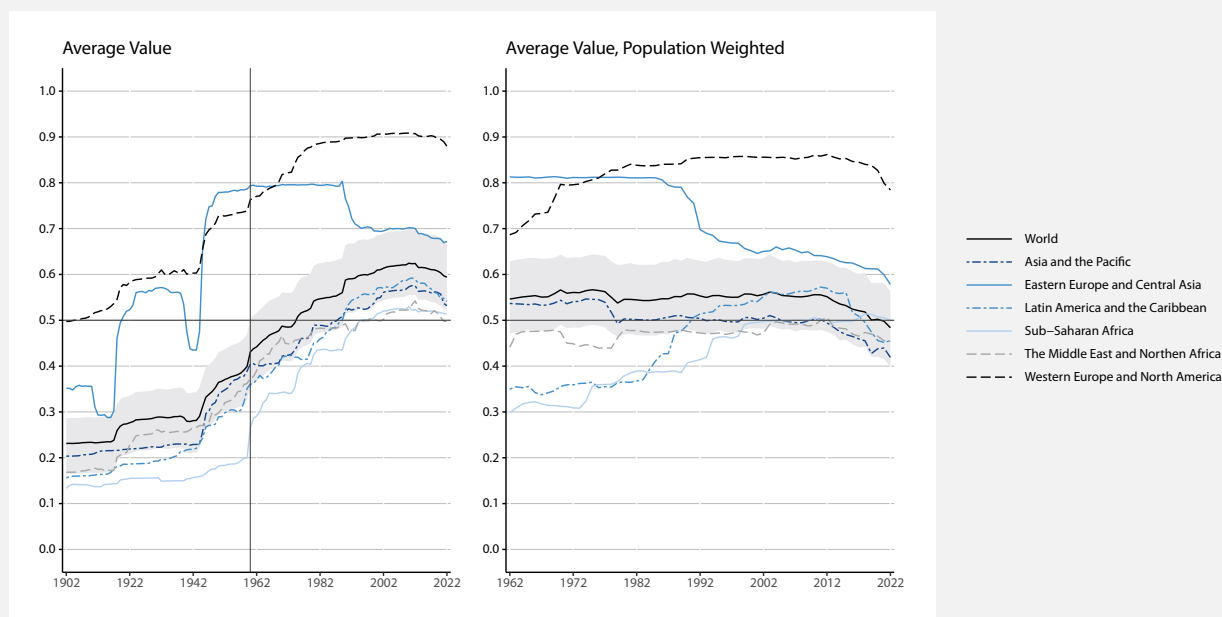


## The Egalitarian Component Index

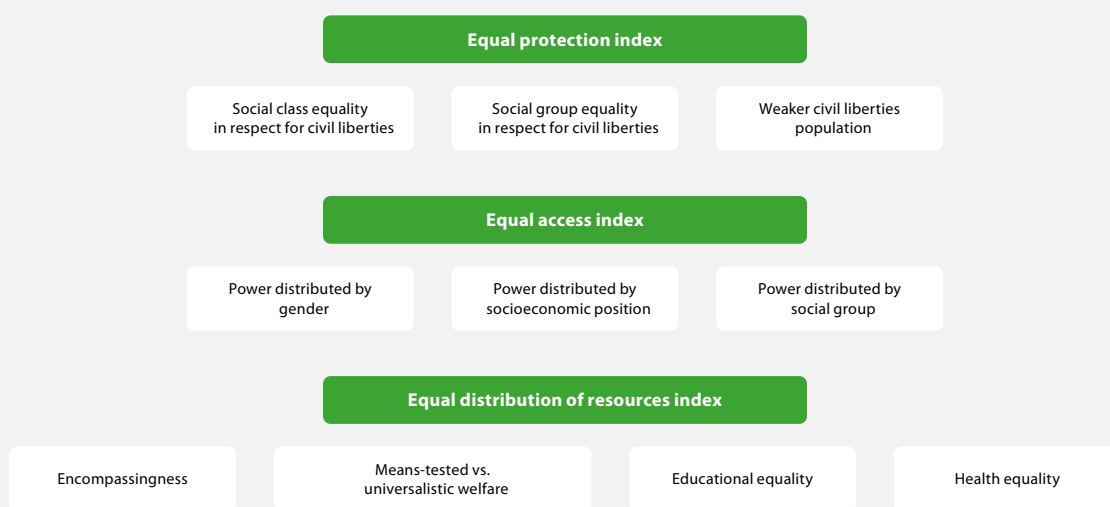
The egalitarian principle of democracy measures to what extent all social groups enjoy equal capabilities to participate in the political arena. It relies on the idea that democracy is a system of rule “by the people” where citizens participate in various ways, such as making informed voting decisions, 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)**

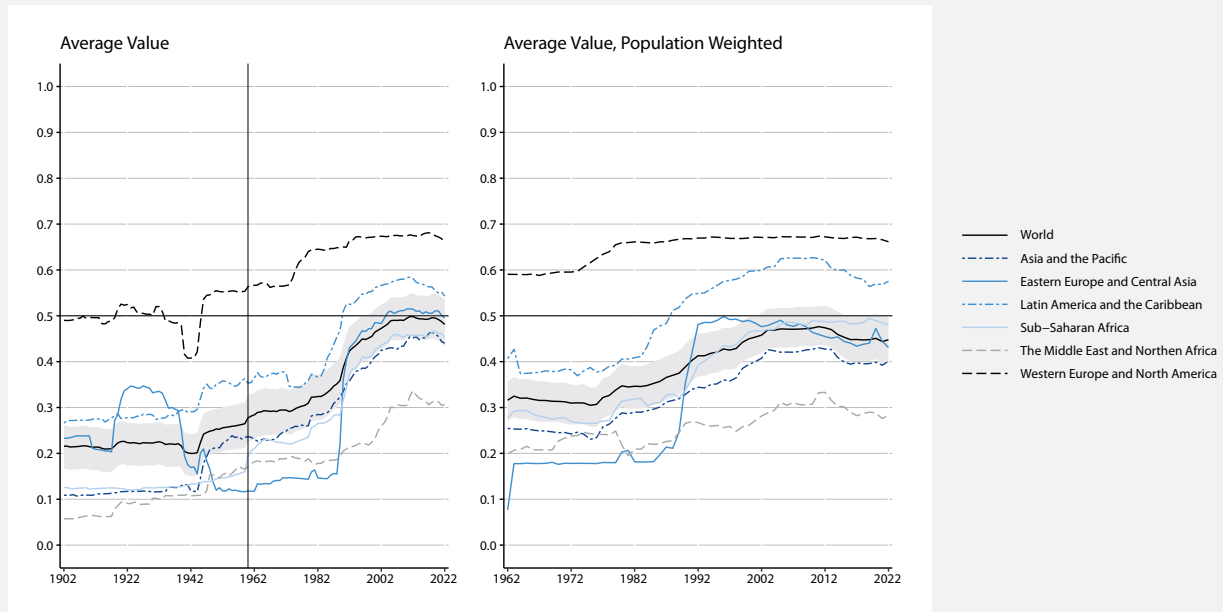


# The Participatory Component Index

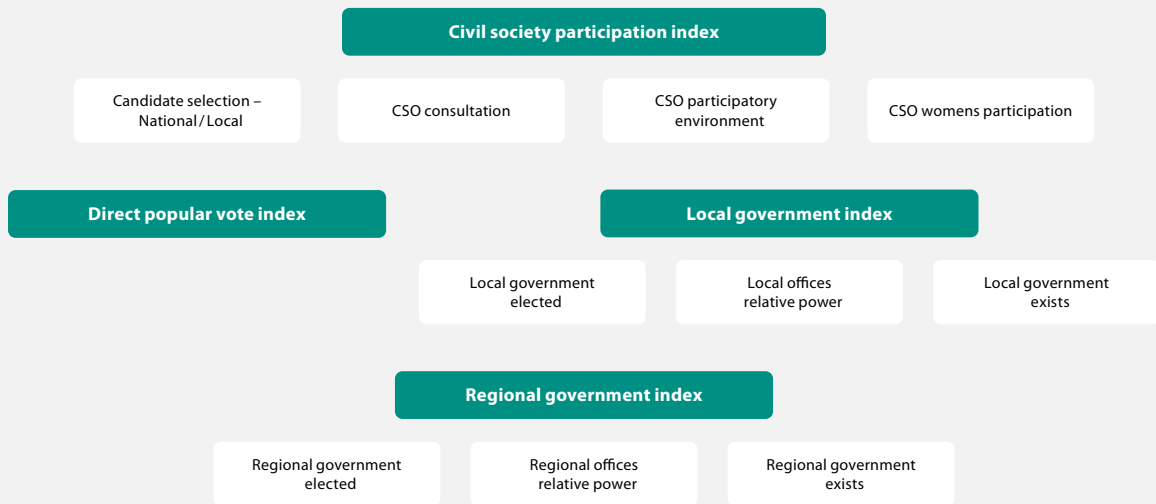
The participatory principle of democracy emphasizes active participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral. This principle prefers direct rule by citizens as practicable. The V-Dem Participatory Component Index (PCI) takes into account four important aspects of citizen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

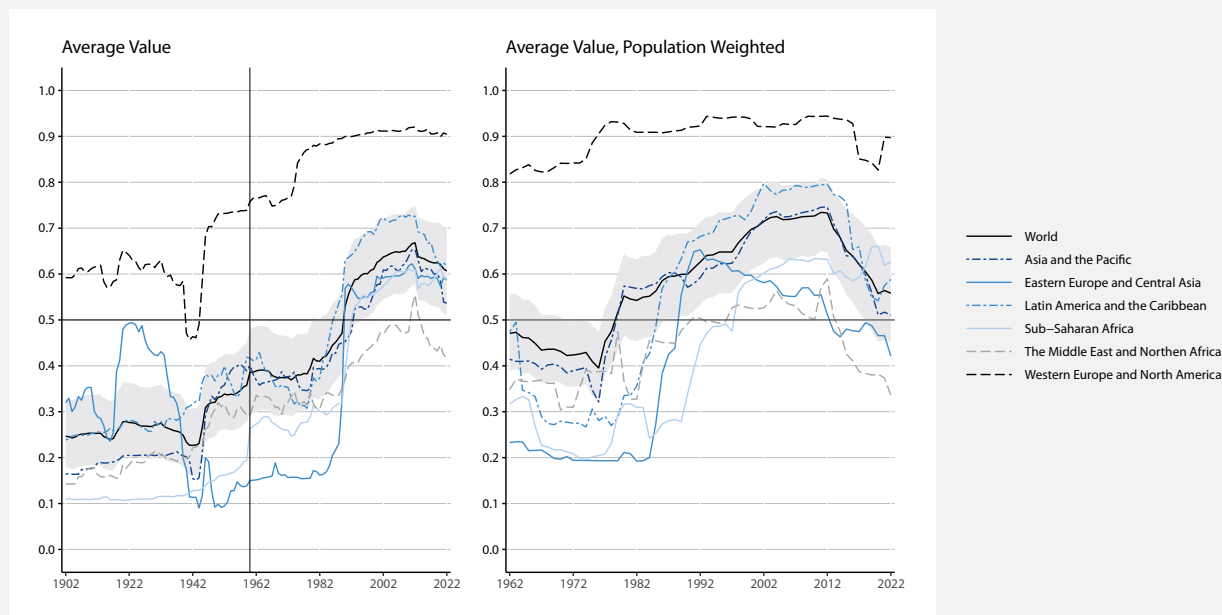


## The Deliberative Component Index

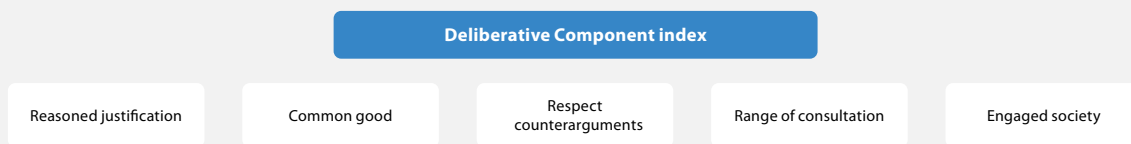
The V-Dem Deliberative Component Index (DCI) captures to what extent the deliberative principle of democracy is achieved. It assesses the process by which decisions are reached in a polity. A deliberative process is one in which public reasoning, focused on the common good, motivates political decisions – 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 A6.1. THE V-DEM DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1902/1962–2022**



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



# Global Standards, Local Knowledge



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