The Global State of Democracy 2024

Strengthening the Legitimacy of Elections in a Time of Radical Uncertainty

Global State of Democracy Initiative

International IDEA
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

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Preface

Elections have been central to International IDEA's mandate and activities ever since the Institute was founded in 1995. At the start of this year, as countries that together account for half of the world's population prepared to go to the polls, we resolved to redouble our focus on the need to support electoral integrity. We are doing this by developing the capacity of election authorities and other partners to manage risk; by convening dialogues to exchange practices and innovations; by leveraging our voice through a global communications and advocacy campaign to protect elections; and, of course, by generating and disseminating knowledge about the trends we are seeing and the lessons to be drawn.

Hence, this report focuses on the challenges facing electoral authorities and systems. In particular, the 2024 Global State of Democracy report emphasizes how procedural and substantive pressures influence public perceptions of elections, and how those perceptions in turn shape democratic outcomes. This report thus builds upon the contributions of International IDEA's Perceptions of Democracy Survey report, released earlier in 2024, by shifting the level of inquiry for democracy assessment out of the ivory tower and into the public square.

Our report outlines the mounting threats to the quality and robustness of elections, a pattern highlighted by a dramatic 10-point fall in average turnout over the past 15 years but reflected in different ways and to different degrees in every region of the world. And the report links this trend to another growing phenomenon in elections globally—the refusal of losers to concede. Between 2020 and 2024, in almost 20 per cent of elections, a losing candidate or party rejected the election outcome.

This relationship between electoral quality (both real and perceived) and a smooth transfer of power is a two-way street. On the one hand, rising pressures on elections from disinformation and polarization, among other variables, expand the space for defeated parties and candidates to spuriously deny or reject the results. On the other hand, when outcomes are contested with vigour and often with vitriol, it can further raise public doubts about the validity and even the value of democratic elections.

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Yet, as this super-cycle year has reinforced, elections remain the single best opportunity to end democratic backsliding and turn the tide in democracy's favour. As shown recently in places as diverse as Brazil, France, The Gambia, Guatemala, India, Poland and Zambia, elections retain a remarkable ability to surprise the experts and, in some cases, strengthen democracy in the face of adversity.

The success of democracy depends on many things, but it becomes utterly impossible if elections fail. And since democracy is an ideal that must be believed if it is to be true, a failure of perception is as serious as a failure of substance. To keep democracy alive, we must preserve public trust in electoral pathways to political change. That's why this report, its findings and, above all, its recommendations are so timely and so vital.

Dr Kevin Casas-Zamora
Secretary-General, International IDEA

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial intelligence
COMELEC	Commission on Elections (The Philippines)
CSO	Civil society organization
EIP	Electoral Integrity Project
EMB	Electoral management body
GSoD	Global State of Democracy
INE	National Electoral Institute (Instituto Nacional Electoral, Mexico)
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission (Nigeria)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OEC	Office of the Electoral Commissioner (Mauritius)
PEI	Perceptions of Electoral Integrity index
PODS	Perceptions of Democracy Survey
SVAs	Special voting arrangements
TSE	Superior Electoral Court (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, Brazil)
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In one way, 2024 is a banner year for democracy. Dubbed by some an election 'super-cycle' year, it will set a record for the most voters in a single year in human history (Sorkin 2024). This would be a triumph of democracy but for the fact that the quality of elections in many countries has declined significantly since the last time voters went to the polls. Around the world, the credibility of elections was worse in more than one fifth of the countries we cover (39 of 173) in 2023 (the most recent year for which we have complete data) than it had been five years before, in 2018. The way that people engage with electoral processes has also been changing over the past several decades: turnout has been going down while the incidence of protests and riots has been going up.

We now live in an era of radical uncertainty, in which multiple, compounding challenges threaten the patterns of stability and growth on which we have come to rely. Amid this pervasive uncertainty, elections are now regularly disputed. When political leaders make public statements disputing the credibility of an election or take the step of challenging an election in court, it sends an important signal to voters. In some cases, such signals convey legitimate concerns about an election; in others, they are cynical attempts to erode public faith in an opponent's victory. Between mid-2020 and mid-2024, one in five elections was challenged in at least one legal proceeding, with voting and vote counting emerging as the most-litigated aspects of the electoral process. During the same period, one in five elections saw a losing presidential candidate or losing party in parliamentary elections publicly reject the outcome of the election, and opposition parties boycotted one in ten elections. These factors combine to challenge public confidence in political processes.

Democracy continued its recent decline in 2023, with notable challenges emerging with regard to Representation and Rights. Assessing each country's various areas of improvement and deterioration, we find that, on balance, four in nine countries were worse off in 2023 than they had been in 2018, while only one in four had improved, continuing a negative trend that developed roughly

Between mid-2020 and mid-2024, one in five elections was challenged in at least one legal proceeding, with voting and vote counting emerging as the most-litigated aspects of the electoral process.

a decade ago. Challenges to democracy are found in every part of the world and at every level of democratic performance. Already-repressive contexts have continued to get worse, as governments have taken ever greater steps to suppress dissent and limit the ability of the people to choose who will govern them. At the same time, we find declines in democratic performance in countries that have been among the world's freest for decades.

Amid this broad context of decline, however, many elections have delivered on their inherent promise as a means of ensuring that the people have control over decision makers.

Amid this broad context of decline, however, many elections have delivered on their inherent promise as a means of ensuring that the people have control over decision makers and decision making in government and as such remain a cornerstone of democracy despite the current challenges. Recent elections in Guatemala, India, Poland, Senegal and many other countries have allowed the voters to have an effective voice. If democracy is 'a system in which parties lose elections' (Przeworski 1991: 10), then democracy remains alive and well in diverse countries around the world.

Taking the election super-cycle year as a call to action, this year's report uses the data as a jumping-off point for solutions to the challenges that elections face in 2024. In particular, we focus on how court challenges and refusals to concede undermine public perceptions of electoral credibility. The report concludes with a set of policy recommendations targeted at improving public confidence in elections. Many of these recommendations call for increased attention to communication with voters and for the incorporation of data on public perceptions into election management plans.

Key findings

1. In an election super-cycle year in which approximately 3 billion people will go to the polls, one in three[1] will vote in countries where the quality of elections is significantly worse than it was five years ago.

2. Electoral outcomes are disputed relatively frequently. Between 2020 and 2024, in almost one in five elections, a losing candidate or party rejected the electoral outcome. Elections are being decided by court appeals at almost the same rate.

3. The global rate of electoral participation has declined as elections have become increasingly disputed, with the global average for electoral turnout declining from 65.2 per cent to 55.5 per cent over the past 15 years.

4. Countries experiencing net declines in democratic performance far outnumber those with advances. About one in four countries is moving forward (on balance), while four out of every nine are worse off.

5. Declines have been most concentrated in Representation (Credible Elections and Effective Parliament) and Rights (Economic Equality, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press).

6. In addition to declines in weaker contexts, democratically high-performing countries in all regions have suffered significant deterioration, especially in Europe and the Americas.

7. While substantial progress has been made in improving electoral administration, disputes about the credibility of elections deal mainly with irregularities at the point of voting and vote counting.

8. Despite the many threats to elections and the declines found in many countries, elections retain their promise as a mechanism for ensuring popular control over decision makers and decision making. Incumbent parties have lost presidential elections and parliamentary majorities in many highly watched elections in 2023 and 2024.

[1] This calculation is based on voting-age population statistics for the countries that have national elections in 2024 and that have experienced significant declines in Credible Elections (compared with 2018). The voting-age population data for six of those countries (Botswana, Chad, Iceland, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique) are from before 2020.

GLOBAL TRENDS METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

Where to find the data

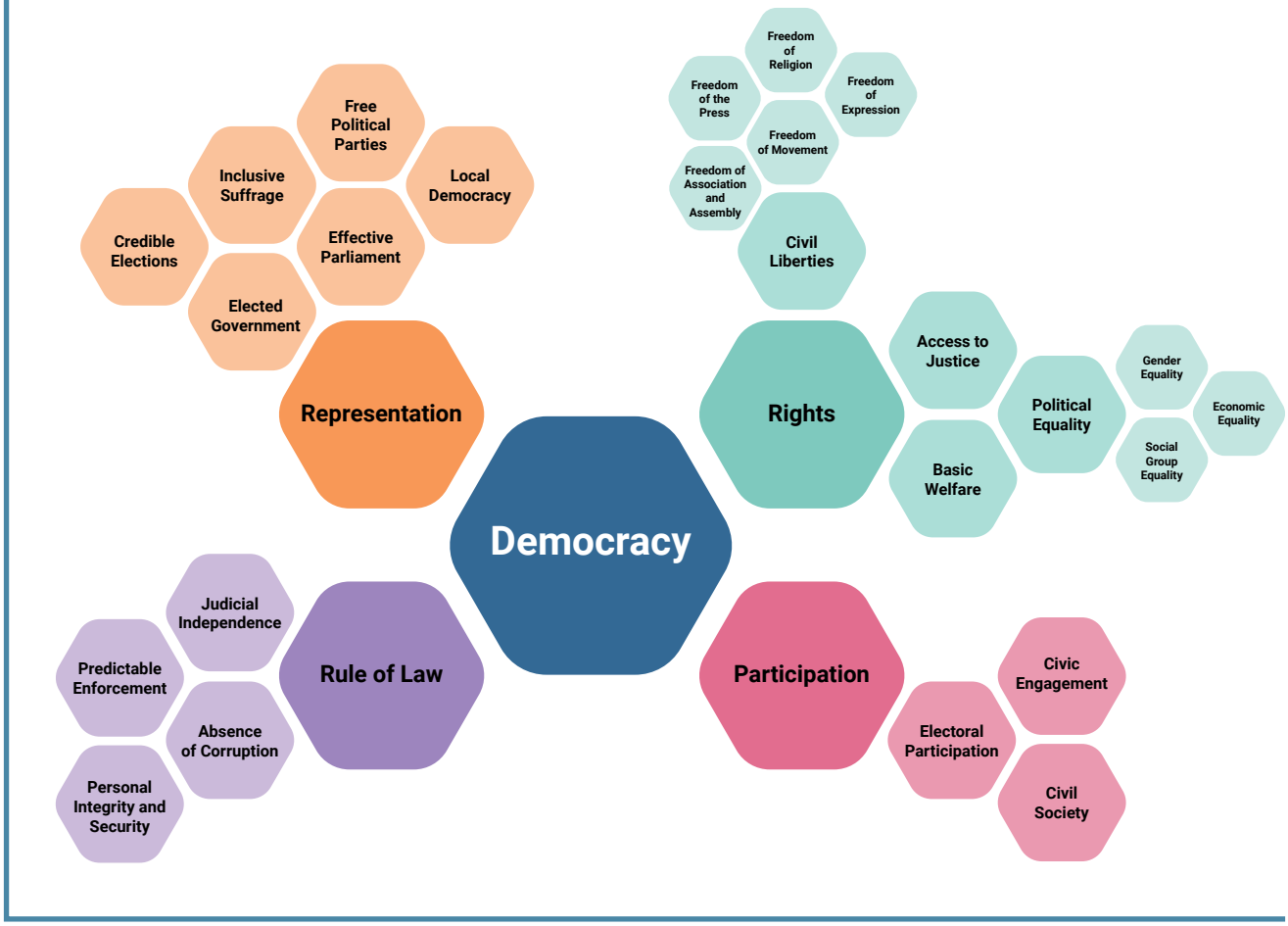
The figures and data referred to in this Report, unless otherwise stated, are drawn from the Global State of Democracy Indices v8, <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/about-the-gsod-indices>, accessed 10 July 2024.

The Global State of Democracy (GSoD) report, the flagship publication of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), provides annual analysis of democratization in 173 countries[2] across the globe. The GSoD Indices, which are a quantitative data set, provide the majority of the data on which this report is based. The Indices measure national performance across discrete areas of democracy, broadly understood as a system in which there is public control over decision making and decision makers and in which there is equality in the exercise of that control. The data cover the years 1975–2023. The Indices are organized through a hierarchical conceptual framework oriented around four core categories of democratic performance: Representation, Rights, Rule of Law and Participation (see Figure 0.1). Below the four categories are factors (such as Credible Elections or Judicial Independence). Finally, at the lowest level are specific indices, or subfactors (such as Freedom of Expression or Social Group Equality).

This report is further informed by the Democracy Tracker, a qualitative data project that provides event-centric information on democracy developments in 173 countries, with a data series beginning in August 2022 and updated every month after that. The Democracy Tracker reports events that signal

[2] The data covered 173 countries in 2023, but the number was lower in years before the mid-1990s. The only country to be dropped from the data set is the German Democratic Republic, which was covered from 1975 to 1990.

Figure 0.1. **GSoD Indices' conceptual framework**



a significant change in a country's democratic performance in a particular month, either positively or negatively, and monitors events that are developing and which could signal that such a change is very likely in the near future (International IDEA 2024d). While the quantitative measures from the GSoD Indices cover only up to December 2023, the Democracy Tracker includes hundreds of reports throughout 2024, many of which are mentioned in this report.

This year's report additionally draws on the Perceptions of Democracy Survey (PODS). The PODS data set includes popular views of the performance of and access to several political institutions, as well as information on people's values and satisfaction with government. The survey covers 19 countries.[3] In each country, survey research providers contacted a representative sample[4] of the population (approximately 1,000 people) and an additional sample of people whose household income indicated that they were experiencing poverty

[3] The survey covers Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, The Gambia, India, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Solomon Islands, South Korea, Taiwan, Tanzania and the United States.

[4] The nature of the sample varies slightly from country to country. In 16 of the 19 countries, the main sample (1,000 people) was nationally representative. In Colombia, India and Taiwan, the sample was online representative.

(approximately 500 people).[5] This oversampling of the poorest and most marginalized people allows us to have confidence in our assessment of how these diverse groups of people differ from the rest of the population.

The report is also anchored in the subject matter and regional expertise of International IDEA's staff at our headquarters in Sweden, as well as the work of colleagues in regional and country offices across Africa and West Asia, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. Our staff do more than just keep an ear to the ground; they are involved in the day-to-day efforts to build, protect and expand the work of democratic institutions around the world.

The GSoD Indices aggregate indicators from 24 data sources (see Box 0.1), which include observational data from United Nations agencies, expert-coded data from academic programmes and some data collected directly by International IDEA. The Indices are based on a total of 165 indicators. The result is a collection of 2,088,783 data points on a total of 174 countries over the last 49 years.

Box 0.1. **GSoD Indices' sources**

Bertelsmann Transformation Index (15 indicators)
Bjørnskov-Rode Regime Data (1 indicator)
CIRIGHTS (11 indicators)
Civil Liberties Dataset (5 indicators)
Freedom in the World (23 indicators)
Freedom on the Net (3 indicators)
Global Gender Gap Report (1 indicator)
Global Media Freedom Dataset (1 indicator)
Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2 indicators)
International Country Risk Guide (4 indicators)
International IDEA Voter Turnout Database (1 indicator)
International Labour Organization (2 indicators)
Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy (3 indicators)
Political Terror Scale (1 indicator)
Polity (4 indicators)
Standardized World Income Inequality Database (1 indicator)
UN E-Government Survey (1 indicator)
UN Food and Agriculture Organization (1 indicator)
UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (1 indicator)
UN World Population Prospects (1 indicator)
UNESCO Institute for Statistics (1 indicator)
Varieties of Democracy (79 indicators)
World Bank (1 indicator)
World Health Organization (2 indicators)

This year, we have added Economic Equality to our conceptual framework as a new Rights subfactor. The Economic Equality index combines six indicators of socio-economic equality and exclusion, and it is included along with Social Group Equality and Gender Equality in the Political Equality factor.

Each index in the GSoD Indices ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 being the most democratic; the boundaries are set by the best and worst observed values across all countries and years. The aggregation methods allow us to report the level of uncertainty around the estimated values (confidence intervals) for most of the indices. We use those confidence intervals to assess significant

[5] One significant exception to this approach is the Solomon Islands, where the small population posed significant challenges for data collection, and the sample size was only 526 people, 309 of whom were in the lowest income category

changes over time, comparing each year to the one five years before it and reporting significant improvements or declines when there is complete separation in the confidence intervals (meaning that the apparent change is almost certainly not due to measurement error).

The GSoD Indices do not include a singular value for democratic quality. Their primary utility is found in the specific categories, which can be used to track progress over time in defined areas of democratic performance within countries and to compare between them.

The GSoD Indices also report annual global rankings for each of the top-level categories of democratic performance. These are listed in full in Annex A. To simplify analysis, they also classify countries as high-performing (at least 0.7), mid-range-performing (0.4 to 0.69) or low-performing (0.39 and below) in each index.

The focus on category-level performance (rather than on something like regime types) allows for a more nuanced understanding of where democracy is thriving and where it is suffering. It also shifts the focus from the broad idea of democracy generally to specific and narrower aspects of democracy, which are more appropriate to target for reform and intervention. Where relevant, the following analysis groups countries together according to the level of performance (low-range/mid-range/high-range) in a particular category or factor. This approach allows us to highlight that countries with highly varied contexts may have important but often-neglected commonalities and lessons to learn from each other. It also reminds us of the inherent complexity of democratization; countries may be thriving or suffering in ways that are not always apparent at the surface.

Part 1

Global trends

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In an age of radical uncertainty—marked by climate change, migration flows, increasing conflict and transformations driven by artificial intelligence (AI)—democracy's fate seems somewhat aptly, though sadly, indeterminate (Casas-Zamora 2024). Ongoing conflicts in places such as Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine have already had immense human cost and add uncertainty to assessments of near-term developments in their regions. While climate change long seemed like a problem for the future, it has already had impacts on democracy, including through the heat-related deaths of dozens of poll workers in India's 2024 election (Mitra 2024). More broadly, subnational or national elections in at least 23 countries were affected by natural hazards between January 2019 and June 2024 (International IDEA 2024j).

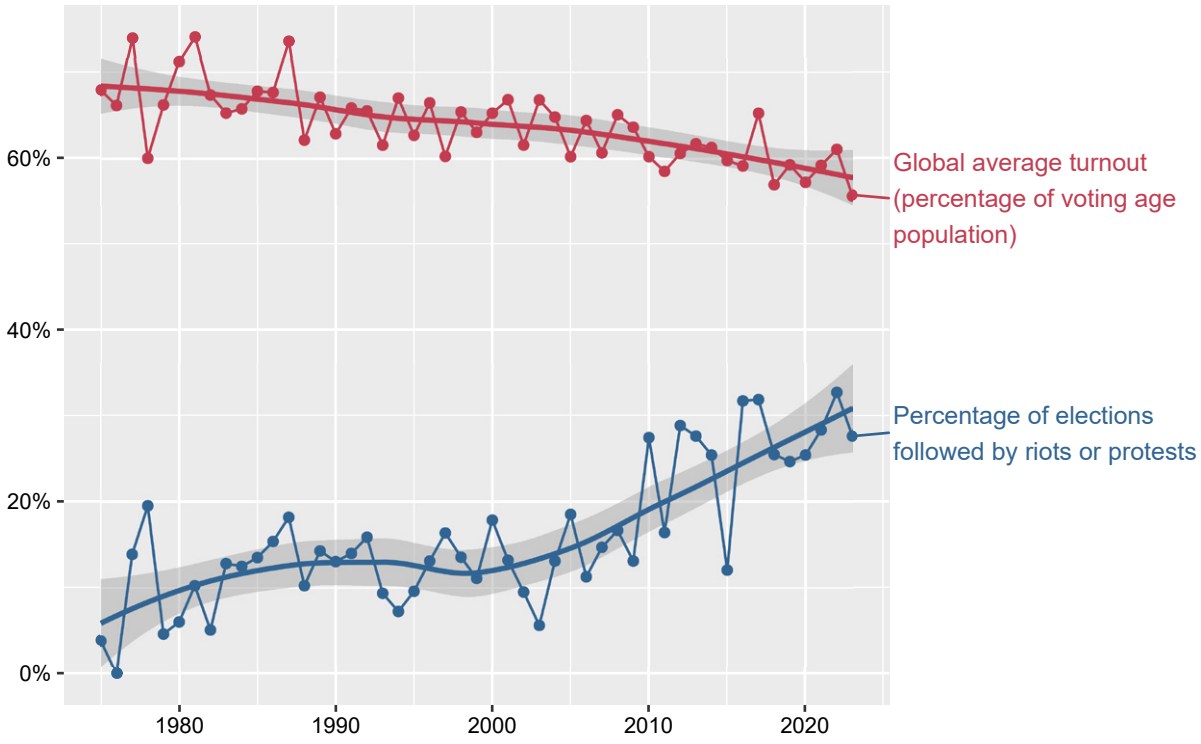
In an age of radical uncertainty democracy's fate seems somewhat aptly, though sadly, indeterminate.

The 2024 elections super-cycle year falls fittingly into this era of uncertainty, with candidates and political parties using potentially transformational policy agendas to court nearly 3 billion voters. In most cases, the inherent (and healthy) uncertainty of elections sparks the kind of debate that drives democracy forward. In other contexts, however, it can motivate more hostile disputes and unrest. Unsurprisingly, unrest and violence related to elections can decrease turnout (van Baalen 2023), a trend that is apparent at the global level (see Figure 1.1) and is worrying for the future of democracy. In 2023 the average level of electoral participation (measured in terms of the percentage of the voting-age population that voted) had declined to 55.7 per cent (from 67.9 per cent in 1975), while the percentage of elections that were followed by riots or protests had risen to 27.6 per cent (from 3.8 per cent in 1975). The ways in which electoral disputes impact public perceptions of the integrity of elections are explored in Part 2 of this report.

In 2023 only 42 countries (of the 173 our data cover) demonstrated a net positive change—the number of factors of democratic performance[6] that

[6] See the Methodology section for more information on the levels of aggregation in our measurement of democratic performance.

Figure 1.1. **Global average turnout compared with the percentage of elections marked by riots or protests (1975–2023)**

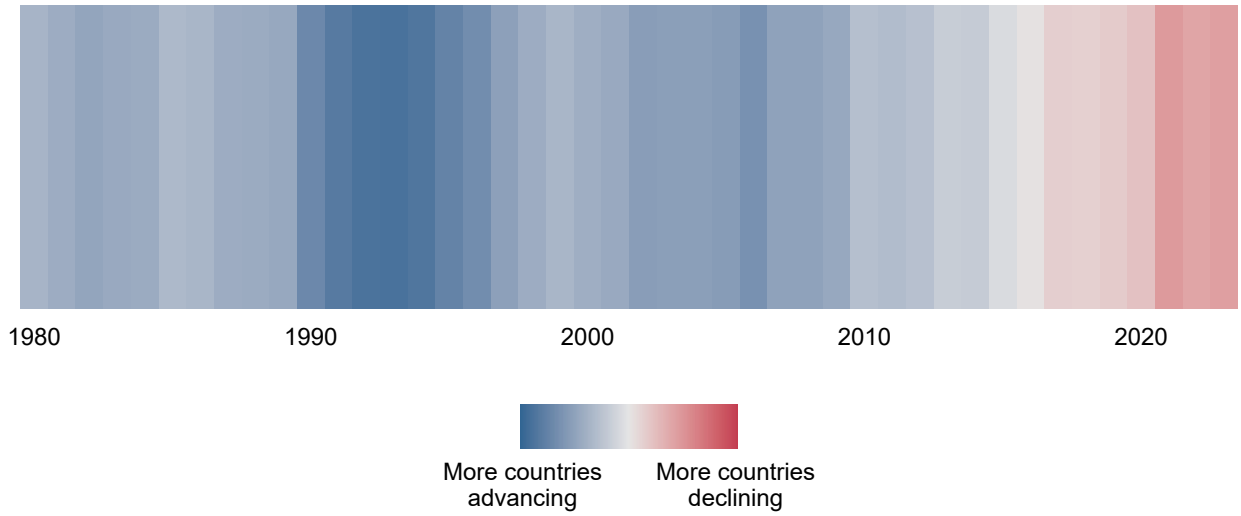


Source: Hyde, S. D. and Marinov, N., 'Which elections can be lost?', *Political Analysis*, 20/2 (2012), pp. 191–201, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23260172>, accessed 19 August 2024; data after 2020 from International IDEA, Disputed Elections Data set, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/disputed-elections>, accessed 20 August 2024. Voter turnout data from International IDEA, Voter Turnout Database, [n.d.], <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout-database>, accessed 8 July 2024.

showed a significant improvement exceeded the number of factors that showed a decline—a figure that pales in comparison with the 79 countries that suffered more declines than advances (net negative change). Put another way, about one in four countries is making progress, while four out of every nine are worse off. As Figure 1.2 illustrates, the balance of countries making progress versus those falling back has been negative for several years, with the pandemic-affected declines in 2021 standing out as a notably severe point (see the country status in 2023 in the map found in Figure 2.6). This is the eighth consecutive year where the number of countries declining exceeded the number advancing, the longest such stretch in the GSoD data set.

The contexts that showed the sharpest declines—Afghanistan, Belarus, Burkina Faso and Haiti—are unsurprising, as most are marked by severe insecurity or have experienced coups d'état. It is not, however, only countries with already weak institutions that have suffered. In times of radical uncertainty, marked by age-old challenges, such as crime and war, as well as new problems that threaten both our shared reality and our very existence, such as climate change

Figure 1.2. **Balance of countries with net declines and net advances**



and generative AI, even established democracies are struggling to uphold freedoms. Even so, growing uncertainty has not extinguished hope.

The political world is a complex place, and individual countries can advance in one area while declining in another. Equally, the very democratic institutions that are suffering in some places have become stronger elsewhere. At the global level, Participation and Rights remain relatively stable, even though progress in these areas has been minimal. At the factor level, across the 173 countries, advances have been most common in the categories of Rule of Law, Rights and Representation, especially in factors such as Absence of Corruption, Freedom of Expression, Economic Equality and Access to Justice—though there have been movements in both directions across all these measures in different countries.

In a time of uncertainty, it is these mechanisms of democracy that facilitate the participation and innovation that are key to mitigating the threats of our age.

1.1. **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

This year's report begins with a broad overview of trends at the global level, shining a light on the aspects of democracy that have experienced the most change—positive and negative—in the recent past. Specifically, Part 1 of the report provides a description of what has changed within each category of democratic performance: Representation, Rights, Rule of Law and Participation. It uses country cases to draw out illustrative examples and highlight important patterns. In most cases, we illustrate advances and

declines by referencing statistically significant changes that have occurred in comparison with five years earlier. When that is not the case, we provide the interval we are using.

In response to the breadth of change in measures of Credible Elections and the heightened frequency with which elites and the public cast doubt on the accuracy and legitimacy of electoral processes, Part 2 of the report focuses on the question of what matters for electoral integrity in the eyes of the public and how that differs from expert views. This section of the report, which is organized as a policy paper, also introduces a new data set on disputed elections and uses it to explain some of the factors that people and their representatives (such as political parties and civil society) prioritize with regard to credible elections. It concludes with a set of policy recommendations.

This new approach to the flagship publication is International IDEA's response to the ways in which the 2024 elections super-cycle year has refocused attention on the institutions of representative democracy. Given growing pushback against the democratic model, this analysis provides new information and initial suggestions to renew public trust in electoral processes.

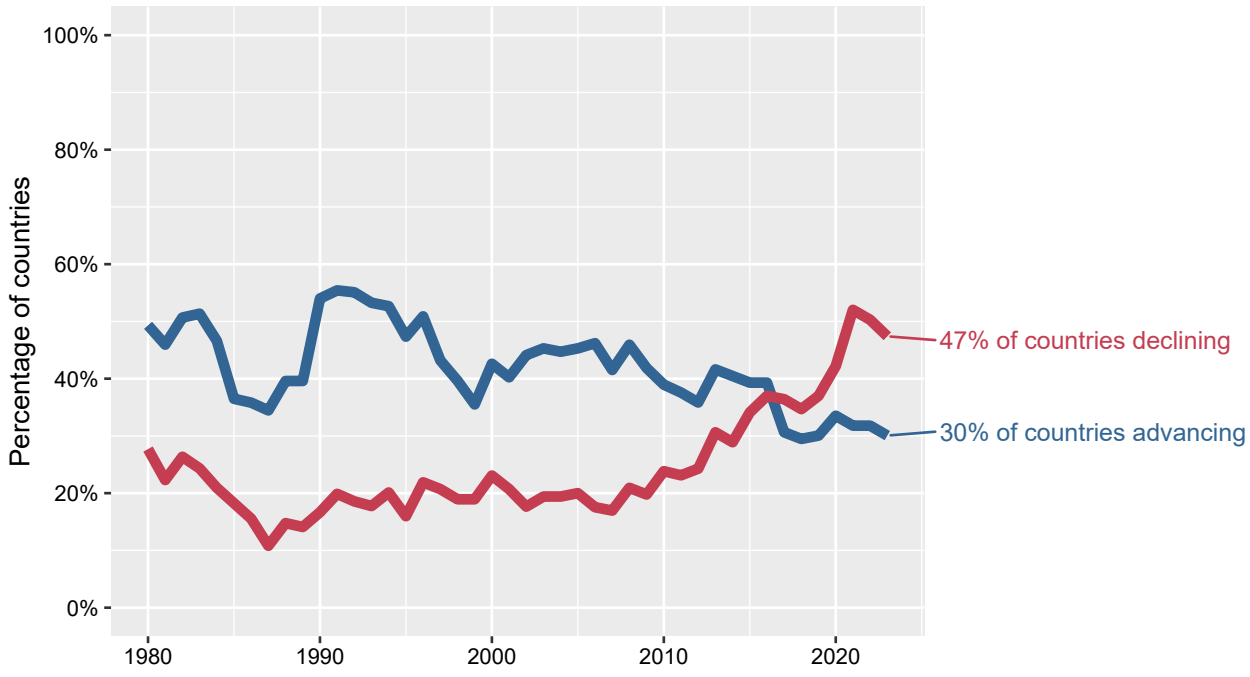
Chapter 2

GLOBAL TRENDS

2.1. GLOBAL PATTERNS

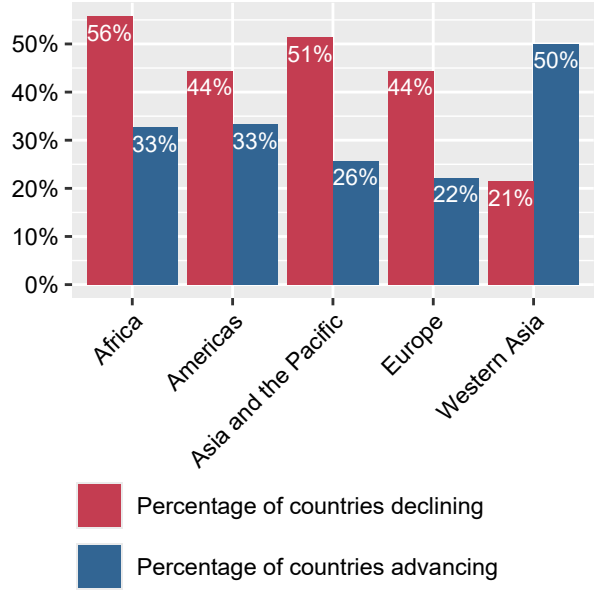
High-level patterns reveal that the plight of democracy continues. In 2023, 82 countries (47 per cent) suffered a decline in at least one second-level factor of democratic performance, compared with their own performance five years prior. In contrast, 52 countries advanced in at least one factor over that time period (30 per cent). As Figure 2.1 illustrates, the balance between progress and decline shifted in 2017 and has not recovered.

Figure 2.1. **Percentage of countries with significant advances and declines at the factor level**



Change was seen in all regions (see Figure 2.2), though the most declines occurred in Africa and Asia and the Pacific, followed by Europe and the Americas. Advances were most prevalent in West Asia, followed by the Americas and Africa (see Figure 2.4 for a breakdown of the factors that saw changes in each region).

Figure 2.2. **Percentage of countries in each region advancing and declining in at least one factor (2023 compared with 2018)**[1]



[1] Gains in West Asia outnumbered declines and were seen mostly in Absence of Corruption, Personal Integrity and Security, and Effective Parliament. Importantly, however, they impacted only seven countries, and most impacted factors remained in the low-performing range.

2.1.1. Global declines and advances

Declines at the factor level have been most concentrated in the categories of Representation and Rights (see Figure 0.1 for an overview of how we measure democratic performance). As illustrated in Figure 2.3, the factors that have declined the most within Representation were Credible Elections and Effective Parliament, while Economic Equality, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press saw the largest decreases within Rights. Together, these declines raise concerns in the context of an elections super-cycle year. As almost 3 billion voters are going to the polls, the weakening of these particular factors raises questions about the fundamental structures of democratic systems: declines cast doubt on the extent to which people have the civic and economic space to cast informed votes as well as on the ability of elected representatives to counter the power of the executive and keep democratic systems balanced.

Figure 2.3. **Advances and declines at the factor level (2023 compared with 2018)**

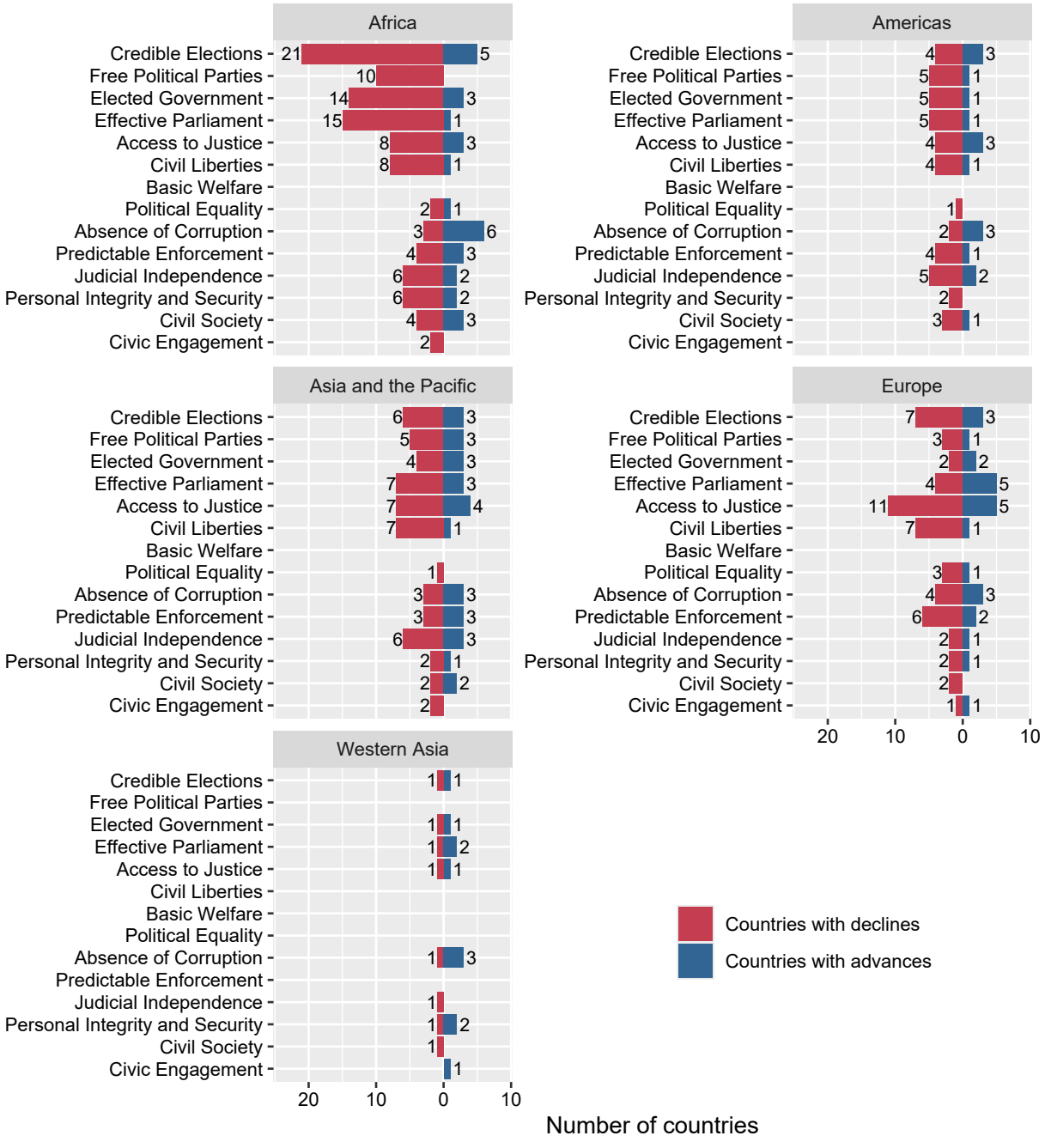
Declines in Representation and Rights

Examples of the declines in Representation and Rights can been seen around the world (see Figure 2.4). In Africa, coups have clear impacts on both Representation and Rights, especially as leaders come to power in the absence of polls, and many then suspend rights in order to maintain their new grip on power. Some coup leaders have tried to justify their actions by citing growing, unaddressed violence and insecurity (Mcallister 2023). In the Americas, on the other hand, many countries continue to show relatively strong performance in Representation. Yet, some leaders have used their power to severely restrict rights—ostensibly to address violence but with clear impacts on democratic processes. Beyond what has been seen in other countries in the region, in El Salvador President Nayib Bukele has systematically derailed democratic checks on power by weakening term limits, starving the opposition of funding, intimidating the press and instituting a state of emergency that has allowed him to severely restrict human rights (Meléndez-Sánchez 2024).

In Asia and the Pacific, declines in the Representation and Rights subfactors have occurred in multiple countries going to the polls this year, including India, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Korea and Sri Lanka. In many of the countries

in that region, elites have moved to restrict opposition parties and limit transparency in order to tilt the playing field. In some cases, of course, recent elections could mark a turning point. In India, for example, the judiciary helped reopen a constricted space by allowing senior opposition leaders to participate in the polls (despite pending court cases).

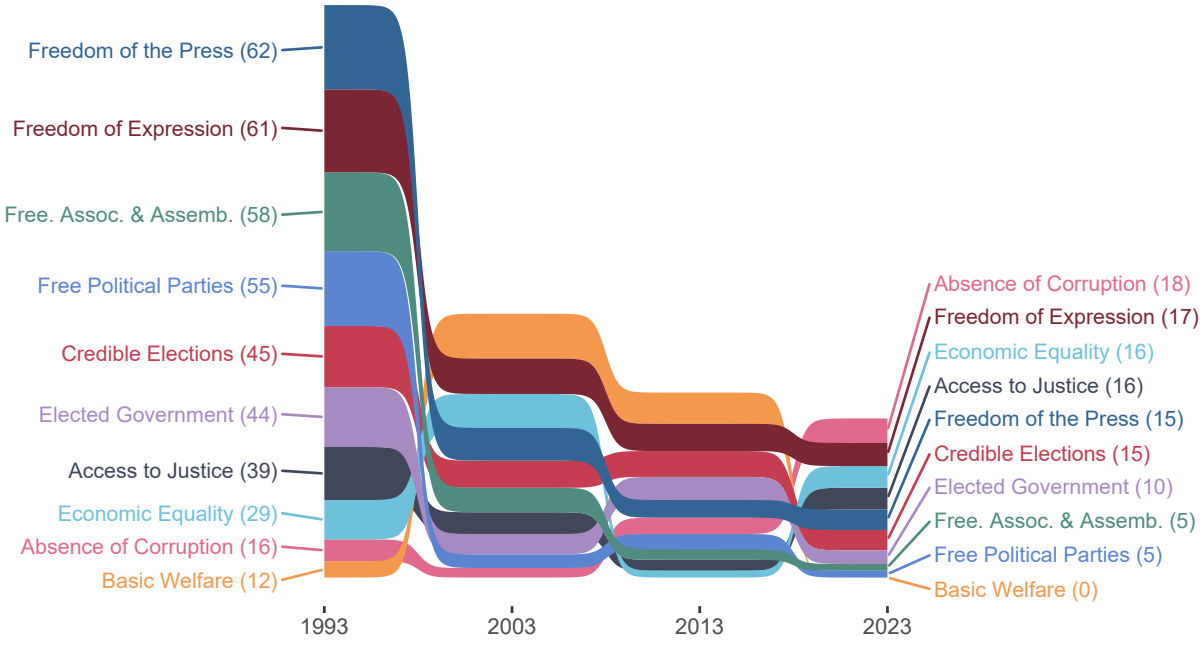
Figure 2.4. **Number of countries advancing and declining, by factor and region (2023 compared with 2018)**



Advances in Rights and Rule of Law

The very democratic institutions that are suffering in some places have become stronger elsewhere. As Figure 2.5 illustrates, the breadth of progress has consistently narrowed over the past three decades, but it has not halted altogether. The figure also shows that the areas where progress is being made have changed over time. In 2023, where there were advances, they occurred most frequently in factors in the categories of Rule of Law and Rights—Absence of Corruption, Freedom of Expression, Economic Equality and Access to Justice. While the 18 countries that have improved in Absence of Corruption present a hopeful sign, it is important to note that several remain low-performing (Burundi, Dominican Republic, Iraq and Kazakhstan) or home to more broadly troubling contexts (Afghanistan, Haiti, Saudi Arabia and Syria). Research has shown that while corruption is low where the level of democracy is high, it is high where the level of democracy is modest and low where democracy is absent (McMann et al. 2020). It is therefore not surprising that negative trends in democratic performance (in countries already at low levels) are sometimes accompanied by declines in the level of corruption.

Figure 2.5. **Number of countries with significant advances in selected factors (1993, 2003, 2013, 2023)**



In Europe, a push for certain countries' accession to the European Union in the aftermath of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has prompted progress in Access to Justice, Economic Equality and Freedom of Expression, including in Albania, Kosovo and Moldova. Asia and the Pacific has also seen important gains here, including in smaller countries such as Fiji, the Maldives, the

Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu. Gains in these areas have also been evident in Africa and West Asia, where countries such as Burundi, The Gambia, Somalia and Zambia have seen progress.

2.1.2. Signs of change

The current context of radical uncertainty is likely to persist at least into the near future, but a few events could signal the direction of change. As polls predicted, the far right made significant gains in some countries during the European Parliament elections, raising questions related to the future direction for democracy support across the continent and further afield (Bounds and Foy 2024).

Figure 2.6. **Map of the change in the average level of democratic performance in each country (2023 compared with 2018)**

Note: Each tile represents a country, which is identified by the three-letter ISO 3166 country code. Two countries without an official code are Palestine (PSE) and Kosovo (XKX). The countries covered by the GSoD Indices are coloured in shades of red and blue. Countries that are not covered are coloured in grey.
Source: Schwabish, J., 'The World Tile Grid Map', PolicyViz, 2017, <https://policyviz.com/2017/10/12/the-world-tile-grid-map>, accessed 8 August 2024.

The much-watched 2024 Indian election was also a pivotal moment in setting the agenda for change. In a surprise showing, opposition parties won enough seats in the lower house of parliament to prevent the ruling party from maintaining an outright majority (Krishnan 2024). Though the Bharatiya Janata Party was able to form a government with its coalition partners, the opposition will likely be a more forceful voice, thus strengthening checks and balances. A large part of the success of the election was due to the maturity of Indian voters, supported by the work of countervailing institutions, including the courts, political parties and the electoral management body (EMB), which helped facilitate participation and a healthy contest. In the USA, which has suffered declines in Civil Liberties and which has had to grapple with questions surrounding its electoral process, elections in November 2024 will set the tone for international democracy-focused programming in many parts of the world.

At the same time, smaller signals of change provide hope for long-term advances. The Democratic Republic of the Congo's first female prime minister may be a harbinger of other gender-equality advances, and all eyes will be on Namibia, whose November elections may result in Africa's second elected female president. In countries such as Mozambique and Senegal, the emergence of a new generation of political leaders is seen with excitement, particularly given the extreme gap between the demographics of society and the demographics of current heads of state and government in Africa. The significant advances in the Pacific Island countries noted are important reminders not to neglect smaller countries, which can also be showcases of democratization.

The significant advances in the Pacific Island countries noted are important reminders not to neglect smaller countries, which can also be showcases of democratization.

2.2. **REPRESENTATION**

In the GSoD Indices, Representation is an aggregate measure of the extent of representative democracy, building from component measures of credible elections, inclusive suffrage, freedom to organize through political parties, the effectiveness of the legislature and the practice of democracy at the local level.

Representation captures many of the things that people associate with democracy, such as elections, parties and legislatures. Global trends in this area turned negative more than a decade ago, and 2023 was the worst year we have yet observed. The situation continues to evolve as new technology and new approaches to politics generate ever greater levels of uncertainty—not about outcomes (which must be uncertain), but about rules, practices, standards of conduct and acceptance of legitimate outcomes. Elections are also affected by the global context of radical uncertainty through developments such as threats of foreign interference, disinformation and the potential uses of generative AI in campaigns. One good example of a response to these developments was a code of conduct that political parties proactively signed in the lead-up to elections for the European Parliament, committing to actions that can mitigate many of these issues (see Box 2.1).

Box 2.1. **Code of Conduct for the 2024 European Parliament elections**

On 9 April 2024 all 10 pan-European political parties signed a Code of Conduct for the 2024 European Parliament elections (International IDEA and European Commission 2024). International IDEA developed and negotiated the Code of Conduct in collaboration with European political parties and the European Commission's Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourová. The initiative was inspired by the EU Recommendation on inclusive and resilient electoral processes that the Commission presented in the Defence of Democracy Package in 2023 to ensure that European elections follow the highest democratic standards (European Commission 2023d).

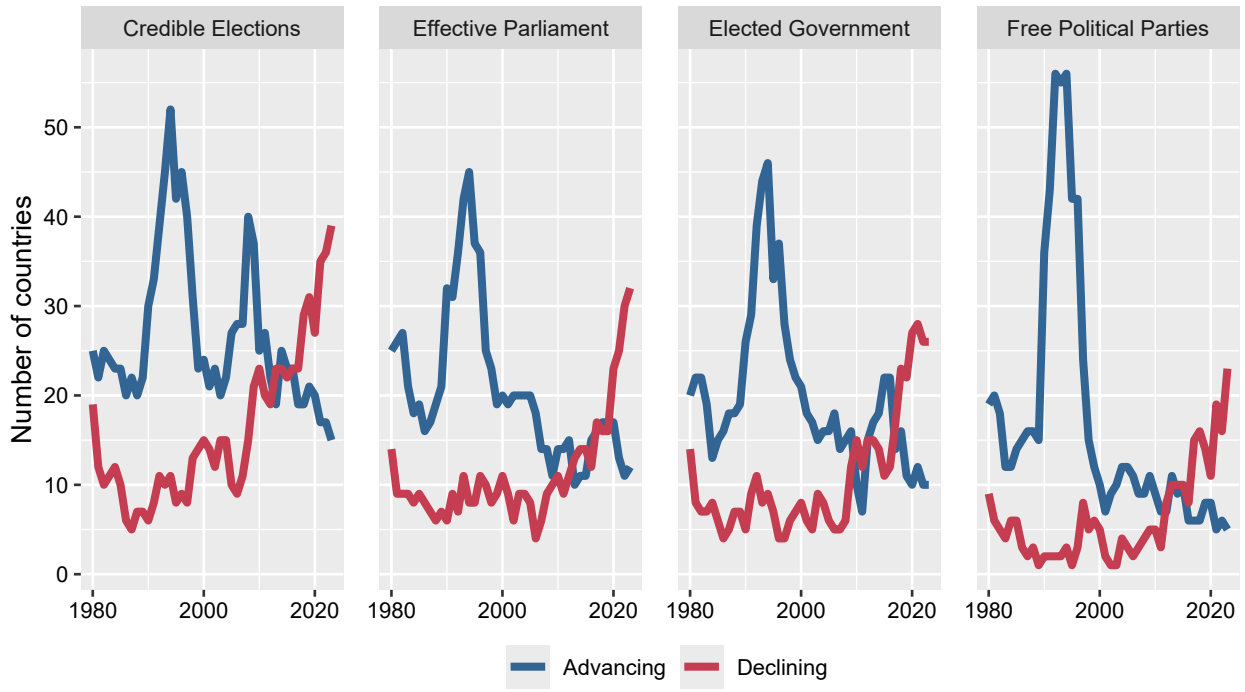
The Code of Conduct includes 14 commitments that promote fair and ethical campaigning. When signing the Code of Conduct, parties undertook to uphold existing laws and promote inclusive political discourse, as well as to practise transparency when utilizing new technologies, financial contributions and political advertising. The Code of Conduct also outlines expectations regarding parties' investment in cybersecurity, removal of inappropriate online content and countering of narratives led by non-EU entities to erode European values (International IDEA and European Commission 2024). The emphasis on risks posed by AI, such as misinformation, is timely and important (Goujard 2024). The Code's last three commitments relate to adherence. Parties are encouraged to promote independent observation of staff compliance, discuss implementation with relevant partners and conduct post-election reviews.

The aim of the Code of Conduct is to protect democratic values, including transparency, accountability and freedom of expression, by complementing existing election frameworks at the national and European levels. On a fundamental level, the document stands to protect European elections from internal and external threats by serving as a checklist for parties, media and citizens to demand ethical campaigning. In the words of Commission Vice-President Jourová, the Code of Conduct also represents a collective commitment to electoral integrity, with the potential of fostering greater public trust in democratic processes and European institutions (International IDEA 2024f).

Despite these challenges, elections retain their promise as a means to facilitate the peaceful transfer of power between political parties and ideologies. The 2023 elections in Poland, a country then performing far below its best in many factors of democracy, illustrate this promise: elections remain a vital way to halt negative trends in democratic development. Poland now faces a time of transition; the coming years will determine whether or not the democratic contraction will be substantially reversed (Bloom and Hudson 2023).

Declines in the factors of Representation were most common in mid-range-performing countries, with Africa, the Americas, and Asia and the Pacific particularly affected. The single worst area of decline is Credible Elections in Africa, where 21 countries (40 per cent) performed at a significantly worse level than they had five years before (in 2018) (see Figure 2.7). The only area where more countries were making progress than were falling behind was in Effective Parliament in Europe (five countries were advancing while four were declining).

Figure 2.7. **Trends in selected factors of Representation (1980–2023)**



2.2.1 **Credible Elections**

The Credible Elections index aggregates indicators that measure the extent to which elections for national representative political office are free from irregularities, such as flaws and biases in the voter registration and campaign processes, voter intimidation and fraudulent counting.

The GSoD index of Credible Elections is a key indicator to consider in evaluating the quality of Representation around the world, especially in this election super-cycle year. In our most recent data (covering up to the end of 2023), we find that 39 countries (22.5 per cent of those we cover) performed worse in this area than they had in 2018. Countries with declines were found at all levels of performance, from high performers such as Germany and New Zealand, to low performers such as Belarus and Nicaragua.

Among the 39 countries with a significant decline in the Credible Elections index, 38 saw increasing levels of government intimidation, 33 saw higher levels of irregularities in the electoral process, 30 saw a decrease in EMB autonomy, and 29 saw a decline in EMB capacity (Coppedge et al. 2024). The combination of government intimidation of opposition candidates and attacks on the institutions that guarantee free and fair electoral processes (EMBs and courts) is a potent threat to credible elections. What these data do not cover is the extent to which political parties and candidates dispute electoral outcomes, the level of disinformation around elections and the effects these have on public faith in electoral processes. We take up some of these matters

in Part 2 of this report, using new data to identify specific weaknesses and provide policy recommendations that can help reverse the negative trend in Credible Elections.

Box 2.2. **Protecting elections: Mauritius and Finland EMBs test integrated framework**

Undermined electoral integrity—genuine or perceived—can contribute to political crises that weaken democratic processes and institutions, trigger violent conflicts and instability, and harm governments' domestic and international legitimacy. International IDEA's Protecting Elections Project, funded by the Government of Canada, is developing an integrated framework to empower EMBs and other state and non-state actors to deal with electoral integrity risks, threats and crises. Thus far, project activities have been implemented in Finland and Mauritius.[1]

Recognizing the importance of electoral integrity, Mauritius was the first country to join the project in November 2023. For International IDEA, a partnership with the Office of the Electoral Commissioner (OEC) was an opportunity to pilot its resources with an EMB that has a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience and is looking for ways to strengthen its capacity to protect electoral integrity. For the OEC, this was an opportunity to get early access to cutting-edge resources and capacity development opportunities and to reinforce its global leadership in innovation of this kind. Furthermore, the engagement was valuable because the country was heading towards general elections in 2024. The exchanges, workshops and training implemented as part of the project fulfilled the expectations of both partners. The OEC and other state agencies pointed out how their engagement in the project has already led to improved knowledge and practices concerning risk management, resilience building and crisis management in elections. Moreover, the project provided an impetus for improved inter-agency collaboration. Competent feedback and an evidence base are crucial for International IDEA to perfect the project's resources and methodologies.

Although the project in Finland is at an early stage, the Ministry of Justice—responsible for organizing elections—has already indicated that the project is relevant for protecting electoral integrity in the country. This is particularly important because the GSoD reports constantly remind us that there should be no complacency about electoral integrity in mature democracies. With the engagement of countries from Asia and the Pacific and Latin America regions, the project will ensure that challenges and experiences from diverse contexts are embedded in the framework.

[1] At the time of publication, partnerships were being pursued with Panama and Sri Lanka as well.

Amid a global pattern of decline in Credible Elections, a few countries stand out. Past elections in Serbia have been tainted by excessive incumbency advantages, but the 2023 election was notably worse in several respects. For the first time, the level of electoral manipulation extended to voting day itself (Milačić 2024), and election observers reported instances of vote buying and ballot-box stuffing (OSCE/ODIHR 2024).

For different reasons, Guatemala also stands apart from the trends. It is an ambiguous case, in which there has been a significant decline in the Credible Elections index, but the final outcome of the 2023 election was that the person who received the most votes (Bernardo Arévalo) took office (Schwartz 2024). One of the main features of the Guatemalan process that illustrates a global trend is the judicialization of elections. Prosecutions and court challenges were a regular feature of this electoral process. President Arévalo and his party faced investigation by prosecutors, attempts to have his candidacy invalidated

and later attempts to prevent him from taking office. Ultimately, a combination of popular mobilization, international pressure and the use of writs of amparo by Arévalo's supporters ensured that he would be sworn in as president (for more information on writs of amparo and their application in Guatemala see Kurtenbach, Reder and Ripplinger 2024).

Box 2.3. **2024 election in Senegal: A story of resilient countervailing institutions**[1]

The 2024 election in Senegal highlighted a few important pressure points in the country's democracy: (a) the independence of trial courts and prosecutors; (b) the independence of the Constitutional Council and the National Autonomous Electoral Commission; and (c) respect for democratic norms on the part of the head of state.

Uncertainty about the election began early on with Macky Sall's flirtation with running for a third term as president (including a long-running refusal to publicly rule it out), despite the apparent conflict with the term limits established by the Constitution (Négoce 2023b). Candidate eligibility became a live political issue after 2021, when the third-place finisher in the 2019 presidential election, Ousmane Sonko, was charged with crimes for which a conviction would have disqualified him from running for president (Africanews and AFP 2023). Sonko was eventually convicted twice in 2023, and his supporters frequently clashed with police at pivotal moments in his prosecutions, leading to several deaths (France 24 2021; Négoce 2023a).

On 20 January 2024, following a presidential decree setting the election date for 25 February, the Constitutional Council published the list of candidates for the presidency. The list was the longest in Senegalese history, with a full 20 candidates. However, two potential candidates who had been expected to mount serious challenges to the ruling Benno Bokk Yaakaar coalition's candidate, Prime Minister Amadou Ba, were excluded from the list—Karim Wade (excluded on the basis of evidence that he had not renounced his French citizenship in time) and Mr Sonko (Le Monde and AFP 2024). In a restive political context, President Sall announced on 3 February that the elections would not take place as planned (France 24 2024a). He referenced the ongoing controversy over candidate eligibility as a reason for the delay. However, it was not clear that he had the constitutional authority to act in this manner.

On 6 February, in a chaotic session that involved the forcible removal of opposition lawmakers, the National Assembly passed a constitutional amendment allowing a delay in holding elections and set a new election date of 15 December (Berthaud-Clair 2024). Crucially, the Constitutional Council declared the postponement unconstitutional and urged authorities to hold elections as soon as possible (France 24 2024b). Amid the political turmoil that followed the postponement, however, parliament passed an amnesty law proposed by President Sall. Although the law enabled the release of hundreds of opposition members, including Mr Sonko and his party's new presidential candidate, Bassirou Faye, international and civil society organizations (CSOs) warned that the law could grant impunity to the officials accused of having used excessive force against protesters (Ngom and Ollivier 2024; Human Rights Watch 2024b).

On 24 March Senegal elected Mr Faye as Senegal's next president (at 44, the youngest elected president in Africa) in a competitive election that was deemed free and fair by international observers and had a turnout of 61.3 per cent (Idrac 2024). In the end, the election is remembered not only for its tumultuous lead-up but also for the resilience of the Senegalese people (notably its youth), the judicial system that defended democratic principles amid a very serious institutional crisis and the independence demonstrated by the EMB.

[1] The 2023 GSoD report defined countervailing institutions as the set of governmental and non-governmental institutions that balance the distribution of power between the branches of government and ensure that popular priorities regularly and consistently feature in decision making. They encompass what are traditionally understood as checks and balances within the formal structures of government, but they also include myriad organizations, institutions and popular movements that act to protect equal access to and public control of decision making, such as civil society and other political institutions (ombuds offices, anti-corruption commissions, EMBs, ethics bodies, etc.).
This box is adapted from Hudson, A., 'How to make sense of the electoral situation in Senegal', International IDEA, Democracy Notes blog, 1 March 2024, <https://www.idea.int/blog/how-make-sense-electoral-situation-senegal>, accessed 16 July 2024.

2.2.2. **Free Political Parties**

The Free Political Parties index aggregates indicators that measure the extent to which political parties are free to form and campaign for political office.

Given the ways in which some incumbents may seek to remain in power by restricting the space in which opposition parties can operate, particular attention should also be paid to the Free Political Parties index. Only five countries improved from 2018 to 2023, while 23 declined (13 per cent of the countries covered). Most of the countries with declines are in the low-performing range (below 0.4/1), as already-dire situations worsened further in places such as Afghanistan, Belarus, Myanmar and Nicaragua. However, there were also declines in this index in mid-range-performing countries such as El Salvador and Guatemala.

As democracy has been aphoristically defined as 'a system in which parties lose elections' (Przeworski 1991: 10), declines in Free Political Parties indicate fundamental challenges to the kind of free competition necessary for the people to control decision making and decision makers. For example, Comoros began to see declines in the indicators of Free Political Parties in 2018. That year saw both a constitutional reform that ended a system that rotated the presidency across the major islands that make up the country and arrests of opposition politicians (Massey 2020). Since then, there have been sharp declines in several of the indicators aggregated in the Free Political Parties index, such as multiparty elections, opposition party autonomy, the right to organize parties and barriers to party formation (Coppedge et al. 2024; Freedom House 2024; Skaaning, Gerring and Bartusevičius 2015). Both the 2020 and 2024 elections were marred by accusations of fraud and by opposition boycotts (Massey 2020; Reuters 2024b). The kind of boycotts and legal challenges now common in Comoros are taken up in a broader context in Part 2 of this report.

2.2.3. **Effective Parliament**

The Effective Parliament index aggregates indicators that measure the extent to which the legislature is capable of overseeing the executive.

Threats to institutions that check executive power were a major focus in last year's report (International IDEA 2023i), and declines in one of the key indices in that analysis, Effective Parliament, continued in 2023. Now, 32 countries (18 per cent) have declined relative to 2018, while only 12 have improved. One third of the declining countries were cases where coups d'état or other catastrophes deprived the country of a functioning parliament altogether (including in Afghanistan and Haiti). Another half of these countries are mid-range performers, including Botswana, Greece and Nepal. The remaining five countries are (or recently were) in the high-performing range: Cabo Verde, Japan, Peru, Portugal and South Korea.

The decline in Effective Parliament in Greece can be traced in part to a spyware scandal that implicated the government in targeting journalists and politicians, including an opposition party leader, a government minister and the chief of the

armed services, with advanced spyware (Amnesty International 2023). In 2024 the European Parliament adopted a resolution expressing 'grave concerns about very serious threats to democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights' in Greece, referring specifically to spyware, media freedom, police violence and checks and balances. The European Parliament also flagged concerns about the alleged lack of impartiality in a parliamentary inquiry into the Tempi train disaster, which resulted in dozens of deaths in February 2023. There are also questions related to the Greek Parliament's 'refusal to conduct an investigation into two former ministers for transport' in relation to the disaster, despite a request by the EU public prosecutor (European Parliament 2024).

2.3. **RIGHTS**

In the GSoD Indices, Rights is an aggregate measure of a fair legal system, respect for civil liberties, the extent to which the material and social supports of democracy are available and the degree to which political and social equality between social groups and genders is realized.

As radical uncertainty forces leaders to grapple with new crises and contexts, many attempt to control the situation by restricting people's rights.

As radical uncertainty forces leaders to grapple with new crises and contexts, many attempt to control the situation by restricting people's rights. Compared with five years earlier, declines were most common in Economic Equality and Freedom of Expression, impacting 38 countries each (22 per cent). Advances were most common in Freedom of Expression, where 17 countries (10 per cent) saw progress. Gains in Access to Justice and Economic Equality are similarly notable, impacting 16 countries each (8 per cent) (see Figure 2.8).

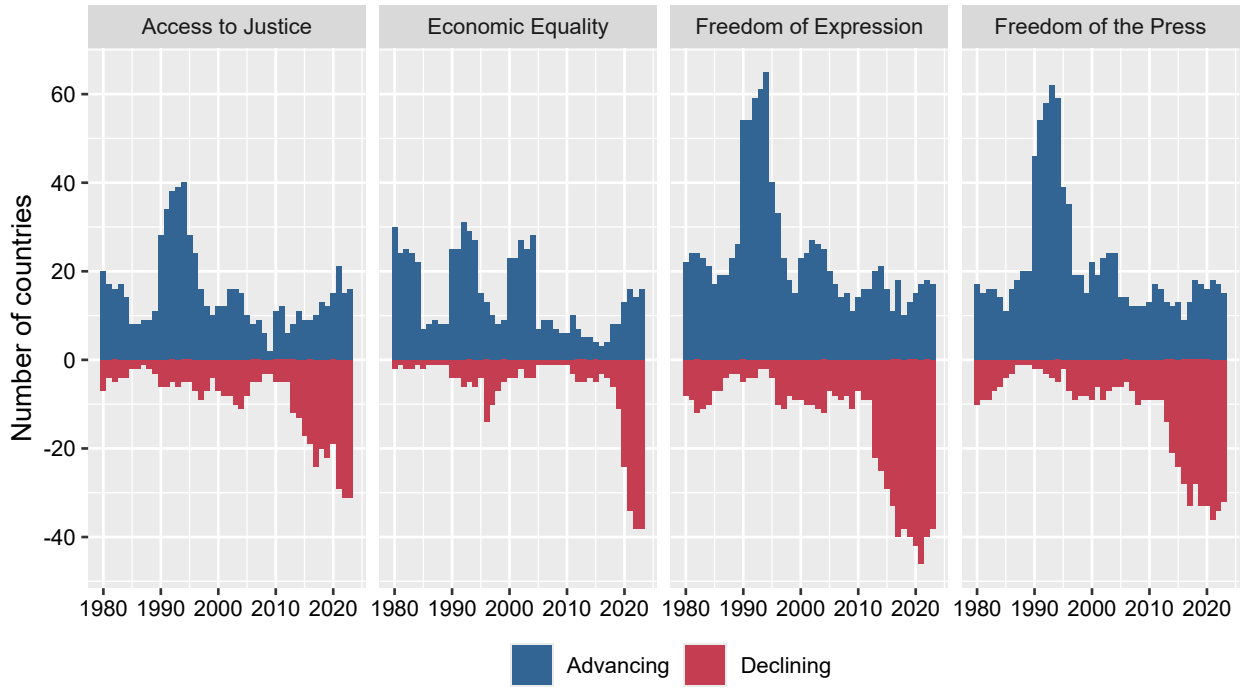
Most of the countries that declined at the aggregate level were already low-performing (Afghanistan, Belarus, El Salvador and Myanmar). Only two countries experienced gains (the Maldives and Somalia). It is difficult to comprehend the declines in Rights without considering violent conflict, the occurrence of which drives declines in this category by limiting people's ability to safely exercise their rights and often by prompting authorities to impose restrictions on rights. In extreme contexts such as low-performing Afghanistan, Myanmar (State Administration Council) and Sudan and mid-range-performing Israel, for example, authorities have restricted the rights of journalists to operate freely (or at all), as well as people's right to assemble and move about (Endeshaw 2023; Sharon 2023).

In multiple Latin American countries, public security challenges have recently been met with heavy-handed state responses, which have—in some cases—included allegations of human rights abuses (Roy and Cheatham 2023). El Salvador is one of the clearest examples. While its homicide rate is now the second-lowest in the western hemisphere (after Canada), the policies that have facilitated this drop in violence (such as amendments to the law that undermine the presumption of innocence and the right to a defence) have led to hundreds of enforced disappearances, thousands of arbitrary detentions

and hundreds of deaths in state custody (Amnesty International 2024; Flores-Macías 2024).

In mid-range-performing Ecuador, increasing public insecurity has also been met with harsh state responses. While the homicide rate has dropped, there have been allegations of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and a lack of due process. At the same time, extortion and kidnapping have been on the rise even as homicide declines (Human Rights Watch 2024c). Public insecurity has also occurred, however, in situations that are not marked by severe violence. In the USA, for instance, a spate of fast-spreading, student-led pro-Palestinian encampments and protests were often met with police force and arrests. Some of these events were marred by anti-Semitic incidents. The use of excessive police force was described by some advocacy organizations as 'quashing' the right to protest (Amnesty International USA 2024; International IDEA 2024i).

Figure 2.8. **Advances and declines in selected Rights indices**



2.3.1. **Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press**

The Freedom of Expression subfactor refers to the right to openly discuss political issues and express political opinions outside the mass media and to considerations of the broader information environment. The Freedom of the Press subfactor measures the extent to which the news media are diverse, honest, critical of the government and free from censorship (on the part of the government or self-imposed); it also measures independence of the media.

Some of the steepest declines in Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press were in countries marked by closed and insecure contexts, including Afghanistan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Myanmar and Nicaragua. In other higher-performing contexts, though, these rights also came under strain. Mid-range-performing Greece has struggled with academic freedom in recent years, exemplified by a law that allows for scrutiny of students displaying banners and that established a police force to help maintain order on university campuses. The law was controversial, sparking multiple protests and concerns about the undermining of free speech (CIVICUS 2021; Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs 2021). These developments have been compounded by a longer-term decline in Freedom of the Press due to the murder of a crime reporter, threats against journalists and spyware scandals (Media Freedom Rapid Response 2024). Other high-performing countries in Europe, including Italy and Slovakia, have also seen executive attempts to exert pressure on the media (Mapping Media Freedom 2023; Reporters without Borders 2024).

In Asia, mid-range-performing Kyrgyzstan stands out for a spate of recent moves that harm Freedom of Expression. These include the government's shutdown of an investigative journalism website, a slew of police raids on journalists' homes and newsrooms, and a 'foreign agents' law that impacts press freedom groups (International IDEA 2023g; International IDEA 2024a; Committee to Protect Journalists 2024b). In mid-range-performing South Korea, the government conducted raids on media outlets that reported on the president's alleged involvement in corruption. Press freedom organizations condemned the raids, demanding a stop to the intimidation and harassment of journalists (International Federation of Journalists 2023).

Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press are especially critical in electoral processes, guaranteeing that voters have the information and space to learn about and engage in electoral activities. In the months before the 2024 Mexican election, concerns expressed by many observers about press freedoms were tied to phenomena such as the leaking of the personal information of hundreds of journalists who had registered with the office of the Mexican presidency and the president's disclosure on national television of the personal cell-phone number of a journalist for *The New York Times* (Committee to Protect Journalists 2024a; International IDEA 2024b; Romero 2024). The highest-profile example of this pattern took place in Guatemala in the lead-up to the 2023 election and included targeted prosecutions of the leadership of the *El Periodico* newspaper, moves that critics say were taken in retaliation for the paper's negative coverage of the former administration (International IDEA 2023d).

Box 2.4. **Popular and expert assessments of Freedom of Expression**

The Perceptions of Democracy Survey found that people were markedly more confident about the freedom they enjoy speaking publicly than they were about other rights and institutions, the performance of political institutions or about their access to justice. In 15 of the 19 countries surveyed, at least half of respondents felt that they always or usually have this freedom. This result stands in stark contrast to expert assessments, which note long-standing declines. In some countries, the differences in popular and expert perceptions are especially notable. Experts consider Iraq, for example, to be low-performing in Freedom of Expression. Yet roughly 55 per cent of respondents expressed confidence in this freedom. Experts consider Romania and Senegal to be high-performing in Freedom of Expression, but less than half of the respondents in these countries expressed any degree of confidence. The survey also reveals important differences in how minorities feel about the freedoms they have to express their views publicly. Even in wealthy, high-performing countries such as Chile, Denmark, Lithuania and Taiwan, minorities are less confident about this right (International IDEA 2024g). The gaps between public and expert views as well as the distinct views of minority groups reinforce the need for greater and constant vigilance of democratic rights, even in contexts that have long been considered democratic strongholds.

2.3.2. **Economic Equality**

The Economic Equality index aggregates expert-coded measures of the extent to which people are excluded from political processes on the basis of economic factors, along with observational data about economic inequality.

While many of the countries that suffered from the steepest drops were low-performing (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the Central African Republic, Myanmar, Nicaragua and Qatar), mid-range performers were also impacted (Canada, France, Iceland, Mauritius, Romania and the USA). In Iceland, which declined from high-performing to mid-range-performing in the past year, a main issue has been the distribution of power by socio-economic position. In 2023 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance published its sixth report on Iceland, noting that while there were commendable improvements, there were also ongoing problems with hate speech against asylum seekers and immigrants, a lack of systematic data collection on racist or LGBTQIA+ hate crime, bullying against LGBTQIA+ students and a lack of awareness of the country's anti-discrimination legal framework. Such discrimination may impact access to employment and broader economic prosperity (ECRI 2023). In Canada, which is also mid-range-performing (having dropped from high performance between 2019 and 2020), declines may be due to reports that the wealth gap between high- and low-income households increased at the fastest pace ever in the first quarter of 2023. The wealth held by the top 20 per cent accounted for more than two thirds of net worth, compared with 2.7 per cent held by the bottom 40 per cent (Statistics Canada 2023). Despite these challenges, it is important to note that these countries continue to be home to strong democratic institutions. In particular, Mauritius remains one of the best performing countries in Africa.

2.3.3. **Access to Justice**

The Access to Justice factor denotes the extent to which the legal system is fair (i.e. citizens are not subject to arbitrary arrest or detention and have the right to be under the jurisdiction of and to seek redress from competent, independent and impartial tribunals without undue delay).

Over the past five years, the number of declines in Access to Justice was almost double the number of advances, mirroring popular perceptions about problems with judicial institutions (see Box 2.5). In its 10th report on Norway, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women praised the country for the progress made to close the gender gap in education and employment. At the same time, it raised questions about the strict evidentiary requirements for rape prosecutions and about how changes to a law on compensation for crimes might disadvantage victims of violence and abuse. These issues reflect declines related to access to justice for women, which have not recovered since a drop in 2020. Notably, however, high-performing Norway is considering a new legal aid scheme as well as a new consent-based provision on rape (United Nations Office at Geneva 2023). In Iceland, political scandals, such as the invalid sale of Íslandsbanki and the lack of charges brought against the company Samherji—accused of foreign bribery—have undermined judicial accountability (Iceland Monitor 2023; Transparency International 2024). Senegal's decline was seen in the unlawful arrests of opposition figures in 2023, an example of how Senegalese politicians can wield substantial influence over the courts (Human Rights Watch 2024a). In that case, however, the courts were able to act as countervailing institutions and were an important force in assuring a level playing field.

At the same time, the advances are also worth noting. In Chile, authorities took the initial steps to reform the national police and established a police reform commission (Human Rights Watch 2023a). Albania's advances follow ambitious reform of the justice sector, which has included legislative and institutional reforms as well as the creation of a free legal aid system and efforts to strengthen the rule of law (UNDP Albania n.d.; FIIAPP 2023).

Box 2.5. **Popular and expert assessments of Access to Justice**

The Perceptions of Democracy Survey found that people are severely dissatisfied with their access to the courts. In 18 of the 19 countries surveyed, less than half of respondents said that the courts always or often provide access to justice. Only in Denmark did a majority of respondents express confidence in the courts. Even in countries that experts assess to be high-performing—such as Chile, Italy, South Korea and the USA—the public has little faith, with less than 30 per cent of respondents in these countries expressing confidence. In India and Iraq, which experts assess as mid-range-performing and low-performing, respectively, relatively larger proportions of people feel that the courts provide access to justice. In 15 of the 19 countries surveyed, minority groups have less confidence in access to justice, and in some countries the gaps between those communities and majorities are large. In Italy, there is a 21-point difference, and in Taiwan the difference is 20 points. In the USA, minorities are 15 points more likely to say that the courts rarely or never deliver justice. The fact that these countries perform well in expert measures emphasizes the importance of both asking citizens about their experiences and disaggregating these responses by social group. Despite the high GSoD Indices scores in these countries, there are real problems with access to justice for some groups within each country (International IDEA 2024g).

2.3.4. **Gender Equality**

The Gender Equality subfactor measures power distribution by gender and female participation in civil society organizations, the ratio of female-to-male mean years of schooling and the proportion of lower-chamber legislators who are female. It also measures exclusion by gender, women's empowerment and women's political and economic rights.

While Gender Equality has not made notable improvements globally since 2018 (eight countries saw advances, and five saw declines), there have been important markers of progress. These include the passage of a bill to implement a gender quota for the lower house of parliament and state assemblies in India and a landmark bill that would guarantee extra seats for women in provincial assemblies in the Solomon Islands (Brechenmacher 2023; RNZ 2024; Solomon Islands Government 2024).

Mexico is also a noteworthy case, as it sets a high standard in terms of the range of mechanisms it has in place to ensure women's political participation. In 2024 voters chose Claudia Sheinbaum to be Mexico's first woman president. Additionally, at the time of the writing of this report, the heads of the Supreme Court and the Electoral Tribunal were both women, as were the presidents of the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies and the National Electoral Institute (INE). Building on previous amendments that had gradually introduced gender parity, a groundbreaking 2019 constitutional reform established 'parity in everything' as a permanent principle in all branches of government to guarantee women's access to politics, government and the administration of justice (Ravel 2024; Piscopo and Vázquez Correa 2023).

Although high levels of violence, particularly against women, have been an issue in this election year (INEGI 2022; Piscopo and Vázquez Correa 2023; Harrison-Cripps 2024; Calderón 2024), strong legislation and policies have facilitated the monitoring and sanctioning of gender-based political violence, including through a National Registry of Sanctioned Persons for Violence against Women in Politics and the INE's collaboration with platforms regarding digital-based political violence (INE 2024; Meta 2024).

2.4. **RULE OF LAW**

In the GSoD Indices, Rule of Law is an aggregate measure that includes assessments of the independence of the judiciary from government influence, the extent to which public administrators use their offices for personal gain, how predictable enforcement of the law is and the degree to which people are free from political violence.

Rule of Law performance around the world has been mixed in the last five years, with more countries declining than advancing. Overall, aggregate gains in Rule of Law have been most broadly distributed across Africa, followed by the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and West Asia. The majority of declining countries are found in Europe.

Box 2.6. **Repression becomes digital**

Although digital repression has become the favourite tool of authoritarian regimes, its use is not exclusive to such regimes. In recent years, democracies and autocracies alike have seen a rise in digital repression through Internet shutdowns, digital censorship, the use of spyware, disinformation and information manipulation (International IDEA 2023i). In Europe, there has been a worrying use of spyware against politicians, journalists and human rights defenders (Roussi 2023). Experts said 2023 was marked by the highest number of shutdown incidents in a single year ever (Access Now 2024). These examples highlight the need for strong legal frameworks to protect fundamental rights and, ultimately, democracy from the rise of digital repression.

At the same time, online platforms have improved the ability of individuals to reach worldwide audiences and receive an unprecedented volume of information. Nevertheless, this new online information environment is not neutral (Gibaja, Castellaro and Hammar 2024). Social media companies are governing online public spaces based on business models that do not consistently include sufficient democratic and legal safeguards for transparency, accountability and responsibility. A lack of accountability and legal gaps in content governance have been seen, for instance, with regard to dissemination of hate speech, attacks on minorities and tech-enabled gender-based violence.

The eruption of AI, including generative AI, adds complexity for democracies and the exercise of rights. On the one hand, generative AI has the capacity—for now theoretical—to alter and disrupt elections with deceptive content. Moreover, AI-based ranking algorithms used to classify social media content remain unaccountable to civil society and researchers alike. These algorithms compromise freedom of expression and access to information during elections. An already-stressed information environment is being further strained by new actors, tactics, techniques and procedures.

On the other hand, AI systems can exacerbate the reach and repressive capacity of digital repression. They lower the barrier to accessing these tools for authoritarian regimes and expand the range of possibilities these tools offer. For example, AI can make digital surveillance more intrusive and online censorship (often at a scale that makes human oversight unmanageable) more efficient and effective.

To better safeguard democracy against existing and emerging digital threats, democracies around the world must reinforce the protection of citizens' rights. This includes shielding citizens from invasive digital surveillance, making online platforms more accountable, creating safeguards for AI and adjusting data protection regimes. Examples of legislative efforts to address these issues while respecting democratic principles and human rights are scarce. That said, the EU's Digital Service Act and Artificial Intelligence Act, Brazil's Marco Civil da Internet (Brazilian Civil Rights Framework for the Internet) and Canada's Digital Charter serve as useful benchmarks. These collective efforts will be essential in maintaining democratic values and ensuring the protection of digital rights in an increasingly connected world.

The spotlight has been on the courts, as Judicial Independence and Predictable Enforcement metrics have suffered the most broadly. Absence of Corruption scores, on the other hand, have advanced the most. Notably, though, the degree of change in Absence of Corruption scores has generally been small, and most improving countries are low-range or mid-range in performance levels. Moldova experienced the steepest growth in Absence of Corruption, thanks to new policies that protect whistleblowers and clarify the competencies of anti-corruption bodies (European Commission 2023a). The USA also stands out as the only high-performing country to have seen advances, which were due to improvements in relation to measures of executive embezzlement and bribery. One example is the passage of the Foreign Extortion Prevention Act, described as 'the most important foreign bribery law in half a century' (Transparency International U.S. 2023). This law makes 'it a crime for a foreign official … to demand or accept a bribe from an

American or an American company, or from any person while in the territory of the United States, in connection with obtaining or retaining business' (Transparency International U.S. 2023). The law helps fight the demand side of bribery, invigorating the Department of Justice's global anti-corruption efforts, which previously focused only on the supply side. In addition, a court found former President Donald Trump guilty of civil fraud for artificially inflating his net worth in exchange for more favourable loan terms. He was fined millions of dollars (Bromwich and Protess 2024). Other countries that have seen advances in Absence of Corruption include Angola, Bulgaria, Kenya and the Maldives.

2.4.1. **Judicial Independence and Predictable Enforcement**

The Judicial Independence factor denotes the extent to which the courts are not subject to undue influence from the other branches of government, especially the executive. The Predictable Enforcement factor denotes the extent to which the executive and public officials enforce laws in a predictable manner.

The worst declines in Judicial Independence and Predictable Enforcement have taken place in low-performing countries such as Afghanistan, El Salvador, Myanmar and Tunisia. Tunisia's struggles were exemplified by the arbitrary dismissal of 49 magistrates (i.e. judges and prosecutors) in 2022 and a refusal to comply with a court order for their reinstatement. Instead, in 2023 the Minister of Justice opened criminal cases against the judges (Human Rights Watch 2023b). Predictable Enforcement has also suffered due to the arrests of critics of the president (Reuters 2024a).

The courts took centre stage in the context of elections. Sometimes, the courts are co-opted to support particular candidates or ensure certain electoral results. This pattern was apparent in the Americas, where prosecutors and the courts were used to try to weaken judicial independence and oversight in Guatemala (International IDEA 2024e) and Peru (ICG 2024). In Guatemala, prosecutors asked a court to strip then-President-elect Arévalo of his immunity, suggesting, on the basis of questionable evidence, that the election results could be nullified because of irregularities. The Organization of American States characterized such prosecutorial moves as a coup attempt (*El País* 2023; OAS 2023). In countries such as Indonesia and Thailand (International IDEA 2024c), constitutional courts were used to further leaders' specific agendas related to elections. In the case of Indonesia, the Constitutional Court ruled that candidates under the required age of 40 could run for the office of president or vice-president as long as they had held elected regional office. The decision allowed the former president's son to be a vice-presidential candidate in the 2024 general elections, and critics alleged that this was the former president's way of retaining influence (Widianto and Teresia 2023).

At the same time, other courts have acted to uphold the integrity of elections. In India (International IDEA 2023f), Mexico (International IDEA 2023e), Pakistan (International IDEA 2023h) and Sri Lanka (International IDEA 2023b), the courts defended electoral integrity through rulings that upheld opposition candidates' rights, including the right to free speech, the independence of EMBs and the election calendar. India stands out in this regard, as its Supreme Court issued

a ruling that affirmed the importance of an equal playing field in the run-up to elections. The Court's ruling allowed a senior opposition leader to contest the 2024 general election after a previous court judgment had sanctioned him for defamation of the prime minister. The Court ruled again in 2024 to grant the temporary release on bail of another key opposition leader so that he could participate in elections (The Wire 2024). In Part 2 of this report, we highlight the pivotal roles courts play in the peaceful resolution of election disputes.

Other countries in Asia and the Pacific have also seen significant improvements in Judicial Independence, including Fiji, the Maldives and Uzbekistan. Mongolia is also notable. In 2023 lawmakers introduced reforms (related to the appointment, tenure and removal of judges, among other issues) that will strengthen the independence of the Constitutional Court.

Important progress has also been made in European countries incentivized by the prospect of EU integration. In Ukraine, for instance, the European Commission noted a transparent and merit-based selection process for the Constitutional Court and the resumption of disciplinary proceedings against judges, among other things (European Commission 2023c). Reforms in Moldova also contributed to stronger vetting of judges and prosecutors (European Commission 2023b). Poland also stands out for reforms that strengthen judicial independence, especially by reforming the disciplinary regime for judges (European Commission 2024). Indeed, Rule of Law concerns have remained at the top of the EU's agenda, exemplified by the convening of the EU General Affairs Council in April 2024 by Belgium, which held the Presidency of the European Council at the time. The General Affairs Council discussed a set of five concrete recommendations and 42 specific actions to strengthen aspects of the rule of law (Brasseur, Pachta and Grigolo 2024).

One of the most notable examples of gains in Predictable Enforcement took place in Fiji, where the legislature took firm steps to bring to account former Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, who had come to power through a coup and then ruled (including by winning two elections) for 16 years (until 2022). After Bainimarama criticized the president for supporting the newly elected government, Fiji's Parliament suspended him from the legislature for three years (International IDEA 2023c). In another case, Bainimarama was sentenced to one year in prison for perverting the course of justice when he instructed the police not to investigate allegations of graft at a university (Nataro 2024). Another notable example is Brazil, where the courts banned former President Jair Bolsonaro from running for office until 2030, when he will be 75 years old, for making baseless claims against the country's electronic voting system (Plummer 2023).

Box 2.7. **Democratic trends in the USA**

Amid the election super-cycle year, no election is receiving as much attention internationally as the one in the United States[1]. In that context, the democratic trends in the country are also a matter of global concern. The USA experienced a period of democratic contraction from 2017 to 2021 as democratic performance deteriorated across a wide range of dimensions (International IDEA 2022). The declines related to both actions undertaken in the executive branch and the performance of Congress.

Since 2021 there have been some improvements that have enabled the country to slowly return to the levels of democratic performance it had previously experienced in some areas. For example, levels of Absence of Corruption have improved to match those seen in 2015 (the high point before the 2016 election). Access to Justice and Civic Engagement were both at least as healthy in 2023 as they were in 2015.

However, other indicators remain weaker now than they were in 2015. Credible Elections, Civil Liberties and Political Equality have not recovered to their previous levels. While Credible Elections improved in the 2022 midterms relative to the 2020 general election, the change is not enough to recover from the decline registered during the 2016 election. Elections in the USA are well run, and the votes are accurately reported. However, the level of intimidation against candidates has remained higher than pre-2016 levels (Coppedge et al. 2024). The politicization of elections has impacted public perceptions; a recent survey that International IDEA fielded in the USA found that less than half of Americans agreed that the 2020 election was free and fair (International IDEA 2024g).

The turmoil around the last two presidential elections has also taken a toll on how people think about politics more broadly. Survey research conducted by the Pew Research Center (2023) recently found that the majority of Americans feel angry and exhausted when thinking about politics, and that political debates in the country have become less respectful and less fact-based. Moreover, levels of polarization between supporters of the two major political parties have increased (Tyler and Iyengar 2023), and at least 1 in 10 Americans is open to the use of political violence (Armaly and Enders 2024).

Considering overall levels of democratic performance across the globe, the USA remains a high performer. As with all countries, however, there is considerable variation across the country in terms of the quality of democracy. For example, using a simple index of democratic quality that takes into account the fundamentals of contestation and participation (Vanhanen 2000; Pérez Sandoval 2023; Disi Pavlic 2024), Figure 2.9 illustrates that even within the same state, the level of democracy varies across congressional districts.[2] Note that in 2022, in 35 of the 435 House districts only one of the major parties put forward a candidate (Byler 2022), meaning that there is often no meaningful contestation in these districts.

Taken as a whole, the country has only partially recovered from its recent period of decline, and public attitudes towards politics and towards other Americans are cause for concern. Subnationally, other areas of concern stand out, as long-term processes and institutional choices have deprived Americans in many places of meaningful choices on the ballot.

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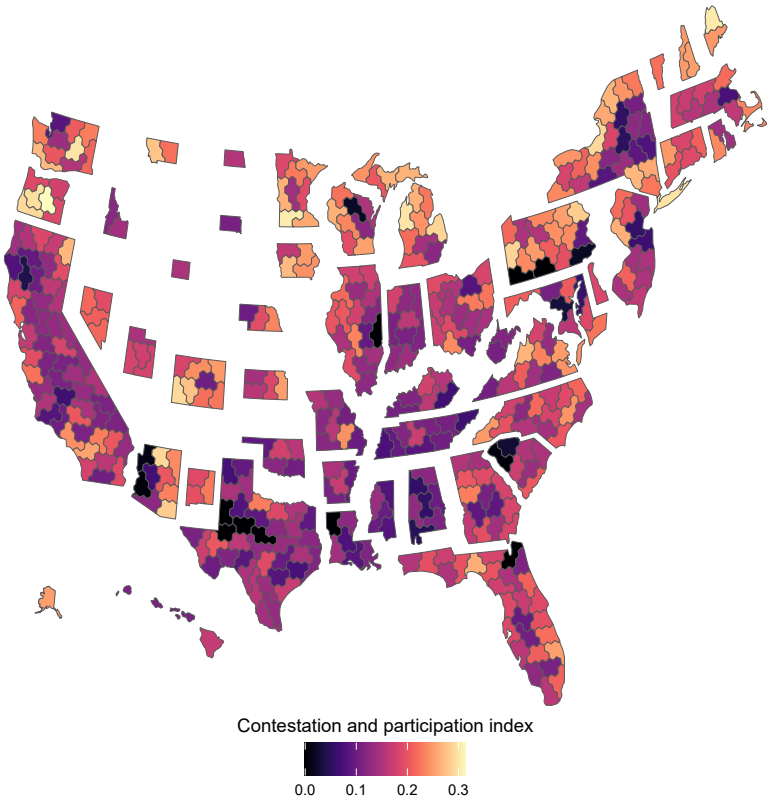
1 Please see International IDEA's forthcoming publication *Beyond Polarized Narratives: Unveiling the Nuances of the State of Democracy of the US* for more details.

2 The index multiplies the level of contestation (measured as 1 minus the winner's vote share) and participation (the percentage of the voting-age citizen population that voted). In this index, a high level of contestation (such as a near 50/50 split between the two major parties) and perfect turnout (100 per cent of the voters) would yield a score of 0.5. Congressional districts in which only one candidate received votes would have a score of 0 regardless of the level of turnout.

Box 2.7. **Democratic trends in the USA (cont.)**

Figure 2.9. **Levels of contestation and participation, by US House district in 2022**



Sources: Daily Kos Elections, 'Congressional district hexmap', <https://dkel.ec/map>, accessed 2 July 2024; MIT Election Data and Science Lab, 'U.S. House 1976–2022', Harvard Dataverse, v13, [n.d.], <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/IG0UN2>; United States Census Bureau, 'American Community Survey', 2024, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S2901>, accessed 2 July 2024.

Box 2.8. **Money in Politics and Rule of Law**

Overview

While most countries in the world have laws regulating the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns, political finance scandals and allegations that implicate national leaders, politicians and business leaders remain prevalent across all regions, including the recent cases in Colombia (Daniels 2023), Japan (Sieg 2024) and South Korea (The Korea Times 2024). Ensuring the full implementation of existing laws and closing legal loopholes continues to be a major challenge in the areas of Money in Politics and Rule of Law. At the same time, the political finance landscape is continuously evolving. It is important to ensure that political finance legislative frameworks are up to date with the exigencies of emerging issues and as future-proof as possible. For example, digitalization has changed many aspects of electoral campaigns. The amount of money spent on online advertising and services by political parties and candidates is increasing with every election. However, most political finance laws and regulations were drafted long before campaigning went digital.

Recent developments

Approximately 20 countries revised political finance laws between January 2021 and June 2023, according to International IDEA's Political Finance Database (n.d.b). While the scope of legislative revision varies across countries, one interesting case is Ireland. The Electoral Reform Act 2022 provides that online political advertisements must be clearly labelled as such and must also contain a detailed transparency notice (Ireland 2022). Online platforms must verify the identity of purchasers of political advertisements. This Act provides the legal basis to improve political finance transparency and protect electoral campaigns from hidden influences in the digital age.

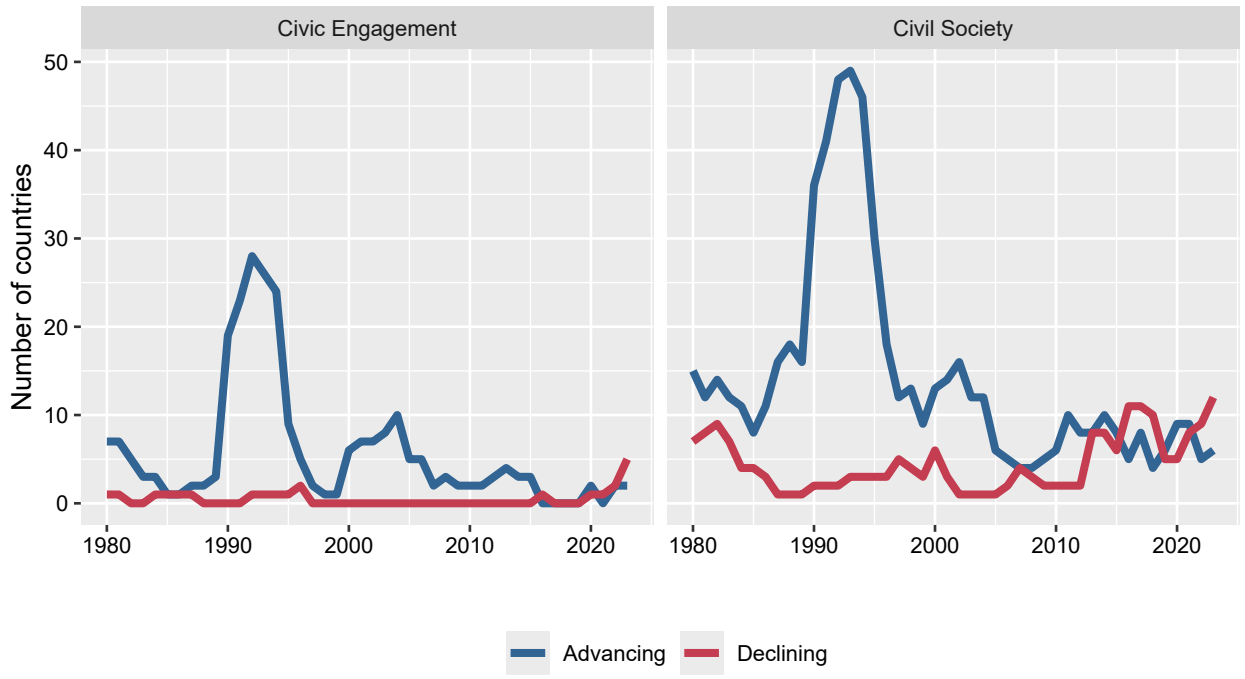
Besides legal reforms, there have been several initiatives to increase political finance transparency as well. For example, the number of countries introducing a digital political finance reporting and disclosure system has been on the rise. Such a system enables political parties and candidates to file financial reports online with the oversight agency, and the data are subsequently disclosed for better public scrutiny. Most recently, Albania launched a digital political finance reporting and disclosure platform in 2023 (Albania n.d.).

At the global level, several international organizations have adopted new anti-corruption strategies and instruments that link political finance with related regulatory issues to holistically address the influence of money in politics. For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (n.d.) revised its Recommendation on Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying and Influence in 2024 and called on the adherents to 'ensure the transparency of lobbying and influence actors' donations, contributions and services to the government, political parties and election campaigns, either directly or through third parties or natural persons hired to conduct lobbying and influence activities'. Similarly, the Open Government Partnership's 2023–2028 strategy (n.d.) features anti-corruption as one of the priority areas to strengthen democracies and prompts all members of the Partnership, including 75 countries and 150 local jurisdictions, to increase transparency around political finance, beneficial ownership and public procurement.

2.5. **PARTICIPATION**

The one area of democratic practice relatively untouched by the larger negative trend is Participation. As noted in the 2023 Global State of Democracy report (International IDEA 2023i), Participation sometimes remains quite strong even when other indicators of democratic health are at a low ebb. The contrast with the other categories of democratic performance here touches both levels and trends. As illustrated in Figure 2.10, while there are now more countries experiencing declines in the factors of Participation than are improving, the number of countries with declines is far lower than for the other categories

Figure 2.10. **Trends in selected factors of Participation (1980–2023)**



discussed above. In 2023 only five countries (3 per cent of those covered) had experienced significant declines in Civic Engagement.

2.5.1. **Electoral Participation**

Electoral Participation denotes the extent to which citizens vote in national legislative and (if applicable) executive elections, measured as the percentage of the voting-age population that cast a ballot in the election.

Electoral Participation is a key area of interest in this year's report. Trends here are difficult to assess globally, as each country has its own unique characteristics that contribute to turnout, and the issue is further complicated by compulsory voting in some countries. That said, global averages have a great deal of inertia, and the movement we see at this level is noteworthy. The average for Electoral Participation across the 173 countries covered by the GSoD Indices (measured as the percentage of the voting-age population who voted) declined from 65.2 per cent in 2008 to 55.5 per cent in 2023 (see Figure 1.1).

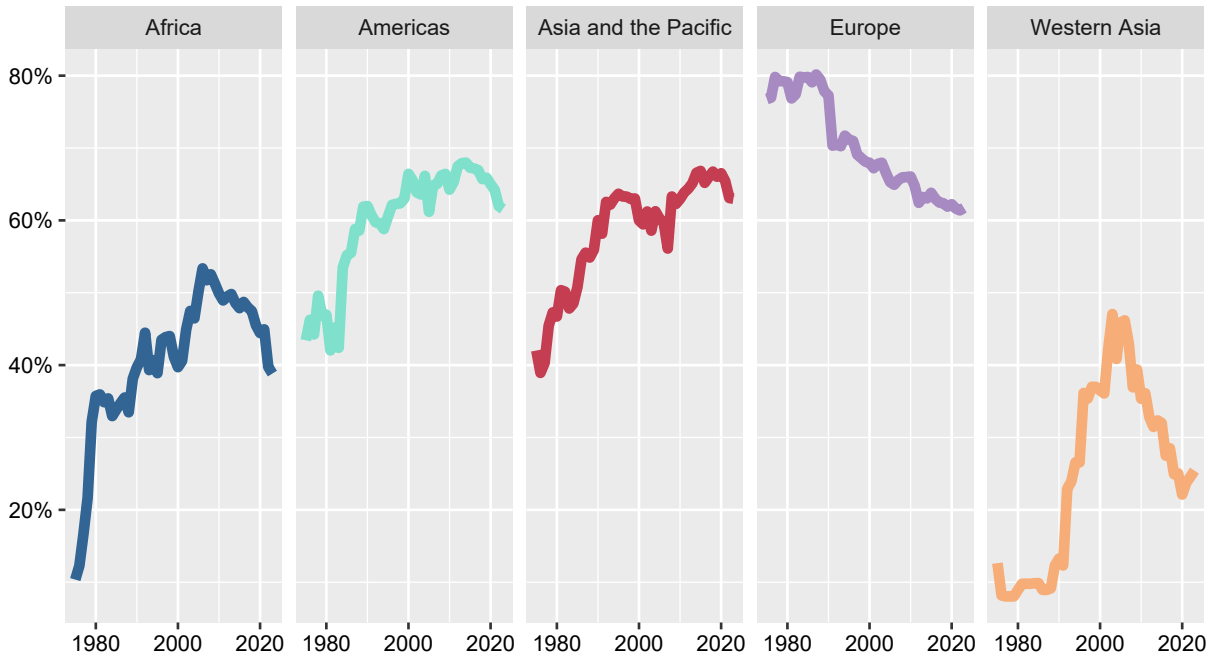
This decline has occurred despite many innovations around the world (especially since the Covid-19 pandemic) aimed at making electoral processes more accessible. For example, South Korea lowered the minimum age to vote from 19 to 18 in 2019 (*The Korea Times* 2020), while Fiji lowered the minimum age to vote in municipal elections from 21 to 18 (Kate 2023). This is a developing trend globally, with other recent examples including discussions

about reducing the voting age in Cyprus and Lithuania (municipal elections) to 16 (Cleaver 2024; Zdanytė 2024), and a court ruling in New Zealand that found the age requirement of 18 to be discriminatory (Davies 2022).

Innovations in ballot access are also being tried. South Korea provides another example here: through the early voting period, anyone can vote at any polling station in the country within or outside the constituency of registration without a specific reason to do so (중앙선거관리위원회 [National Election Commission] 2023; KBS 2024). After two decades of declining participation, voter turnout in South Korea improved (to 66 per cent) in 2020 and sustained that level in 2024 (International IDEA n.d.a). However, special voting arrangements (SVAs) such as those developed in South Korea cannot be expected to significantly increase turnout in most other cases, as the relative inconvenience of voting explains only a small part of the choice not to vote (Barrat et al. 2023).

Measured in terms of the percentage of the voting-age population that participates in elections, turnout varies widely around the world (see Figure 2.11). Countries with persistently low turnout include Kuwait (averaging 17 per cent over the past two decades), Côte d'Ivoire (23 per cent), Morocco (32 per cent) and The Gambia (32 per cent). Many countries with high average turnout have compulsory voting, but among those that do not are Malta (averaging 91 per cent over the past two decades), Indonesia (81 per cent), Sweden (81 per cent) and Timor-Leste (79 per cent). There is considerable variation

Figure 2.11. **Average levels of Electoral Participation across regions (1975–2023)**



across regions in terms of the trends in Electoral Participation, though the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe all had similar levels in 2023. The trends in every region are negative (though less so in Asia and the Pacific), and there was notably low turnout in 2023, including in Tunisia (10.6 per cent of the voting-age population), Nigeria (20.6 per cent), Switzerland (36.1 per cent) and Cyprus (38.0 per cent) (International IDEA n.d.a).

2.5.2. **Civil Society**

The Civil Society index aggregates indicators that measure the extent to which organized, voluntary, self-generating and autonomous social life is institutionally possible.

A vibrant associational life is a vital support to democracy. In addition to the related indices of Free Political Parties and Freedom of Association and Assembly, we assess the quality of the environment in which CSOs may operate in the Civil Society index. As noted above, declines in this index are not widespread. However, the declines in Civil Society we observed from 2018 to 2023 took place (for the most part) in contexts that were already very challenging and where authoritarian practices had become further entrenched. The countries with the largest declines in that period were Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russia and Tunisia.

Uganda had the smallest decline among those where the trend was significant, but developments there illustrate themes that are common in many similarly affected countries. Since 2020 the government has shut down some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and harassed others (International Federation for Human Rights 2021). Areas of conflict include civil society groups' efforts to monitor environmental protection and to offer support to the LGBTQIA+ community (Horne 2023; Nyeko 2022). Uganda is a challenging context for democracy already, and these declines will further constrain the space for CSOs.

Slovenia stands out when it comes to progress, with CIVICUS (2023) pointing to new initiatives to promote increased dialogue and cooperation between the government and civil society, specifically relating to migration policy and public broadcasting. The European Civic Forum and partners also reported a more open environment for civil society. The national NGO fund has issued new calls for proposals, in contrast to a previous restriction of funding for civil society. Accountability is also being pursued in the wake of attacks against certain activists. For example, authorities are prosecuting a case in which civil society activists were physically attacked and faced online threats (European Civic Forum and Civic Space Watch 2023).

Chapter 3

CONCLUSION, PART 1

Uncertainty can also give democratic institutions a chance to shine and demonstrate their unique ability to bring order, stability and security.

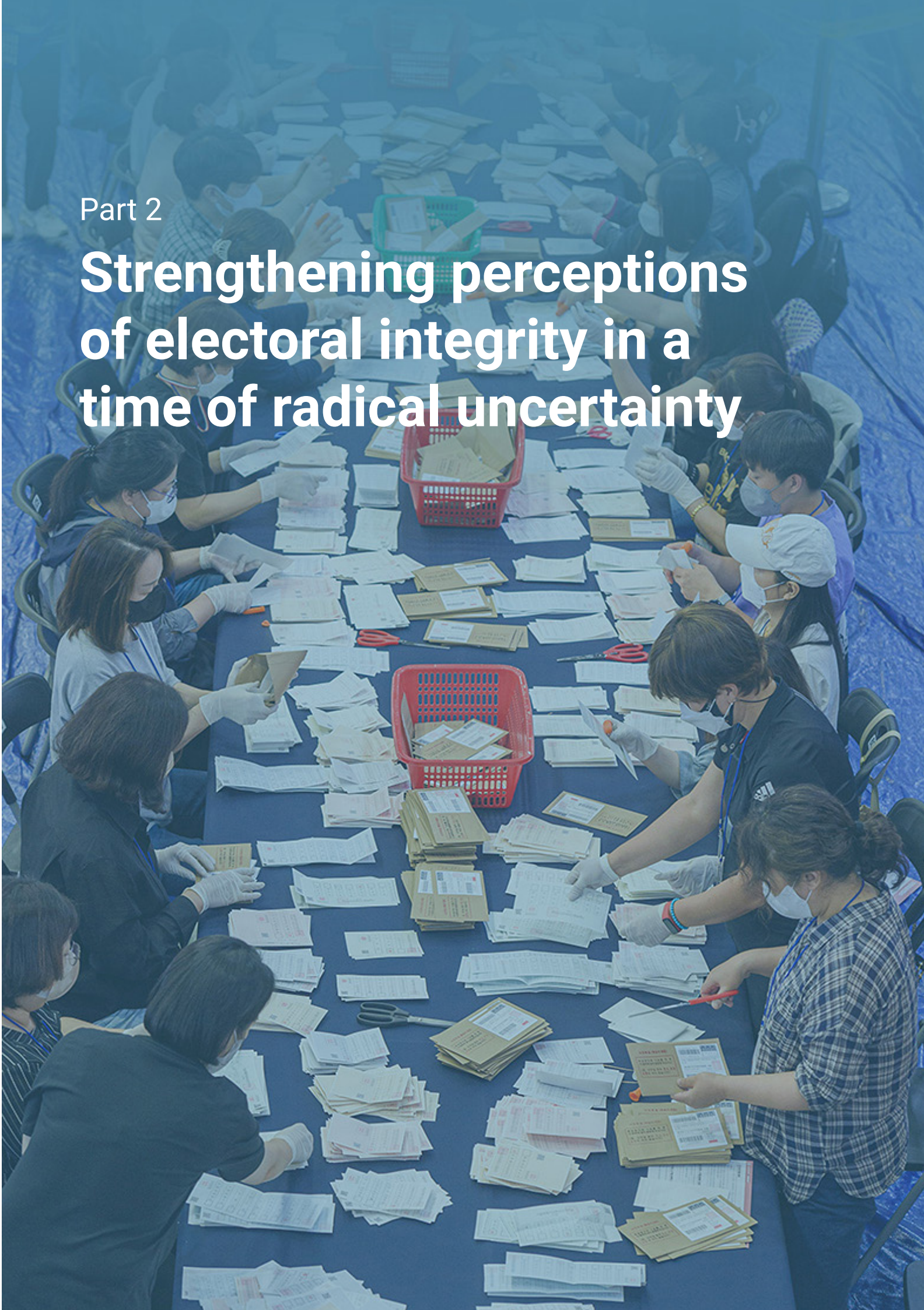
Uncertainty often evokes fear, which prompts leaders and the public to do more to exert control where they can. This pattern is seen in coups d'état in Africa, the severe curtailment of rights in the face of rising violence in Latin America and police brutality against student protesters in the USA. In Europe, an attempt to assassinate the Slovak prime minister rocked a sense of stability long taken for granted. But uncertainty can also give democratic institutions a chance to shine and demonstrate their unique ability to bring order, stability and security. In Senegal, it was those institutions that checked attempts to limit electoral competition, while in Brazil the courts were diligent in sanctioning former President Bolsonaro for his attempts to illegally maintain power.

It is also democracy's trademark openness and space for independent, innovative thinking that breeds new ideas and solutions, especially in the face of crisis. Thailand is a case in point. As growing restrictions threaten what had seemed like a democratic opening there, members of the former opposition Move Forward Party (and its successor, the People's Party) are strategizing new ways to stay active and impactful. Elsewhere, in a landmark judgment, the European Court of Human Rights recently ruled in favour of a group of senior women in Switzerland who alleged that their government had violated their right to respect for private and family life by failing to protect them from climate change. This ruling marks the first time an international court has upheld a human rights–based claim to climate protection (International IDEA 2024h).

Elections, the hallmark of democratic systems, also stand as constant beacons of hope for change. Poland's 2023 parliamentary elections exemplify this potential, having ushered in a sea change of reforms, especially with regard to the rule of law. Critically, however, the fundamental importance of elections also makes them prime targets for attack. As attempts to tarnish the legitimacy of even the most credible processes increase, it is important to investigate how to prevent, mitigate and address such challenges. It remains to be seen what the remainder of the 2024 elections super-cycle holds, but it is only democracy that offers a promise of new beginnings, even in the most uncertain of times.

Part 2

Strengthening perceptions of electoral integrity in a time of radical uncertainty



Chapter 4

THE STATE OF ELECTIONS IN 2024

The most recent Global State of Democracy Indices data reveal that several key phases of the electoral cycle are suffering from declines.

The most recent Global State of Democracy Indices data reveal that several key phases of the electoral cycle are suffering from declines. Credible Elections scores (which measure EMB independence and capacity, competition, the occurrence of fraud, government intimidation and the fairness of the legal framework) are among the most broadly declining metrics around the world. These declines are compounded by significant downturns in other factors necessary for a strong and legitimate electoral cycle, including indicators of Free Political Parties and respect for Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press. Unsurprisingly, popular perceptions of electoral integrity are also suffering. International IDEA's recent Perceptions of Democracy Survey revealed that in 11 of 19 countries surveyed, less than half of respondents expressed confidence in the previous election in their country (International IDEA 2024g). In the latest round of the World Values Survey, a strikingly low 12.6 per cent of respondents said that they have 'a great deal' of confidence in elections (Inglehart et al. 2022).

Such mistrust has led to dire outcomes, including the outright rejection of credible results, extreme levels of toxic polarization, targeted attacks against EMBs and violent protests. Such attacks have occurred even without evidence of irregularities or malfeasance, highlighting just how important public perceptions are to electoral integrity, whether the alleged irregularities or malfeasance are real or not. After all, in many ways, public faith in elections and their outcomes is all about perceptions (Akinduro 2024).

Expert assessments of electoral integrity have raised issues such as campaign finance and fair media coverage, both of which have been consistently problematic over time. Popular perceptions of elections, however, are harder to understand, largely because they may be based in part on phenomena that are well outside the electoral sphere. Some new research indicates that people's negative perceptions of electoral integrity are based in part on problems as broad as political polarization and a general mistrust of government (Kousser 2023).

While it is challenging for actors with decision-making authority (policymakers at the local, national and regional levels), donors and practitioners (EMBs and election assistance providers) to effectively address underlying grievances that are about factors that go well beyond elections, especially in the short term, it is critical to thoroughly understand all the possible drivers of public perceptions in order to design interventions around the issues over which each stakeholder has a degree of control. Such actions serve to build the electorate's trust in objectively credible electoral processes, which is critical because it is the electorate that ultimately legitimizes an election.

In the long term, targeted responses can help shore up confidence in electoral processes and reinforce the centrality of elections to democratic systems.

This part of the report addresses the issue of popular perceptions of electoral integrity by focusing on the following research questions.

- What are the main drivers of popular perceptions of electoral integrity?

- What can be done to prevent, mitigate and respond to threats that can negatively affect perceptions of electoral integrity?

While acknowledging that there are multiple drivers of public distrust of elections, including factors that are not directly related to the administration of electoral processes, this part of the report focuses narrowly on the specific ways in which EMBs (and election observers and electoral support organizations, to a lesser degree) may be able to promote public trust.

The literature review sets the stage, laying out what is known and what is less understood about how experts and the public assess electoral integrity. The following chapter describes a novel data set that contributes a new set of indicators relevant to the study of popular perceptions of electoral integrity. This data set categorizes three kinds of rejections of elections: opposition boycotts, the lack of concessions on the part of losing candidates and parties, and the filing of legal challenges. It then investigates legal challenges closely to lay out a typology of the threats to electoral integrity that actors most frequently raise as the most urgent across various phases of the electoral cycle. The part of the report closes with a set of targeted policy recommendations.

Chapter 5

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT DISPUTED ELECTIONS

At a minimum, electoral integrity can be understood to be based on two key principles: the credibility of the entire electoral cycle and the legitimacy of a set of global norms.

5.1. WHAT IS ELECTORAL INTEGRITY?

Given the wide variation in views regarding what is core to a credible election (Elklit and Svensson 1997; van Ham 2015), there is unsurprisingly no consensus on how to define electoral integrity. At a minimum, however, electoral integrity can be understood to be based on two key principles: the credibility of the entire electoral cycle (as opposed to merely voting and vote counting) and the legitimacy of a set of global norms (as articulated through international treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and others). Norris (2013: 564) articulates the concept as 'international conventions and global norms, applying universally to all countries worldwide throughout the electoral cycle, including during the pre-electoral period, the campaign, and on polling day, and its aftermath'. Practitioners, through the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security, consider political equality to be an additional core component of this concept (2012: 6). Even here, of course, it may be contentious to claim that 'global norms' are 'owned' by everyone or are universally applicable (Mutua 2000).

Additionally, the forthcoming *Model Commitments for Advancing Genuine and Credible Elections*, authored by International IDEA, the Carter Center, the National Democratic Institute and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, flesh out and operationalize these norms and guide countries in identifying where obstacles to holding fully democratic elections might lie. These commitments are tied to the international norms described above and to standards and best practices, as expressed in regional treaties and national constitutions. Together, these commitments help elucidate the global norms that inform the meaning of electoral integrity.

Despite the lack of consensus, there are several reasons why understanding electoral integrity—even broadly defined—is critical to democracy. First, while

elections are not sufficient to qualify a political system as democratic, it is well established that they are a core minimum for any democracy. As such, a flawed or farcical election is uniquely detrimental to the legitimacy of a democratic system. Indeed, countries that hold elections without a bare minimum of the enabling rights required for participation are seen as 'electoral autocracies' (Lührmann, Tannenberg and Lindberg 2018). Such environments demonstrate that countries can hold elections that do not substantively contribute to democracy. Clearly controlled electoral environments are popularly understood as little more than 'shams', evidenced recently by the severely repressed media, the lack of opposition parties and the climate of fear that marked the Belarusian and Russian elections (Komin 2024; Liubakova 2024). Conversely, 'fairly conducted and regular elections create system legitimacy' (Banducci and Karp 2003: 443).

Second, a robust concept of electoral integrity is key for reform. Practitioners and policymakers, including EMBs, election support organizations, legislators and courts, and election observation groups, must understand where the weaknesses in the electoral process are so that they can work to strengthen those activities and procedures.

5.2. **EXPERT ASSESSMENTS**

Fortunately, the knowledge base on election integrity is rich, and expert data sets provide an excellent source of information. The Electoral Integrity Project (EIP), for example, which annually surveys experts in 169 countries on a comprehensive set of questions covering 11 aspects of the electoral cycle, provides a long record of expert evaluations of electoral integrity. Since at least 2013, the EIP's Perceptions of Electoral Integrity (PEI) data set shows that campaign finance and campaign media coverage are the two weakest aspects of electoral processes around the world. Those long-standing concerns now co-exist with new ones about money spent online for campaign purposes. For example, some analyses have illustrated the need to embed digital campaigning rules within the regulatory architecture for political finance (Tham et al. 2022).

Contrary to expectations, EIP data show that vote tabulation and the announcement of results have historically been among the least problematic stages of electoral processes (Norris, Frank and Martínez i Coma 2014; Norris, Martínez i Coma and Grömping 2015; Norris et al. 2016; Norris and Grömping 2019; Garnett et al. 2023a, 2023b). Notably, however, a recent study of the PEI data set (2012–2022) found that vote counting has emerged as an area of significant decline, even though the degree of change is relatively small (James, Matlosa and Shale 2023: 327). These recent findings are important to consider, especially in comparison with the GSoD Indices data. The latter data set shows that metrics of Credible Elections, which include assessments of intentional irregularities and voter fraud, government intimidation, EMB independence and capacity, fairness of the legal framework and political

EIP data show that vote tabulation and the announcement of results have historically been among the least problematic stages of electoral processes.

competition, have been among the most broadly declining indicators of democratic performance for at least the last five years (International IDEA 2023i). Specifically, GSoD Indices data show that some of the most common problems include government intimidation or harassment of opposition candidates, intentional irregularities, declining EMB autonomy and a sense that the overall process was not free and fair.

Given the fears around election-related violence, it is somewhat surprising that it does not feature among the list of the most urgent problems for electoral integrity. Experts do consider violence to be important, and one study found that reducing the threat of violence at the polls is indeed likely to have an impact on assessments of electoral integrity (Frank and Martínez i Coma 2017). Most other studies on violence, however, focus on how it impacts voters' behaviour (as opposed to overall integrity), which is taken up below.

Somewhat in contrast to this, election observers often focus on violence (or the lack thereof) in their official reports (Matlosa 2021). Here, there are no comprehensive studies that link observer reports and expert assessments of electoral integrity. Judith Kelley's (2012) seminal work has shown, however, that there are cases in which observer recommendations do eventually contribute to improvements. She demonstrates that such cases tend to be those in which there is a desire for increased cooperation with the West, where there is domestic pressure for reform and where observers are invested in long-term follow-up and consistent engagement in and with countries. Observers' ability to deter fraud in some cases is also shown through case studies (Asunka et al. 2019). Negative statements in election observer reports are an additional sign of flawed electoral processes, at both the local and international levels (Kelley 2012). However, in contrast to the positive effects of established international observation practices, there is growing concern about fake electoral observation missions. These are used to advance the interests of certain political actors and do not adhere to the common standards and good practice of international election observation, as defined in key documents such as the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, adopted in 2005 (National Democratic Institute 2005). Examples of biased missions include the 2023 local and regional elections in occupied territories of Ukraine, the 2022 referendum in occupied territories of Ukraine and the 2021 parliamentary elections in Crimea (European Platform for Democratic Elections n.d.). An in-depth study of observation missions, however, is outside the scope of the present study.

5.3. **POPULAR PERCEPTIONS**

In recent years, scholars have broadened the scope of their work to include popular perceptions of electoral integrity, responding to a serious vacuum in the knowledge base (Pearce Laanela 2023). Understanding how the public perceives and considers elections is important for several reasons. First, low confidence in elections can lead to decreased turnout (Birch 2010).

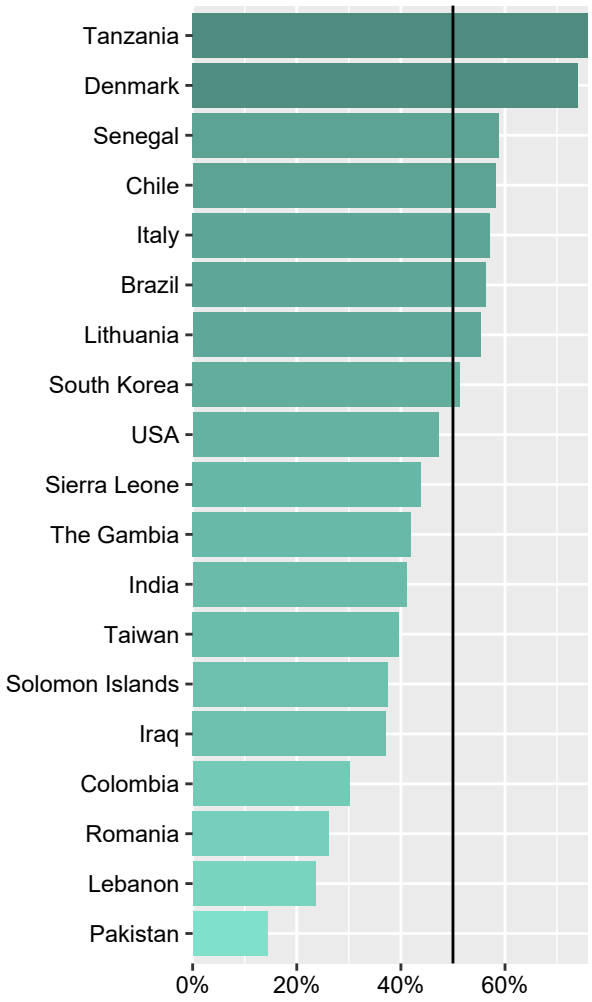
Second, it is voters who ultimately legitimize elections and the resulting elected government; their opinions are thus crucial for political stability, the popular endorsement of a legitimate set of elected leaders and the establishment of the resulting institutions of democratic governance. McAllister and White (2011: 665) explain, 'The concept of "fairness" is a qualitative judgment that voters themselves are in an ideal position to make … . It is voters who experience the election campaign, directly through contact with election candidates and parties, and indirectly through the mass media. Unlike outside observers, they cast a ballot and therefore have a degree of "ownership" over the election process and its outcome' and a direct perception of how credibly, freely and fairly that process has unfolded. People's beliefs in and support for certain platforms and parties give them a personal stake in outcomes and processes. In fact, scholars have made significant advances in understanding how partisanship contributes to popular evaluations, with clear findings that a 'winner's effect' plays a strong role in popular perceptions of fairness, as voters' assessments of elections are tinged by the success (or failure) of the party they supported (Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn 2008; Ansolabehere and Persily 2008; Wilson and Brewer 2013; Bowler et al. 2015; Sances and Stewart 2015; Shah 2015).

Third, elections are pivotal to citizens' trust in their country's broader political system. When there are doubts about electoral integrity, people (and especially supporters of the losing party) are more likely to doubt the fairness of an election and the legitimacy of its outcome, which results in lower levels of trust (Mauk 2022). In unfair electoral contexts, voters' mistrust extends to political parties, the legislature and government (McAllister and White 2011). Indeed, the potential of cracks in perceptions of electoral integrity to trigger a domino effect which leads to doubts about the legitimacy of the broader democratic model of governance is perhaps the most important reason for focused attention on the drivers of electoral integrity.

Recent evidence suggests cause for concern. International IDEA's Perceptions of Democracy Survey showed that in 11 of the 19 countries surveyed, less than half of the respondents said that the most recent elections in their countries were free and fair (see Figure 5.1). In some cases, the percentage of the respondents who agreed with expert assessments was quite low (see Figure 5.2). Marginalized communities, including self-identified minorities and those within the lowest income groups, were more sceptical than others (see Figure 5.3) (International IDEA 2024g). The survey results echo others' work, including a study in the USA which found that women and minorities were less likely to think that elections were fair. Women of colour were 'much less likely than others to see officials and vote counts as fair' (Bowler et al. 2015: 6).

Scholarship demonstrates that public perceptions about elections may be driven by a wide range of factors, some of which are clearly outside the realm of election administration. A recent survey in the context of the USA showed that people with lower levels of education and who are younger are more likely to mistrust elections. Those who earn more are more likely to trust elections (Kousser 2023). In the US context, there is also evidence that

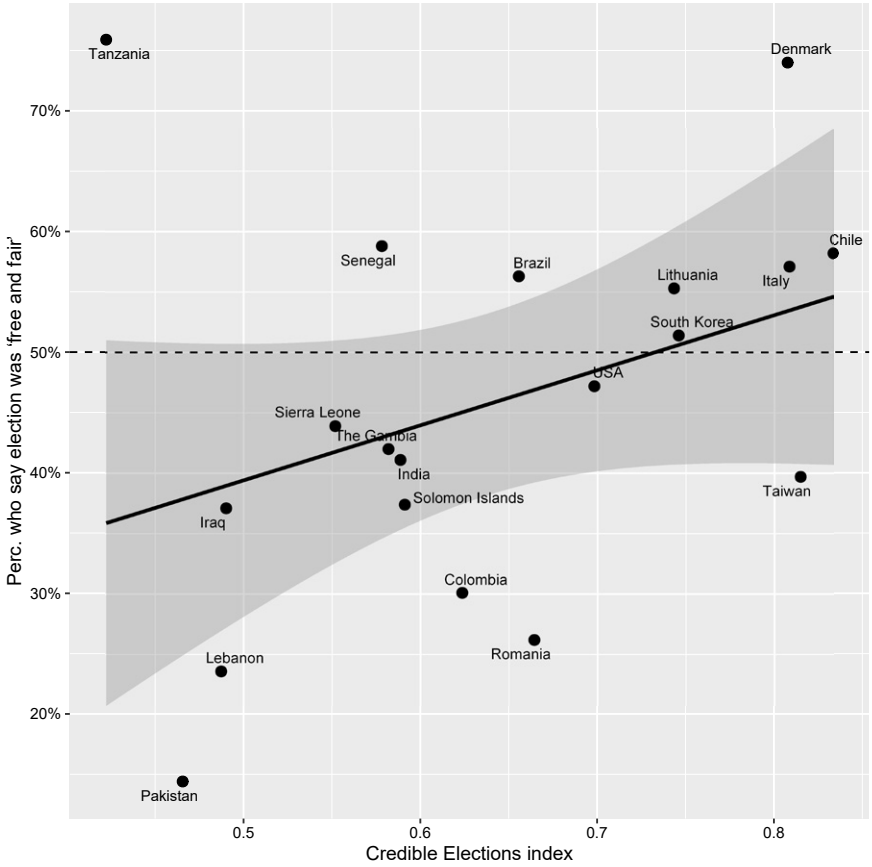
Figure 5.1. **Share of people who say that the most recent election in their country was free and fair**



Source: International IDEA, *Perceptions of Democracy: A Survey about How People Assess Democracy around the World* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.24>.

white Americans who believe they (and others in this racial category) are the victims of discrimination are less likely to trust elections (Filindra, Kaplan and Manning 2024). In the context of Brazil, a 2023 study found that right-wing ideology and exposure to voter fraud allegations are correlated with higher levels of mistrust, raising concerns about the influence of political elites who spread disinformation for their own political ends (Rossini, Mont'Alverne and Kalogeropoulos 2023). In the United Kingdom, a 2021 study found that declining levels of political trust were tied to the perception that politicians were out for themselves rather than committed to the best interest of the country (Quilter-Pinner et al. 2021). Clearly, many of these drivers are outside the ambit of EMBs or other agencies involved in elections.

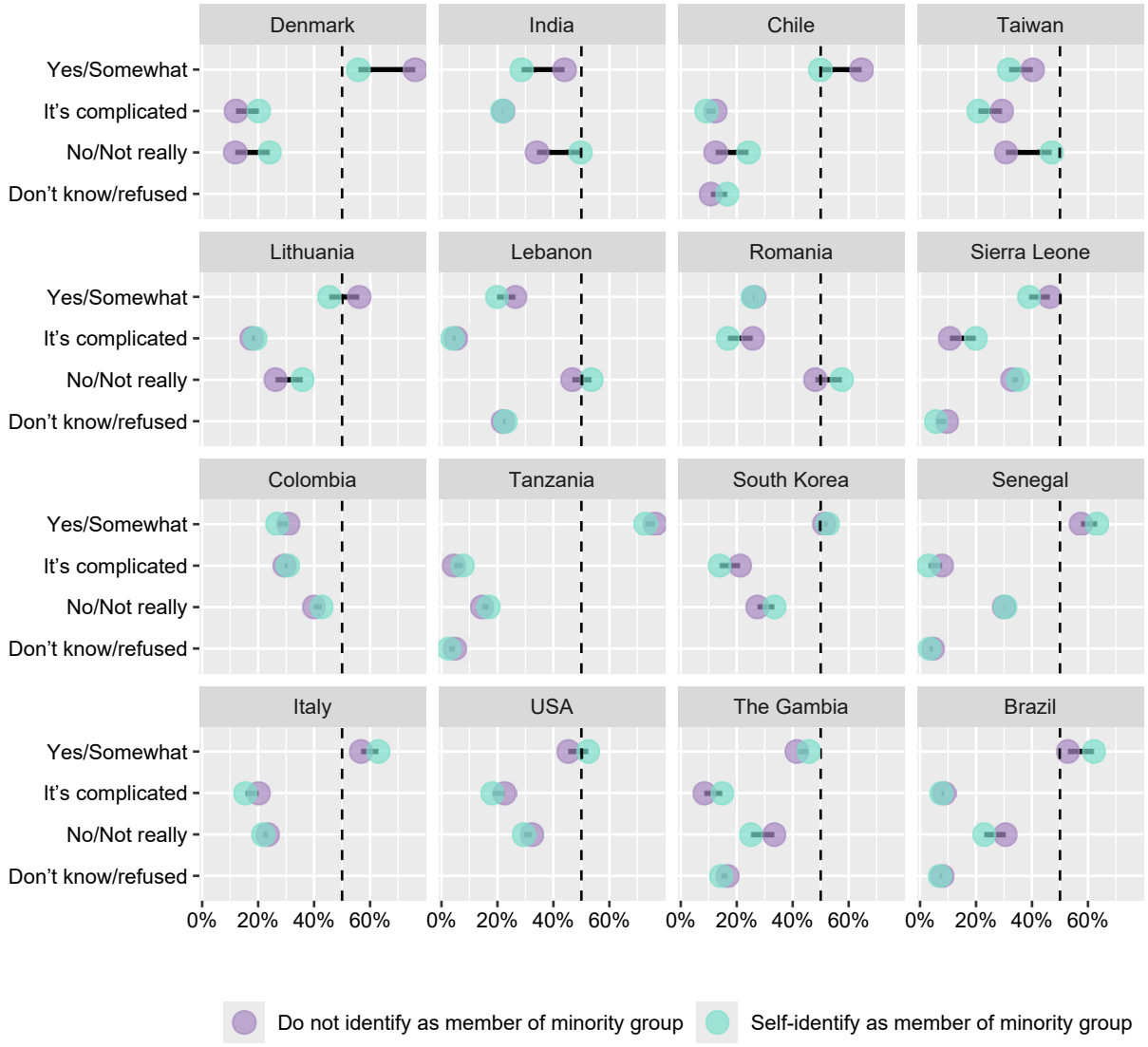
Figure 5.2. **Comparison of expert and popular evaluations of elections**



Source: International IDEA, *Perceptions of Democracy: A Survey about How People Assess Democracy around the World* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.24>.

Some factors, however, are more directly related to the work of those who administer and make decisions about how elections are run. There is evidence that people's confidence in electoral integrity is tied to the 'rules of the game'. Birch (2008) demonstrates, for example, that elections utilizing proportional representation systems and public funding options are associated with higher public confidence. In the USA, distrust of elections is driven partly by concerns about postal voting, ineligible voters casting ballots and eligible voters being kept away from the polls because of strict voter identification laws (Kousser 2023). People also pay attention to the practical details of election administration. In their study, Bowler et al. (2015: 8) found that people expressed more confidence about the fairness of an election in US states that had high scores in administrative quality, explaining that 'technical improvements to electoral administration can improve voter perceptions of elections being fair'. Examples of technical improvements include shorter wait times for voting, the availability of online registration, disability-related voting accommodations and the provision of tools that enable voters to look up election-related information, among other things. Bowler et al.'s findings mirror

Figure 5.3. **Evaluation of free and fair elections, comparing minority and majority groups**



Source: International IDEA, *Perceptions of Democracy: A Survey about How People Assess Democracy around the World* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.24>.

other work which has found that EMBs contribute to popular confidence in elections (Debrah, Asante and Gyimah-Boadi 2010; Kerr 2013).

Popular perceptions of electoral integrity may also be affected by innovations such as electronic voting, but the impact is dependent on the underlying context. Studies have found that while there are cases in which electronic voting raises specific concerns (e.g. ballot secrecy and manipulation of vote counting or results tabulation), people's primary concerns related to voting technology are usability, verifiability and the privacy and security of the technology (Alvarez et al. 2013; Avgerou et al. 2007; Zhu, Azizah and Hsiao

2021). Trust in electronic systems is itself tied to people's confidence in the underlying environment. If voters do not trust the authorities responsible for elections or are doubtful about information and communication technology, for example, even the most secure, usable, verifiable and privacy-respecting machines will not be embraced.

Given the technical complexity involved in the adoption of electronic voting, partnerships between EMBs and civil society can be important, as voters may delegate their trust to CSOs and experts to verify systems that are beyond their own capacities to investigate. A good example of this occurred in Switzerland in 2019, when the source code for a new Swiss Post electronic voting system was published, and researchers were able to uncover vulnerabilities, allowing the code to be revised before the vulnerability could be exploited (Swiss Federal Chancellery 2019). This kind of three-party interaction between the voter, an expert group and the EMB is an example of delegated trust (Warren 1999), in which trust in those with the capacity to verify the integrity of the system can act as a guarantor for the EMB. Even where voting takes place through an electronic system, the production of a paper record can reassure voters and facilitate a manual recount in case verification of the electronic record is required (Wolf, Nackerdien and Tuccinardi 2011). In the US context, the use of paper ballots was credited with affirming the accuracy of the 2020 election (Tisler and Baker 2022). In Namibia, the EMB decided to revert to paper ballots in the 2024 elections, in part due to the Supreme Court's prior ruling that if electronic voting machines were used, a verifiable paper trail would be necessary.

Of course, people also evaluate the credibility of elections based on their own experiences of the electoral process as well as some second-hand information (Kerr 2018). In his study of Nigerian voters' perceptions of electoral integrity, Kerr (2018: 11) found that negative election day experiences were strongly associated with perceptions of electoral integrity. Specifically, voters who had experiences with ineffective card readers and malfunctioning machines were less willing to express the highest degree of confidence in the integrity of the vote count and less willing to consider the electoral process free and fair. On the other hand, it is important to note that there is evidence that personal experience with fraud or manipulation does not consistently have a significant effect on perceptions of integrity (Shah 2015; Wellman, Hyde and Hall 2018). In some cases, voters may even witness or expect fraud without subsequent impacts on their assessments (Schedler 1999). The role of partisan identity (see below) may explain this finding.

A portion of the second-hand information that Kerr refers to may come from election observers. The assumption is that the public will view elections as flawed if election observers report problems. Hyde and Marinov (2014) assert that this is particularly the case when accurate and credible information is limited. In his work in Nigeria, Kerr (2018) found that voters tend to express greater confidence in national elections when they witness the presence of international observers. When they witness only domestic observers, they are more likely to express confidence in the integrity of elections at their polling

stations. Another more recent study, however, found that observer reports can have effects that are in opposition to what they intend (Benstead, Kao and Lust 2020). In some contexts, what is perceived as Western influence on domestic politics is resented, and people adjust their evaluations to be in opposition to observer reports. This study found that positive statements from international observers in Jordan, for example, induced some citizens to make statements about the 2013 elections that were more negative than they otherwise would have made because they were influenced by their pre-existing negative beliefs that foreign governments were intervening in their country. The fact that they did not like the source of the positive assessment of the elections made them take a more negative view of it (Benstead, Kao and Lust 2020).

Finally, it is important to consider the influence of violence on public perceptions. Unfortunately, the scholarly literature on the specific connection between the occurrence of violence and people's opinions of electoral integrity is limited. One study showed that the use of violence decreased the public's support for candidates who make use of it, but it did not show a link between violence and overall integrity (Rosenzweig 2021). Another study showed that violence reduces turnout, but the question of perceptions of integrity were not taken up (Bratton 2008). One recent study has made inroads, showing that in polarized contexts where there is violence, people with strong partisan identities tend to assess elections as being more free and fair if co-partisans were involved in the violence (Daxecker and Fjelde 2022). The sample size here is small, and results are thus difficult to generalize beyond this case.

In sum, people's perceptions of electoral integrity are driven by a wide range of factors. These include their trust in political leaders, exposure to fraud allegations, trust in special voting arrangements and their own (and their peers') experience at polling stations. The rules also matter, and factors such as public funding options and proportional representation systems are correlated with higher levels of confidence.

5.4. **THE CHANGING CONTEXT**

The wealth of scholarship cited in this report provides a critical baseline of knowledge about election integrity, but there are now new factors to consider. In addition to long-standing threats to integrity (such as bias in media coverage and weak campaign finance regulations), electoral processes today face a new array of risks, ranging from the practical consequences of severe weather events (International IDEA 2024j) to elaborate and hard-to-mitigate cyberattacks, the unregulated use and misuse of AI technology, disinformation campaigns and the rise of fake electoral observation missions (International IDEA 2024g; European Platform for Democratic Elections n.d.). These are in addition to the broader system-level drivers mentioned above, including declining levels of trust in government, disillusionment with political elites, etc.

International IDEA lists eight categories of potential threats to electoral integrity to reflect this context. These threats are undemocratic electoral reforms, electoral management and dispute resolution malfunctions, electoral malpractices (fraud and corruption), violence, malicious online actions, lack of trust and negative public perceptions (without substantiation), environmental and man-made disasters, and gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence. Depending on the context, some threats may be more or less relevant at various times.

Perhaps most urgently, public faith in electoral integrity today is threatened by false narratives—often fuelled by opportunistic politicians and often without evidence—that seek to discredit elections. Such threats can have dire impacts on public trust. These narratives have been most clearly evident in Brazil and the USA, but they have also impacted countries such as France (Adler and Thakur 2021) and India (Anand 2024).

Public faith in electoral integrity today is threatened by false narratives that seek to discredit elections.

Disinformation in particular causes significant worry, but there is little systematic data to demonstrate the severity of impact on voters, their behaviour and resulting perceptions. Still, advances in 'pre-bunking', which is understood as 'inoculating' people against disinformation so that they are better able to identify it, are important. While some studies have proven the benefits of pre-bunking, others say that its effects are much better in labs than in real-life settings (Buluc et al. 2023; Traberg, Roozenbeek and van der Linden 2022). There have also been important developments in the way voting takes place. SVAs, which include early voting, mobile ballot boxes, postal voting, proxy voting and telephone voting, have expanded the options people have to cast their ballots (International IDEA 2021). It will be important for researchers to study how the use of SVAs impacts both public and expert perceptions of electoral integrity.

Given this context, what drives people to mistrust their respective country's election results and doubt the credibility of electoral processes, even without strong proof of malfeasance or error? What specific events, acts or issues do people consider to be most important when assessing the credibility of elections in their own country?

Chapter 6

DISPUTED ELECTIONS METHODOLOGY

The narratives referenced in the chapter above have concrete manifestations in the ways in which parties and candidates deal with the outcomes of elections and, from there, in the ways in which voters perceive and understand or evaluate the integrity of an election. The ideal data to use in analysing public perceptions of electoral integrity would, of course, be survey data. However, the data of this kind that are available have limited coverage, and there are often significant time lags in publication. An alternative measurement approach is to leverage the known connections between the public statements and actions of political parties and candidates and public perceptions, measuring the former as an incomplete (but still helpful) indicator of the latter.

In the analysis that follows, we investigate elections that have been the subject of political or legal disputes, defined here as elections marked by (a) calls for or actual boycotts of an election by political parties; (b) the refusal to concede on the part of any losing candidate or party regardless of how minor the party is; and (c) court cases that allege that elections were flawed. Though the cases examined were filed by different actors, they (mainly CSOs and political parties and candidates) all enjoy a direct connection with the public, either because they represent significant portions of the public or because they are mandated to work in the public interest, or because they are members of the public (Costello et al. 2021; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016; Kopecký and Mudde 2003; Lane and Ersson 1997; McLaverty 2002). This is particularly the case with parties and candidates, from whom the public takes cues regarding what to care about (Arceneaux 2008; Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013; Pyeatt and Yanus 2016; Zaller 1990). Given this connection between political elites and the public, the grounds upon which election-related cases are filed represent at least a core set of the issues people (and their leaders) prioritize when considering electoral integrity. It is important to note that legal challenges are not the only sign that an election result or process is in dispute. Indeed, protests and violence can be important signs of public disagreement. However, violence has been studied slightly apart from electoral integrity to this point and is not included in most data sets that cover electoral integrity.

The following analysis is based on an original data set that covers all national elections that took place during the last four years, specifically between May 2020 and April 2024. On the basis of press reports, court rulings, observer reports and other sources, we coded (a) whether or not an opposition party boycotted or called for the boycott of an election; (b) whether or not a losing party or candidate publicly rejected the validity of an election; (c) whether or not any actor filed a legal challenge to an election; (d) the aspects of an election that were the subject of a legal complaint (according to the major categories of the PEI data set questionnaire); and (e) data about who undertook these actions. These data inform the analysis that follows.

Chapter 7

DATA AND FINDINGS

The data show that the public is likely to pay special attention to voting processes, as well as partisanship, EMB behaviour and aspects of the electoral system. Election-related legal challenges suggest that people are likely to be most focused on the voting process and vote counting, as these are two of the electoral operations with which voters and observers have the most familiarity and interaction (see Figure 7.1 for a comprehensive list of all the phases of the electoral cycle). Though experts cite long-standing concerns about the weakness of campaign finance and campaign-related media coverage, the public raises these issues less frequently. The relatively scant attention to these areas may be explained by the increased difficulty involved in finding relevant evidence, and by poor laws that do not sufficiently regulate the space for cases to be filed and by the somewhat indirect connection with the final vote tally.

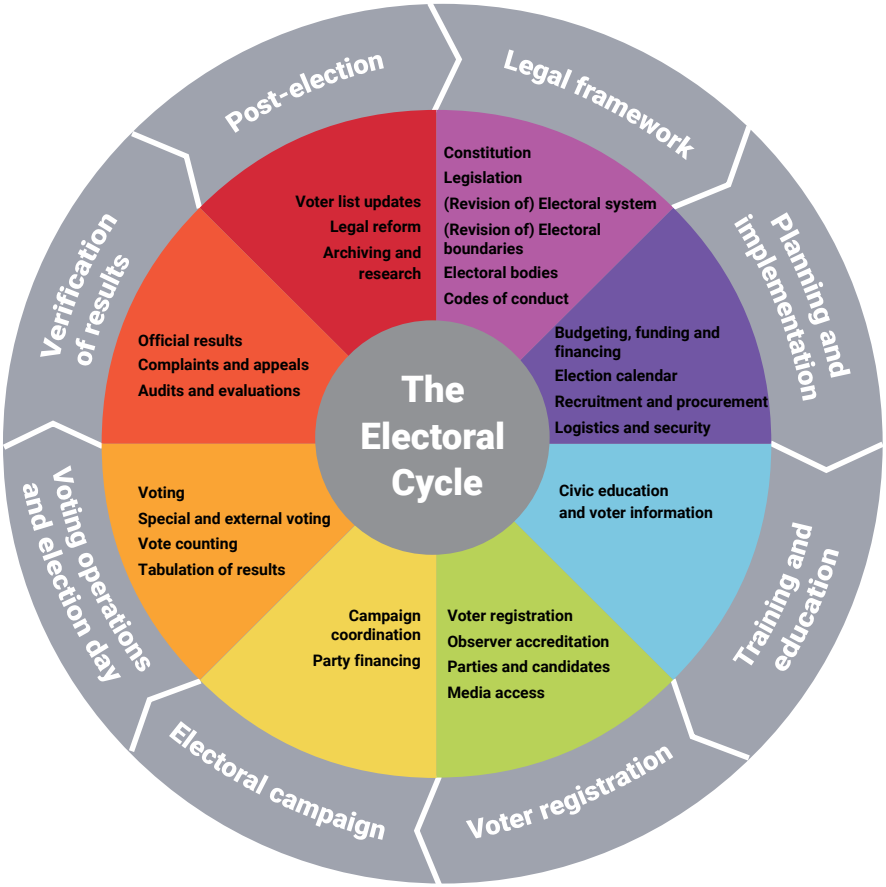
Data show that disputed elections are fairly common. Almost one in five of these elections was challenged in court.

7.1. DISPUTED ELECTIONS

Between May 2020 and April 2024, at least 221 national elections were held across 159 countries. In line with the growing number of attacks on the credibility of elections, most visibly in Brazil and the USA, this data set shows that disputed elections are fairly common. Almost one in five of these elections (19.5 per cent) was challenged in court (see Figure 7.2).

In nearly all of these cases, the legal challenges were filed in contexts in which the GSoD Indices scores for Credible Elections were in the mid-range band of performance (0.4 to 0.7). The exceptions were in Czechia (2021) and Japan (2022), which were high-performing; and Burundi (2020), the Central African Republic (2020), Comoros (2023), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2023), Egypt (2020) and Uganda (2021), which were low-performing. Cases were filed in every region of the world, though most were in Africa (see Figure 7.3). In fact, only 28.6 per cent of elections in Africa were not disputed in

Figure 7.1. **The electoral cycle**



Source: Catt, H., Ellis, A., Maley, M., Wall, A. and Wolf, P., *Electoral Management Design*, Revised Edition (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2014), <https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/electoral-management-design-revised-edition>, accessed 9 July 2024.

any way (see Annex B for a list of all disputed elections between May 2020 and April 2024, including contexts marked by boycotts, a public rejection of results and legal challenges).

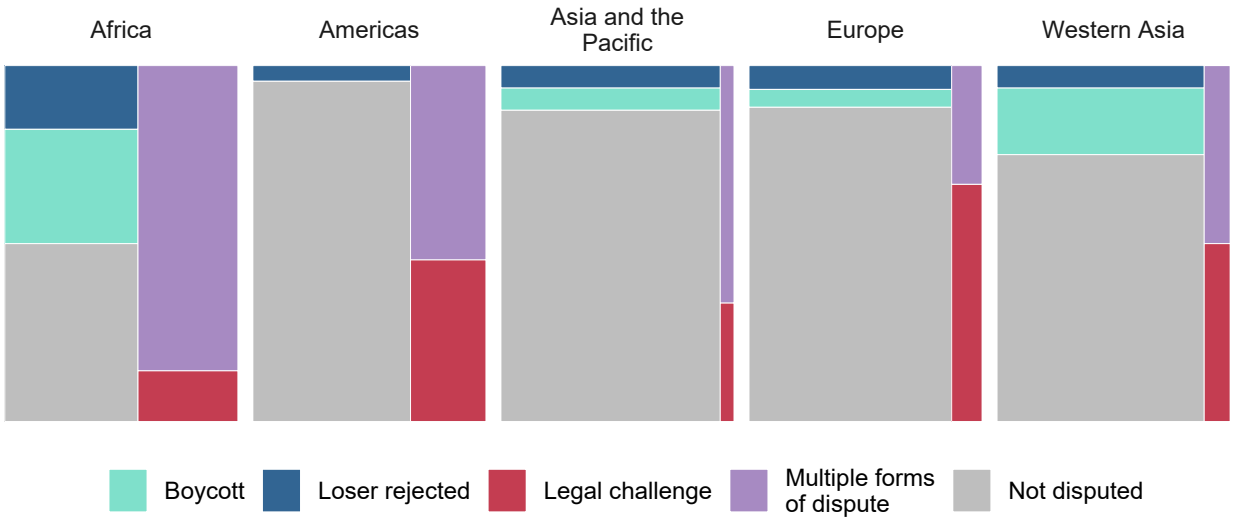
This pattern corresponds to the mixed nature of mid-range-performing contexts, where there are clear strengths and weaknesses. In contexts marked by higher scores for Credible Elections, there may be less reason for challenges, while in contexts of lower credibility, there may be less incentive to file legal challenges at all, perhaps because of lower levels of trust in political institutions or because those institutions lack independence.

Figure 7.4 illustrates the range of values that is most common for elections where some form of contestation took place, with the majority of cases found in the range between 0.2 (low-performing) and 0.6 (mid-range-performing) for both Credible Elections and Judicial Independence.

Figure 7.2. **Frequency of disputed elections (2020–2024)**

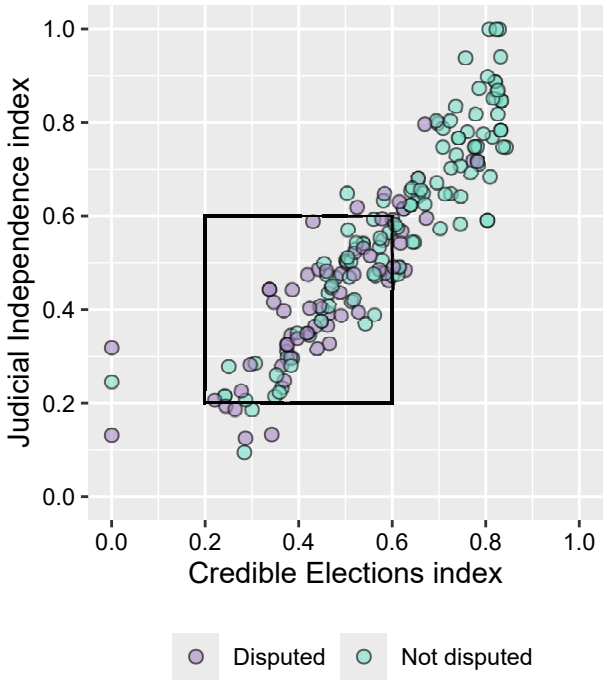
Source: International IDEA, Disputed Elections Data set, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/disputed-elections>, accessed 20 August 2024.

Figure 7.3. **Regional distribution of disputed elections (2020–2024)**



Source: International IDEA, Disputed Elections Data set, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/disputed-elections>, accessed 20 August 2024.

Figure 7.4. **Credible Elections and Judicial Independence scores for disputed and non-disputed elections (2020–2024)**



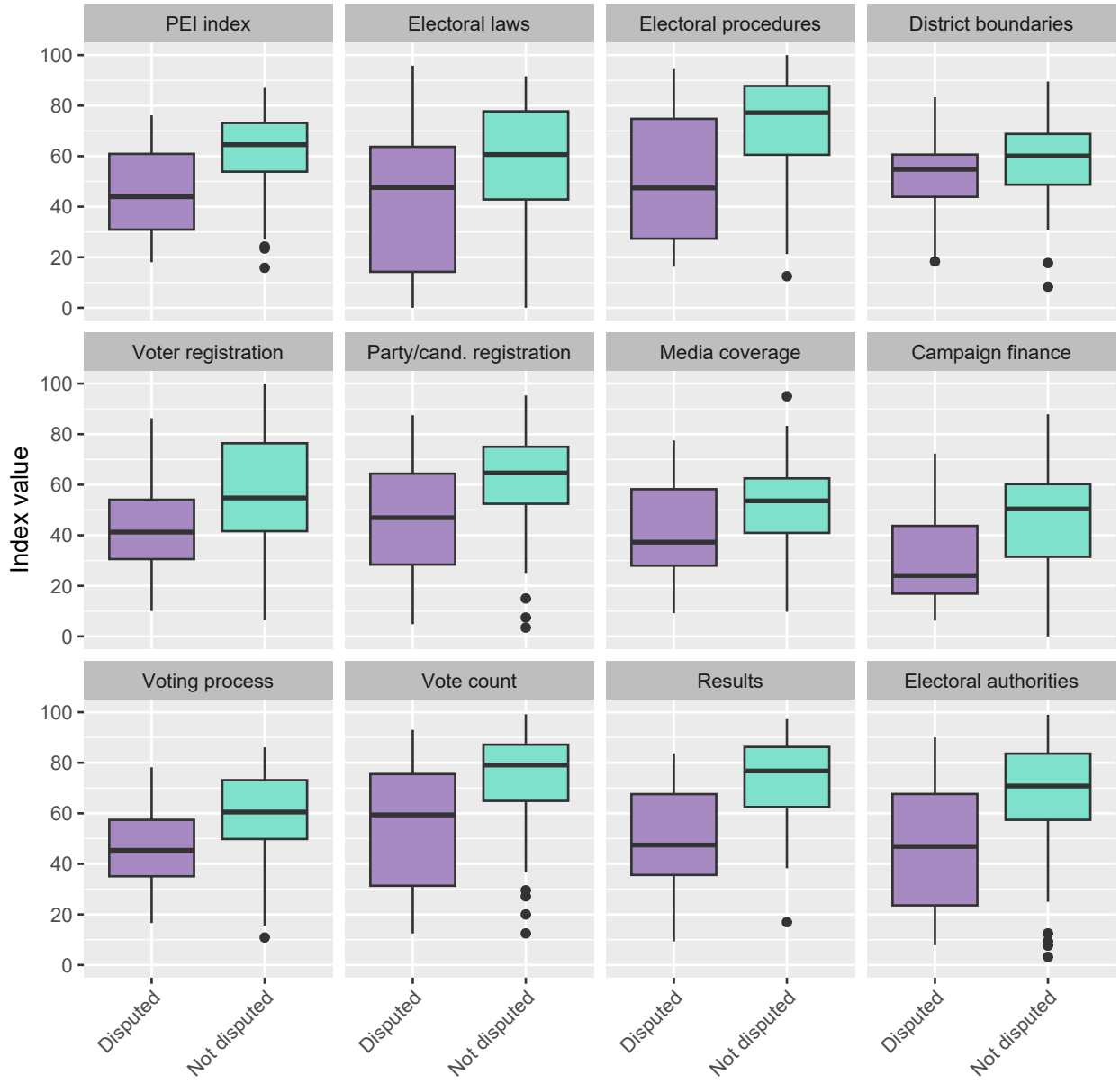
Sources: International IDEA, Disputed Elections Data set, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/disputed-elections>, accessed 20 August 2024; International IDEA, Global State of Democracy Indices, v7.1, 2023, <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/gsod-indices>, accessed 15 March 2024.

Expert perceptions of the quality of elections also indicate that disputed elections are generally of lower quality than those that are not disputed. Figure 7.5 uses box plots to show the differences in the distributions of scores across the main (summative) PEI index and its 11 component indices (Garnett et al. 2023a). It is clear that the median value across every index is lower for the disputed elections, though the distribution is often more dispersed for the disputed elections. It is notable that the distribution of values for the non-disputed elections is particularly narrow, with a high median score for the Vote Count and Results indices. We see these two points of the electoral process to be key, a point we will return to in the discussion of court challenges below.

We also might assume that elections are more likely to be disputed when there is more on the line. All elections matter, but presidential elections leave the winner with great power and the loser with nothing (in contrast with legislative elections, where losing parties are likely to at least have representation). Moreover, some presidential elections may matter more than others, as presidential power varies across countries, and the margin of victory will also vary across countries. In Figure 7.6, we plot the relationship between the vote share of the winning candidate and an executive power index developed by constitutional scholars (Elkins, Ginsburg and Melton 2012). It is indeed

the case that, on average, disputed elections involve slightly higher levels of executive power. However, the difference is trivial (4.81 against 4.76). The average winner's vote share in presidential elections was actually higher among the disputed elections than in the non-disputed elections (67.3 per cent versus 63.4 per cent). There have also been several disputed presidential

Figure 7.5. **Expert perceptions of electoral integrity and disputed elections (2020–2022)**



Sources: Garnett, H. A., James, T. S., MacGregor, M. and Caal-Lam, S., 'Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, (PEI-9.0)', 2023, <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/2MFQ9K>; International IDEA, Disputed Elections Data set (https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/disputed-elections), accessed 20 August 2024.

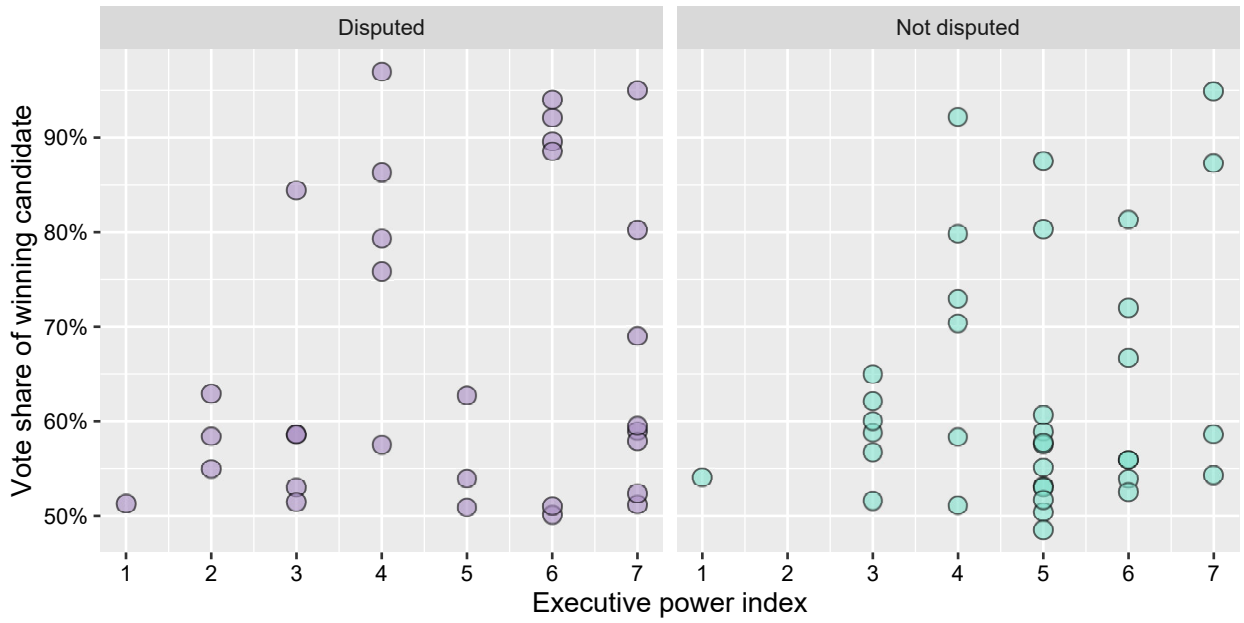
elections where the winning candidate's vote share was above 80 per cent, and others in which the level of executive power was quite low. So, the contestation of electoral outcomes is not determined by the stakes of the election or the margin of victory; instead, it is likely connected with real problems in the credibility of the election.

Overall, disputed elections tend to be in countries that are mid-range-performing in the factors of Judicial Independence and Credible Elections, and they also tend to be evaluated as more problematic by experts. While there is evidence that disputed elections are those where the levels of executive power are higher, the difference is slight enough that it is more likely that the elections are disputed because of real problems with credibility.

7.2. **TYPES OF DISPUTES**

This study catalogued three types of disputes: opposition boycotts, public statements indicating a rejection of results and legal challenges filed in court. Of course, boycotts, public rejections and legal challenges are not the only signs of disputed elections. Violence can also be a sign of disapproval or lack of trust in electoral processes (see Figure 7.7).

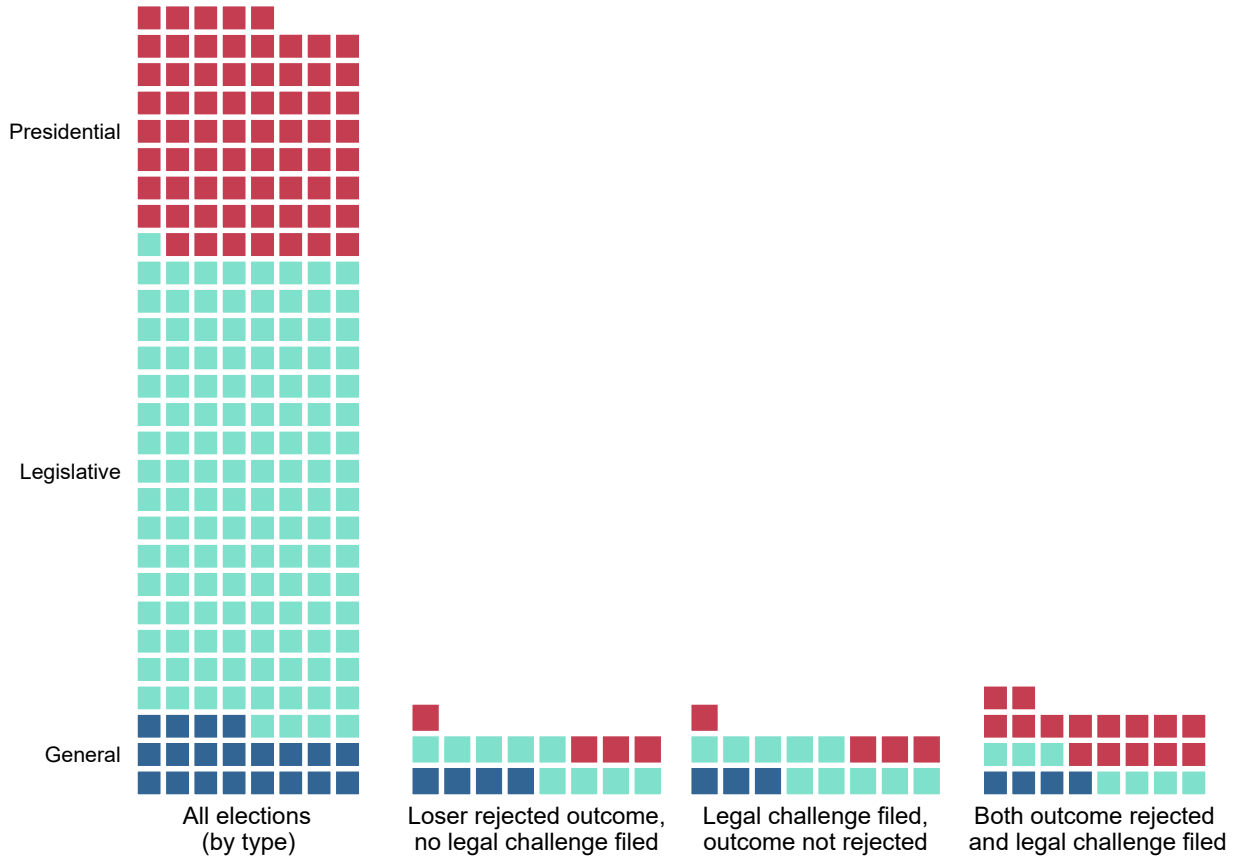
Figure 7.6. **Disputes, vote shares and executive power across presidential elections (2020–2024)**



Sources: International Foundation for Electoral Systems, ElectionGuide, [n.d.], <https://www.electionguide.org>, accessed 9 July 2024; Comparative Constitutions Project, 'Constitution Rankings', 2016, <https://comparativeconstitutionsproject.org/ccp-rankings>, accessed 9 July 2024.

Overall, boycotts took place in 11.3 per cent of cases. Unsurprisingly, the majority of these contexts are categorized in the GSoD Indices as low-performing in Representation. A minority fell in the mid-range band of performance, but none were high-performing. In some contexts, boycotts took place in highly controlled environments, calling into question the degree to which boycott supporters could actually exercise their right not to participate. In the 2024 election in Belarus, for example, the context was so controlled that only parties that supported the ruling party's policies were allowed to appear on the ballot. For the first time, observers from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe were not permitted to deploy an observation mission. In this environment, critics and analysts said mechanisms such as early voting were used to pressure people to participate (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2024). In other, more open, contexts, however, boycotts were more meaningful. In Tunisia, which is mid-range-performing in Representation, the 2023 opposition boycott of legislative elections contributed to the low turnout rate of 10.6 per cent (Amara and Mcdowall 2023).

Figure 7.7. **Types of elections, and reactions of losing parties and candidates**



Source: International IDEA, Disputed Elections Data set, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/disputed-elections>, accessed 20 August 2024.

In 19.5 per cent of the elections, a losing party or candidate (regardless of whether they represented a major or minor party) publicly rejected the results, and a legal challenge was filed in more than half of those cases (60.5 per cent). In one of the most extreme examples, former US President Donald Trump's public rejection of the 2020 presidential election outcome resulted in the violent storming of the US Capitol (Sheerin 2022). In another relatively severe case, the leading opposition party rejected the results of Sierra Leone's June 2023 general election. The rejection led to violence and mounting tension, as some opposition members refused to take their legislative seats. International mediation eventually led to a settlement, including an agreement to investigate the election (Africanews 2023). In 18 cases, legal challenges were filed without public rejections.

7.3. GROUNDS FOR LEGAL CHALLENGES

A close look at the 43 cases in which aggrieved parties filed court cases challenging the integrity of elections reveals several important points (see Table 7.1, which groups the challenges using the categories from the PEI questionnaire).

Table 7.1. **Grounds for legal challenges**

Grounds	Number of times used
Boundaries	2
Electoral procedures	3
Campaign finance	4
Party registration	4
Voter registration	5
Electoral authorities	8
Vote count	26
Voting process	26

Source: Authors' calculations.

First, public attention is likely to be focused primarily on voting and the vote-counting process (as these are the areas of the electoral process invoked in court filings and likely to be the focus of media coverage). This focus stands in stark contrast to expert assessments that show confidence in this phase of the electoral cycle. There could be several reasons for this discrepancy. It could be that legal challenges focus on these aspects because they are the primary

points at which voters have direct and personal interaction with the electoral cycle. Problems here will therefore have particular resonance with voters. It could also be that these problems are easier to document, understand and present to a court than others.

It is important to note that it may not always be clear which problems in a particular polling station or location are representative of more systematic issues or are serious enough to go beyond what is considered a negligible level of error in elections. Regardless, the prevalence of social media means that voters and the public can now express and disseminate their doubts widely. As a result, there may be cases in which issues or errors receive a disproportionate amount of unmerited attention (Rios Tobar 2024). The question of whether or not voters are right about the severity of a problem is less important, however, than the fact that issues that arise during voting and vote counting are those that may be most obvious to voters as they consider the credibility of their elections.

Second, expert concerns about campaign finance and campaign media do not appear to be priorities for the public. This finding is also likely a consequence of the fact that most voters do not have a great deal of personal experience with either of these phenomena and therefore do not personally feel the impact of the poor regulations behind them. While they may watch or hear campaign advertisements, for example, it may not be obvious that the political parties behind those ads do not receive equal and balanced coverage. Indeed, only parties and candidates (and not individuals) filed challenges alleging campaign finance violations. Even when violations are clear, it may be difficult to prove them, especially in cases where laws do not require transparent and public records. In some cases, the laws themselves may be insufficient or non-existent. Additionally, campaign finance violations and skewed campaign media are more difficult to link directly to problems with the final tally of votes, which is the part of the process that voters tend to focus on more.

Policy recommendations

Chapter 8

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing voter and stakeholder concerns related to voting and vote counting will require new levels of attentiveness and action.

There are multiple, complex drivers of public perceptions of electoral integrity, including phenomena that go well beyond the administration of elections. While it may not always be possible for electoral management bodies or the other countervailing institutions that support them to address all the drivers, it is risky to not attend to—at a minimum—the perceived problems in the areas under the direct control of these institutions. Specifically, addressing voter and stakeholder concerns related to voting and vote counting, which our data reveal to be the areas that people pay the most attention to, will require new levels of attentiveness and action.

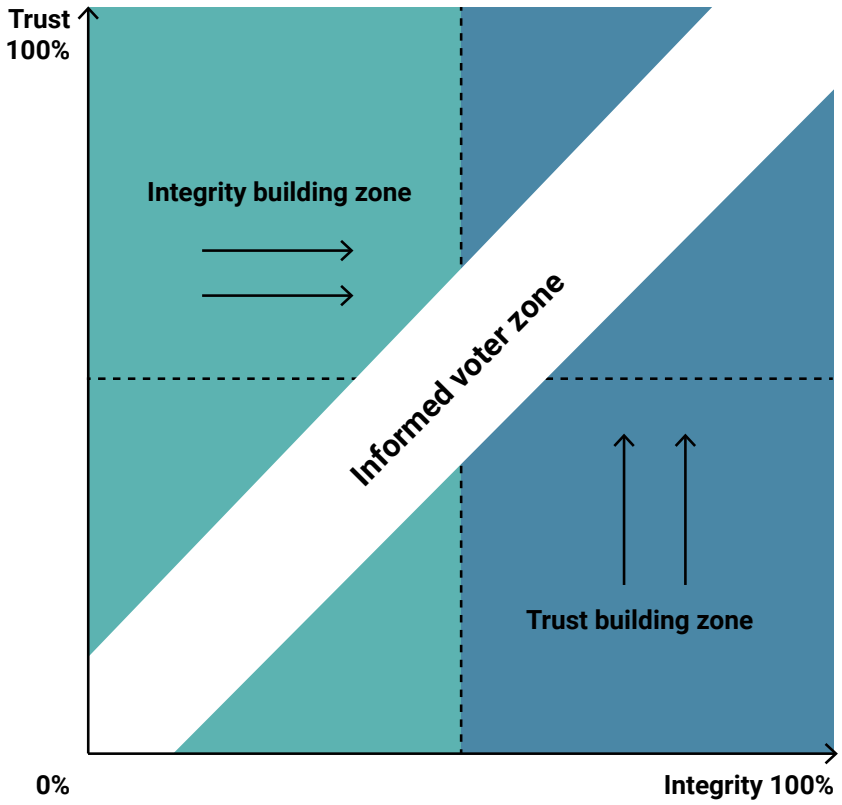
Importantly, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions to situations marked by low levels of public trust, and there may be cases in which even the most transparent and accessible electoral processes do not assuage all doubts or suspicions. The goal, regardless of context, is electoral processes marked by high levels of both public confidence and integrity (see Figure 8.1). Each country's relative levels of public trust and electoral integrity will require a different approach.

The following recommendations focus on how stakeholders may begin to address public distrust of elections, with a focus on devoting more attention to public perceptions.

FOR EMBS

1. *Acknowledge and respond to public opinion by incorporating public perceptions into operational planning.* Recognizing that voters pay more attention to voting and vote counting than to other phases of the election cycle, EMBs should be attentive to how voters' access to and understanding of these activities may impact their perceptions of elections in general. It is important to access regular public polling data, engage

Figure 8.1. **Public trust and electoral integrity (SVG)**



Source: Developed by the authors.

consistently with leading academics and civil society, and use temporary election workers and local election authorities to understand what voters are worried about and what they feel confident about when it comes to electoral processes.

2. *Introduce electoral reforms with great care, after wide consultation and planning for accidental errors and with as much political consensus as possible.* EMBs (and legislators) should carefully consider the costs and benefits—and especially the possible unintended consequences and political impacts on perceptions—of reforms, especially (but not only) those that will impact voting and vote counting. This need for careful consideration applies to any reform, including but not limited to electoral system design, voting methods, voter registration and identification requirements, ballot paper design, boundaries, polling dates. Whatever may be gained in time and efficiency could be lost in public faith, especially where there is unease or suspicion about change or a high risk of mistakes during the initial roll-out because of unfamiliarity. The introduction of reforms or changes to the electoral process should include careful selection, targeted and inclusive consultations, pilot studies and trust building anchored in each society's values and context.

Box 8.1. **Engaging the public on electronic voting in the Philippines**

The Philippines introduced electronic voting, which has prompted varied criticism over the years. Serious declines in the public's confidence in the technology have been averted, however, due to the EMB's and other stakeholders' careful attention to public education and communication over time. The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) oversaw a public acceptance programme that aimed to educate the electorate on how the automated electoral system worked, to promote acceptance of the system as a guarantee of efficient and credible results and to manage expectations. The country's three major television networks considered the dissemination of information about the technology to be part of their corporate social responsibility, and they developed and aired information clips in the run-up to the 2010 election at no cost to the government. The core content of these information clips was approved by COMELEC to ensure accuracy and consistency (Goldsmith and Ruthrauff 2013).

3. *Prioritize consistent and meaningful communication with the public.* Given voters' heightened sensitivity to and awareness of the voting process, it is important for EMBs and donors to work within well-established, broad ecosystems of partners (including civil society organizations, media, the courts and others) that devote more resources and attention to comprehensive and consistent communications with the public. Communication strategies should span the electoral cycle so that the public becomes more familiar with the EMB, which can reinforce public trust. Such strategies should include but not be limited to providing focused information on the voting process and the vote-counting rules and regulations, with evidence-backed explanations of what kinds and numbers of errors are considered serious or not (and why). As the public becomes increasingly able to understand the practicalities and complexities of voting and vote counting, it is important that it also becomes more knowledgeable about what is and is not a serious or urgent problem.

   Such strategies should prioritize regular communication that emphasizes how and why other parts of the electoral cycle that are more indirectly related to voting contribute to credible elections. Ensuring that voters have a deeper understanding of the electoral process as a whole could motivate them to push for long-needed reforms to problem areas, such as campaign finance and campaign media.

Box 8.2. **Communication throughout the electoral cycle in Nigeria**

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria prioritizes communication with the public by offering daily televised briefings during election periods and voter registration exercises. Voter education resources are available on the INEC website at all times, and the Commission has also offered a weekly television and radio programme on its activities. INEC also strives to maintain regular communication with key actors. It holds quarterly consultative and briefing meetings with political parties, civil society, media and security agencies, and it operates a contact centre where citizens can call to make inquiries on a daily basis. In the three months before election day, INEC hosts community town hall meetings to engage with citizens on elections.

Box 8.3. **An ecosystem of partnerships for Mexican elections**

Mexico's INE has established an ecosystem of partnerships with social media platforms and civil society to disseminate trustworthy information and encourage participation (Ooi et al. 2021; International IDEA 2023i). The INE's partnership with Facebook includes a specialized WhatsApp chatbot that answers questions from the public and allows users to report possible false or inaccurate news about an election. The partnership has also established an operations centre that employs experts in data science, engineering, research, operations, policy and law to identify and mitigate election-related threats in real time (Meta 2024). The INE has also partnered with the CSO Movilizatorio. Together with Meta, they developed an educational programme to promote critical thinking, responsible consumption of information and online safety to fight misinformation during elections. While the INE carried out workshops to disseminate information, Movilizatorio published guides for students, civil society and academics (Expansión 2024).

FOR ALL COUNTERVAILING INSTITUTIONS

4. *Respond vigilantly to unfounded accusations that seek to harm people's perceptions of electoral integrity.* Institutions with the authority to deal with libellous statements should make it clear that there will be consequences for those who make accusations that seek to harm perceptions of electoral integrity without credible evidence. Additionally, news media should take up such accusations and inform the public about the extent to which such accusations are factual.

Box 8.4. **EMB response to disinformation in Brazil**

In Brazil, the Superior Electoral Court (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, TSE), led by justices and jurists from different organs of the judiciary (Santillana 2023), is responsible for preserving the integrity, transparency and fairness of electoral processes. During the 2022 election, which was marked by a complex context of toxic political polarization, misinformation and even an attempt to overturn the election results by force, the TSE's ability to react promptly was tested.

Despite a long history of electronic voting, fully implemented in the country since 2000, and the fact that the country has never recorded a proven case of fraud involving the vote count (since electronic voting machines were introduced) (Rubio and Monteiro 2023), the credibility of the electoral system has been increasingly challenged by disinformation campaigns about the integrity of electronic voting machines since 2018. To counter these challenges, the TSE launched a counter-disinformation programme in 2019 that was later extended as a permanent policy during the period leading up to the 2022 elections (TSE 2022a).

The programme included partnerships with various stakeholders, such as governmental agencies, the press, civil society, Internet providers and social media companies, to combat the spread of disinformation. Partnerships with Google, TikTok and WhatsApp have helped create and channel verified information to users of these platforms (TSE 2022b). More recently, the TSE created a website called Fato ou Boato (Fact or Rumour) for the purpose of centralizing verified information regarding elections and debunking false information (Rubio and Monteiro 2023). Some actions taken by the TSE, such as taking down online content linked to the spread of disinformation, have been criticized for threatening freedom of expression (Nicas 2022). This serves as a clear reminder of the complexity and difficulty of maintaining a balanced response in the context of widespread disinformation.

FOR REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND ELECTION OBSERVERS

5. *Create increased regional and international capacity devoted to rigorous research, reflection and learning throughout the electoral cycle, with a special emphasis on public perceptions.* Given the heightened uncertainty surrounding the integrity of electoral processes around the world, International IDEA reiterates its previous recommendation that the UN and/or regional bodies should consider creating a special rapporteur on the credibility of electoral processes.

   Such a rapporteur could focus on specific phases or aspects of the electoral cycle (e.g. the independence of EMBs) or on the cycle in its entirety. Such a position could be similar to current initiatives supporting the independence of judges or freedom of opinion or expression (International IDEA 2023a). The forthcoming Model Commitments for Advancing Genuine and Credible Elections may be used as a framework for structuring the mandate of such a rapporteur.

   In addition to an international special rapporteur, EMBs and NGOs or national or domestic election observation groups should work together to consider creating specialized bodies, such as an ombudsperson for

elections who is embedded in the electoral process as a permanent, independent observer and liaison who can regularly issue updates to the public on the credibility of various phases of the electoral cycle.

Box 8.5. **Shadow reporting for elections**

Civil society groups around the world often conduct shadow reporting, which allows them to report on a government agency's report or account of an event or activities. In this way, CSOs are able to provide readers with crucial information about problems that may exist or areas where governments have been non-compliant with rules or laws. One of the best-known examples is civil society submissions to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process (which focuses on a review of countries' human rights records). The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, for example, provided a submission to the UPR process in 2017, noting areas of improvement and a series of ongoing concerns related to non-implementation of previous UPR recommendations (United Nations Human Rights Council n.d.). Such shadow reporting could be more regularly applied to EMB activities.

6. *Integrate public opinion information more systematically into research and preparation.* Election observer missions should integrate public opinion information into their assessments. Analysis of the public's views on electoral integrity throughout the electoral cycle may promote a greater understanding of the risks presented to post-election stability and to the ultimate legitimacy of a new government. Relying solely on the views of EMBs, experts and civil society may result in a skewed picture of the election environment and may miss out on key information related to people's (mis)understanding of elections. Such information may help authorities prepare to address public doubts or questions and pre-empt post-election instability.

FOR RESEARCHERS

7. *Support more research on both the reality and range of perceptions of electoral management.* Examples of questions that merit greater attention include the following:
   - How do different special voting arrangements impact public confidence in electoral integrity?
   - How do fake election observation missions impact domestic and international public opinion of electoral integrity?
   - What is the relationship between election observer findings and public perceptions of electoral integrity, and how (if at all) do experts integrate these findings into their assessments?
   - In what ways does election violence impact people's perceptions of electoral integrity?
   - How and to what extent does election-related disinformation impact voters' and electoral authorities' behaviour? How do such changes in behaviour impact electoral integrity? What are the impacts of pre-bunking, and what can be done to strengthen this mitigation measure?

Chapter 9

CONCLUSION, PART 2

Whether or not they are right, public perceptions matter for electoral integrity. It is, after all, voters who ultimately grant legitimacy to elected governments. In an age when electoral processes face a bevy of new challenges, and public trust in democratic institutions is declining, protecting electoral integrity is of utmost importance. Perceptions of the electoral process are complex, the result of multiple, intersecting drivers. Nonetheless, electoral rules and EMB behaviour have a demonstrable impact on public confidence, and attention to these factors can help boost trust.

While experts have long pointed to campaign finance and campaign media as among the weakest aspects of the electoral cycle, our data reveal that court challenges (and from there the public) are much more focused on voting and vote counting. This is unsurprising because voters engage with the electoral cycle differently than others. They tend to have a different and narrower set of touchpoints throughout the electoral cycle than actors such as political parties, EMBs and observers.

Going forward, it will be important to integrate public perception data into decision making. More consistent and focused communication strategies that span the entirety of the electoral cycle will be critical, as they can help foster an important trusted relationship between EMBs and the public and mitigate unfounded doubts, allegations or suspicions of fraud and irregularities. Increased attention to polling stations and vote-counting centres is also important, as these areas are focal points for voters who want to be engaged with elections in their respective countries. Finally, voters and the public pay attention to the rules and regulations in place, and deviations matter in public assessments of the credibility of elections.

If elections are to continue to act as the foundation stones of democratic systems, it is critical to reinforce public trust in them. Integrating popular opinion into the activities of the electoral cycle is one important step in this process.

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Annex A. Rankings

The GSoD Indices provide annual global rankings of country performance for each of the categories of democratic performance—Representation, Rights, Rule of Law, and Participation— rather than classifying regimes on an overall basis.

The focus on category-level performance (rather than on something like regime types) allows for a more nuanced understanding of where democracy is thriving and where it is suffering. It also shifts the focus from the broad idea of democracy generally to specific and narrower aspects of democracy, which are more appropriate to target for reform and intervention.

The tables on the following pages provide each country's score in each category, accompanied by the level of uncertainty around that score. The rankings are based on the score itself, but we have also provided a range of possible rankings that take the uncertainty into account. Each country's real ranking could fall within the given range. Year-on-year changes in the rankings should be interpreted with this uncertainty in mind. Many changes in the rankings are not due to statistically significant changes.

Table A.1. **Representation**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Germany	0.893 (0.039)	1	1–11	0
Uruguay	0.893 (0.039)	1	1–11	2
Sweden	0.864 (0.037)	3	1–16	1
Finland	0.861 (0.039)	4	1–18	1
Norway	0.861 (0.039)	4	1–18	8
Netherlands	0.860 (0.038)	6	1–18	7
Costa Rica	0.859 (0.040)	7	1–19	2
France	0.859 (0.037)	7	1–18	4
Estonia	0.857 (0.038)	9	1–19	-7
Denmark	0.856 (0.039)	10	1–20	-3
Italy	0.856 (0.039)	10	1–20	3
Belgium	0.853 (0.038)	12	3–22	-5
Australia	0.848 (0.039)	13	3–24	3
Chile	0.843 (0.038)	14	3–25	-9
Taiwan	0.843 (0.038)	14	3–25	3
New Zealand	0.829 (0.038)	16	3–27	-1
Canada	0.827 (0.038)	17	3–29	2
Czechia	0.826 (0.039)	18	3–29	4
Ireland	0.820 (0.040)	19	7–30	6
United Kingdom	0.818 (0.038)	20	10–30	-2
Lithuania	0.816 (0.040)	21	10–30	4
Portugal	0.816 (0.039)	21	12–30	0
Slovenia	0.811 (0.038)	23	13–31	4
Switzerland	0.811 (0.038)	23	13–31	0
Austria	0.809 (0.038)	25	13–31	3
Spain	0.803 (0.039)	26	16–31	-17
Slovakia	0.795 (0.040)	27	16–34	-3
Japan	0.791 (0.038)	28	16–34	2

Table A.1. **Representation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Croatia	0.789 (0.039)	29	17–36	2
Luxembourg	0.784 (0.039)	30	19–39	-1
Greece	0.777 (0.040)	31	21–39	-11
Cabo Verde	0.764 (0.038)	32	27–41	3
Cyprus	0.763 (0.037)	33	27–41	1
South Korea	0.760 (0.038)	34	27–42	-1
Jamaica	0.753 (0.039)	35	28–44	-3
Latvia	0.753 (0.038)	35	28–43	4
Iceland	0.749 (0.039)	37	30–44	2
Israel	0.747 (0.038)	38	30–44	0
Panama	0.747 (0.039)	38	30–44	-1
Argentina	0.737 (0.037)	40	32–46	-4
Trinidad and Tobago	0.737 (0.039)	40	32–47	3
Brazil	0.723 (0.040)	42	33–48	5
Malta	0.720 (0.038)	43	35–48	1
Romania	0.715 (0.038)	44	35–50	-2
Vanuatu	0.704 (0.040)	45	40–53	0
United States	0.701 (0.038)	46	40–54	3
Barbados	0.700 (0.039)	47	40–54	-1
Ghana	0.684 (0.037)	48	43–57	2
Bulgaria	0.682 (0.038)	49	44–57	-2
Peru	0.682 (0.039)	49	43–57	-8
Timor-Leste	0.671 (0.038)	51	45–58	5
Moldova	0.667 (0.037)	52	45–58	-1
Suriname	0.667 (0.040)	52	45–59	0
South Africa	0.665 (0.038)	54	46–59	-1
Ecuador	0.659 (0.039)	55	48–60	-1
Poland	0.652 (0.040)	56	48–62	1

Table A.1. **Representation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Colombia	0.651 (0.039)	57	48–63	-2
Bhutan	0.640 (0.038)	58	51–66	-1
Lesotho	0.630 (0.040)	59	52–67	0
Nepal	0.624 (0.039)	60	55–70	0
Kosovo	0.620 (0.038)	61	56–72	3
Namibia	0.613 (0.038)	62	57–76	0
Mongolia	0.612 (0.039)	63	58–77	2
Malawi	0.608 (0.039)	64	58–77	-1
Indonesia	0.607 (0.037)	65	58–77	-4
Dominican Republic	0.606 (0.039)	66	58–77	0
Senegal	0.593 (0.039)	67	59–81	0
Albania	0.590 (0.038)	68	60–81	0
Liberia	0.588 (0.038)	69	60–81	13
Mexico	0.588 (0.038)	69	60–81	2
India	0.584 (0.040)	71	60–84	-1
North Macedonia	0.584 (0.038)	71	61–84	1
Sri Lanka	0.578 (0.038)	73	62–86	-4
Mauritius	0.577 (0.039)	74	62–87	-1
Montenegro	0.576 (0.038)	75	62–87	9
The Gambia	0.576 (0.039)	75	62–87	0
Bolivia	0.574 (0.038)	77	63–88	-1
Solomon Islands	0.564 (0.038)	78	67–91	-1
Maldives	0.562 (0.037)	79	67–91	7
Armenia	0.557 (0.039)	80	67–92	-3
Paraguay	0.557 (0.039)	80	67–92	-7
Zambia	0.550 (0.038)	82	71–93	-1
Guatemala	0.549 (0.038)	83	69–93	4
Georgia	0.547 (0.038)	84	71–93	-1

Table A.1. **Representation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Hungary	0.543 (0.039)	85	73–93	0
Botswana	0.541 (0.038)	86	73–93	-7
Kenya	0.540 (0.038)	87	73–93	2
Fiji	0.537 (0.038)	88	77–93	11
Guyana	0.534 (0.038)	89	78–94	-1
Philippines	0.528 (0.040)	90	78–97	1
Honduras	0.527 (0.038)	91	78–97	1
Malaysia	0.520 (0.040)	92	80–98	4
Ukraine	0.518 (0.038)	93	82–98	-1
El Salvador	0.499 (0.038)	94	88–104	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.493 (0.037)	95	90–105	2
Nigeria	0.493 (0.038)	95	90–105	3
Kuwait	0.491 (0.039)	97	90–106	6
Papua New Guinea	0.481 (0.040)	98	92–106	3
Benin	0.473 (0.039)	99	94–108	11
Iraq	0.473 (0.039)	99	94–108	5
Tunisia	0.472 (0.038)	101	94–108	-12
Côte d'Ivoire	0.467 (0.038)	102	94–111	4
Sierra Leone	0.463 (0.038)	103	94–111	-23
Singapore	0.463 (0.037)	103	94–111	-1
Togo	0.459 (0.037)	105	95–113	3
Lebanon	0.453 (0.037)	106	97–113	1
Tanzania	0.441 (0.039)	107	99–115	4
Türkiye	0.438 (0.039)	108	99–115	1
Pakistan	0.434 (0.038)	109	101–115	2
Jordan	0.431 (0.039)	110	102–115	5
Morocco	0.429 (0.038)	111	102–115	3
Guinea-Bissau	0.424 (0.037)	112	105–118	1

Table A.1. **Representation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Serbia	0.423 (0.039)	113	105–119	-8
Thailand	0.415 (0.039)	114	106–120	15
Madagascar	0.406 (0.038)	115	107–120	-16
Kyrgyzstan	0.391 (0.038)	116	111–125	1
Zimbabwe	0.389 (0.039)	117	112–126	2
Mozambique	0.388 (0.038)	118	112–126	0
Mauritania	0.387 (0.038)	119	112–127	-3
Uganda	0.377 (0.039)	120	114–129	0
Angola	0.368 (0.038)	121	115–129	0
Algeria	0.366 (0.038)	122	116–129	0
Ethiopia	0.362 (0.037)	123	116–131	0
Oman	0.362 (0.039)	123	116–131	3
Rwanda	0.357 (0.038)	125	116–131	-1
Bangladesh	0.351 (0.039)	126	116–133	-1
Comoros	0.350 (0.039)	127	118–133	-1
Kazakhstan	0.345 (0.038)	128	120–133	4
Cameroon	0.341 (0.039)	129	120–135	1
Egypt	0.326 (0.040)	130	123–140	4
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.325 (0.038)	131	123–140	2
Djibouti	0.318 (0.038)	132	126–141	3
Central African Republic	0.316 (0.039)	133	126–141	-5
Eswatini	0.307 (0.038)	134	128–142	4
Vietnam	0.307 (0.039)	134	128–142	3
Congo	0.301 (0.039)	136	130–142	3
Russia	0.300 (0.039)	137	130–142	-1
Burundi	0.293 (0.039)	138	130–145	2
Iran	0.293 (0.040)	138	130–145	4
Uzbekistan	0.288 (0.037)	140	131–147	1

Table A.1. **Representation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Bahrain	0.282 (0.040)	141	132–149	4
Cambodia	0.271 (0.040)	142	134–149	1
Nicaragua	0.261 (0.039)	143	136–150	1
Equatorial Guinea	0.259 (0.039)	144	138–150	2
Azerbaijan	0.255 (0.038)	145	138–150	4
Venezuela	0.253 (0.039)	146	140–151	2
Laos	0.251 (0.039)	147	140–151	-1
Tajikistan	0.247 (0.039)	148	141–151	2
Cuba	0.246 (0.039)	149	141–151	1
Belarus	0.229 (0.038)	150	143–152	2
Turkmenistan	0.215 (0.037)	151	147–152	2
North Korea	0.194 (0.039)	152	150–152	2
Qatar	0.127 (0.038)	153	153–153	2
Afghanistan	0.000 (0.038)	154	154–173	2
Burkina Faso	0.000 (0.038)	154	154–173	2
Chad	0.000 (0.038)	154	154–173	2
China	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2
Eritrea	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2
Gabon	0.000 (0.038)	154	154–173	-24
Guinea	0.000 (0.038)	154	154–173	2
Haiti	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2
Libya	0.000 (0.037)	154	154–173	2
Mali	0.000 (0.040)	154	154–173	2
Myanmar	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2
Niger	0.000 (0.038)	154	154–173	-59
Palestine	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2
Saudi Arabia	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2
Somalia	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2

Table A.1. **Representation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
South Sudan	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2
Sudan	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2
Syria	0.000 (0.038)	154	154–173	2
United Arab Emirates	0.000 (0.037)	154	154–173	2
Yemen	0.000 (0.039)	154	154–173	2

Table A.2. **Rights**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Denmark	0.959 (0.052)	1	1–5	0
Switzerland	0.950 (0.050)	2	1–5	-1
Germany	0.949 (0.049)	3	1–5	0
Luxembourg	0.927 (0.052)	4	1–7	1
Belgium	0.925 (0.049)	5	1–7	-1
Finland	0.894 (0.052)	6	4–10	0
Czechia	0.891 (0.050)	7	4–10	0
Ireland	0.874 (0.050)	8	6–12	0
Japan	0.871 (0.054)	9	6–15	0
Sweden	0.856 (0.051)	10	6–16	-1
Australia	0.840 (0.050)	11	8–23	1
Spain	0.830 (0.050)	12	8–24	0
Estonia	0.821 (0.049)	13	10–25	4
Italy	0.820 (0.051)	14	9–25	0
Netherlands	0.819 (0.053)	15	9–25	1
New Zealand	0.810 (0.051)	16	10–27	-1
Austria	0.802 (0.051)	17	11–27	3
Lithuania	0.802 (0.050)	17	11–27	2
Latvia	0.801 (0.050)	19	11–27	2
Costa Rica	0.798 (0.050)	20	11–27	-2
Slovenia	0.798 (0.051)	20	11–27	4
Iceland	0.794 (0.049)	22	11–27	-11
Norway	0.792 (0.049)	23	11–27	-1
Taiwan	0.786 (0.052)	24	12–29	-1
Cyprus	0.774 (0.051)	25	13–31	4
Uruguay	0.766 (0.049)	26	16–34	-1
Canada	0.763 (0.051)	27	16–35	-1
Malta	0.740 (0.050)	28	24–38	-1

Table A.2. **Rights (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
South Korea	0.735 (0.051)	29	24–38	-1
France	0.728 (0.049)	30	25–38	1
Slovakia	0.725 (0.050)	31	25–38	2
Chile	0.723 (0.051)	32	25–38	4
Greece	0.722 (0.052)	33	25–38	-1
United States	0.721 (0.052)	34	26–39	-4
United Kingdom	0.715 (0.050)	35	27–40	0
Vanuatu	0.702 (0.051)	36	28–40	3
Barbados	0.693 (0.050)	37	28–42	0
Portugal	0.691 (0.050)	38	28–42	-4
Israel	0.670 (0.050)	39	35–48	-1
Jamaica	0.667 (0.049)	40	35–48	0
Singapore	0.646 (0.049)	41	37–57	0
Albania	0.644 (0.054)	42	37–58	0
Croatia	0.640 (0.052)	43	38–58	0
Trinidad and Tobago	0.639 (0.052)	44	38–58	0
Poland	0.633 (0.052)	45	39–59	7
Bulgaria	0.629 (0.050)	46	39–61	-1
Suriname	0.626 (0.051)	47	39–61	16
Tunisia	0.622 (0.051)	48	39–61	-2
Montenegro	0.616 (0.049)	49	41–62	2
Argentina	0.613 (0.052)	50	41–64	3
South Africa	0.613 (0.049)	50	41–62	-1
Armenia	0.612 (0.050)	52	41–63	-5
Romania	0.611 (0.052)	53	41–66	-3
Botswana	0.607 (0.049)	54	41–66	5
Cabo Verde	0.607 (0.051)	54	41–66	0
Bhutan	0.606 (0.049)	56	41–66	-8

Table A.2. **Rights (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Moldova	0.599 (0.052)	57	41–69	-1
Georgia	0.596 (0.052)	58	41–70	-3
Hungary	0.585 (0.050)	59	45–76	-3
Serbia	0.582 (0.052)	60	45–76	-2
The Gambia	0.580 (0.051)	61	46–76	0
Ghana	0.568 (0.051)	62	49–80	0
Brazil	0.564 (0.050)	63	50–81	17
Namibia	0.562 (0.049)	64	53–81	4
Benin	0.560 (0.051)	65	53–83	1
Panama	0.560 (0.050)	65	54–82	-1
Mauritius	0.556 (0.051)	67	56–83	-2
Solomon Islands	0.551 (0.051)	68	57–84	1
Mongolia	0.549 (0.050)	69	57–84	-3
Guyana	0.545 (0.050)	70	59–85	0
Fiji	0.542 (0.050)	71	59–86	24
Sierra Leone	0.542 (0.050)	71	59–86	0
Nepal	0.541 (0.050)	73	59–86	3
North Macedonia	0.540 (0.051)	74	59–87	-1
Kuwait	0.538 (0.051)	75	59–88	2
Lesotho	0.536 (0.052)	76	59–90	-4
Kosovo	0.530 (0.050)	77	61–91	-2
Niger	0.527 (0.050)	78	62–94	6
Jordan	0.521 (0.051)	79	62–94	17
Tanzania	0.520 (0.052)	80	62–94	-2
Morocco	0.516 (0.049)	81	63–95	-2
Malaysia	0.513 (0.051)	82	63–98	1
Senegal	0.510 (0.052)	83	64–99	-23
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.504 (0.052)	84	67–101	-2

Table A.2. **Rights (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Maldives	0.498 (0.051)	85	69–101	3
Malawi	0.495 (0.050)	86	70–101	-12
Gabon	0.491 (0.050)	87	71–104	2
Ukraine	0.489 (0.050)	88	75–105	-3
Ecuador	0.485 (0.049)	89	77–105	-8
Liberia	0.485 (0.051)	89	76–107	3
Colombia	0.481 (0.050)	91	77–109	-6
Peru	0.480 (0.052)	92	77–109	-2
Papua New Guinea	0.478 (0.051)	93	78–109	-2
Sri Lanka	0.478 (0.049)	93	79–109	1
Timor-Leste	0.468 (0.049)	95	81–111	4
Philippines	0.467 (0.051)	96	81–111	1
Burkina Faso	0.465 (0.051)	97	81–111	-4
Nigeria	0.465 (0.051)	97	81–111	7
Bolivia	0.461 (0.050)	99	83–112	1
Dominican Republic	0.456 (0.052)	100	84–113	1
Kenya	0.453 (0.051)	101	84–114	-14
Paraguay	0.444 (0.050)	102	87–115	0
Indonesia	0.443 (0.052)	103	87–117	-5
Palestine	0.443 (0.051)	103	87–117	0
Algeria	0.441 (0.054)	105	86–117	0
Zambia	0.436 (0.051)	106	89–118	1
Kazakhstan	0.435 (0.051)	107	89–118	0
Lebanon	0.433 (0.051)	108	89–119	4
Oman	0.432 (0.053)	109	91–120	-4
Côte d'Ivoire	0.428 (0.050)	110	93–120	-1
Honduras	0.424 (0.049)	111	95–121	2
Qatar	0.412 (0.051)	112	99–125	2

Table A.2. **Rights (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Mexico	0.407 (0.052)	113	100–126	1
Zimbabwe	0.404 (0.053)	114	100–127	-3
Kyrgyzstan	0.397 (0.050)	115	102–131	1
India	0.394 (0.051)	116	102–131	-6
Mali	0.393 (0.051)	117	102–133	0
Thailand	0.387 (0.052)	118	106–133	2
Angola	0.383 (0.054)	119	106–133	1
Egypt	0.380 (0.049)	120	110–133	-1
Mozambique	0.377 (0.051)	121	110–133	-4
Mauritania	0.374 (0.050)	122	111–135	3
United Arab Emirates	0.373 (0.051)	123	111–135	1
Djibouti	0.371 (0.052)	124	112–136	2
Uganda	0.368 (0.051)	125	112–136	-3
Vietnam	0.361 (0.051)	126	112–141	2
Madagascar	0.354 (0.051)	127	114–143	1
Eswatini	0.351 (0.050)	128	115–143	0
Guinea-Bissau	0.350 (0.052)	129	115–143	2
Togo	0.349 (0.051)	130	115–143	-3
Uzbekistan	0.348 (0.050)	131	115–143	1
Ethiopia	0.343 (0.047)	132	118–143	-10
Guatemala	0.343 (0.049)	132	117–144	3
Bangladesh	0.327 (0.049)	134	121–149	2
Türkiye	0.327 (0.050)	134	121–149	2
Rwanda	0.321 (0.051)	136	124–149	-3
China	0.316 (0.051)	137	126–149	1
Russia	0.314 (0.050)	138	126–151	-4
Guinea	0.313 (0.050)	139	126–151	2
Comoros	0.312 (0.051)	140	126–151	0

Table A.2. **Rights (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Iraq	0.312 (0.050)	140	126–151	2
Pakistan	0.309 (0.051)	142	127–151	-3
Saudi Arabia	0.307 (0.052)	143	127–151	3
Cameroon	0.296 (0.051)	144	132–155	-1
Venezuela	0.289 (0.051)	145	134–156	2
Cuba	0.288 (0.048)	146	134–156	-3
Iran	0.284 (0.051)	147	134–157	3
Somalia	0.283 (0.050)	148	134–157	14
Azerbaijan	0.282 (0.052)	149	134–158	0
Bahrain	0.265 (0.051)	150	137–162	2
Belarus	0.265 (0.050)	150	138–162	1
Laos	0.255 (0.050)	152	144–163	-7
Congo	0.254 (0.049)	153	144–163	0
Cambodia	0.250 (0.051)	154	144–164	3
El Salvador	0.249 (0.050)	155	144–164	-7
Haiti	0.244 (0.048)	156	145–164	-2
Central African Republic	0.234 (0.052)	157	147–165	-1
Libya	0.233 (0.054)	158	147–165	0
Burundi	0.229 (0.050)	159	150–165	-4
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.229 (0.050)	159	150–165	1
Sudan	0.222 (0.049)	161	150–165	-2
Chad	0.221 (0.050)	162	150–165	-1
Equatorial Guinea	0.213 (0.050)	163	152–165	0
Turkmenistan	0.205 (0.051)	164	152–167	3
Myanmar	0.183 (0.049)	165	159–171	-1
Nicaragua	0.162 (0.051)	166	163–172	-1
South Sudan	0.162 (0.052)	166	163–172	0
Eritrea	0.149 (0.050)	168	165–172	0

Table A.2. **Rights (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Yemen	0.149 (0.051)	168	165–172	4
Tajikistan	0.138 (0.050)	170	165–173	1
North Korea	0.137 (0.053)	171	165–173	-1
Syria	0.131 (0.050)	172	166–173	1
Afghanistan	0.093 (0.050)	173	170–173	-4

Table A.3. **Rule of Law**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Denmark	0.991 (0.030)	1	1–1	0
Germany	0.947 (0.029)	2	2–2	0
Switzerland	0.895 (0.029)	3	3–6	0
Finland	0.892 (0.030)	4	3–6	1
Luxembourg	0.888 (0.030)	5	3–6	1
New Zealand	0.867 (0.030)	6	3–11	3
Ireland	0.854 (0.029)	7	6–11	1
Estonia	0.851 (0.028)	8	6–11	-1
Sweden	0.849 (0.029)	9	6–11	-5
Australia	0.846 (0.029)	10	6–11	0
Norway	0.841 (0.028)	11	6–12	0
Singapore	0.817 (0.028)	12	10–13	0
Latvia	0.798 (0.029)	13	12–18	0
Belgium	0.779 (0.028)	14	13–20	0
Netherlands	0.775 (0.031)	15	13–21	2
Japan	0.774 (0.031)	16	13–21	0
Iceland	0.772 (0.028)	17	13–21	0
Taiwan	0.770 (0.030)	18	13–21	5
France	0.767 (0.028)	19	14–21	2
United Kingdom	0.765 (0.029)	20	14–21	-5
Canada	0.747 (0.029)	21	15–25	-1
Chile	0.735 (0.030)	22	20–26	3
Spain	0.735 (0.029)	22	21–26	-3
Czechia	0.732 (0.029)	24	21–27	0
Costa Rica	0.720 (0.029)	25	21–28	2
United States	0.712 (0.030)	26	22–30	3
Uruguay	0.705 (0.028)	27	24–32	-1
Austria	0.692 (0.029)	28	25–35	4

Table A.3. **Rule of Law (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Bhutan	0.686 (0.028)	29	26–35	5
Lithuania	0.686 (0.029)	29	26–35	1
Slovenia	0.678 (0.029)	31	27–37	-3
Cyprus	0.677 (0.029)	32	27–37	3
Israel	0.670 (0.029)	33	28–37	-11
South Korea	0.669 (0.029)	34	28–38	-4
Barbados	0.664 (0.029)	35	28–38	3
Italy	0.655 (0.030)	36	31–40	3
Portugal	0.654 (0.029)	37	31–40	-1
Slovakia	0.641 (0.029)	38	33–40	-5
Greece	0.636 (0.030)	39	35–41	-2
Malta	0.632 (0.029)	40	36–42	0
Vanuatu	0.609 (0.029)	41	39–47	1
Namibia	0.604 (0.028)	42	40–47	6
Jamaica	0.600 (0.028)	43	41–49	-2
Trinidad and Tobago	0.587 (0.030)	44	41–53	3
Montenegro	0.586 (0.028)	45	41–53	1
Croatia	0.582 (0.030)	46	41–54	-2
United Arab Emirates	0.582 (0.030)	46	41–54	-3
Bulgaria	0.576 (0.029)	48	42–58	2
Cabo Verde	0.573 (0.029)	49	43–60	-1
Fiji	0.572 (0.029)	50	43–60	47
Botswana	0.568 (0.029)	51	44–60	-6
Tanzania	0.562 (0.030)	52	44–62	0
Brazil	0.560 (0.029)	53	44–62	38
Argentina	0.553 (0.030)	54	46–65	1
Kosovo	0.550 (0.029)	55	48–66	-2
Moldova	0.550 (0.030)	55	48–66	-1

Table A.3. **Rule of Law (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Maldives	0.549 (0.030)	57	48–68	6
Malawi	0.548 (0.029)	58	48–66	-2
Suriname	0.547 (0.030)	59	48–69	11
Romania	0.545 (0.030)	60	49–72	-9
The Gambia	0.538 (0.029)	61	51–74	-1
Kuwait	0.537 (0.030)	62	52–75	-1
South Africa	0.531 (0.028)	63	54–76	-6
Georgia	0.530 (0.030)	64	53–77	5
Timor-Leste	0.526 (0.029)	65	54–79	2
Zambia	0.523 (0.030)	66	55–82	11
Benin	0.520 (0.029)	67	57–83	-4
Poland	0.520 (0.030)	67	57–83	-2
Albania	0.518 (0.031)	69	57–86	6
Senegal	0.517 (0.030)	70	59–86	-12
Malaysia	0.516 (0.030)	71	60–86	2
Mongolia	0.516 (0.029)	71	60–86	-3
Colombia	0.512 (0.029)	73	61–86	-2
Serbia	0.512 (0.030)	73	61–88	-14
Hungary	0.509 (0.029)	75	61–88	-13
Panama	0.503 (0.029)	76	63–90	-10
Kenya	0.501 (0.030)	77	63–91	-3
Mauritius	0.500 (0.029)	78	65–91	-1
Solomon Islands	0.499 (0.029)	79	65–91	3
India	0.496 (0.029)	80	66–92	-4
Nepal	0.496 (0.029)	80	66–91	4
Peru	0.496 (0.030)	80	65–92	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.491 (0.030)	83	67–96	7
Guyana	0.490 (0.029)	84	69–96	0

Table A.3. **Rule of Law (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Oman	0.489 (0.030)	85	69–96	-1
Sri Lanka	0.489 (0.028)	85	70–96	7
Ghana	0.483 (0.029)	87	73–96	0
Jordan	0.483 (0.029)	87	73–97	1
Burkina Faso	0.476 (0.030)	89	76–97	-17
Lesotho	0.475 (0.030)	90	76–97	-7
Dominican Republic	0.474 (0.030)	91	76–99	2
Armenia	0.468 (0.029)	92	80–99	-12
Ecuador	0.467 (0.028)	93	83–99	-14
Tunisia	0.465 (0.029)	94	83–100	-6
Sierra Leone	0.464 (0.029)	95	83–100	1
North Macedonia	0.463 (0.029)	96	83–100	-2
Bolivia	0.454 (0.029)	97	87–102	-2
Honduras	0.445 (0.028)	98	92–103	0
Indonesia	0.445 (0.030)	98	90–103	2
Gabon	0.437 (0.029)	100	94–105	3
Paraguay	0.433 (0.029)	101	97–105	1
Qatar	0.428 (0.030)	102	97–111	3
Niger	0.419 (0.029)	103	98–116	-4
Philippines	0.411 (0.029)	104	100–118	0
Uganda	0.411 (0.029)	104	100–118	13
Côte d'Ivoire	0.404 (0.029)	106	101–120	3
Liberia	0.404 (0.029)	106	101–120	1
Morocco	0.404 (0.028)	106	102–120	4
Ukraine	0.404 (0.029)	106	101–120	4
Papua New Guinea	0.402 (0.029)	110	102–121	-4
Togo	0.400 (0.029)	111	102–121	-11
Kazakhstan	0.398 (0.029)	112	102–121	4

Table A.3. **Rule of Law (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Mexico	0.395 (0.030)	113	103–121	-3
Kyrgyzstan	0.394 (0.029)	114	103–122	0
Uzbekistan	0.394 (0.029)	114	103–122	-1
Mozambique	0.391 (0.029)	116	103–123	-9
Vietnam	0.390 (0.029)	117	103–123	1
Angola	0.389 (0.031)	118	103–126	1
Mauritania	0.381 (0.029)	119	106–128	8
Rwanda	0.381 (0.029)	119	106–128	-4
Algeria	0.373 (0.031)	121	106–130	0
Madagascar	0.366 (0.029)	122	113–131	-2
Mali	0.363 (0.029)	123	116–131	9
Nigeria	0.361 (0.030)	124	116–132	4
Saudi Arabia	0.361 (0.030)	124	116–132	0
Djibouti	0.359 (0.030)	126	118–132	-3
Thailand	0.358 (0.030)	127	119–132	2
China	0.355 (0.030)	128	119–133	-6
Palestine	0.352 (0.030)	129	119–134	-3
Guatemala	0.350 (0.029)	130	121–135	-5
Laos	0.338 (0.029)	131	122–138	-1
Pakistan	0.332 (0.029)	132	124–139	-1
Comoros	0.327 (0.029)	133	128–140	2
Bangladesh	0.324 (0.028)	134	129–141	3
Bahrain	0.322 (0.029)	135	130–143	1
Iran	0.319 (0.030)	136	131–143	2
Ethiopia	0.317 (0.027)	137	131–143	-4
Guinea-Bissau	0.317 (0.030)	137	131–144	2
Iraq	0.307 (0.029)	139	132–145	3
Egypt	0.301 (0.028)	140	133–147	2

Table A.3. **Rule of Law (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Lebanon	0.298 (0.030)	141	133–147	-2
Congo	0.295 (0.028)	142	135–147	2
Guinea	0.295 (0.029)	142	134–147	-1
Russia	0.289 (0.029)	144	137–147	-10
Türkiye	0.285 (0.029)	145	139–148	4
Azerbaijan	0.275 (0.030)	146	140–152	0
Zimbabwe	0.274 (0.031)	147	140–152	0
El Salvador	0.259 (0.029)	148	145–153	-3
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.257 (0.029)	149	145–155	4
Somalia	0.256 (0.029)	150	146–155	5
Cameroon	0.249 (0.029)	151	146–155	0
Cuba	0.249 (0.028)	151	146–155	-1
Eswatini	0.243 (0.029)	153	148–156	-2
Burundi	0.231 (0.029)	154	148–157	-6
Cambodia	0.230 (0.029)	155	148–157	-1
Belarus	0.216 (0.029)	156	153–159	4
Equatorial Guinea	0.205 (0.029)	157	154–162	6
South Sudan	0.195 (0.030)	158	156–164	3
Myanmar	0.194 (0.028)	159	156–164	-2
Sudan	0.185 (0.028)	160	157–166	-1
Haiti	0.180 (0.028)	161	157–168	-3
Turkmenistan	0.180 (0.029)	161	157–168	1
Syria	0.171 (0.029)	163	158–171	9
Tajikistan	0.171 (0.029)	163	158–171	5
North Korea	0.164 (0.031)	165	158–172	0
Eritrea	0.159 (0.029)	166	160–172	-2
Chad	0.156 (0.029)	167	160–172	-1
Central African Republic	0.155 (0.030)	168	160–172	-12

Table A.3. **Rule of Law (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Yemen	0.145 (0.030)	169	163–172	1
Libya	0.143 (0.031)	170	163–172	-1
Nicaragua	0.143 (0.029)	170	163–172	-3
Afghanistan	0.135 (0.029)	172	165–172	-1
Venezuela	0.081 (0.030)	173	173–173	0

Table A.4. **Participation**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Denmark	0.964 (0.089)	1	1–3	0
Switzerland	0.940 (0.086)	2	1–6	0
Norway	0.897 (0.074)	3	1–10	0
Brazil	0.867 (0.070)	4	3–16	29
Finland	0.862 (0.070)	5	3–16	-2
Ireland	0.855 (0.071)	6	3–16	0
Uruguay	0.854 (0.065)	7	3–16	0
United States	0.853 (0.079)	8	3–18	1
Taiwan	0.837 (0.065)	9	3–18	-1
Germany	0.826 (0.089)	10	3–25	0
Sweden	0.820 (0.065)	11	4–23	-6
Trinidad and Tobago	0.812 (0.066)	12	4–24	-1
France	0.806 (0.070)	13	4–25	13
Estonia	0.803 (0.098)	14	3–31	-1
Belgium	0.802 (0.068)	15	4–25	0
Slovenia	0.800 (0.068)	16	4–25	12
Luxembourg	0.781 (0.071)	17	9–28	0
Italy	0.780 (0.065)	18	9–28	-6
Costa Rica	0.767 (0.074)	19	9–33	-3
Austria	0.760 (0.064)	20	11–33	-1
Australia	0.756 (0.066)	21	11–34	-1
Canada	0.756 (0.071)	21	10–37	-1
Iceland	0.756 (0.066)	21	11–34	-7
Senegal	0.750 (0.071)	24	11–41	-1
Netherlands	0.742 (0.065)	25	13–43	0
Indonesia	0.729 (0.062)	26	17–45	-8
Argentina	0.724 (0.069)	27	17–50	-5
United Kingdom	0.715 (0.062)	28	19–51	-4

Table A.4. **Participation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Israel	0.710 (0.079)	29	17–55	7
Botswana	0.707 (0.068)	30	19–53	22
Latvia	0.707 (0.073)	30	19–54	2
Mauritius	0.704 (0.064)	32	19–53	-6
Mali	0.703 (0.064)	33	19–53	-4
Cyprus	0.691 (0.065)	34	21–56	5
Spain	0.690 (0.080)	35	19–63	3
Ghana	0.689 (0.068)	36	21–60	-5
Chile	0.687 (0.081)	37	19–64	0
South Africa	0.684 (0.074)	38	21–63	3
Barbados	0.682 (0.066)	39	25–61	4
Zambia	0.682 (0.063)	39	25–60	4
South Korea	0.680 (0.068)	41	25–62	4
Fiji	0.678 (0.068)	42	25–63	13
Greece	0.678 (0.061)	42	26–61	-8
Suriname	0.673 (0.066)	44	26–64	-9
New Zealand	0.671 (0.062)	45	26–63	-4
Sierra Leone	0.666 (0.070)	46	26–69	-16
Czechia	0.663 (0.062)	47	27–67	1
Japan	0.658 (0.063)	48	28–71	1
Niger	0.657 (0.063)	49	28–71	16
Sri Lanka	0.657 (0.069)	49	27–73	33
The Gambia	0.654 (0.063)	51	28–72	6
Kenya	0.653 (0.064)	52	28–72	-6
Bolivia	0.643 (0.064)	53	30–80	-6
Lithuania	0.637 (0.066)	54	33–83	0
Jamaica	0.632 (0.067)	55	34–85	1
Slovakia	0.631 (0.062)	56	34–83	-5

Table A.4. **Participation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Liberia	0.625 (0.062)	57	37–85	4
Dominican Republic	0.624 (0.092)	58	28–94	-8
Gabon	0.622 (0.076)	59	34–92	-7
Lebanon	0.622 (0.063)	59	38–85	2
Malta	0.619 (0.064)	61	39–88	-2
Panama	0.615 (0.065)	62	41–90	10
Nepal	0.612 (0.062)	63	44–90	-2
Philippines	0.608 (0.061)	64	46–92	-4
Malawi	0.606 (0.076)	65	39–96	10
Guinea-Bissau	0.605 (0.082)	66	37–99	3
Poland	0.605 (0.082)	66	37–99	38
Vanuatu	0.600 (0.068)	68	46–94	-10
Ecuador	0.598 (0.062)	69	48–94	-2
Montenegro	0.596 (0.062)	70	48–94	-2
Namibia	0.595 (0.072)	71	46–99	-1
Bulgaria	0.593 (0.083)	72	44–101	2
Albania	0.588 (0.067)	73	51–99	5
Peru	0.587 (0.076)	74	47–100	2
Togo	0.587 (0.079)	74	46–101	-9
Benin	0.586 (0.072)	76	48–100	-4
Croatia	0.584 (0.061)	77	53–99	-7
North Macedonia	0.582 (0.061)	78	53–99	5
Maldives	0.580 (0.062)	79	54–100	6
Timor-Leste	0.580 (0.062)	79	54–100	7
Burkina Faso	0.579 (0.072)	81	53–101	-41
Portugal	0.573 (0.065)	82	54–101	-21
Ukraine	0.572 (0.077)	83	53–105	8
Tanzania	0.569 (0.064)	84	55–103	14

Table A.4. **Participation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Moldova	0.568 (0.080)	85	53–106	-6
Guinea	0.558 (0.065)	86	59–105	0
Armenia	0.557 (0.069)	87	57–106	1
Côte d'Ivoire	0.557 (0.068)	87	57–105	1
Malaysia	0.556 (0.061)	89	62–105	7
Nigeria	0.554 (0.071)	90	57–107	0
Colombia	0.550 (0.063)	91	63–107	-10
Pakistan	0.547 (0.062)	92	64–107	-13
Guyana	0.541 (0.063)	93	68–108	-9
Tunisia	0.538 (0.066)	94	68–110	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.531 (0.062)	95	72–112	11
Mongolia	0.531 (0.068)	95	69–115	3
Kosovo	0.529 (0.061)	97	73–113	3
Georgia	0.528 (0.068)	98	70–117	4
Lesotho	0.527 (0.070)	99	70–119	-22
Honduras	0.520 (0.063)	100	78–119	-7
Serbia	0.511 (0.062)	101	82–123	-7
Ethiopia	0.507 (0.086)	102	72–131	1
Bhutan	0.506 (0.066)	103	83–124	-6
India	0.503 (0.061)	104	86–124	-13
Zimbabwe	0.503 (0.061)	104	86–124	-4
Papua New Guinea	0.490 (0.064)	106	90–129	6
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.488 (0.080)	107	85–134	3
Cameroon	0.482 (0.065)	108	92–133	1
El Salvador	0.475 (0.068)	109	93–134	16
Thailand	0.474 (0.067)	110	93–134	4
Morocco	0.471 (0.061)	111	95–134	2
Madagascar	0.470 (0.067)	112	95–134	4

Table A.4. **Participation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Kuwait	0.469 (0.062)	113	95–134	-5
Solomon Islands	0.467 (0.066)	114	95–134	7
Iraq	0.464 (0.062)	115	99–134	15
Singapore	0.463 (0.065)	116	98–135	0
Algeria	0.461 (0.067)	117	98–136	1
Paraguay	0.460 (0.061)	118	100–134	3
Mexico	0.458 (0.061)	119	101–135	5
Cabo Verde	0.457 (0.064)	120	100–136	3
Comoros	0.453 (0.071)	121	100–137	-14
Romania	0.452 (0.061)	122	101–136	-12
Jordan	0.450 (0.061)	123	101–137	-4
Bangladesh	0.444 (0.064)	124	102–138	-10
Uganda	0.440 (0.062)	125	106–138	-20
Eswatini	0.438 (0.085)	126	100–141	9
Guatemala	0.432 (0.066)	127	106–139	5
Hungary	0.429 (0.062)	128	106–139	1
Mozambique	0.428 (0.064)	129	106–139	-3
Congo	0.425 (0.061)	130	108–139	0
Palestine	0.424 (0.082)	131	102–146	-4
Mauritania	0.420 (0.066)	132	108–141	-5
Vietnam	0.420 (0.074)	132	106–144	1
Angola	0.411 (0.062)	134	110–143	3
Somalia	0.398 (0.062)	135	119–147	6
Libya	0.397 (0.072)	136	113–147	0
Türkiye	0.390 (0.072)	137	117–147	2
Kyrgyzstan	0.382 (0.068)	138	123–147	-4
Sudan	0.370 (0.074)	139	124–154	-20
Bahrain	0.357 (0.086)	140	125–156	4

Table A.4. **Participation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Djibouti	0.357 (0.066)	140	132–156	5
Kazakhstan	0.353 (0.062)	142	134–156	0
Haiti	0.350 (0.062)	143	134–156	-5
Burundi	0.349 (0.073)	144	132–156	3
Chad	0.344 (0.082)	145	130–156	-5
Central African Republic	0.343 (0.063)	146	135–156	-3
Egypt	0.337 (0.063)	147	135–156	9
Venezuela	0.313 (0.088)	148	135–163	2
Cambodia	0.311 (0.064)	149	139–158	3
United Arab Emirates	0.311 (0.065)	149	139–158	2
Uzbekistan	0.311 (0.065)	149	139–158	-1
Iran	0.310 (0.081)	152	137–162	1
Rwanda	0.305 (0.069)	153	139–159	-7
China	0.300 (0.074)	154	139–163	0
Yemen	0.293 (0.083)	155	139–163	0
Oman	0.292 (0.062)	156	142–162	0
Laos	0.255 (0.072)	157	148–167	4
Russia	0.253 (0.064)	158	148–166	-9
Saudi Arabia	0.242 (0.067)	159	153–168	8
Myanmar	0.236 (0.087)	160	148–168	-2
Equatorial Guinea	0.234 (0.063)	161	155–168	3
South Sudan	0.234 (0.063)	161	155–168	-1
Tajikistan	0.227 (0.067)	163	155–168	2
Cuba	0.202 (0.068)	164	157–170	-2
Nicaragua	0.191 (0.093)	165	157–170	-6
Qatar	0.190 (0.072)	166	157–170	0
Azerbaijan	0.188 (0.066)	167	158–170	2
Belarus	0.179 (0.068)	168	159–170	-5

Table A.4. **Participation (cont.)**

Country	Score (uncertainty)	Ranking	Range of possible rankings	Year-on-year ranking change
Afghanistan	0.147 (0.066)	169	164–170	-1
Syria	0.134 (0.082)	170	164–171	0
Turkmenistan	0.060 (0.086)	171	170–173	0
North Korea	0.029 (0.093)	172	171–173	0
Eritrea	0.016 (0.094)	173	171–173	0

Annex B. Disputed elections

International IDEA created the Disputed Elections Data set to support the research on elections published in the Global State of Democracy Report 2024. The data set covers legal and political disputes concerning almost all national-level elections held between May 2020 and April 2024. The data set covers five ways in which elections are disputed: (1) boycotts of elections; (2) public refusals of losing parties or candidates to concede; (3) legal challenges to elections; (4) violence involving civilian deaths; and (5) riots and protests after the election.

Table B.1 provides summary statistics about the frequency of legal challenges to elections by region during the covered period. Table B.2 lists the elections where there was a boycott. Table B.3 lists the elections in which a losing party or candidate rejected the result. Finally, Table B.4 lists the elections in which a legal challenge was filed.

Table B.1. **Disputed elections, by region**

Region	Percentage of legal challenges
Africa	45%
Americas	23%
Asia and the Pacific	7%
Europe	20%
West Asia	5%

Table B.2. **Elections that were boycotted by a political party**

Country	Year	Type of election
Azerbaijan	2024	Presidential
Bangladesh	2024	General
Belarus	2024	Legislative
Chad	2021	Presidential
Comoros	2024	Presidential
Côte D'Ivoire	2020	Presidential
Djibouti	2023	Legislative
Egypt	2020	Legislative
Ethiopia	2021	Legislative
Iran	2021	Presidential
Iran	2024	Legislative
Iraq	2021	Legislative
Kazakhstan	2021	Legislative
Madagascar	2023	Presidential
Nepal	2022	Legislative
Nicaragua	2021	Presidential
Serbia	2020	Legislative
Syria	2021	Presidential
Tunisia	2023	Legislative
Venezuela	2020	Legislative

Table B.3. **Elections in which losing parties or candidates publicly rejected the outcome**

Country	Year	Type of election
Albania	2021	Legislative
Angola	2022	Presidential
Armenia	2021	Legislative
Belarus	2020	Presidential
Benin	2023	Legislative
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2022	Presidential
Burkina Faso	2020	Presidential
Burundi	2020	Presidential
Central African Republic	2020	Presidential
Congo, Republic of	2021	Presidential
Côte D'Ivoire	2020	Presidential
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2023	General
Ecuador	2021	Presidential
Ethiopia	2021	Legislative
Gabon	2023	General
The Gambia	2021	Presidential
Georgia	2020	Legislative
Ghana	2020	Presidential
Guatemala	2023	General
Guinea	2020	Presidential
Indonesia	2024	Presidential
Iraq	2021	Legislative
Kyrgyzstan	2020	Legislative
Kyrgyzstan	2021	Legislative
Madagascar	2023	Presidential
Malawi	2020	Presidential
Mauritania	2023	Legislative
Myanmar	2020	Legislative

Table B.3. **Elections in which losing parties or candidates publicly rejected the outcome (cont.)**

Country	Year	Type of election
Nicaragua	2021	Presidential
Nigeria	2023	General
Paraguay	2023	General
Peru	2021	Presidential
Russia	2021	Legislative
Samoa	2021	Legislative
Serbia	2023	Legislative
Sierra Leone	2023	General
Syria	2020	Legislative
Tanzania	2020	Presidential
Togo	2024	Legislative
Trinidad and Tobago	2020	Legislative
Uganda	2021	Presidential
United States	2020	Presidential
Venezuela	2020	Legislative
Zimbabwe	2023	General

Table B.4. **Elections in which legal challenges were filed**

Country	Year	Type of election
Angola	2022	Presidential
Armenia	2021	Legislative
Benin	2023	Legislative
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2022	Presidential
Brazil	2022	Presidential
Burkina Faso	2020	Presidential
Burundi	2020	Presidential
Central African Republic	2020	Presidential
Colombia	2022	Legislative
Comoros	2024	Presidential
Czechia	2021	Legislative
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2023	General
Ecuador	2021	Presidential
Ecuador	2023	General
Egypt	2020	Legislative
El Salvador	2024	General
Ethiopia	2021	Legislative
The Gambia	2021	Presidential
Ghana	2020	Presidential
Guatemala	2023	General
Guinea	2020	Presidential
Hungary	2022	Legislative
Indonesia	2024	Presidential
Iraq	2021	Legislative
Japan	2022	Legislative
Lebanon	2022	Legislative
Madagascar	2023	Presidential
Malawi	2020	Presidential
Moldova	2021	Legislative

Table B.4. **Elections in which legal challenges were filed (cont.)**

Country	Year	Type of election
Myanmar	2020	Legislative
Nigeria	2023	General
Peru	2021	Presidential
Poland	2020	Presidential
Poland	2023	Legislative
Serbia	2023	Legislative
Togo	2024	Legislative
Uganda	2021	Presidential
United States	2020	Presidential
United States	2022	Legislative
Zambia	2021	Presidential

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member States founded in 1995, with a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

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The 2024 elections super-cycle year falls fittingly into an era of radical uncertainty, with candidates and political parties using potentially transformational policy agendas to court nearly 3 billion voters. In most cases, the inherent (and healthy) uncertainty of elections sparks the kind of debate that drives democracy forward. In other contexts, however, it can motivate more hostile disputes and unrest.

Democracy continued its recent decline in 2023, with notable challenges emerging with regard to Representation and Rights. Assessing each country's various areas of improvement and deterioration, we find that, on balance, four in nine countries were worse off in 2023 than they had been in 2018, while only one in four had improved, continuing a negative trend that developed roughly a decade ago. Challenges to democracy are found in every part of the world and at every level of democratic performance.

In this report, we take a close look at elections, and we find that the credibility of elections around the world was worse in more than one fifth of the countries we cover (39 of 173) in 2023 (the most recent year for which we have complete data) than it had been five years before, in 2018. The way that people engage with electoral processes has also been changing over the past several decades: turnout has been going down while the incidence of protests and riots has been going up. Between mid-2020 and mid-2024, one in five elections was challenged in at least one legal proceeding, with voting and vote counting emerging as the most-litigated aspects of the electoral process. During the same period, in one in five elections a losing presidential candidate or losing party in parliamentary elections publicly rejected the outcome of the election, and opposition parties boycotted one in ten elections. These factors combine to challenge public confidence in political processes.

The Global State of Democracy 2024 provides an overview of global trends related to democracy and human rights, along with an in-depth analysis of the drivers of public perceptions of electoral integrity. It includes a set of policy recommendations to address the issues that contribute to public mistrust in electoral integrity around the world.

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