



V-Dem

VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY

Organization and Management

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1 The Global Team

The V-Dem Institute is headquartered in Gothenburg, Sweden, but the V-Dem project has a large team around the globe. A complex undertaking like V-Dem requires the coordination of the work of many individuals, each contributing with unique skills and knowledge.

The Steering Committee (SC) was created in 2015 for the purposes of overall guidance and decision-making connecting the various “branches” of V-Dem: 1) the original V-Dem data collection effort mainly led by Principal Investigators (PIs) Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, and Staffan I. Lindberg; 2) Historical V-Dem led by PIs Jan Teorell and Carl Henrik Knutsen; 3) the experiment and vignettes part, mainly funded by Lindberg’s Wallenberg Academy Fellowship and where V-Dem’s main methodologist Daniel Pemstein plays a key role; 4) and the consolidation of a coherent and permanent V-Dem research infrastructure for data collection, processing, dissemination, and outreach with the Director of the V-Dem Institute, Steven Wilson. All the above-mentioned individuals are members of the SC. In addition, the V-Dem Project Managers, with responsibilities for various thematic areas of the data collection, have a representative on the SC, who is currently Brigitte Seim. A representative for the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, currently Agnes Cornell, is also a member of the Committee.

Principal Investigators (PIs) Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, and Jan Teorell constitute the V-Dem PI Board, the highest decision-making body. The PIs began their work in 2008.

Project Managers (PMs), together with the PIs, were instrumental in the development of survey questions and the preparation of data collection in specific substantive areas. Most of the Project Managers have been part of V-Dem since 2009. The diverse specialization of the team and the division of labor allowed us to define concepts, identify existing data sources, and create survey questions that reflect the wide-ranging work and the accumulated knowledge on these topics. It also created a decentralized system of informal consultation among experts (academics and practitioners) in these areas. In addition, Project Managers are responsible for ensuring cross-country equivalence for their indicators, so that a given question is not interpreted differently in varying country contexts.

The themes covered by the original set of Project Managers are:

- Direct Democracy (David Altman, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile)
- Civil Liberty (Svend-Erik Skaaning, Aarhus University)
- Civil Society (Michael Bernhard, University of Florida)
- Elections (Staffan I. Lindberg, V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg)
- Executives (Jan Teorell, Stockholm University)
- Formal and Descriptive Representation (Pamela Paxton, University of Texas, Austin)
- Judiciary (Jeffrey Staton, Emory University)
- Media (Michael Coppedge, University of Notre Dame)
- Legislatures (M. Steven Fish, UC Berkeley)
- Parties and Party Systems (Allen Hicken, University of Michigan)
- Political Equality (John Gerring, University of Texas, Austin)
- Sovereignty (Michael Bernhard, University of Florida)
- Subnational Government (Kelly McMann, Case Western University)

After the initial phase, V-Dem recruited additional Project Managers for:

- Causal Inference (Adam Glynn, Emory University)
- Forecasting (Richard Morgan, V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg)
- Computational Infrastructure (Steven Wilson, University of Gothenburg)
- Experiments (Brigitte Seim, University of Minnesota)
- Statistical Computing (Juraj Medzihorsky, Durham University)
- Measurement Methods (Daniel Pemstein, North Dakota State University & Kyle Marquardt, University of Bergen)
- Exclusion and State Capacity (Rachel Sigman, University of Denver)
- Evolutionary Theory (Patrik Lindenfors, University of Stockholm)

- Civic and Academic Space (Katrin Kinzelbach, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Regional Managers are responsible for identifying potential Country Experts, and inspecting for problems of validity at the regional level. Occasionally, Regional Managers manage only a single country, in which case they are referred to as Country Managers. The first Regional Managers were recruited in the fall 2011.

Country Experts code type C indicators (see the *V-Dem Methodology document*). Experts are usually academics or professionals with specialist and evidenced knowledge in one or more domains. Approximately two-thirds are nationals or residents of the country for which they provide information. Country Experts have been recruited on a rolling basis since the start of the pilot study in spring 2011 (see the *V-Dem Methodology document* for details about the protocol for recruitment of country experts). primarily in the early phase (the board is not responsible for the content or conduct of V-Dem). The Board included a mix of academics, jurists, and practitioners from around the world.

Regional Centers are being established around the world. These centers bring V-Dem closer to the local and regional levels and further enhance regional research collaboration. V-Dem currently has *Regional Centers* for the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, East Asia, Eastern Europe & Russia, Latin America, North America, Southern Africa, and Southern Europe.

2 The V-Dem Institute

The V-Dem Institute, hosted by the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, is the headquarters of V-Dem. The Institute is responsible for most aspects of the data collection, processing, and management, as well as most of the outreach, dissemination, and collaborations with policy/practitioners' organizations. Associate Professor Steven Wilson is the Institute's Director since February 2026. Professor Staffan I. Lindberg was the Institute's Director from its foundation in 2012 until 2025.

One of the partnering institutions is the Regional Center in North America, run by Professor Michael Coppedge and located at the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame (USA). In the early years of V-Dem, the Kellogg Institute was one of the two founding institutional homes for the project, and it was instrumental in building and establishing V-Dem. It was initially responsible for data collection in the Western Hemisphere, hosted workshops, and funded many students who worked on the project, as well as one of the Project Coordinators. In addition, the Center for Research Computing at Notre Dame developed the early versions of the research database and web interfaces used from 2011 to fall 2014. As the project grew, the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg progressively assumed responsibility for these functions and became, in effect, the headquarters for the project. Recognizing the shifting roles, in 2018 the Kellogg Institute formalized its current role as the V-Dem Regional Center in North America.

The following core team is based at the V-Dem Institute in addition to Associate Professor Steven Wilson:

- *Administration and Finance Officer* Susanna Burmeister administers the country expert data collection and conducts financial administration.
- *Part-time Program Coordinator* Saga Cambon works with administration, budgeting, reporting, and management of research funding.
- *Data Manager and Data Engineer* Linnea Fox is responsible for maintaining and developing the V-Dem infrastructures, and the construction of the annual V-Dem dataset.
- *Part-time Technical Officer* Moosa Ghaeb implements new features on the V-Dem website.
- *Research and Data Analyst* Ana Good God is responsible for the annual collection of A/A* data and data quality improvement projects, as well as supporting research and policy projects.
- *Communications Officer* Sara Haug Andersson manages V-Dem's outreach, including the website, social media, publications, newsletters, press, conferences, and other events.
- *Program Manager* Maria Verkhovtseva is responsible for the coordination, development, and execution of the annual country expert data collection cycle.

Post-Doctoral Research Fellows, located at the University of Gothenburg, assist with various aspects of constructing the final measurement model, data validation, aggregation, policy-analysis, and training. The current post-doctoral research fellows are:

- Fabio Angiolillo (PhD, University of Hong Kong) performs research centered on comparative politics, political institutions, authoritarian regimes, and political behavior, combining quantitative methods, panel data, and natural experimental research designs. He co-organizes the Authoritarian Political Systems Group.
- Marina Nord (PhD, University of Governance in Berlin) works with research that lies at the intersection of international political economy and regime transformation, and primarily focuses on the economic underpinnings of autocratic regime (in)stability.

The Institute has had over 20 postdocs, and some of them are now Project Managers, while others often continue to participate in research affiliated with the Institute. The current research associates are:

- Abdalhadi Alijla (Co-Leader, Global Young Academy)
- Vanessa Boese-Schlosser (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, WZB Berlin Social Science Center)
- Amanda Edgell (Assistant Professor, University of Alabama)
- Sebastian Hellmeier (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, WZB Berlin Social Science Center)
- Jean Lachapelle (Assistant Professor, University of Montreal)
- Lars Lott (Postdoctoral Researcher, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)
- Seraphine Maerz (Lecturer, University of Melbourne)
- Valeriya Mechkova (Assistant Professor, University of Gothenburg)
- Juraj Medzihorsky (Assistant Professor, Durham University)

- Kelly Morrison (Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee)
- Yuko Sato (Assistant Professor, Koç University)
- Eitan Tzelgov (Associate Professor, University of East Anglia)
- Yi-Ting Wang (Associate Professor, National Cheng Kung University)
- Felix Wiebrecht (Lecturer, University of Liverpool)
- Matthew Wilson (Associate Professor, University of South Carolina)

3 Historical V-Dem

The project Historical V-Dem extends the data back in time and adds a number of indicators. The project collects both type (A) and (C) data. The historical data extends the coding of almost 200 V-Dem indicators (including about 130 Country Expert coded indicators) from 1789 to 1900, supplementing the current V-Dem coverage. Further, the Historical V-Dem data adds a number of new indicators, mostly covering the years 1789-1920. Some of these indicators might be extended forward in time, to the present, for future iterations of the V-Dem dataset. The Historical data collection mainly took place between 2015 and 2020, with an additional round of data collection for several countries in 2023. Almost 90 countries are covered.

Historical V-Dem is led from the two Centers for Historical V-Dem located at University of Oslo and Stockholm University. They are led by Professor Carl Henrik Knutsen (Oslo) and Professor Jan Teorell (Stockholm). In addition to the two Principal Investigators, Knutsen and Teorell, there are four Project Managers for Historical V-Dem: Professor Agnes Cornell (University of Gothenburg), Professor John Gerring (University of Texas at Austin), Professor Svend-Erik Skaaning (Aarhus University), and Professor Daniel Ziblatt (Harvard University).

Four researchers have also been part of the Historical V-Dem team, all recruited at the University of Oslo during the initial round of Historical V-Dem coding:

- Haakon Gjerløw (as PhD Student) has been mainly responsible for following up with Historical Country Experts, constructing scripts/automated routines for streamlining tasks related to consistency checking and cleaning the data, alongside various other tasks.
- Tore Wig (as Post-doc, and later as Researcher) has been mainly responsible for validation of the expert data and subsequently following up with experts, and for instructing various research assistants collecting data on particular indicators.
- Sirianne Dahlum (as Researcher) handled various automated and manual reliability and validity checks on the data.
- Luca J. Uberti (as Researcher) has been involved in working with the documentation of the data set, especially the Codebook.

Several individuals, at different institutions, contributed to the coding of historical A variables, or helped manage the data collection process. While not an exhaustive list (see the Codebook and website), Selemon Negash, Lee Cojocaru, Vlad Ciobanu, Vilde Lunnan Djuve, Swaantje Marten, Sune Orloff Hellegard Bernardo Isola, Cem Mert Dalli, and Katarina Sibbers have been instrumental in the data collection; Vilde Lunnan Djuve and Solveig Bjørkholt in the outreach and contact with experts; and Sindre Haugen in the management and cleaning of the data.

4 The V-Dem Data

4.1 Data Collection Phases and Progress to Date

The V-Dem data collection can be summarized in four phases:

First, there is the conception and management, including the pilot study. This phase was completed in October 2011. With the support of Sweden’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Sweden), the Vice-Chancellor’s Office, the College of social Sciences, and the Department of Political Science at University of Gothenburg, and the Kellogg Institute and other bodies at the University of Notre Dame, a pilot study was conducted in twelve countries from May to December 2011. These included two countries from each of six regions: Mexico and Suriname in the Americas, Japan and Burma in Asia, Russia and Albania in the post-Communist region, South Africa and Ghana in Africa, Egypt and Yemen (North and South) in the Middle East, and Sweden and Switzerland in Europe. These pairs were chosen to represent two countries in each region that, in the judgment of the team, would be fairly easy and fairly difficult to code respectively (e.g., in the Americas it was expected that Mexico would be fairly easy and Suriname fairly difficult to code).

Almost 100 experts submitted 461,000 country-date-question-expert ratings. Preliminary analyses indicated that the methodology was sound and working as intended in collecting high quality data. For example, aggregated scores discriminated well across countries and over time, but also across components; a country may perform e.g. well with in regards to civil society but under-perform in administration of elections. Such distinctions are among the most important contributions of V-Dem’s approach. The pilot study was also used to pinpoint the weakest questions and to modify or drop them, and this information was used to revise the questionnaire extensively in order to improve reliability before the current phase of data collection. In addition, the pilot study demonstrated the need for having more coders per country-question, a better system for standardized instructions and management, as well as the need for an expanded post-survey questionnaire allowing for systematic assessment of potential biases in coding.

The **second** phase of V-Dem, comprising of the data collection for the entire world from 1900 to 2012, began in March 2012 and was concluded in fall 2013. 167 countries and territories that exist today were included, which required the involvement of about 2,000 Country Experts. In preparation of the release of the first V-Dem dataset, this phase also involved cleaning of the data, conducting extensive quality control and measures for correcting for errors, and development of the custom-designed Bayesian IRT-model for aggregation of raw country expert data to point estimates for each indicator-country-year, with associated measures of uncertainty. On January 4, 2016, the first full V-Dem dataset was finally released. Supported by several grants, the research team initiated a large scale research program addressing the issues of democratization both in terms of endogenous processes of sequencing and diffusion, and the role of various exogenous factors in explaining transitions to and development of various types of democracies.

The **third** phase began in December 2014, with the first annual update of the data. Updated versions of the datasets are launched annually in the spring.

By the launch of the historical data, the data collection entered a **fourth** phase. The V-Dem dataset has included Historical data since version 8. By reaching further back in time and including several previously existing countries, the V-Dem database was expanded to more than 31 million data points, covering a total of 202 countries, and 236 years.

4.2 The V-Dem Infrastructure

The V-Dem Institute hosts the data collection process and has built a complex custom-designed research infrastructure (see the *V-Dem Methodology document* for details). The research infrastructure includes:

- The network of more than 5,000 Country Experts across the world providing the raw data, as well as the staff operating and maintaining the operations are the very core of the infrastructure.
- A management software with some 50 custom-designed interfaces built in FileMakerPro on top of a relational database. This is the “heart” of the operations and through which the Country Expert data collection can be managed. In a simplified description, the management software handles a large roster of potential experts, and the multifaceted management of more than 5,000 Country Experts coding various combinations of 180 countries and 15 surveys, and is connected to the Postgres database and the online surveys. Note that none of the public data carries confidential or identifying information about the Country Experts. All personal identifying information is kept on encrypted servers behind several layers of protection, separately from the ratings submitted.

- A Postgres database that contains all the raw data, experts' ratings, indices, and related data, and includes a large set of tables that relates to the data collection.
- A complex parallel data processing pipeline (PDPP) consisting of some 6,800 scripts in over 50 interrelated modules that are programmed to operate interactively. Running the C-coded data in the custom-designed IRT-measurement model(s) on computers hosted by the National Academic Infrastructure for Supercomputing in Sweden (NAISS), is part of the PDPP.
- A set of online surveys and administrative interfaces through which experts submit their ratings. The coding interfaces consist of a series of web-based functions that in combination allow experts to log into the system using their individual (randomized) username and access the surveys assigned to them. They are able to submit ratings for each question in each survey over long series of years. The coding interface combines features such as allowing for many types of questions (binominal, ordinal, multiple selection, etc.), country-specific and question-specific year masks (for example to allow coding only for elections years). Question-specific instructions and clarifications are offered for each question in the survey, and the survey interface also features coder self-assessed confidence levels for each rating submitted.
- A public website with information on V-Dem and access to download the data free of charge.
- A set of *online tools* for analyzing the data available on the website. This is the most used section of the website, including the graphing tools that have been specifically designed for V-Dem. Currently, 15 online analysis tools are available on the website:
 1. **Variable Graph:** compares multiple countries for one index or one variable at a time.
 2. **Country Graph:** displays multiple variables and/or indices for one country over time.
 3. **Mapping Tool:** enable users to quickly generate a world map of any V-Dem indicator for any year.
 4. **Variable Radar Chart:** displays multiple variables and/or indices for one country over time in the form of a radar chart.
 5. **Country Radar Chart:** displays multiple countries for one indicator/index in a radar chart.
 6. **Scatter Chart:** displays one indicator/index in a scatter plot.
 7. **Thematic Comparison:** two-year comparison for selected component and country.
 8. **Regional Comparison:** two-year regional comparison for an indicator/index.
 9. **Heat Map:** displays one indicator/index on a heat map.
 10. **Contingency Tables:** sequencing relationships between indicators in a selected category.
 11. **Low Hanging Fruit Tool:** an advanced sequencing tool useful for data-driven decision making.
 12. **V-Forecast:** PART and DemSpace are the two tools providing an interactive dashboard for the V-Forecast: Predicting Adverse Regime Transition project.
 13. **Demspace:** The Democratic Space Barometer estimates the probability that a country will experience a shift towards more democratic or more autocratic governance.
 14. **Pandemic Backsliding Dashboard:** The Pandemic Backsliding dashboard helps to track state responses to Covid-19 and their potential effect on the overall quality of democracy within the country in an interactive way.
 15. **V-Party Explorer:** Varieties of Party Identity and Organization (V-Party) examines the policy positions and organizational structures of political parties across the world.

The Sequence and Contingency Tools (i.e. the Contingency Tables and the Low Hanging Fruit Tool) are recommended for advanced users who are keen to learn more about sequencing mechanisms and contingency conditions.

4.3 Outreach and Communication

Numerous projects and papers based on V-Dem data are being produced by academics and professionals. The V-Dem team is working hard to make V-Dem a useful and accessible source for as many people as possible and to facilitate the use of V-Dem data for policy makers, researchers, students, and media around the world. As of today, the V-Dem datasets have been downloaded more than 445,000 times by users from over 200 countries.

The V-Dem Institute has a visiting scholar program for leading international scholars in the field of democracy research. The scholars generally spend a week at the V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg, to present their work on a V-Dem related theme, such as democratization, effects of democratization, electoral violence, persistence of inequality in new democracies, etc. The seminars are open to the general public.

During 2015-2025, the Institute hosted over 100 visiting scholars.

One of V-Dem's core activities is producing high-quality research that provides insights into crucial questions such as the relationship between democracy and development, the conditions that make democracies endure, and the determinants of women's political empowerment. Peer-reviewed publications in high-profile academic journals and press outlets ensure that relevant communities are informed of the availability of V-Dem data and how it can be used to help them in their work. At the time of writing, 231 articles have been published in international peer-reviewed journals. Plus, 154 V-Dem Working Papers have been published on the V-Dem website, covering a wide range of topics. The Working Papers have been downloaded over 282,000 times.

In addition to the Working Papers, V-Dem regularly produces a range of publications targeting a wider audience. The V-Dem Country Briefs outline the most important political trends in a specific country. The Policy Briefs summarize policy-related research on topics such as accountability, legislative strengthening, and executive corruption.

Since 2017, V-Dem has been publishing Democracy Reports on an annual basis. The previous reports covered topics on "Democracy at Dusk?" (2017), "Democracy for All?" (2018), "Democracy Facing Global Challenges" (2019), "Autocratization Surges - Resistance Grows" (2020), "Autocratization Turns Viral" (2021), "Autocratization Changing Nature?" (2022), "Defiance in the Face of Autocratization" (2023), "Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot" (2024), and "25 Years of Autocratization - Democracy Trumped" (2025). The reports are released together with the data updates in the spring.

The V-Dem Institute is active on several social media platforms, sharing data analysis and research findings. Combined, the social media channels have 32,000 followers. Plus, the V-Dem Newsletter currently has more than 12,000 subscribers.

The V-Dem website is an integral part of the outreach, and since 2012, the website has had around 10 million page views from 227 countries/territories. In addition to datasets and publications, the V-Dem website contains information on, for example, methodology and research programs. The website also offers graphing tools, which have been used to create more than 37 million graphs in total.

4.4 Funding

The funding for data collection covers all costs associated with collection of all types of indicators, this includes fees for Country Experts, as well as staff costs to maintain the competencies and organization at the V-Dem Institute. It also includes the development of the unique and highly complex research infrastructure that has been built over the course of this project and is the foundation on which V-Dem rests. We would like to point out that the Kellogg Institute of Notre Dame provided important contributions in the early phases of the project, and that the University of Gothenburg has provided substantial co-funding during all phases of the project and continues to do so. We are very grateful to all our funders, which are presented in the *Funders list on the V-Dem website*.

5 Demscore

V-Dem is a part of the national research e-infrastructure Demscore (acronym for "research infrastructure for Democracy, Environment, Migration, Social policy, Conflict, and Representation"). Demscore integrates data from six data collection projects in Sweden, bringing together some of the world's leading research infrastructures and databases. The University of Gothenburg hosts the consortium which also includes Stockholm-, Uppsala-, and Umeå universities. Together, the consortium partners are building a world-leading hub for contextual data with free and user-friendly access to data, documentation, and online visualization tools.

Beyond providing access to high-quality contextual data, Demscore addresses the longstanding challenge of inconsistent and incompatible datasets in the social sciences. Through an innovative approach to open access and real-time customized data merging, Demscore ensures seamless integration between all member datasets. By applying principles of functional data engineering, it optimizes data merging processes and enhances usability, making it easier to analyze 25,000 original variables covering nearly all countries from the early 1700s to the present. This not only streamlines data collection, management, and distribution but also delivers significant time- and cost-saving benefits for researchers and the broader scientific community.

Demscore harmonizes data from its partnering research institutes, each specializing in different areas of the social sciences:

- **Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)**, University of Gothenburg.
The world's largest dataset on Democracy.
- **Quality of Government (QoG)**, University of Gothenburg.
QoG's award-winning datasets focus on concepts related to quality of government, transparency, and public administration.
- **Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)/Violence Early-Warning System (VIEWS)**, Uppsala University.
UCDP is the world's main provider of data on organized violence and the oldest ongoing data collection project for civil war. VIEWS offers a novel integration of isolated causal factors into a theoretically and methodologically consistent forecasting system.
- **Comparative Policy Laboratory (COMPLAB)** Stockholm University and Uppsala University.
COMPLAB provides vital policy data across three different policy strands: environmental-, social-, and migration policy.
- **Representative Democracy (REPDEM)**, Umeå University.
REPDEM provides unique data on governments, parliaments, political parties, length of government formation periods, bargain rounds, as well as procedures and mechanism for intra-coalition governance.
- **Historical Data Archive (H-DATA)**, Stockholm University
Up until the end of 2024 H-DATA was also a Demscore module, and provided extensive country-level data dating back to before the French Revolution. Following the completion of the project at the end of 2024, H-DATA is no longer active, but its historical data remains accessible through Demscore.

The interdisciplinary nature of Demscore data enables large-scale comparative analyses necessary to advance adequate policy responses to complex societal challenges associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) facing Sweden, Europe, and the world. The joint infrastructure ensures data integrity and quality at the highest international standards. As a collaborative effort between leading Swedish universities, Demscore elevates the scale of social science data to a new level, offering unprecedented opportunities for interdisciplinary research and knowledge advancement.

Demscore is funded by the Swedish Research Council, University of Gothenburg, Stockholm University, Uppsala University and Umeå University.

To learn more about our Demscore, please visit: <https://www.demscore.se>.