

DEMOCRACY TRACKER METHODOLOGY AND USER GUIDE

Version 2, February 2025



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Abbreviations

CAMEO	Conflict and Mediation Event Observations
CSO	Civil society organization
DA	Democracy Assessment
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Force
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDELT	Global Database of Events, Language and Tone
GSoD	Global State of Democracy
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual
NCA	National Crime Agency (United Kingdom)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEMOCRACY TRACKER

The Democracy Tracker is a data project that provides event-centric information on democracy developments in 173 countries, with a data series beginning in August 2022. The monthly event reports include (a) a narrative summary of the event; (b) indications of the specific aspects of democracy that have been impacted; (c) the magnitude of the impact on a five-point scale ranging from exceptionally positive to exceptionally negative; (d) links to original sources; and (e) keywords to enable further research. The project is run by the Democracy Assessment (DA) Unit at International IDEA. To produce the reports, analysts in the DA Unit review thousands of documents every month, including media reports and varied expert analysis and advocacy and, where needed, directly contact in-country experts.

The Democracy Tracker is grounded in the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) conceptual [framework](#) and thus covers 29 aspects of democratic performance, which are organized hierarchically into ‘categories’, ‘factors’ and ‘subfactors’. Among its many uses, the Democracy Tracker acts as a qualitative and timely complement to the annually updated quantitative scores found in the [Global State of Democracy Indices](#) (GSoD Indices).

The Democracy Tracker reports events that signal a significant change in a country’s democratic performance in a particular month, either positively or negatively. In addition, it reports events that signal such a change is very likely in the near future (events to watch) and all national elections. The reporting is not intended to be a comprehensive accounting of political events but is intended to focus attention on events that have an impact on the quality of democracy in a given country. Evaluations of the direction and magnitude of the events’ effects are relevant to a specific month and reflect each country’s particular context. They are therefore not comparable between countries and across time.

While the Democracy Tracker’s primary audiences are policymakers and influencers—including donors, development cooperation actors and advisors

The Democracy Tracker is a data project that provides information on democracy developments in 173 countries.

to, and the staff of, government ministers and legislators—it is also useful for the media, researchers, civil society and anyone else who wishes to stay informed. The data can be useful for a range of outputs, including diplomatic briefings, policy briefs, media reports, academic articles, strategic planning and risk assessment.

Ultimately, the Democracy Tracker reports are launching pads for deeper analysis.

The Democracy Tracker aims to go beyond the indicators in the quantitative data set and provide a holistic picture of contemporary democratic developments.

The Democracy Tracker aims to:

- provide regular, qualitative information that can ‘round out’ the meaning of the quantitative scores provided by the annually updated quantitative data in the GSoD Indices; and
- go beyond the indicators in the quantitative data set and thus provide a more holistic picture of contemporary democratic developments.

Chapter 2

UNITS AND CONCEPTS

2.1. UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The Democracy Tracker reports at monthly intervals at the country level. Generally, therefore, the unit of measurement is the country-month. However, each country-month may include any number of event report observations. Whenever at least one event report has been created, there will also be an overall country-month observation. As described in further detail below, the magnitude of the impacts of the events is coded on a scale from 'exceptionally negative' to 'exceptionally positive' and with reference to the conceptual framework developed for the GSoD Indices. The organization of these concepts is shown in Figure 2.1. A list of covered countries is included in Annex A.

The choice to use states as the unit of analysis creates some challenges, but it is the unit that can be used most consistently. Even so, some events have a transnational character. Good examples of this include interstate (and sometimes intrastate) wars, environmental catastrophes and migration. When reporting on events that have a transnational aspect, the Democracy Tracker seeks to maintain the state-centric approach by reporting the event in the country or countries in which the event took place, even if the event was caused somewhere else. For example, if the rights of migrants are violated in a particular country, the event is reported there, even if the violation occurred as a result of policies created elsewhere. The state-centric methodology also means that the Democracy Tracker only reports on the activities of supranational institutions (such as the United Nations, European Union and African Union) when those activities have a direct impact on the state of democracy in a particular country. There are times when investigative reports reveal long-standing and systematic problems that may not have been common knowledge. In these cases, analysts determine how the revelations impact the status quo in a country and then integrate a description of the findings into the country profile narrative. In this way, the findings are

considered a part of the country's context rather than a 'new event'. New developments related to the investigations' findings are then subsequently reported as standard event reports, as relevant.

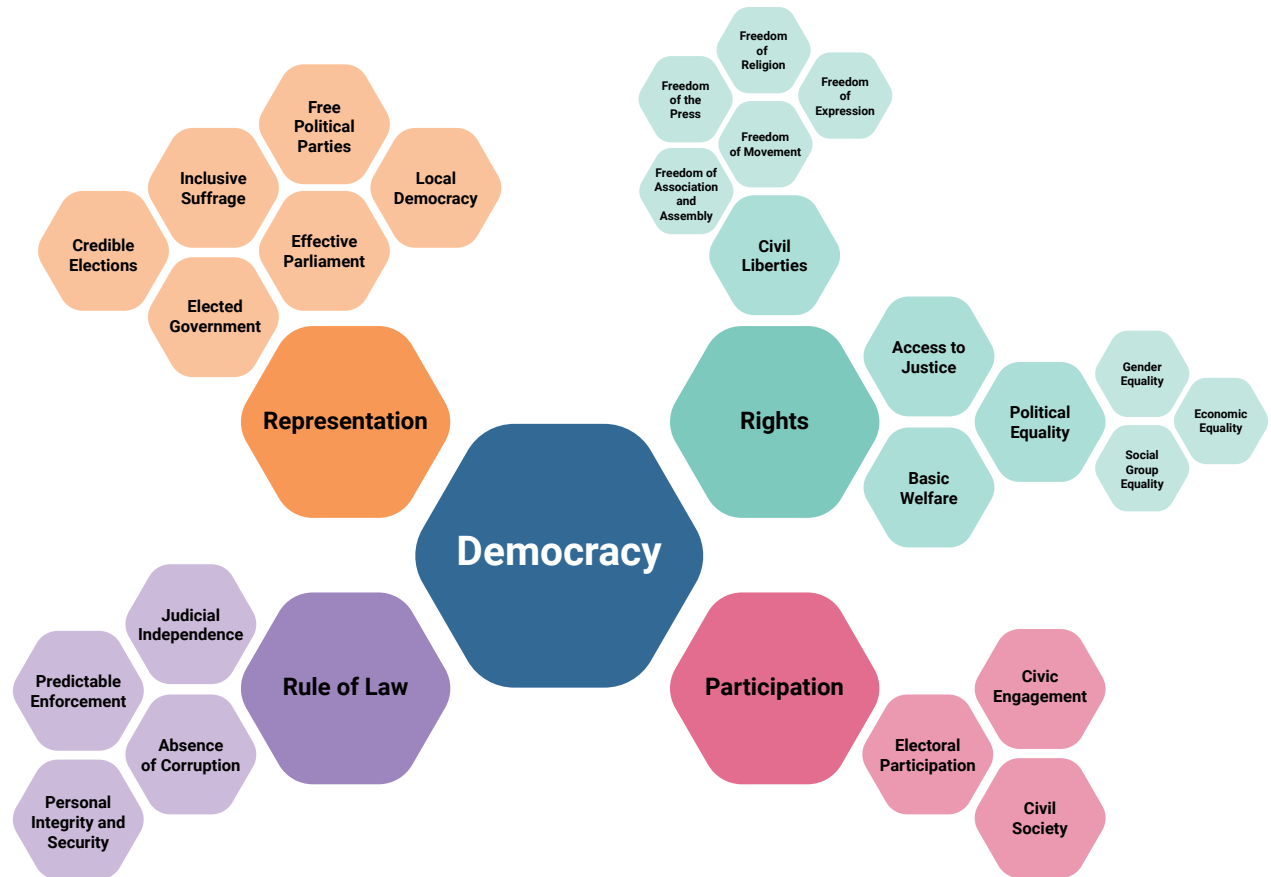
Similarly, while the use of months as the unit of time has some disadvantages, it appears to be a unit that is both useful and manageable. Monthly event reports are published by the middle of each month and reflect the previous month's developments. In general, monthly event reports will strictly reflect what happened in one month only. When relevant, however, some flexibility can be applied in order to avoid creating artificial limitations in reporting that would hinder users as they look for information in the Democracy Tracker. Finally, there are exceptional cases when significant developments are identified and assessed as meeting the threshold of reporting several months after the actual event has taken place. In such cases, an event report is added retroactively as a standard or a 'to watch' report in the month the event took place.

2.2. CONCEPTS

Many aspects of the Democracy Tracker's methodology are anchored by International IDEA's conceptual framework of democracy, originally created for a qualitative assessment process (the State of Democracy Assessments) and in its most recent iteration formulated for the GSoD Indices.

The framework is hierarchical and is based on four core categories of democratic attributes—Representation, Rights, Participation and the Rule of Law. The four categories are made up of factors (such as Credible Elections or Judicial Independence). Finally, at the lowest level are subfactors (such as Freedom of Expression or Social Group Equality). Please refer to the GSoD Indices [methodology](#) and [codebook](#) for more detailed information on the GSoD conceptual framework.

Figure 2.1. Global State of Democracy Indices conceptual framework



Chapter 3

TYPES OF REPORTS

3.1. STANDARD EVENT REPORTS

Most of the event reports in the Democracy Tracker take the form of a standardized summary of what analysts consider to be the most important democracy-related developments every month. These reports include a narrative describing the event, its context and its significance. Analysts are asked to do this as concisely as possible, ideally using between 500 and 1,000 characters to convey only the necessary information. Data users can access linked sources for further details as necessary. Analysts also provide an assessment of the direction and magnitude of each event using the five-point scale (see 4.3.2: Coding event impacts). These narratives are drafted by the analysts and edited and fact-checked by the staff tasked with quality control (see below).

3.2. 'TO WATCH' REPORTS

In some cases, recent events have not reached the level of significant change required for a standard report, but there is good reason to believe that an ongoing process will reach that threshold within a year. These events may be reported as 'to watch' (see 4.2: Inclusion rules for further details on the reporting of this type of event). Because the anticipated impacts have not yet materialized, such events are reported with neutral coding (which differs from the standard event reports).

3.3. ELECTION REPORTS

Elections are at the core of contemporary democratic practice and as such are always reported in the Democracy Tracker. Neutral event reports are therefore written for every national election. They contain straightforward, non-judgemental descriptions of the official results and other key data (for the guidance on the content of the election report, see 4.2.4: National elections). The neutrality of the election reports means that they do not include coding of the direction or magnitude of any impact of the election on the quality of democracy in the country.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1. DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process involves a comprehensive review of online and print news media items and expert reports and analysis relating to democracy in each of the 173 countries at monthly intervals. Analysts primarily use two large-scale media monitoring services that collect media and expert reporting from around the world, supplemented by country-specific data sources and individual expert inputs where needed.

The first media monitoring source is [Nexis Newsdesk™](#), produced by the publisher LexisNexis. Nexis Newsdesk allows access to reporting from more than 100,000 media outlets, covering 235 countries and regions, and includes content in more than 100 languages. In collaboration with the content experts at LexisNexis, analysts have created a number of complex Boolean queries that identify the media reports that are relevant to the aspects of democratic performance that are covered by the Democracy Tracker. The search results are often filtered and denoised using Nexis Newsdesk's tools, which leverage the known characteristics of media sources to identify the most useful and authoritative reporting. These tools are used differently depending on the volume of media and expert coverage in each country (i.e. more filters are required in larger countries with more media outlets). Nexis Newsdesk includes both free and licensed content, including subscriptions to the main print sources in many countries. Analysts make frequent use of in-browser translations to read content published in languages that they do not read.

The second media monitoring source is the [Global Database of Events, Language and Tone](#) (GDEL), which covers online media in 65 languages. GDEL scrapes many thousands of news sites for content, and is updated at 15-minute intervals. The various data products within GDEL are freely

available for access and download through Google's BigQuery service. The Democracy Tracker uses the GDELT 2.0 Event Database. Each month, Democracy Tracker staff use BigQuery to run an SQL query using dates and [Conflict and Mediation Event Observations](#) (CAMEO) event codes to identify the stories that are relevant to the Democracy Tracker (based on the selection of specific types of events that are specifically related to its conceptual framework—see Annex D) and download the output as a comma-separated values (CSV) file. This file is then further filtered and cleaned in R (software for statistical computing and data visualization) and distributed to the full team. Each entry in this monthly data set includes a number of variables describing matters such as where the event took place, when the news item was published, the number of other stories that mentioned the event and a URL for a representative news item on the event. Analysts use the event codes and URLs to determine which items should be read in more detail and use a web browser to access the relevant media reports. As with Nexis Newsdesk, in-browser translations are frequently used.

Finally, as necessary, analysts also consult major news sources in the countries to which they are assigned as a final step to ensure that nothing has been missed. In each region, there are some relatively authoritative news sources and analysts give special attention to events reported in these news outlets.

Beyond news media, analysts utilize information reported by national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies. Wherever possible, analysts also consult primary sources, including court judgments, legislation, election observation reports and official government communications. In cases where information is difficult to find, the publicly available information is not consistent or the event is controversial or sensitive, or if analysts assess that on-the-ground verification/supplemental information is necessary, analysts consult with International IDEA's regionally based experts and country offices, and other local experts and partners.

Analysts will not include events that have only been reported in low-quality media sources, or which are not reported by multiple independent media and expert sources. However, events reported by only one media source can be included if the source has a reputation for quality of international standing or if the story can be verified by International IDEA's regional and country-based staff or by International IDEA's partners. For example, if a major national newspaper or an international wire service published exclusive reporting on a significant event, this can be included even if other media organizations cannot confirm the report. Whenever possible, analysts will include at least one local source in addition to international sources.

4.2. INCLUSION RULES

Having used news media and expert data sources to comprehensively assess what has taken place in a given country, in a given month analysts must then decide which events should be reported in the Democracy Tracker. As noted above, events are selected for reporting on the basis that they signal a significant change in the status quo, either positive or negative. In addition to these, the Democracy Tracker also reports events that signal such a change is very likely in the near future (events 'to watch') and all national elections.

The Democracy Tracker is not intended to be a comprehensive accounting of political events. Instead, the value added is in classifying events and describing their impact on the quality of specific aspects of democracy. This means that many events that have political significance are not reported, because they are a continuation of the status quo. Many final decisions about what to include are made at the quality control stage, as more senior staff are consulted about what may constitute a notable change in the status quo.

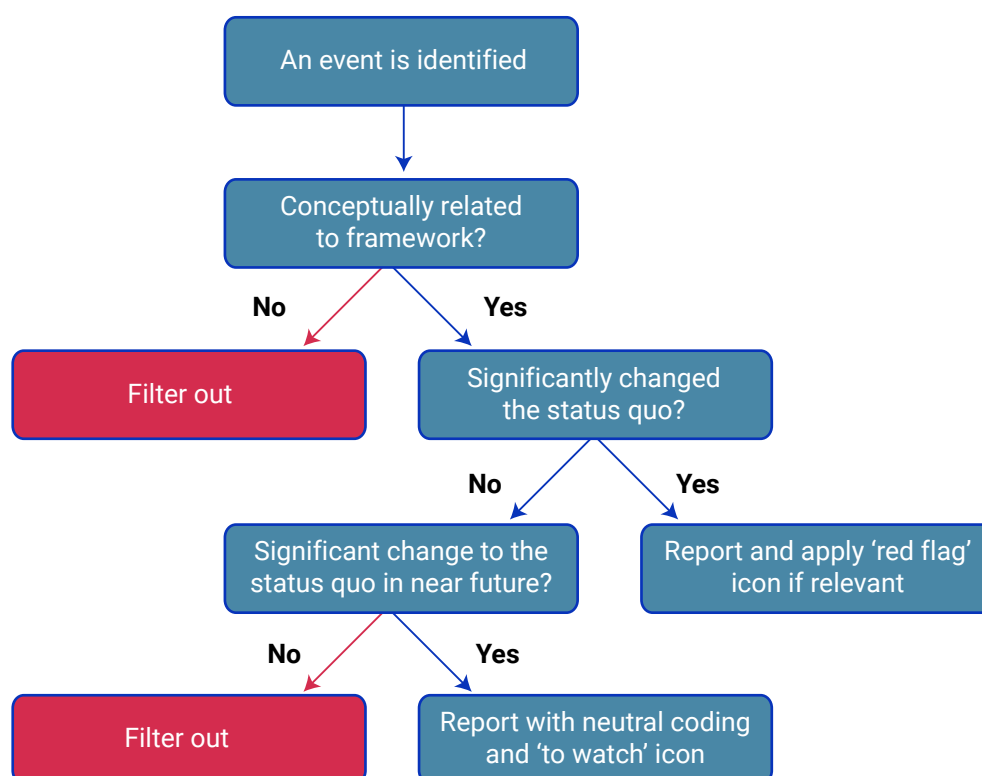
As noted above, all national elections are reported in the Democracy Tracker. For all other events, analysts use the following questions to decide whether or not an event should be reported (see also an illustration of the decision-making process in Figure 4.1):

- Is the event closely related to a concept in the GSoD conceptual framework?
 - If yes, the analyst moves on to the next question.
 - If no, the event is filtered out.
- Has the impact of the event changed the status quo in the country to such an extent that it will very likely prompt a change in the current GSoD Indices score(s)?
 - If yes, the analyst reports the event and codes the direction and magnitude of the impact of the event for the relevant concepts (and may add a 'red flag' icon where relevant—see 4.3: Coding procedure for details of coding and icons).
 - If no, the analyst moves on to the next question.
- Is the event notable in and of itself and is it very likely to have a significant impact on the status quo in the country in the next 12 months?
 - If yes, the analyst reports the event with neutral impacts and applies the 'to watch' icon.
 - If no, the event is not reported.

4.2.1. Conceptually related to the GSoD framework

To ensure alignment between the GSoD Indices and the Democracy Tracker, events are only reported when they bear a close conceptual relationship to one or more of the categories, factors or subfactors in the GSoD Indices conceptual framework (see Figure 2.1). To help them define the parameters of the framework, analysts may consult the GSoD Indices methodology (which defines

Figure 4.1. Inclusion decisions flowchart



the concepts); however, a broader understanding of the concepts is often appropriate for the qualitative assessments made in the Democracy Tracker.

Examples of types of issues that are not directly measured by the GSoD Indices but are still sufficiently related to the core concept include (a) those that focus on suffrage (the GSoD Indices include only de jure measures of suffrage, while the Democracy Tracker includes de facto disenfranchisement and special voting arrangements); (b) gender-based violence (GBV) (the GSoD Indices do not include GBV as part of Gender Equality but the Democracy Tracker does include GBV stories when they have significant impacts at the country level); and (c) digitalization (the GSoD Indices cover digital aspects of the freedom of information, but the Democracy Tracker reports broader digitalization and democracy issues). The Democracy Tracker also includes (d) events that focus on non-citizens (e.g. migrants, refugees and asylum seekers). These events are reported in the country in which the event takes place (i.e. a story on the capsizing of a migrant boat off the coast of Italy would be coded in Italy if the Italian authorities had the responsibility to respond).

Please see the concept descriptions in Annex E for a comprehensive description of what is included in each factor.

Decision-making examples

Egypt, August 2023

As of August, the Egyptian Government has been implementing daily power cutbacks to manage a nationwide energy crisis. However, these measures have been disproportionately affecting the poorest areas in the country, where access to electricity is now severely limited. This has significant implications for economic and social rights, as it disrupts essential services such as lighting, refrigeration and electronic communication. The situation has been exacerbated by a severe heatwave since mid-July, with the resulting frequent and lengthy power outages making conditions even more challenging for Egyptians. The energy crisis is also impacting Egypt's tourism industry, with many establishments turning to fuel generators due to constant power interruptions. These ongoing issues represent a significant socio-economic challenge for the country, symbolizing wider problems under President Sisi's administration. Experts warn that the sustained crisis could potentially disrupt essential services, including hospitals and medical centres.

Proposed categories: Rights

Proposed factors: Basic Welfare, Political Equality

Proposed subfactors: Social Group Equality

Decision: NOT REPORTED. Insufficiently strong connection to the category, factors and subfactor proposed.

Taiwan, August 2023

Taiwan's legislature swiftly responded to the country's latest #MeToo movement and recent high-profile cases triggered by the hit show, *Wave Makers*, amending three key laws on sexual harassment. On 31 July, amendments to the Gender Equity Education Act, Act of Gender Equality in Employment and Sexual Harassment Prevention Act were passed. These changes introduce harsher penalties, including up to three-year jail terms and substantial fines, along with longer statute of limitations and broader definitions of sexual harassment. The ruling party also took prompt action to remove officials implicated in sexual misconduct cases. However, critics argue that these amendments, while a 'legislative milestone', fall short in addressing harassment beyond the workplace. Activists call for increased fines to prevent retaliation and more targeted educational initiatives to challenge societal attitudes towards sexual harassment.

Categories: Rights

Factors: Political Equality

Subfactors: Gender Equality

Decision: REPORTED. The event concerned sexual harassment, a form of GBV. GBV is only partially measured by the GSoD Indices but it is a fundamental aspect of gender equality and so the necessary conceptual relationship between the event and the framework was judged to exist.

4.2.2. Status quo changed

The principal category of events reported by the Democracy Tracker are those which have significantly changed the quality of the country's democratic performance. The following non-exhaustive list of questions helps to guide this assessment:

1. Is this event part of an observed pattern for at least the last three months?
2. Is this event part of a broader phenomenon or pattern and does it add another dimension to that phenomenon or clearly entrench that phenomenon?
3. Is the impact of the event likely to be long-lasting?
4. If the scale of the event can be quantified (e.g. number of protesters/casualties/women elected), how does it compare with prior events of this sort?
5. Has the event brought about structural change (e.g. enactment of a law or a precedent-setting court judgment)?

Decision-making examples

Sweden, June 2023

Parliament approved amendments to the criminal code to strengthen the protection of journalists and prevent attacks on reporters. The changes aim to safeguard impartial reporting by journalists by minimizing the risk of exposure to threats which may affect their work or lead to self-censorship. The amendments ensure that crimes committed against a person because of their role as a journalist are assessed more harshly and carry higher penalties. Recent research by Lund University found a need for increased resources and priority within the legal system to address online harassment against journalists. The changes also introduce penal provisions to expressly prevent abuse and harassment against other 'socially beneficial functions', including personnel in healthcare, social services, rescue services and schools, to ensure the uninhibited performance of duties deemed critical for society and to protect occupations that are especially exposed to threats.

Decision: REPORTED. The new legislation brought about structural change in terms of the protection of journalists in Sweden and therefore constituted a significant change in the status quo with regard to Freedom of the Press.

Madagascar, August 2023

On 10 August, chief of staff to President Andry Rajoelina, Romy Voos Andrianarisoa, and a French associate (Philippe Tabuteau) were arrested in London on suspicion of soliciting a bribe from the mining firm Gemfields. The United Kingdom's National Crime Agency (NCA) alleges that Ms Andrianarisoa and Mr Tabuteau asked Gemfields to give them GBP 225,000 and a 5 per cent stake in any Gemfields projects in Madagascar in exchange for mining licences. The NCA made no allegation against President Rajoelina, who is running for re-election in November. Ms Andrianarisoa pled not guilty on 9 September and will face trial in early 2024.

Decision: NOT REPORTED. The charges had not been proven in court and there was no apparent connection with the President.

4.2.3. Future changes in the status quo (events ‘to watch’)

The Democracy Tracker also reports events that are notable in and of themselves and that are very likely to have an impact on the status quo in the country in the near future (i.e. within the next 12 months—this must be clearly communicated in the narrative of the report). Analysts only report this type of event when they are confident that the predicted impact will materialize in the near future. This is most often the case where the event is procedural, with a trajectory and impact that is reasonably foreseeable. An example would be the introduction or passage of a bill, the potential impact of which is indicated by its provisions and the path to enactment is governed by domestic rules. Bills awaiting executive or royal assent will be reported as ‘to watch’ when their likelihood of entering into force is uncertain or not imminent. Non-procedural events, such as state repression of protesters, or procedural events whose outcomes are generally less predictable (such as the arrest of senior opposition party leaders) are reported where the context allows the analyst to say with confidence that the event is likely to have an important impact on democracy and where their assessment is supported by the opinion of one or more country experts. A ‘to watch’ report includes descriptive text clarifying (a) how the event connects to the GSoD conceptual framework and (b) which future developments to monitor in order for the predicted impact on the status quo to materialize. ‘To watch’ reports should only be used if such future developments are not imminent. If the analyst expects such future developments to occur within a highly condensed timeframe (e.g. one month), the event can be captured in a standard report the following month.

Generally, when there are new developments related to the ongoing process which are expected to impact the status quo, the ‘to watch’ report is ‘closed’ through a new, standard report that conveys the end or closure of the process. See 4.4.1: Updates below for more details.

Every month, analysts from each region will select one ‘critical event to watch’, which will be featured on the Democracy Tracker homepage.

4.2.4. National elections

The critical importance of elections to democratic governance means that the Democracy Tracker reports all national elections. Election reports contain non-judgemental descriptions of the official results and other key data (for guidance on the content of the election report, see the list of information to cover below). The neutrality of the election reports means that the impacts of the event are not coded. However, it is important to note that, where the analyst determines that an aspect of the election marks a significant change in the status quo—for example in the level of repression, the number of women elected or other matters of substantive importance—they will report this in a separate, conventional event report in which the magnitude of the impacts is recorded with the usual directional coding. In general, election reports do not include the ideological positions of political parties, though there may be exceptional circumstances, for example to elucidate a change in political power dynamics or underscore the party’s significance given the country’s context and history.

Decision-making examples

Uganda, March 2023

On 21 March, Ugandan parliamentarians voted almost unanimously (389 to 2) to pass the Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2023, a piece of legislation which, if signed into law, would further restrict the human rights of LGBTQIA+ people in the country. While the rights of this community are already severely constrained under Ugandan law (e.g. same-sex sexual relations are illegal and LGBTQIA+ rights groups are prevented from registering with the state), the Bill would expand these restrictions in important respects. It would, for example, criminalize identifying as an LGBTQIA+ person and 'promoting homosexuality', which would likely include advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights and financially supporting such advocacy and so could have significant implications for civil society engagement. These crimes would be punishable with lengthy prison sentences. The version of the Bill amended on 21 March (yet to be published) also includes the death penalty for the crime of 'aggravated homosexuality' (where same-sex relations are carried out in one of a select list of 'aggravating' circumstances, e.g. where the offender is a serial offender or the victim is under 18). President Yoweri Museveni has 30 days to assent or reject the legislation.

Decision: REPORTED. The Anti-Homosexuality Bill had been passed by the legislature but not yet signed into law. However, its strong support among legislators and supportive comments from President Museveni had indicated that it would be signed into law within six months. Expert legal analysis of the Bill stated that, if enacted, it would significantly change the status quo with regard to LGBTQIA+ rights.

Senegal, March 2023

In the lead up to the 2024 presidential election, Ousmane Sonko has emerged as a likely candidate to challenge President Macky Sall (who is widely expected to seek a third term). Sonko's potential candidacy is impaired by two criminal trials: one involving charges of rape and death threats, and another involving an accusation of libel against a government minister. As the date of the first trial approached at the end of March, his supporters clashed with police in a number of locations across the country. Adding to the tensions, Sonko made accusations of an assassination attempt after he was exposed to a chemical irritant as he was physically forced into the court building. Sonko's first trial ended on 30 March. He was found guilty of libel but given a two-month suspended sentence that will not prevent his candidacy. The rape trial is yet to begin but can be expected to generate unrest when it does.

Decision: REPORTED. The event was very likely to prompt a significant escalation in anti-government protest and state harassment of government opponents in the near future.

Romania, October 2023

An open letter was addressed to the Romanian Parliament by 56 NGOs and academics, calling for the introduction of legislated gender quotas in parliamentary elections. Romanian law requires all political parties to ensure that men and women are represented on electoral lists, without specifying any minimum representation levels. A bill, pending in Parliament since 2022, would require candidate lists for parliamentary elections to the Chamber of the Deputies and the Senate to be composed of at least 33 per cent women. The window for electoral reform before the November 2024 elections is closing, where amendments can be made up to one year before elections. The letter, initiated by women's rights NGO FILIA Center, calls for the introduction of zipper measures, to ensure women candidates have access to eligible positions rather than being relegated to the bottom of the electoral lists. In the 2016 and 2020 elections, women made up around 30 per cent of candidates. The current Chamber of the Deputies, the lower house of Parliament, is comprised of 19 per cent female lawmakers.

Decision: NOT REPORTED. The event was not critical or mature enough to be reported. This could be reported, however, if and when more specific steps are taken in the future (e.g. if the legislation progresses further).

Election reports constitute neutral descriptions of the official results and will cover (subject to the availability of information close to the election):

- the date(s) on which voting took place;
- which offices were contested in the election;
- the official election results, including vote share to one decimal place (note: in the case of legislative elections, election results are conveyed in terms of seats won by leading candidates and political parties; vote share is optional);
- any legal challenges to the results;
- key findings of election observers (where available);
- voter turnout to one decimal place; and
- number of women elected and number of women candidates.

Election report example

Maldives, September 2023

Mohammed Muizzu, the opposition candidate from the Progressive Alliance (a coalition of the Progressive Party of Maldives and People's National Congress), won the presidential run-off on 30 September with 54 per cent of the vote, defeating Ibrahim Solih of the Maldivian Democratic Party. The run-off followed the 9 September election, where no candidate secured the minimum 50 per cent of required votes. Voter turnout increased from 79.98 per cent on 9 September to 87.31 per cent on 30 September. A record eight candidates ran in the election, with no female candidates. Transparency Maldives reported overall peaceful elections despite isolated incidents of violence.

4.3. CODING PROCEDURE

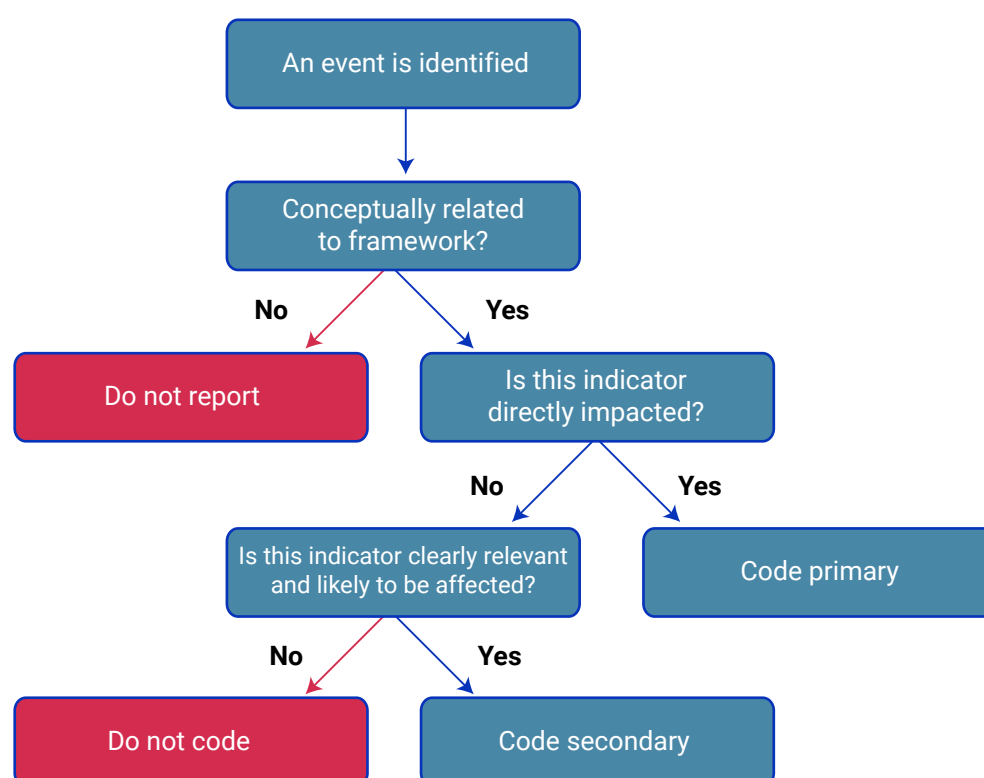
4.3.1. Areas of impact

If an event merits inclusion, the next step is to code the direction and magnitude of the impact of the event with reference to the relevant categories, factors and subfactors of democratic performance. These indicators are coded at two levels—primary and secondary. This shows which aspects of democracy are principally impacted by the event and which aspects are secondarily impacted. Coding takes place first at the lowest level of analysis (i.e. the factor or subfactor). Coding the direction and magnitude of the impact of an event at the factor level then necessitates coding the category as well (see below for further details). The following guidelines are used to make the distinction between primary- and secondary-level coding:

1. If an indicator is principally impacted by an event (i.e. it is directly and significantly impacted), it will be coded as primary.
2. If a factor is secondarily impacted by an event (i.e. it is relevant but not directly impacted), it will be coded as secondary. The effects of the event on the secondary factor will be coded as neutral (zero on the five-point scale).

This decision-making process is also illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Primary and secondary factors



4.3.2. Coding event impacts

Having determined which factors have been impacted, the next step is to code the magnitude of the impact. Each standard event report in the Democracy Tracker is coded on a five-point scale (ranging from 'exceptionally positive' to 'exceptionally negative') indicating the magnitude and direction of an event's impact on relevant categories and factors of democracy (as defined by the GSoD Indices, see Figure 2.1). 'To watch' events always take on a neutral coding. As noted above, for each event, directional coding takes place at the lowest level of the theoretical framework (either the factor or subfactor level depending on the factor) and then at the category level. While rare, it is possible to code an event as having different directional impacts

Coding examples

Azerbaijan, August 2023

Former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo published a report arguing the ongoing Azerbaijani blockade of the disputed majority Armenian territory of Nagorno-Karabakh should be considered genocide on 7 August. On 15 August, the Nagorno Karabakh Human Rights Defender's Office said a man had starved to death, marking the first death as a result of the months-long blockade which has prevented food, medicine, fuel and electricity from reaching the region. A UN Security Council meeting on the crisis on 16 August failed to result in a statement, as Azerbaijan's close ally and non-permanent member Türkiye disputed Armenia's claims and defended Azerbaijan's justification to blockade the region.

RED FLAG

Primary categories: Rule of Law

Primary factors: Personal Integrity and Security

Primary subfactors: N/A

Secondary categories: Rights

Secondary factors: Civil Liberties, Political Equality, Basic Welfare

Secondary subfactors: Freedom of Movement, Social Group Equality

Guatemala, July 2023

Concern over the integrity of Guatemala's presidential race arose after the Constitutional Court suspended the certification of the first-round electoral results pending the review of ballots, after rival parties complained about alleged inconsistencies in votes. The measure was widely criticized as unwarranted. After the delay in announcing official results, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal confirmed that Bernardo Arevalo and Sandra Torres would face each other in a run-off. In the weeks after the first-round, upon the request of a special anti-graft prosecutor, a lower court granted the suspension of Arevalo's Semilla party. Also at the request of the anti-graft prosecutor, warrants were granted to carry out a raid on Semilla party's headquarters as part of an investigation into the authenticity of signatures during the process of the party's registration, last year. Prosecutors also carried out searches of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, actions denounced by the UN, EU and Guatemalan protesters, particularly due to the legal framework that prohibits the suspension of a political party while an electoral process is underway. The Constitutional Court blocked the suspension of Semilla party so the run-off can go ahead.

Primary categories: Rule of Law

Primary factors: Predictable Enforcement

Primary subfactors: N/A

Secondary categories: Representation

Secondary factors: Credible Elections, Free Political Parties

Secondary subfactors: N/A

Ecuador, May 2023

President Lasso has issued an executive decree that authorizes the armed forces to participate in operations against cartels, in coordination with national police, to address the 'terrorist threat' that organized crime poses. The decree follows a resolution by the country's security council, in which it found that gangs use terrorist tactics and recommended that the executive address such threats through armed action. Analysts and human rights experts fear that the measure will lead to abuses and a disproportionate use of force.

Primary categories: Rights, Rule of Law

Primary factors: Civil Liberties, Personal Integrity and Security

Primary subfactors: Freedom of Movement

Secondary categories: N/A

Secondary factors: N/A

Secondary subfactors: N/A

on the various relevant factors even within a single category. As the coding takes place primarily at the event level, this poses no immediate procedural problems. However, with upwards aggregation more rules must be applied.

Scale

Code	Meaning
Exceptionally positive	The event signals an <i>exceptionally positive</i> change in the status quo
Positive	The event signals a <i>significant positive</i> change in the status quo
Neutral	The event is neutral and does not impact on the status quo
Negative	The event signals a <i>significant negative</i> change in the status quo
Exceptionally negative	The event signals an <i>exceptionally negative</i> change in the status quo

Application of the scale

Having determined at the inclusion stage that the event represents a significant deviation from the status quo, the analyst has determined that the event merits inclusion. In assessing whether the magnitude of the event's impact has been exceptionally positive or negative, analysts are guided by the following questions.

Exceptionally positive:

1. Does this event reflect the codification of new rights or laws that protect democratic institutions and/or norms?
2. Does this event reflect a significant change in the context such that there are markedly more openings for democratic reform?
3. Is this event representative of the significant expansion of any individual factor or category, such that it will be difficult to describe the context without referencing this development?

Exceptionally negative:

1. Is this event a coup d'état, unconstitutional change of regime, political assassination or an outbreak of severe armed hostility?
2. Does this event include the pronouncement of genocide, crimes against humanity or other severe violations of international law?
3. Is this event representative of the severe degradation of any individual factor or category, such that it will be difficult to describe the context without referencing this development?

Once factor- or subfactor-level codes have been assigned, category-level codes are calculated. If only one factor or subfactor is coded, the associated category or factor code mirrors this lower-level code. If, however, there are two or more lower-level codes, they are averaged to produce the higher-level code. Finally, countries are assessed to have an overall direction for democratic

Coding examples

Russia, April 2023

Several bills signed into law on 28 April raised the maximum sentence for treason to life in prison and allowed for depriving naturalized citizens of their citizenship for ‘discrediting’ the armed forces. A decree signed by President Vladimir Putin on 27 April legalized the deportation of residents of illegally occupied Ukrainian territory who decline to take up Russian citizenship. The laws and decree are interpreted as providing the Russian state with more tools to punish and discourage dissent.

Event-level coding:

Primary categories: Rights (exceptionally negative)

Primary factors: Civil Liberties (exceptionally negative)

Primary subfactors: Freedom of Expression (exceptionally negative), Freedom of Movement (exceptionally negative)

Secondary categories, factors and subfactors: N/A

Ecuador, August 2023

In a referendum held on 20 August, over 58 per cent of voters chose to stop oil extraction in the Yasuni National Park, a UN protected biosphere located in the Amazon. In a second referendum, Ecuadorians also voted to ban all extraction activities in the Choco Andino tropical rainforest, near Quito, with around 68 per cent support.

Efforts to contain oil production in the Amazon had been spearheaded by Indigenous Peoples and environmental activists, many of them young people, for years. Officials across several administrations and the state’s oil company, Petroecuador, had argued that an end to oil development in Yasuni would lead to austerity measures with a negative impact on the economy. Petroecuador will have to dismantle its oil processing facilities and provide for reparations.

According to Human Rights Watch, the vote on the Yasuni is the first time a referendum has resulted in a ban on new and pre-existing fossil fuel exploration. Turnout for this referendum neared 83 per cent. Notably, the decision will benefit the Taromenane, Tagaeri and Dugakaeri peoples, who choose to live in isolation in the region, as the drilling activities impacted the quality of their water and resources. Environmental activists have organized to demand the government’s compliance with the referendum as, following the results, officials, including incumbent president Lasso, as well as the candidate currently leading in polls to succeed him, have expressed reservations about the government’s ability to implement the results in the given timeline.

Event-level coding:

Primary categories: Rights (exceptionally positive), Participation (exceptionally positive)

Primary factors: Political Equality (exceptionally positive), Civil Society (exceptionally positive), Civic Engagement (exceptionally positive)

Primary subfactors: Social Group Equality (exceptionally positive)

Secondary categories, factors and subfactors: N/A

performance at the country-month level, again using the five-point scale. These overall country codes reflect the averages of the country’s multiple event reports, if relevant, or simply mirror the sole event report that month. There are cases in which analysts’ expertise overrides the mathematical average. If one factor—in case of multiple factors coded to a single event—or one event—in case of multiple event reports—has a disproportionate impact on the political landscape, analysts may decide to code the country at large to reflect that impact. It is important to note that the overall direction for democratic performance applied at the country level is limited to the specific factors of democracy and to that month and does not in any way reflect an assessment of the overall democratic performance of that country.

Coding examples

Ethiopia, August 2023

The human rights situation in Ethiopia's Amhara region deteriorated in August, as heavy fighting broke out between the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and Amhara militias known as Fano. The fighting follows months of tension and sporadic clashes over the federal government's plans to disband the country's regional forces. It began in early August when Fano fighters moved into towns and cities across the region, where they attacked police stations and regional administrators. The federal government responded by moving in the ENDF, which reportedly struck urban areas with heavy weaponry. The fighting caused large-scale civilian casualties, disrupted access to basic services and confined residents to their homes. Reports also indicate that the government shut down the Internet and used broad powers acquired under a state of emergency declared on 4 August to carry out mass arrests, with journalists and an opposition MP among those detained. The UN called for an end to the arrests and the release of those arbitrarily detained.

Event-level coding:

Primary categories: Rights (negative), Rule of Law (negative)

Primary factors: Civil Liberties (neutral), Basic Welfare (negative), Personal Integrity and Security (negative)

Primary subfactors: Freedom of Movement (negative)

Secondary categories: Rights

Secondary factors: Civil Liberties

Secondary subfactors: Freedom of Expression, Freedom of the Press

Country-level coding:

Categories: Rights (negative), Rule of Law (negative)

Overall country-month score: negative

Senegal, July 2023

Event 1

President Macky Sall announced in July 2023 that he will not seek a third term in office. He had publicly entertained the possibility of running again in 2024, claiming that the revision of the Constitution in 2016 had effectively reset presidential term limits. While Sall's claims regarding the legality of a third term were never settled by a court, leaders including the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations described Sall's decision not to seek a third term as a positive example in the region.

Event-level coding:

Primary categories: Representation (positive)

Primary factors: Elected Government (positive)

Primary subfactors: N/A

Secondary categories, factors and subfactors: N/A

Coding examples (cont.)

Event 2

Following his earlier convictions on charges of defamation (May) and corruption of youth (June), opposition politician Ousmane Sonko was arrested and faced further criminal charges at the end of July. Sonko was charged with nine serious offences, including plotting an insurrection and criminal association with terrorists. Sonko has been a frontrunning candidate for the 2024 presidential election, but his past convictions may disqualify him.

Following the latest charges against Sonko, the political party he leads, Patriots of Senegal (PASTEF), was legally dissolved through a decree issued by the Interior Minister. The day after Sonko's latest arrest, prominent journalist Papé Alé Niang was also arrested and charged with calling for insurrection. Niang had posted a video on social media discussing Sonko's case. Both Sonko and Niang began hunger strikes soon after being arrested.

Event-level coding:

Primary categories: Rights (negative), Representation (negative)

Primary factors: Civil Liberties (negative), Free Political Parties (negative)

Primary subfactors: Freedom of Expression (negative), Freedom of the Press (negative)

Secondary categories: Rule of Law

Secondary factors: Personal Integrity and Security

Secondary subfactors: N/A

Country-level coding:

Categories: Representation (neutral), Rights (negative)

Overall country-month score: Negative

4.4. OTHER ELEMENTS OF EVENT REPORTS

4.4.1. Updates

Considering that months are the Democracy Tracker's units of time, reports are only updated after publication on an exceptional basis. When there is a new development related to an already published standard event report, an update is provided in the original report. The update is labelled as such and includes the date of the update.

For 'to watch' reports, generally, new information related to an ongoing process that is expected to impact the status quo will be included in the Democracy Tracker as a new standard report that conveys the end or closure of that process and the original 'to watch' report will be included as a source to the new report. In exceptional circumstances, when a new development is considered crucial for users' understanding of the process that is being followed but the process as such is still ongoing, concise updates may be added to the original report and are also labelled and dated.

In election reports regarding countries where run-off elections are held, a single report with the initial results is published and will include an update with the final run-off results that is labelled and shows the date of the update.

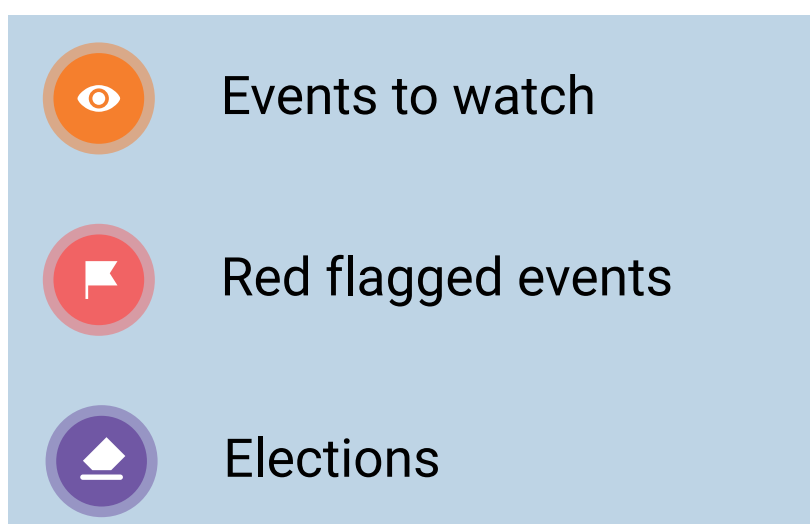
4.4.2. Tags

In addition to coding the relevance of the events to the categories and factors of democracy, analysts also assign tags to the events that facilitate searching and filtering the data later. These tags include important concepts and political institutions, and the names of people (such as heads of government) and institutions (such as courts, electoral authorities and political parties) that are named in the reports. Events that are relevant to more than one country are tagged as 'transnational'. Sustainable Development Goals goals 5, 10 and 16 are also tagged to event reports coded with corresponding categories, factors and subfactors of the GSoD conceptual framework, to enable further research and contribute to monitoring the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

4.4.3. Icons

Icons are applied by analysts to the reports of the three exceptional types of events: (a) events to watch; (b) red flagged events; and (c) national elections. 'To watch' reports and national elections reports have been described above. The Democracy Tracker applies red flags to notably egregious events, including assassinations of national politicians, coups d'état or other unconstitutional regime changes, outbreaks of severe intrastate or interstate hostilities, or reports of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or ethnic cleansing from authoritative sources such as the UN. Please note that attempted political assassinations are usually coded as -1 while successful assassinations are usually coded as -2, most commonly with regard to Personal Integrity and Security and Free Political Parties. Elected Government and Credible Elections may also be coded, depending on the timing and nature of the event. The application of a red flag in cases of political assassinations is restricted to senior politicians, with the exception of few extraordinary cases, in view of contexts where political violence is widespread.

Figure 4.3. Examples of icons



4.4.4. Archived sources

The source material for the event reports is almost without exception online. As online media sites are subject to various interruptions and URL changes, analysts are required to archive reliable sources for the events and to provide links to the archived pages in the event reports. The Democracy Tracker uses [Perma.cc](#) for this purpose. This is a subscription-based service developed and maintained by the Harvard Law School Library in conjunction with other university law libraries in the United States and has significant contingencies in place to ensure link accessibility even if the initiative shuts down at some point. Articles with paywalls and licensed content are also archived with Perma.cc (even if the entire content is not visible). Users with the relevant subscription can access the full article directly from the source.

4.5. QUALITY CONTROL

Difficult decisions are made at two stages of the Democracy Tracker data collection and reporting process, namely (a) in choosing which events to report; and (b) in interpreting the significance of those events. DA regional analysts in the project team make these calls in the first instance. However, the DA senior adviser, the Democracy Tracker Coordinator and the Head of the DA Unit ('quality controllers') check the event reports for accuracy and quality. In this way, at least five individuals have verified each of the event reports.

Each month, the DA analysts complete their research, consult regional colleagues and partners (as necessary), draft their reports and code the impact of the events. These first drafts are reviewed by the DA senior adviser, the Democracy Tracker Coordinator and the Head of the DA Unit. In especially sensitive or controversial cases, these first drafts are also reviewed by regionally based colleagues and International IDEA's Director of Global Programmes. These quality controllers verify the accuracy of the reporting, confirm or amend the directional codings and more broadly ensure that the event reports are of a high quality. It is common at this stage that quality controllers suggest dropping several event reports that do not meet the standard of signalling a significant change in the status quo. After this first round of review, the analysts edit the event reports to incorporate the changes requested by the quality controllers and resubmit the event reports for a second review. During this second review, quality controllers verify that the changes they requested have been completed and again review the overall quality of the reporting. When necessary, a second round of revisions may take place. Event reports are not published until they receive final clearance from the Democracy Tracker Coordinator and the Head of the DA Unit.

4.6. STAFF

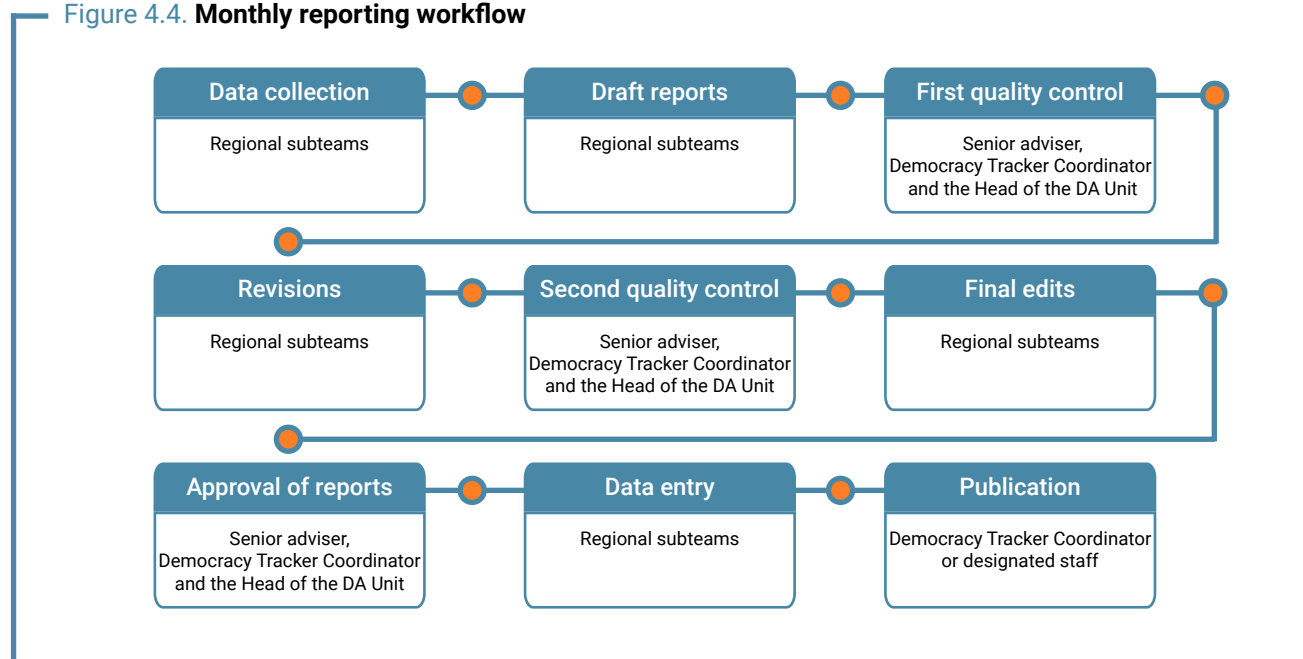
The Democracy Tracker is maintained by the DA Unit at International IDEA's Global Programmes division in Stockholm. The DA Unit ensures gender parity among its staff, who come from and have professional experience in a diverse array of countries representing all the regions covered by the Democracy Tracker. Work for the Democracy Tracker is overseen by the Head of the DA Unit and coordinated by a designated adviser. The data collection, reporting and quality control tasks are assigned to regional subteams. These groupings follow International IDEA's broad regional divisions: Africa and Western Asia, Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. An adviser and associate programme officer are responsible for the primary data collection, with the adviser overseeing the overall regional work. The senior adviser, the Democracy Tracker Coordinator and the Head of the DA Unit are responsible for quality control.

Additional oversight and guidance will be provided by a steering committee set up by International IDEA. The goal is for this committee to validate the research methods used in the Democracy Tracker and oversee the management of findings that are politically sensitive. The development of this committee is under discussion.

4.7. WORKFLOW

The various elements of the monthly reporting process are described in more detail in the subsequent sections of this guide. However, the basic steps in the process are depicted in the workflow schematic in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4. Monthly reporting workflow



4.8. DEVELOPING AND VALIDATING THE METHODOLOGY

In developing and validating the Democracy Tracker methodology, International IDEA consulted peer organizations that have developed similar tools, as well as expert methodologists in academia. Select examples include the International Crisis Group's [CrisisWatch](#) tool and Uppsala University's [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#).

Chapter 5

USER GUIDE

5.1. COUNTRY PAGES

5.1.1. Country profile overview

Monthly event reports are featured on individual country pages. Each country page includes qualitative and quantitative background data to provide an overview of the country's democracy landscape, as described below.

5.1.2. Country briefs

Each country page features a brief that sets out the country's political context. Among other things, the briefs describe how the country performs at the category level, recent trends in the annual GSoD Indices data, relevant socio-political history, politically salient social cleavages, primary drivers of politics and an outlook on political developments to watch over the next 10 years. As an example, the first paragraph of the country brief for Namibia is copied in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Example of a country brief

Namibia is a **mid-range performing** democracy. Over the past five years, there have been declines in Clean Elections, Judicial Independence, Absence of Corruption, and Electoral Participation. Economically, Namibia is one of the **wealthiest countries** in Sub-Saharan Africa and an **upper-middle income** economy, though it suffers from high levels of **economic inequality**. **Mining, fishing, and agriculture** are key industries, and the **tourism sector** has recently become quite significant. In 2022, **major oil discoveries** were made in Namibian waters that have the potential to revolutionize the country's economy. Namibia is also characterized by its very **low population density**.

5.1.3. Basic information boxes

Complementing the narrative text of the country briefs are a series of key data points describing the institutional features of a country's political system, recent elections, the representation of women in the legislature and the country's engagement with the UN's Universal Periodic Review (a mechanism for reviewing member states' human rights records). The information is updated using the sources listed in Annex B.

Figure 5.2. Example of basic information box

Basic Information

POPULATION

2 587 340

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

Presidential system

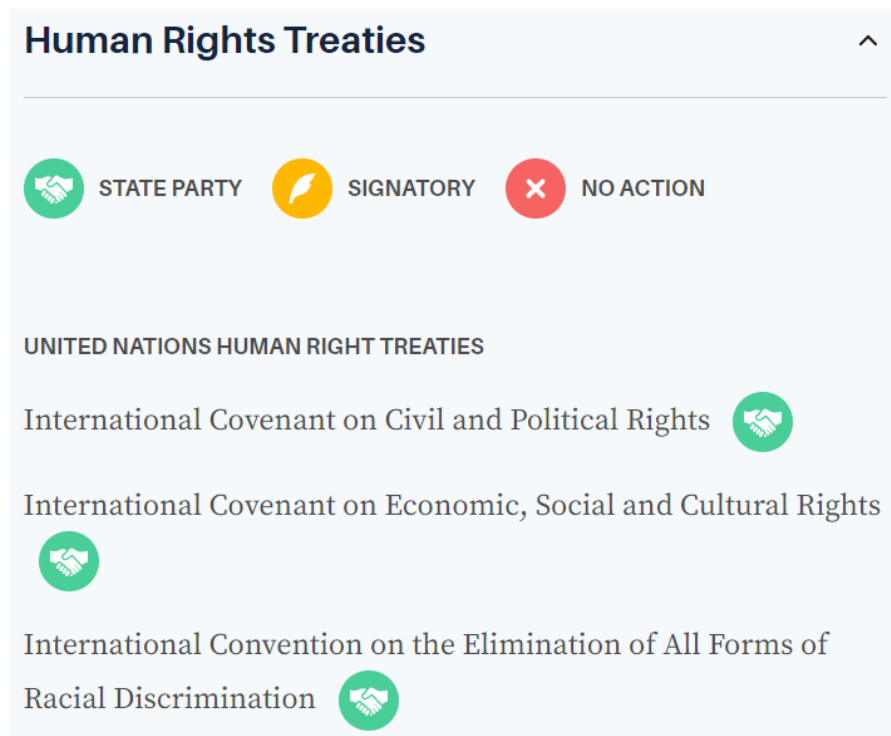
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT

Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa (since 2015)

5.1.4. Human rights treaty boxes

Users are given a further indication of how countries engage with the international human rights system through summary information on the ratification status of three sets of human rights treaties—the UN's core international human rights treaties, the International Labour Organization's Fundamental Conventions and the principal regional human rights treaties. This information is updated annually using the sources listed in Annex C. An example of a country's ratification status of human rights treaties is shown in Figure 5.3.

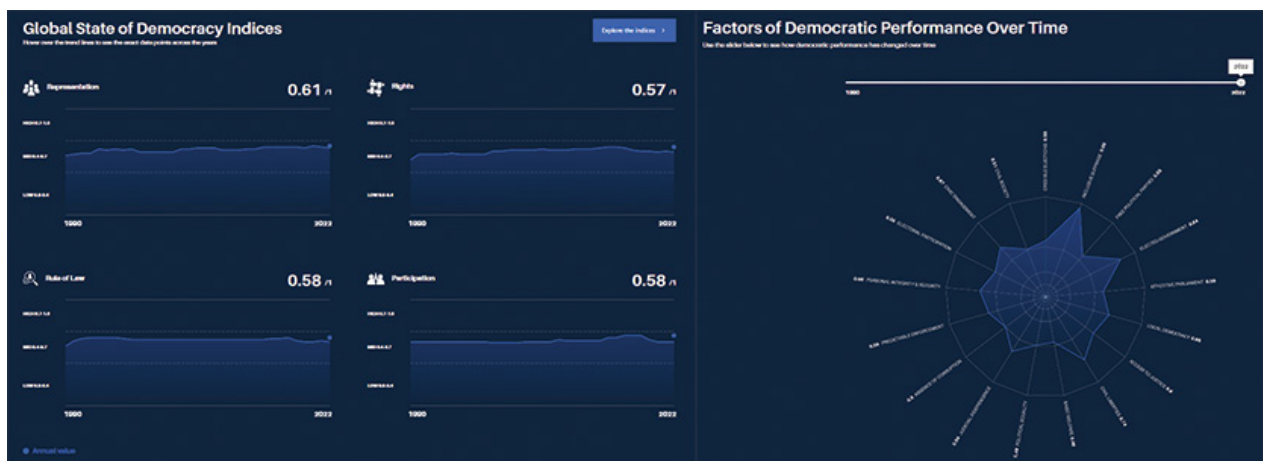
Figure 5.3. Example of human rights treaty box



5.1.5. Global State of Democracy Indices data

The country pages also feature visualizations of key GSoD Indices data. The global ranking data show the country's ranking per category of democratic performance from the most recent data set. Trendlines show the country's performance on the GSoD Indices' four categories since 1975 to date. A spider chart offers the user an overview of the state of democracy in the country, illustrating performance levels across the GSoD Indices' 17 factors of democracy. An interactive slider allows users to produce a spider chart for any year.

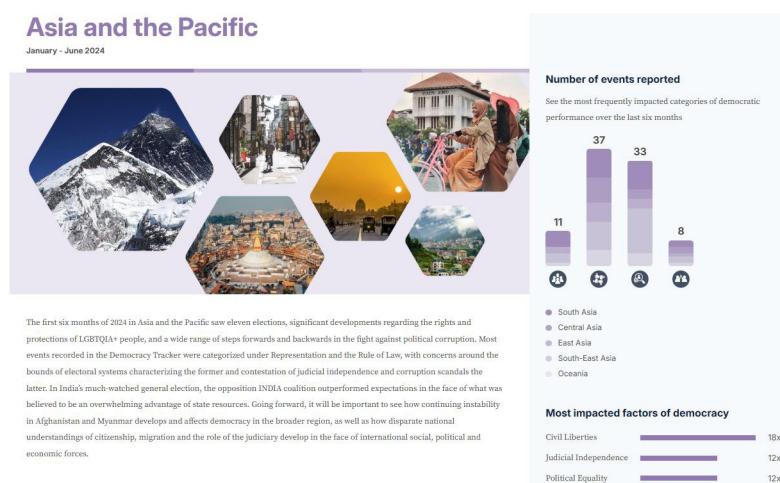
Figure 5.4. Example of visualization of GSoD Indices data



5.2. REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PAGES

In addition to country pages, the Democracy Tracker offers regional and global summary pages on a biannual basis. Regional and global pages highlight and analyse the most important trends from the last six months, as well as what to watch. They also feature visual data, including a spider chart which shows regional or global averages of the 17 factors from the latest data set, as well as bar charts with the most frequently impacted categories and factors of democratic performance.

Figure 5.5. Example of a regional profile



5.3. DATA ARCHIVE

In addition to being published on the relevant country profile pages and the main content on the home page, event reports are accessible to users in a data archive. There, users are able to filter the event reports and download them as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

When a user downloads the data archive, the file will include the variables listed in Table 5.1.

5.4. MONTHLY ALERTS

The alert system allows users to receive a customized selection of reports every month. Users are able to select parameters tailored to their interests, including the regions and countries, aspects of democracy, positive/neutral/negative events and election reports.

Table 5.1. Variables in data archive

Variable	Description
country_name	The short name of the country for which the event was reported
region_name	The name of the region in which the event was reported
month	The month in which the event took place
year	The year in which the event took place
upload_date	The date on which the event was added to the Democracy Tracker database
event_title	A short description of the event
event_text	A summary of what took place in the event (generally 500–1,000 characters)
url	The location on the Democracy Tracker website where the event report can be found
tags	A list of proper nouns, event types and concepts that are relevant to the event, separated by commas
red_flag_value	A binary record of whether or not a red flag icon was applied to the event (1=red flag, 0=no red flag)
to_watch	A binary record of whether or not a 'to watch' icon was applied to the event (1=indicator applied, 0=not applied)
election	A binary record of whether or not an election icon was applied to the event (1=election, 0=no election)
representation	Records the directional coding for the Representation category. When the category is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
rights	Records the directional coding for the Rights category. When the category is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
rule_of_law	Records the directional coding for the Rule of Law category. When the category is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
participation	Records the directional coding for the Participation category. When the category is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
credible_elections	Records the directional coding for the Credible Elections factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
inclusive_suffrage	Records the directional coding for the Inclusive Suffrage factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
free_political_parties	Records the directional coding for the Free Political Parties factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
elected_government	Records the directional coding for the Elected Government factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
effective_parliament	Records the directional coding for the Effective Parliament factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty

Table 5.1. Variables in data archive (cont.)

Variable	Description
local_democracy	Records the directional coding for the Local Democracy factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
access_to_justice	Records the directional coding for the Access to Justice factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
civil_liberties	Records the directional coding for the Civil Liberties factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
basic_welfare	Records the directional coding for the Basic Welfare factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
political_equality	Records the directional coding for the Political Equality factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
judicial_independence	Records the directional coding for the Judicial Independence factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
personal_integrity_and_security	Records the directional coding for the Personal Integrity and Security factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
predictable_enforcement	Records the directional coding for the Predictable Enforcement factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
absence_of_corruption	Records the directional coding for the Absence of Corruption factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
civil_society	Records the directional coding for the Civil Society factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
civic_engagement	Records the directional coding for the Civic Engagement factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
electoral_participation	Records the directional coding for the Electoral Participation factor. When the factor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
freedom_of_expression	Records the directional coding for the Freedom of Expression subfactor. When the subfactor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty.
freedom_of_the_press	Records the directional coding for the Freedom of the Press subfactor. When the subfactor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
freedom_of_association_and_assembly	Records the directional coding for the Freedom of Association and Assembly subfactor. When the subfactor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
freedom_of_religion	Records the directional coding for the Freedom of Religion subfactor. When the subfactor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
freedom_of_movement	Records the directional coding for the Freedom of Movement subfactor. When the subfactor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
social_group_equality	Records the directional coding for the Social Group Equality subfactor. When the subfactor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
gender_equality	Records the directional coding for the Gender Equality subfactor. When the subfactor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty
economic_equality	Records the directional coding for the Economic Equality subfactor. When the subfactor is not relevant to the event, the cell is empty

Annex A. Country list

The following countries are included in the Democracy Tracker's monthly reporting:

Afghanistan	Albania	Algeria
Angola	Argentina	Armenia
Australia	Austria	Azerbaijan
Bahrain	Bangladesh	Barbados
Belarus	Belgium	Benin
Bhutan	Bolivia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Botswana	Brazil	Bulgaria
Burkina Faso	Burundi	Cabo Verde
Cambodia	Cameroon	Canada
Central African Republic	Chad	Chile
China	Colombia	Comoros
Congo	Costa Rica	Côte d'Ivoire
Croatia	Cuba	Cyprus
Czechia	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark	Djibouti	Dominican Republic
Ecuador	Egypt	El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea	Eritrea	Estonia
Eswatini	Ethiopia	Fiji
Finland	France	Gabon
Gambia	Georgia	Germany
Ghana	Greece	Guatemala
Guinea	Guinea-Bissau	Guyana
Haiti	Honduras	Hungary
Iceland	India	Indonesia
Iran	Iraq	Ireland
Israel	Italy	Jamaica
Japan	Jordan	Kazakhstan

Kenya	Kosovo	Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Latvia
Lebanon	Lesotho	Liberia
Libya	Lithuania	Luxembourg
Madagascar	Malawi	Malaysia
Maldives	Mali	Malta
Mauritania	Mauritius	Mexico
Mongolia	Montenegro	Morocco
Mozambique	Myanmar	Namibia
Nepal	Netherlands	New Zealand
Nicaragua	Niger	Nigeria
North Macedonia	Norway	Oman
Pakistan	Palestine	Panama
Papua New Guinea	Paraguay	Peru
Philippines	Poland	Portugal
Qatar	Republic of Korea	Republic of Moldova
Romania	Russian Federation	Rwanda
Saudi Arabia	Senegal	Serbia
Sierra Leone	Singapore	Slovakia
Slovenia	Solomon Islands	Somalia
South Africa	South Sudan	Spain
Sri Lanka	Sudan	Suriname
Sweden	Switzerland	Syrian Arab Republic
Taiwan	Tajikistan	Tanzania
Thailand	Timor-Leste	Togo
Trinidad and Tobago	Tunisia	Türkiye
Turkmenistan	Uganda	Ukraine
United Arab Emirates	United Kingdom	United States
Uruguay	Uzbekistan	Vanuatu
Venezuela	Viet Nam	Yemen
Zambia	Zimbabwe	

Annex B. Basic information sources

Description	Sources	Frequency of update/ verification
Population	World Bank	Once a year, based on the World Bank population data
System of government	CIA The World Factbook	Once a year
Head of government	Democracy Tracker monthly event report research; official government sites	Following presidential/legislative elections
Head of government party	Democracy Tracker monthly event report research; official government sites	Following presidential/legislative elections
Electoral system for lower or single chamber	International IDEA Electoral System Design Database	Once a year
Women in lower or single chamber	Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)	Following legislative elections
Women in upper chamber	Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)	Once a year for all countries + following legislative elections at the country level
Last legislative election	Democracy Tracker monthly event report research; IFES Election Guide, Recent and Upcoming Elections	Once a year for all countries + following legislative elections at the country level
Effective number of political parties	Trinity College Dublin Election Indices ; legislature websites as necessary	Following legislative elections
Head of state	Democracy Tracker monthly event report research; official government sites	Following presidential elections/changes in the monarch
Selection process for head of state	International IDEA ConstitutionNet Head of State selection process	Once a year
Latest Universal Periodic Review (UPR) date	UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review	Once a year
Latest UPR percentage of recommendations supported	UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review	Once a year

Annex C. Human rights treaty sources

Table C.1. UN's core international human rights treaties

Treaty acronym	Treaty title	Signatories and parties sources
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights
ICPPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights
ICRPD	International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	United Nations Treaty Collection – CHAPTER IV Human Rights

Table C.2. International Labour Organization fundamental conventions

Treaty acronym	Treaty title	Signatories and parties sources
C029	Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)	Ratifications of C029
C087	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)	Ratifications of C087
C098	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)	Ratifications of C098
C100	Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	Ratifications of C100
C105	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)	Ratifications of C105
C111	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	Ratifications of C111
C138	Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)	Ratifications of C138
C182	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)	Ratifications of C182

Table C.3. Regional human rights conventions

Treaty acronym	Treaty title	Signatories and parties sources
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	ACHPR: signatories and ratifiers
ACHR	Arab Charter on Human Rights	ACHR: signatories and ratifiers
AmCHR	American Convention on Human Rights	AmCHR: signatories and ratifiers
AmCHR (Prot)	Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	AmCHR (Prot): signatories and ratifiers
ECHR	Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	ECHR: signatories and ratifiers
ECHR (Prot 1)	Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	ECHR (Prot 1): signatories and ratifiers
ECHR (Prot 4)	Protocol No. 4 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	ECHR (Prot 4): signatories and ratifiers
ECHR (Prot 6)	Protocol No. 6 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms concerning the Abolition of the Death Penalty	ECHR (Prot 6): signatories and ratifiers
ECHR (Prot 7)	Protocol No. 7 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	ECHR (Prot 7): signatories and ratifiers
ECHR (Prot 12)	Protocol No. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	ECHR (Prot 12): signatories and ratifiers
ECHR (Prot 13)	Protocol No. 13 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	ECHR (Prot 13): signatories and ratifiers

Annex D. Conflict and Mediation Event Observations (CAMEO) codes

The following CAMEO codes are used to filter data from GDELT for analysis.

024	Appeal for political reform
0241	Appeal for leadership change
0243	Appeal for rights
0244	Appeal for change in institutions, regime
0251	Appeal for easing of administrative sanction
0252	Appeal for easing of political dissent
0253	Appeal for release of persons or property
034	Express intent to institute political reform, not specified below
0341	Express intent to change leadership
0342	Express intent to change policy
0343	Express intent to provide rights
0344	Express intent to change institutions, regime
0811	Ease restrictions on political freedoms
0812	Ease ban on political parties or politicians
0814	Ease state of emergency or martial law
082	Ease political dissent
0831	Accede to demands for change in leadership
0833	Accede to demands for rights
0834	Accede to demands for change in institutions, regime
092	Investigate human rights abuses
094	Investigate war crimes
1041	Demand change in leadership
1042	Demand policy change
1043	Demand rights
1044	Demand change in institutions, regime
1052	Demand easing of political dissent

1122	Accuse of human rights abuses
113	Rally opposition against
123	Reject request or demand for political reform, not specified below
1231	Reject request for change in leadership
1233	Reject request for rights
1234	Reject request for change in institutions, regime
1242	Refuse to ease popular dissent
1321	Threaten with restrictions on political freedoms
1322	Threaten to ban political parties or politicians
1323	Threaten to impose curfew
1324	Threaten to impose state of emergency or martial law
133	Threaten with political dissent, protest
140	Engage in political dissent, not specified below
141	Demonstrate or rally, not specified below
1411	Demonstrate for leadership change
1412	Demonstrate for policy change
1413	Demonstrate for rights
1414	Demonstrate for change in institutions, regime
1421	Conduct hunger strike for leadership change
1422	Conduct hunger strike for policy change
1423	Conduct hunger strike for rights
1424	Conduct hunger strike for change in institutions, regime
1431	Conduct strike or boycott for leadership change
1432	Conduct strike or boycott for policy change
1433	Conduct strike or boycott for rights
1434	Conduct strike or boycott for change in institutions, regime
1441	Obstruct passage to demand leadership change
1442	Obstruct passage to demand policy change
1443	Obstruct passage to demand rights
1444	Obstruct passage to demand change in institutions, regime
145	Protest violently, riot, not specified below
1451	Engage in violent protest for leadership change
1452	Engage in violent protest for policy change
1453	Engage in violent protest for rights
1454	Engage in violent protest for change in institutions, regime

1721	Impose restrictions on political freedoms
1722	Ban political parties or politicians
1723	Impose curfew
1724	Impose state of emergency or martial law
175	Use tactics of violent repression
176	Attack cybernetically
1822	Torture
1831	Carry out suicide bombing
1832	Carry out vehicular bombing
1833	Carry out roadside bombing
1834	Carry out location bombing
185	Attempt to assassinate
200	Use unconventional mass violence, not specified below
201	Engage in mass expulsion
202	Engage in mass killings
203	Engage in ethnic cleansing
204	Use weapons of mass destruction, not specified below
2041	Use chemical, biological, or radiological weapons
2042	Detonate nuclear weapons

Annex E. Meaning and boundaries of the concepts

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOURCES AND DATA SETS

The GSoD Indices summarize information from 165 indicators collected from 24 data sets. Some of these indicators, such as the elected office and direct democracy indicators from V-Dem, are composite measures based on several subindicators. The data sets listed in Table E.1 represent four different types of source data:

1. *Expert surveys (ES)*. In these surveys, country experts assess the situation on a particular issue in a country. This kind of data is provided by V-Dem and the ICRG.
2. *Standards-based 'in-house coding' (IC)*. This type of coding is carried out by researchers and/or their assistants based on an evaluative assessment of country-specific information found in reports, academic publications, reference works, news articles, and so on. This kind of data is provided by V-Dem, Polity5, Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy (LIED), CIRIGHTS, Civil Liberty Dataset (CLD), Bjørnskov-Rode regime data (BRRD), Political Terror Scale (PTS) and Media Freedom Data (MFD). Freedom in the World and the BTI are classified as 'in-house coding' in the rest of this document, but it should be noted that their internal processes involve both country experts and in-house review and revision, meaning that their coding processes are between these first two categories.
3. *Observational data (OD)*. This is data on directly observable features such as the ratio of women to men in parliament, infant mortality rates and legislative elections. This kind of data is provided by V-Dem, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Global Health Data Exchange (GHDx), World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Statistics Division.
4. *Composite measures (CM)*. These are based on a number of variables that come from different existing data sets rather than original data collection. This kind of data is provided by V-Dem in the form of an elected officials index, a direct democracy index, and a local government index.

Table E.1. Data sets used in the compilation of the Global State of Democracy Indices

Data set	Data provider	Reference
Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI)	Bertelsmann Stiftung	< https://bti-project.org >
Bjørnskov-Rode Regime Data (BRRD)	Bjørnskov and Rode	< http://www.christianbjoernskov.com/bjoernskovrodedata >
Child Mortality Estimates (CME)	UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation	< https://childmortality.org >
CIRIGHTS	Mark, Cingranelli, Filippov and Richards	< https://cirights.com >
Civil Liberties Data set (CLD)	Møller and Skaaning	< http://ps.au.dk/forskning/forskningsprojekter/dedere/data sets >
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Food Balances	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	< https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FBS >
Freedom in the World	Freedom House	< https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world >
Freedom on the Net	Freedom House	< https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net >
Global Educational Attainment Distributions	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)	< https://ghdx.healthdata.org/record/ihme-data/global-educational-attainment-distributions-1970-2030 >
Global Findex Database	World Bank	< https://data.worldbank.org >
Global Gender Gap Report	World Economic Forum	< https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022 >
Global Health Observatory	World Health Organization (WHO)	< https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/indicator-groups/indicator-group-details/GHO >
Global Media Freedom Data set (MFD)	Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle	< https://faculty.uml.edu/Jenifer_whittenwoodring/MediaFreedomData_000.aspx >
ILOSTAT	International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics	< https://ilostat.ilo.org >
International Country Risk Guide (ICRG)	Political Risk Services	< http://epub.prsgroup.com/products/icrg >
Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy (LIED)	Skaaning, Gerring and Bartusevičius	< http://ps.au.dk/forskning/forskningsprojekter/dedere/data sets >
Political Terror Scale (PTS)	Gibney, Cornett, Wood, Haschke, Arnon and Pisanò	< http://www.politicalterrorsscale.org >

Table E.1. Data sets used in the compilation of the Global State of Democracy Indices (cont.)

Data set	Data provider	Reference
Polity5	Marshall, Jaggers and Gurr	< http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html >
Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID)	Solt	< https://fsolt.org/swiid >
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) statistics	UNESCO	< http://data.uis.unesco.org >
United Nations E-Government Survey	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs	< https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Reports/UN-E-Government-Survey-2022 >
Varieties of Democracy data set	V-Dem Project	< https://www.v-dem.net >
Voter Turnout Database	International IDEA	< https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout >
World Population Prospects (WPP)	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division	< https://population.un.org/wpp >

ABSENCE OF CORRUPTION

Corruption disrupts the effective functioning of democratic institutions by introducing partiality and arbitrariness in the application of laws and distribution of resources. This kind of activity can undermine popular control over decision making, hindering the ability of opposition parties, civil society, independent media and the population at large to hold the government accountable.

When public officials engage in the arbitrary exercise of power, for example by using state resources for personal benefit or by rewarding allies, decisions are not made in the public interest and are instead driven by personal or political motives (Huntington 1996). This fosters favouritism and personalism (Rose-Ackerman 1999) often resulting in a lack of accountability. Fundamentally, corruption undermines the principle of equality before the law—a fundamental pillar of democracy.

Such dynamics also undermine policy effectiveness, exacerbate inequality and prevent democratic governments from meeting the needs of their citizens (Mauro 1995), eroding public trust in institutions and threatening the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Norris 2011).

Definition: Absence of Corruption measures the degree to which public officials (including elected representatives and public servants) abuse their positions through the arbitrary exercise

of power for illicit personal or political gain. It also includes lax or selective enforcement of relevant laws intended to prevent significant acts of corruption in the private sector.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The primary focus is on events that shed light on corrupt activities, events that address (investigate, prosecute, etc.) cases of corruption and strengthen/weaken laws that regulate corrupt activities.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The index measures the extent to which the executive, and public administration more broadly, does not abuse office for personal gain as measured through indicators covering public sector corrupt exchanges and theft, executive embezzlement, bribery, safeguards against official corruption and prosecution of office abuse.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
3.2.1	Public sector corrupt exchanges (v2excrtps)	ES: How routinely do public sector employees grant favours in exchange for bribes, kickbacks or other material inducements?	V-Dem
3.2.2	Public sector theft (v2exthtps)	ES: How often do public sector employees steal, embezzle or misappropriate public funds or other state resources for personal or family use?	V-Dem
3.2.3	Executive embezzlement and theft (v2exembezt)	ES: How often do members of the executive (the head of state, the head of government and cabinet ministers) or their agents steal, embezzle or misappropriate public funds or other state resources for personal or family use?	V-Dem
3.2.4	Executive bribery and corrupt exchanges (v2exbribe)	ES: How routinely do members of the executive (the head of state, the head of government and cabinet ministers) or their agents grant favours in exchange for bribes, kickbacks or other material inducements?	V-Dem
3.2.5	Corruption (F)	ES: How widespread is actual or potential corruption in the form of excessive patronage, nepotism, job reservations, 'favour-for-favours', secret party funding or suspiciously close ties between politics and business?	ICRG
3.2.6	Functioning of Government (C2)	IC: Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	Freedom in the World
3.2.7	Prosecution of office abuse (prosecution)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Officeholders who break the law and engage in corruption can do so without fear of legal consequences or adverse publicity' to 'Officeholders who break the law and engage in corruption are prosecuted rigorously under established laws and always attract adverse publicity'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The opportunity for all people to have access to legal remedies when they have been harmed is fundamental in a democracy. In most cases, this takes place through courts established by the national constitution, but it may also involve traditional dispute resolution systems and even supranational courts. However it is facilitated, Access to Justice serves as a procedural safeguard of other rights and of the rule of law more broadly ([United Nations Human Rights Committee 2007](#)). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees the right to a fair trial and to guarantees of due process, equal treatment and equal access to the courts ([United Nations 1966a: articles 14–15](#)), which are key to ensure Access to Justice.

Access to Justice is closely related to Judicial Independence. In many cases, effective Access to Justice depends on a high level of Judicial Independence. However, for the purposes of the GSoD framework, matters that relate to the independence of judges (including appointment processes and the compliance of other actors with judicial rulings) are covered by the Judicial Independence measures.

Definition: Access to Justice measures the extent to which individuals and groups can use legal institutions to redress injustices and wrongful acts, including historic wrongs. It also entails a guarantee that all people are equal before courts and tribunals and those accused of a crime have an effective right to a fair trial. That is, that people have equal access to the justice system without discrimination and are also guaranteed due process (free from corruption), including when they are accused and charged with a crime. Access to Justice may also take the form of non-judicial (or quasi-judicial) mechanisms for traditional dispute resolution, transitional justice, and truth and reconciliation processes ([Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.b](#)).

What the Democracy Tracker measures: Democracy Tracker reports measure the extent to which people can defend their rights before the courts. Democracy Tracker reports are not focused on high-profile or widely covered cases, but those that demonstrate a change in the ability of people to seek redress when wronged or defend themselves from legal consequences when charged with a crime or accused of wrongdoing. It also covers legislation or executive decisions that impact the ability to access justice. Reports related to progress or setbacks surrounding accountability measures, victims' rights and transitional justice are also relevant to measure Access to Justice. Truth and reconciliation processes related to historic crimes, in both domestic and international settings, are important evidence of changes in Access to Justice.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Access to Justice aggregates indicators on effective access to justice, judicial corruption, judicial accountability and fair trial.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.1.1	Access to justice for men (v2clacjstm)	ES: Do men enjoy secure and effective access to justice?	V-Dem
2.1.2	Access to justice for women (v2clacjstw)	ES: Do women enjoy equal, secure and effective access to justice?	V-Dem

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.1.3	Judicial corruption decision (v2jucorrdc)	ES: How often do individuals or businesses make undocumented extra payments or bribes in order to speed up or delay the process or to obtain a favourable judicial decision?	V-Dem
2.1.4	Judicial accountability (v2juacct)	ES: When judges are found responsible for serious misconduct, how often are they removed from their posts or otherwise disciplined?	V-Dem
2.1.5	Fair trial (fairtrial)	IC: Extent to which citizens have the right to a fair trial in practice, that is, they are not subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; they have the right to recognition as a person before the law, the right to be under the jurisdiction of, and to seek redress from, competent, independent and impartial tribunals, and the right to be heard and to be entitled to trial without undue delays if arrested, detained or charged with a criminal offence.	CLD
2.1.6	Rule of Law (F2)	IC: Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	Freedom in the World
2.1.7	Civil Rights (civ_rights)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Civil rights are systematically violated. There are no mechanisms and institutions to protect residents against violations of their rights' to 'Civil rights are codified by law and respected by all state institutions, which actively prevent discrimination. Residents are effectively protected by mechanisms and institutions established to prosecute, punish, and redress violations of their rights'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

BASIC WELFARE

The Basic Welfare factor serves as an indicator of how well a population's most fundamental needs are met in a given country. This may initially seem a marginal aspect when assessing democratic performance; however, basic welfare provides a crucial material foundation for democracy. Citizens who cannot meet their basic needs for a full and dignified life cannot fully engage in democratic participation or exercise their rights (Sen 1999a). Moreover, since no one would willingly choose poverty, limited access to essential services—such as clean water, sufficient and nutritious food, education and healthcare—reflects a lack of citizen influence over political decisions shaping their lives (SIDA 2022).

Basic Welfare indicates the ability and willingness of a government to ensure its population has access to essential needs, such as food, clean water, healthcare and education. This may be done through policies, programmes and actions that aim to alleviate poverty and guarantee access to key services across the population. The ability of governments to guarantee Basic Welfare can be affected by external factors such as armed conflicts and natural disasters, which can lead to displacement, destruction of critical infrastructure and food supply disruptions. Environmental issues, such as pollution and degradation, can also compromise water supplies,

increase food insecurity and contribute to the spread of diseases. In this sense, Basic Welfare reveals the government's responsiveness and preventive capabilities towards crisis situations.

Definition: Basic Welfare measures the extent to which a population's basic needs, including access to essential goods and services such as nutrition, healthcare and education, are met.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The focus is on policy changes or government (in)actions that affect people's access to the necessities of life. In addition to assessing governments' choices regarding how and where to allocate resources, the factor also covers natural disasters, humanitarian crises and conflicts where access to essential supplies and infrastructure—such as food, water, medicine and shelter—is negatively impacted and, in some cases, where these resources are deliberately withheld as a tactic in a conflict. Reports may also address the living conditions of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. A negative coding often depicts cases in which governments have neglected critical infrastructure maintenance, exacerbating disaster impacts, or have failed to implement policies addressing climate change when directly linked to natural events. Finally, Basic Welfare includes reports on government inaction regarding environmental degradation and pollution, which directly impact public health and livelihoods.

What the GSoD Indices measure: For measuring Basic Welfare, we utilize a variety of human development indicators such as literacy, kilocalories consumption, years of schooling or access to healthcare.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.3.1	Infant mortality rate	The probability that a child born in a specific year will die before reaching the age of one, if subject to current age-specific mortality rates. Expressed as a rate per 1,000 live births.	CME
2.3.2	Life expectancy at birth	The average number of years a newborn child would live if current mortality patterns were to stay the same.	WPP
2.3.3	Kilocalories per person per day	Calorie supply per capita is the amount of food available for consumption, measured in kilocalories per capita per day.	FAO
2.3.4	Literacy	Percentage of the population age 15 and above who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life.	UNESCO
2.3.5	Mean years of schooling	Average years of educational attainment for adults older than 25, age standardized, both sexes.	IHME
2.3.6	Educational equality	To what extent is high quality basic education guaranteed to all, sufficient to enable them to exercise their basic rights as adult citizens?	V-Dem
2.3.7	Health equality	To what extent is high quality basic healthcare guaranteed to all, sufficient to enable them to exercise their basic political rights as adult citizens?	V-Dem

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.3.8	Healthy life expectancy at 60 – Male	The average number of years in full health a person (usually at age 60) can expect to live based on current rates of ill-health and mortality.	WHO
2.3.9	Healthy life expectancy at 60 – Female	The average number of years in full health a person (usually at age 60) can expect to live based on current rates of ill-health and mortality.	WHO

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Engagement in political activities as part of organized groups has been a critical part of democracy for centuries. As an example, Alexis de Tocqueville famously characterized the associational life of the early United States as a key contributor to its democratic development (Tocqueville 1945: 196). However, the democracy-enhancing effects of associations are not inevitable or universal (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005; LeVan 2011). Along with electoral participation, associational engagement is the second form of participation measured in the GSoD framework. Civic Engagement may also be understood to include other ways in which individuals participate in political activities (absent membership in a formal association) such as through political speech (verbal or written expression, including posts on social media), joining protests of various kinds, or even through acts of public service.

Definition: Civic engagement primarily encompasses membership in voluntary, non-party, formal associations (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005), but may also include individual participation in collective political activities. Note that membership or support for a political party is not considered to be part of Civic Engagement and should be dealt with under the concept of Free Political Parties.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The Democracy Tracker reports on events that demonstrate that the level of actual participation in organized associations and in political activities in a given country has changed. Participation by members of formal associations is not required for an event to be relevant to Civic Engagement. For example, participation in somewhat spontaneous protests may indicate that there has been a change in Civic Engagement. However, in the main, events that affect this concept should deal with associational life, such as the prevalence of voluntarism, membership in trade unions, or participation in civic, socially oriented, or religious movements.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices aggregate four closely related indicators from two sources to estimate the level of Civic Engagement.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
4.2.1	Engagement in independent non-political associations (v2canonpol)	ES: What share of the population is regularly active in independent non-political associations, such as sports clubs, literary societies, charities, fraternal groups, or support groups?	V-Dem

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
4.2.2	Engagement in independent political associations (v2capolit)	ES: What share of the population is regularly active in independent political interest associations, such as environmental associations, animal rights groups, or LGBT rights groups?	V-Dem
4.2.3	Engagement in independent trade unions (v2catrauni)	ES: What share of the population is regularly active in independent trade unions?	V-Dem
4.2.4	Civil society traditions (civil_trad)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Traditions of civil society are very strong' to 'Traditions of civil society are very weak'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

The idea of civil liberties has a long tradition in Western legal theory (Russell 1969), but it has also been important to independence and liberation movements in the majority world (Brooks 2018; Upadhyay and Hegde 2018). These rights are often included in concepts of democracy and feature prominently in human rights treaties, most notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Definition: Civil liberties are those negative rights that are understood to be most closely linked to political activity or personal fulfilment. Some theorists see these rights as being inherent to human personhood (Foster 2008: 3). Civil liberties set boundaries for state conduct, specifying the areas where a citizen's 'freedom of action, conduct, or condition' should be legally protected (Katalin 1991) and which can only be limited by the government when their completely free exercise would conflict with other goals of democratic government (Hovius 1986; Gardbaum 2007). Note that civil liberties are generally understood to apply to individuals and not to groups. The list of rights that are included within the concept of civil liberties is not universally agreed upon. However, the most common rights to be included are the freedoms of expression, association, assembly and religion, along with rights to life, property, privacy, bodily integrity and a fair trial. Civil liberties differ from civil rights (at least in contemporary English-language discourse) in that civil rights primarily concern guarantees against discrimination (Schmidt 2016: 1). Some aspects of civil rights are included under Social Group Equality.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: Civil Liberties are protected to the extent that the government both takes no disproportionate or unjustifiable actions to restrict the exercise of these rights itself and prevents other actors in society from illegitimately interfering with the free exercise of these rights. The Democracy Tracker's work is focused on six specific freedoms (expression, press, association, assembly, religion and movement), but will also track positive and negative events relating to the larger meaning of the concept.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The data set measures the larger latent concept of Civil Liberties by aggregating indices that measure five specific freedoms within Civil Liberties, namely: Freedom of Expression, Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Association and Assembly, Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Movement. Each of these component indices is itself understood as a latent concept, measured through the aggregation of a number of related indicators.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
Freedom of Expression			
2.2.1	Freedom of discussion for women (v2cldiscw)	ES: Are women able to openly discuss political issues in private homes and in public spaces?	V-Dem
2.2.2	Freedom of discussion for men (v2cldiscm)	ES: Are men able to openly discuss political issues in private homes and in public spaces?	V-Dem
2.2.3	Freedom of academic and cultural expression (v2clacfree)	ES: Is there academic freedom and freedom of cultural expression related to political issues?	V-Dem
2.2.4	Freedom of opinion and expression (freexp)	IC: The extent to which individual citizens, groups and the media have freedom of opinion and expression, that is, the right of the citizens, groups and the press to hold views freely and to seek, obtain and pass on information on political issues broadly understood without being subject to actual limitations or restrictions.	CLD
2.2.5	Freedom of speech and press (speech)	IC: Government censorship and/or ownership of the media (including radio, TV, Internet, and/or domestic news agencies) is: Complete; Some; None	CIRIGHTS
2.2.6	Obstacles to access (A)	IC: Details infrastructural, economic, and political barriers to access; government decisions to shut off connectivity or block specific applications or technologies; legal, regulatory, and ownership control over Internet service providers; and the independence of regulatory bodies.	Freedom on the Net
2.2.7	Limits on content (B)	IC: Analyses legal regulations on content; technical filtering and blocking of websites; other forms of censorship and self-censorship; the vibrancy and diversity of online information space; and the use of digital tools for civic mobilization.	Freedom on the Net
2.2.8	Violations of user rights (C)	IC: Tackles legal protections and restrictions on free expression; surveillance and privacy; and legal and extralegal repercussions for online speech and activities, such as imprisonment, cyberattacks, or extralegal harassment and physical violence.	Freedom on the Net
2.2.9	Freedom of Expression and Belief (D3)	IC: Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	Freedom in the World
2.2.10	Freedom of Expression and Belief (D4)	IC: Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	Freedom in the World

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.11	Freedom of expression (express)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Freedom of expression is denied. Independent media do not exist or are prohibited' to 'Freedom of expression is guaranteed against interference or government restrictions. Individuals, groups and the press can fully exercise these rights'.	BTI
Freedom of the Press			
2.2.12	Print/broadcast censorship effort (v2mecenefm)	ES: Does the government directly or indirectly attempt to censor the print or broadcast media?	V-Dem
2.2.13	Harassment of journalists (v2meharjrn)	ES: Are individual journalists harassed, i.e. threatened with libel, arrested, imprisoned, beaten or killed, by governmental or powerful non-governmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities?	V-Dem
2.2.14	Media self-censorship (v2meslfcen)	ES: Is there self-censorship among journalists when reporting on issues that the government considers politically sensitive?	V-Dem
2.2.15	Print/broadcast media critical (v2mecrit)	ES: Of the major print and broadcast outlets, how many routinely criticize the government?	V-Dem
2.2.16	Print/broadcast media perspectives (v2merange)	ES: Do the major print and broadcast media represent a wide range of political perspectives?	V-Dem
2.2.17	Media bias (v2mebias)	ES: Is there media bias against opposition parties or candidates?	V-Dem
2.2.18	Media corrupt (v2mecorrpt)	ES: Do journalists, publishers or broadcasters accept payments in exchange for altering news coverage?	V-Dem
2.2.19	Media freedom	IC: Is criticism of government and government officials a common and normal part of the political dialogue in the mediated public sphere?	Media Freedom Data
2.2.20	Freedom of Expression and Belief (D1)	IC: Are there free and independent media?	Freedom in the World
Freedom of Association and Assembly			
2.2.21	CSO entry and exit (v2cseeorgs)	ES: To what extent does the government achieve control over entry and exit by civil society organizations into public life?	V-Dem
2.2.22	CSO repression (v2csreprss)	ES: Does the government attempt to repress civil society organizations?	V-Dem
2.2.23	Freedom of peaceful assembly (v2caassemb)	ES: To what extent do state authorities respect and protect the right of peaceful assembly?	V-Dem

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.24	Freedom of association and assembly (freass)	IC: The extent to which individuals and groups have freedom of assembly and association, that is, the right of the citizens to gather freely and carry out peaceful demonstrations as well as to join, form and participate with other persons in political parties, cultural organizations, trade unions or the like of their choice without being subject to actual limitations or restrictions.	CLD
2.2.25	Freedom of assembly and association (assn)	IC: Citizens' rights to freedom of assembly and association are severely restricted or denied completely to all citizens; limited for all citizens or severely restricted or denied for select groups; virtually unrestricted and freely enjoyed by practically all citizens.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.26	Union practices (union_p)	IC: Workers' rights to association are severely restricted; somewhat restricted; fully protected.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.27	Collective bargaining practices (barg_p)	IC: Workers' rights to collective bargaining are severely restricted; somewhat restricted; fully protected.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.28	Associational and Organizational Rights (E1)	IC: Is there freedom of assembly?	Freedom in the World
2.2.29	Associational and Organizational Rights (E2)	IC: Is there freedom for non-governmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work?	Freedom in the World
2.2.30	Associational and Organizational Rights (E3)	IC: Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labour organizations?	Freedom in the World
2.2.31	Association/ assembly rights (assembly)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Association and assembly rights are denied. Independent civic groups do not exist or are prohibited' to 'Association and assembly rights are guaranteed against interference or government restrictions. Residents and civic groups can fully exercise these rights'.	BTI
Freedom of Religion			
2.2.32	Freedom of religion (v2clrelig)	ES: Is there freedom of religion?	V-Dem
2.2.33	Religious organization repression (v2csrlgprep)	ES: Does the government attempt to repress religious organizations?	V-Dem

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.34	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (frerel)	IC: The extent to which individuals and groups have freedom of thought, conscience and religion, that is, the right of citizens to have and change religion or belief of their own volition and alone or in community, manifest their religion or belief in practice, worship, observance and teaching in private or public, as well as proselytize peacefully without being subject to actual limitations or restrictions.	CLD
2.2.35	Freedom of religion (rel_free)	Government restrictions on religious practices are severe and widespread; moderate; practically absent.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.36	Freedom of Expression and Belief (D2)	IC: Are individuals free to practise and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	Freedom in the World
Freedom of Movement			
2.2.41	Freedom of foreign movement (v2clfmov)	ES: Is there freedom of foreign travel and emigration?	V-Dem
2.2.42	Freedom of domestic movement for women (v2cldmovew)	ES: Do women enjoy freedom of movement within the country?	V-Dem
2.2.43	Freedom of domestic movement for men (v2cldmovem)	ES: Do men enjoy freedom of movement within the country?	V-Dem
2.2.44	Freedom of movement and residence (fremov)	IC: The extent to which individuals and groups have freedom of movement and residence, that is, the right of citizens to settle and travel within their country as well as to leave and return to their country of own choice without being subject to actual limitations or restrictions.	CLD
2.2.45	Freedom of foreign movement (formov)	IC: Foreign movement and travel is severely restricted; somewhat restricted; unrestricted.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.46	Freedom of domestic movement (dommov)	IC: Domestic travel is severely restricted; somewhat restricted; unrestricted.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.47	Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (G1)	IC: Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	Freedom in the World

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding; OD = observational data; CM = composite measures.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Long considered to be one of the key social enablers of democracy, civil society serves several functions, including structuring citizen political participation (Scholte 2002) and providing organized systems of accountability for governments (Goodin 2003). In the GSoD framework, the closely related concepts of Civil Society and Civic Engagement are measured separately. Civil Society is focused on the context in which citizens engage with each other and with the government, while Civic Engagement is focused on the extent to which citizens actively engage in political activities and associations beyond voting and political parties. Civil Society also overlaps to some degree with Freedom of Association and Assembly, which measures the extent to which citizens are free to physically gather with like-minded (or indeed oppositional) individuals and groups to pursue projects of common interest.

Definition: One of the leading scholars of this concept defined it this way: ‘The words “civil society” name the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks—formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology—that fill this space’ (Walzer 1995). For the purposes of the GSoD framework, the most important elements of this definition are the ‘space’ and the ‘networks’. We also consider the interactions between these uncoerced associations and the state to be part of this ‘network’.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The Democracy Tracker reports events that have an impact on these spaces and networks. This may include changes in the regulatory environment or funding conditions for civil society organizations and NGOs. Note that the focus here is on the regulatory and social environment that supports (or hinders) the organization and functioning of civil society organizations. The level of participation in these organizations is covered by Civic Engagement.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices aggregate six closely related indicators from three sources to estimate the level of Civil Society.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
4.1.1	CSO participatory environment (v2csptrcpt)	ES: Are people involved in civil society organizations?	V-Dem
4.1.2	Engaged society (v2dlengage)	ES: When important policy changes are being considered, how wide and how independent are public deliberations?	V-Dem
4.1.3	CSO consultation (v2csnsult)	ES: Are major civil society organizations (CSOs) routinely consulted by policymakers on policies relevant to their members?	V-Dem
4.1.4	E-Participation index	CM: EPI is a multifaceted framework, composed of three core components, i.e., e-information, e-consultation and e-decision-making.	United Nations E-Government Survey

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
4.1.5	Interest groups (int_group)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Interest groups are present only in isolated social segments, are on the whole poorly balanced and cooperate little. A large number of social interests remain unrepresented' to 'There is a broad range of interest groups that reflect competing social interests, tend to balance one another and are cooperative'.	BTI
4.1.6	Social capital (soc_cap)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'There is a very low level of trust among the population, and civic self-organization is rudimentary' to 'There is a very high level of trust among the population and a large number of autonomous, self-organized groups, associations and organizations'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding; CM = composite measures.

CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

By many measures, elections serve as the foundational building block of any democratic system ([Schumpeter 1950](#); Przeworski 1999). In contemporary times—and notwithstanding the recent surge in deliberative forms of democracy—elections are the primary means through which constituents make their political views known, either by endorsing policy platforms or by recalling disappointing leaders. In an era of illiberal democracy (Zakaria 2003), however, undemocratic leaders and regimes often hold 'sham' elections that are marked by factors such as excessive incumbency advantage, suppression of opposition parties and candidates, and laws that enable a skewed playing field. Even in democratic contexts, of course, elections can be problematic or tainted by certain irregularities that cast a shadow over the legitimacy of the result. Against this backdrop, scholars have devoted decades of work to defining the minimum standards of 'free and fair' or 'credible' elections ([Elklit and Svensson 1997](#); [Schedler 2002](#); Goodwin-Gill 2006; [Norris 2013](#); [Norris, Frank and Martínez i Coma 2013](#)), a topic that is again in the spotlight as election disputes are on the rise around the world ([International IDEA 2024](#)). While there is no definitive consensus on such minimum standards, there is widespread agreement that the credibility of a result is dependent upon the credibility of the entire process.

Definition: Credible Elections is a measure of the extent to which electoral processes are free and fair. Our conception is based on the electoral cycle approach, which emphasizes the importance of the cyclical nature of elections and the ways in which the pre-election, election day and post-election periods are interlinked and impact each other. Based on this approach, our measure of Credible Elections may be impacted by a range of activities and events, including, for example, changes to the electoral law, the process of observer accreditation, candidate registration, polling station irregularities, election authorities' independence and post-election audits. We do not assess the overall credibility of any electoral process.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The focus is on the quality of the electoral cycle (at national and subnational levels), including all its constituent phases. Reports of irregularities and other breaches of the electoral law, as well as significant changes to the relevant legal frameworks, feature prominently. Examples of relevant issues include campaign finance,

boundary delimitation and voters' and candidates' security. The Democracy Tracker also includes incidents of election delays, coups and other unconstitutional or illegal regime changes.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure the quality of elections, with a focus on the extent to which elections for national, representative political office are free from irregularities as well as the degree of electoral competition. These indicators also tap into the fairness of the electoral laws, electoral management body (EMB) autonomy and capacity, government intimidation and other irregularities.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
1.1.1	EMB autonomy (v2elembaut)	ES: Does the election management body (EMB) have autonomy from government to apply election laws and administrative rules impartially in national elections?	V-Dem
1.1.2	EMB capacity (v2elembcap)	ES: Does the election management body (EMB) have sufficient staff and resources to administer a well-run national election?	V-Dem
1.1.3	Election other voting irregularities (v2elirreg)	ES: In this national election, was there evidence of other intentional irregularities by incumbent and/or opposition parties and/or vote fraud?	V-Dem
1.1.4	Election government intimidation (v2elintim)	ES: In this national election, were opposition candidates/parties/campaign workers subjected to repression, intimidation, violence or harassment by the government, the ruling party or their agents?	V-Dem
1.1.5	Election free and fair (v2elfrfair)	ES: Taking all aspects of the pre-election period, election day and the post-election process into account, would you consider this national election to be free and fair?	V-Dem
1.1.6	Competition (competitive elections)	Coded as zero if there are no elections or if the electoral process has been suspended or nullified (e.g. through dismissal or dissolution of the relevant elected bodies or offices).	LIED
1.1.7	Electoral process (A3)	ES: Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	Freedom in the World
1.1.8	Political pluralism and participation (B2)	ES: Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?	Freedom in the World
1.1.9	Political pluralism and participation (B3)	ES: Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?	Freedom in the World
1.1.10	Free and fair elections (elect)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'There are no constraints on free and fair elections' to 'National elections, if held at all, are entirely unfree and unfair.'	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Economic Equality is a core part of International IDEA's definition of democracy, based on the understanding that meaningful political equality is contingent on the lack of significant socio-economic inequities and the absence of poverty. This can be thought of as another way of articulating the interdependence of human rights—that the rights enumerated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ([United Nations 1966a](#)) and those in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([United Nations 1966b](#)) are mutually reinforcing and dependent. This concept is also rooted in the latter treaty's requirement that states take positive action to ensure that everyone within their borders fully enjoys these rights, not just refrain from taking actions that may violate them, discriminate, or lead to unequal economic outcomes.

Economic Equality is not intended to be a proxy of income or wealth disparities, but instead a measure of how inequalities impact the ability of individual citizens or groups to influence political decision making or exercise their rights.

Definition: Economic Equality is a measure of the extent to which individuals and social groups enjoy equal socio-economic rights and ability to exert political influence. Events coded as affecting Economic Equality may overlap with Social Group Equality, but this measure is related to changes in a country's economy that primarily affect the relative economic position of individuals or social groups. Social Group Equality is more directly related to events that impact a social group's ability to directly engage in politics or democratic processes on non-economic grounds.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The core focus is events that are likely to increase or decrease the extent to which disparities in wealth or income impact the ability of individual citizens or groups to influence political decision making or exercise their rights. Events may concern policy decisions, binding legal opinions and acts of parliament that can be reasonably expected to significantly narrow or widen the distribution of wealth or income in a country. However, given the state's ultimate responsibility to ensure the enjoyment of social, economic and cultural rights within its borders, the immediately responsible party for any change does not necessarily have to be the state itself. This can also include reports or data that significantly alter the perception of the *status quo ante* of economic inequality's influence on political processes, representation, or the enjoyment of rights in the country.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of the latent concept of Economic Equality aggregates measures that specify dimensions of political exclusion based on economic and geographical characteristics, as well as measures of socio-economic barriers and purely economic indicators.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.4.9	Social class equality in respect for civil liberties (v2clacjust)	ES: Do poor people enjoy the same level of civil liberties as rich people?	V-Dem
2.4.10	Power distributed by socio-economic position (v2pepwrse)	ES: Is political power distributed according to socio-economic position?	V-Dem

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.4.11	Exclusion by socio-economic group (v2xpe_exlecon)	ES: Index of political exclusion by socio-economic group.	V-Dem
2.4.12	Exclusion by urban–rural location index (v2xpe_exlgeo)	ES: Index of political exclusion by urban–rural location.	V-Dem
2.4.13	Socio-economic barriers (barriers)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from ‘Poverty and inequality are extensive and structurally ingrained’ to ‘Poverty and inequality are minor and not structurally ingrained’.	BTI
2.4.14	Gini coefficient (gini_disp)	OD	SWIID

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding; OD = observational data.

EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENT

The primary underlying concept for what we call ‘effective parliament’ is representation. The selection of a group of representatives who then make laws on behalf of the people has been a central institution of democratic government for at least 4,000 years (Keane 2022). We use the term ‘parliament’, but this is a shorthand reference to what is more generally called the legislative branch of government.

Definition: Effective Parliament describes the extent to which the legislature fulfils the core democratic functions of a legislature. The core *democratic* functions of a legislature are: (1) to represent the people, (2) to make laws and (3) to provide oversight and accountability to other branches of the government (Böckenförde 2011). Some scholars add a fourth function: to provide ‘constituency service’ through which the members of the legislature assist the people whom they represent in accessing government services (Barkan 2017). This may also be considered to be a particular form of representation (function 1).

In many political systems legislatures perform other important functions that are not described above. But when considering such additional functions, we must ask what about those functions is essentially linked to democracy. For example, approving a budget or levying taxes are often the sole competence of the legislature (Driedger 1968: 25), yet these functions are not central to the *democratic* contributions of the legislature and are excluded from the concept.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: A legislature is effective to the extent that it fulfils the three functions described above. The Tracker therefore measures improvements and declines in a legislature’s execution of these functions. Such changes may affect any one (or several) of the functions noted above.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices incorporate as many indicators of the functions of legislatures as possible. In this case, most of the indicators that are available deal with the third function described above (oversight and accountability). When possible, more indicators should be added to the index.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
1.5.1	Legislature questions officials in practice (v2lqqstexp)	ES: In practice, does the legislature routinely question executive branch officials?	V-Dem
1.5.2	Executive oversight (v2lgotovst)	ES: If executive branch officials were engaged in unconstitutional, illegal or unethical activity, how likely is it that a body other than the legislature, such as a comptroller general, general prosecutor or ombudsman, would question or investigate them and issue an unfavourable decision or report?	V-Dem
1.5.3	Legislature investigates in practice (v2lginvstp)	ES: If the executive were engaged in unconstitutional, illegal or unethical activity, how likely is it that a legislative body (perhaps a whole chamber, perhaps a committee, whether aligned with government or opposition) would conduct an investigation that would result in a decision or report that is unfavourable to the executive?	V-Dem
1.5.4	Legislature opposition parties (v2lgoppart)	ES: Are opposition parties (those not in the ruling party or coalition) able to exercise oversight and investigatory functions against the wishes of the governing party or coalition?	V-Dem
1.5.5	Executive constraints (xconst)	IC: The extent of institutionalized constraints on the decision-making powers of chief executives, whether individuals or collectivities.	Polity

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

ELECTED GOVERNMENT

In the contemporary practice of *representative* democracy, government by elected leaders is a non-negotiable institution. Electing leaders is certainly not the only way to have a democratic or representative government (Urbinati 2006), but an elected government is the cornerstone of many so-called minimalist definitions of democracy, including Schumpeter's famous description of a 'competitive struggle for the people's vote' (Schumpeter 1950: 269).

Definition: Elected Government measures the extent to which key positions within the executive branch of government are selected through competitive multiparty elections. As members of the executive in parliamentary systems are drawn from the legislature, the extent to which the legislature is selected through competitive multiparty elections is also relevant.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The Democracy Tracker addresses this concept primarily through coding events that change the extent to which high political offices, especially the head of state or head of government, are chosen through competitive elections (excluding the judiciary). Note that most election-related events should be coded under Credible Elections. Instead Elected Government is most relevant when there are events between elections that either remove an elected official from office (such as through a coup d'état or forced resignation), or replace a non-elected official with an elected one (such as through the resignation of a military leader). The Elected Government factor does not address the efficiency

or capacity of the government, only the extent to which those who hold power have gained it through elections.

What the GSoD Indices measure: Elected Government measures the extent to which national, governing offices are filled through elections.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
1.4.1	Elected officials index (v2x_elecoff)	CM: Are the chief executive and legislature appointed through popular elections? Measure based on 16 variables from expert survey data, in-house coded data and observational data collected by V-Dem.	V-Dem
1.4.2	Competitiveness of executive recruitment (xrcomp)	IC: Competitiveness refers to the extent that prevailing modes of advancement give subordinates equal opportunities to become superordinates.	Polity
1.4.3	Openness of executive recruitment (xropen)	IC: Recruitment of the chief executive is 'open' to the extent that all the politically active population has an opportunity, in principle, to attain the position through a regularized process.	Polity
1.4.4	Electoral	IC: Does a country have no regular elections, elections in an effectively one-party state, elections with opposition parties but without an actual chance of government change, or full democracy?	Bjørnskov and Rode
1.4.5	Electoral Process (A1)	IC: Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	Freedom in the World
1.4.6	Electoral Process (A2)	IC: Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	Freedom in the World
1.4.7	Functioning of Government (C1)	IC: Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	Freedom in the World
1.4.8	Lexical index of electoral democracy (lexical_index_plus)	IC: We operationalize electoral democracy as a series of necessary-and-sufficient conditions arrayed in an ordinal scale. The resulting Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy (LIED). In this fashion, we arrive at an index that performs a classificatory function, each level identifies a unique and theoretically meaningful regime type, as well as a discriminating function.	LIED

Note: IC = standards-based in-house coding; CM = composite measures.

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

Voting in elections is the most common means of participation in democracy today. Electoral Participation is therefore a key measure of Participation in the GSoD framework.

Levels of Electoral Participation vary widely around the world. There are many reasons for this, including the presence or absence of laws that make voting mandatory, levels of trust in elections and social matters such as political interest and apathy.

There are two principal ways to measure Electoral Participation for a geographical or electoral unit (such as a country or an electoral district): either (1) dividing the number of valid votes cast by the total number of registered voters, or (2) dividing the number of valid votes cast by the total voting-age population.

Definition: Electoral Participation measures the rate at which members of the political community participate in electoral processes.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The Democracy Tracker reports levels of Electoral Participation measured as the percentage of the registered voters who cast a valid ballot in an electoral process. These data are reported both in standard election reports and in directionally coded reports that record significant changes in the level of Electoral Participation.

What the GSoD Indices measure: In contrast to the Democracy Tracker's measure that uses the percentage of registered voters, the Electoral Participation index reports the percentage of the voting-age population that cast a valid ballot in the most recent national election. Values are carried forward between elections.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
5.2.1	Election voting age population (VAP) turnout (v2elvaptrn)	OD	International IDEA

Note: OD = observational data.

FREE POLITICAL PARTIES

While they are rarely included in formal definitions of democracy or mentioned in constitutions, political parties have arisen in and form a core part of every modern democracy (Stokes 1999). Political parties serve several theoretical roles in a well-functioning democracy: they mobilize the general public and help translate its preferences into policies and laws, bring order to and streamline policymaking processes and, when parties are strong, provide for greater political accountability (Aldrich 2011; Mainwaring and Torcal 2005; Schattschneider 2004).

Definition: Free Political Parties assess the restraints and barriers preventing citizens from organizing themselves into political parties or their equivalents and how free those political parties are to contest elections and compete with similar organizations and parties. It also includes the extent to which elected political parties in a country's legislature are able to exercise the powers of that office, or whether their ability to participate is limited by unconstitutional or otherwise broadly undemocratic means.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: This measure includes executive, legislative and judicial actions that change the status quo of the political party environment and in particular actions taken against—or to the benefit of—a particular political party. It is also broad enough to consider whether extralegal or indirect factors are inhibiting either the formation of political parties or the ability of existing parties to register, compete, field candidates or take part in policymaking processes. In this measure the Democracy Tracker is by default neutral in terms of party platforms and ideological predispositions. The core exception to this rule is when the party in question poses an implicit or explicit threat to the broader functioning of political party formation and contestation in the country—for example, restrictions on exclusionary or explicitly anti-democratic parties may be necessary to protect the freedom of citizens to organize into political parties more broadly.

What the GSoD Indices measure: Free Political Parties measures the extent to which political parties are free to form and campaign for political office. Eight indicators, partly based on expert surveys and partly in-house coded, are used to measure how free political parties are. All of them reflect whether political parties generally, and opposition parties in particular, are allowed to organize freely and run in elections.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
1.3.1	Party ban (v2psparban)	ES: Are any parties banned?	V-Dem
1.3.2	Barriers to parties (v2psbars)	ES: How restrictive are the barriers to forming a party?	V-Dem
1.3.3	Opposition parties' autonomy (v2psoppaut)	ES: Are opposition parties independent and autonomous of the ruling regime?	V-Dem
1.3.4	Elections multiparty (v2elmulpar)	ES: Was this national election multiparty?	V-Dem
1.3.5	Competitiveness of participation (parcomp)	IC: The competitiveness of participation refers to the extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena.	Polity
1.3.6	Multiparty elections (multiparty legislative elections)	OD: The lower house (or unicameral chamber) of the legislature is (at least in part) elected by voters facing more than one choice. Specifically, parties are not banned and (a) more than one party is allowed to compete or (b) elections are nonpartisan (i.e. all candidates run without party labels).	LIED
1.3.7	Political Pluralism and Participation (B1)	IC: Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?	Freedom in the World

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
1.3.8	Party System (party_sys)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'There is no party system to articulate and aggregate societal interest' to 'The party system is stable and socially rooted: it is able to articulate and aggregate societal interest with low fragmentation, low voter volatility, and low polarization'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding; OD = observational data.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

The rights to Freedom of Association and Assembly are among the civil liberties generally considered to be essential to the functioning of democracy and are protected by articles 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, respectively. By ensuring that individuals are able to organize and interact with others to collectively pursue common interests and to peacefully assemble, these freedoms, among other things, enable public discussion of ideas, stimulate political participation and enhance government accountability and responsiveness (Beetham 2004; Diamond 1994; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.a.). They are also important tools for the exercise of other civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression and the recognition and realization of economic, social and cultural rights (Sen 1999b; United Nations Human Rights Committee 2020).

Freedom of Association is one of the rights that enables people to organize political parties and the two concepts are closely linked within our conceptual framework. Wherever possible, we distinguish between Freedom of Association in general and Free Political Parties specifically.

Definition: Freedom of Association concerns the ability of individuals to 'formally join together in groups to pursue common interests' (Joseph and Castan 2013). Such groups include trade unions, political parties, NGOs, professional or sporting clubs and corporations (Joseph and Castan 2013). Freedom of Assembly concerns the extent to which individuals are able to participate in peaceful gatherings of more than one person, which may be in-person or online, in public or in private. It covers a range of different types of gathering, including meetings, processions, protests, demonstrations, rallies, strikes and sit-ins (United Nations Human Rights Committee 2020; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.a.). International human rights law permits states to restrict Freedom of Association and Assembly where such restrictions are justified on legitimate grounds (e.g. in the interests of national security or public safety) and where the restrictions are provided for by national law, necessary, proportionate and non-discriminatory (United Nations 1966a; United Nations Human Rights Committee 2011). States may suspend the rights in times of emergency (United Nations Human Rights Committee 2001).

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The Democracy Tracker reports events that signal a significant change in the quality of Freedom of Association and Assembly, such as unwarranted restrictions on civil society organizations and instances where the state has failed to protect against rights violations perpetrated by non-state actors, for example by failing to protect protesters against violence by other members of the public. They also include positive actions

taken by states to facilitate the enjoyment of these rights, such as improvements to legal and institutional frameworks. This measure does not include the regulation of political parties (covered by Free Political Parties) or of registered civil society organizations (covered by Civil Society) as such.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Freedom of Association and Assembly aggregates a variety of related indicators from expert-coded data sets.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.21	CSO entry and exit (v2cseeorgs)	ES: To what extent does the government achieve control over entry and exit by civil society organizations into public life?	V-Dem
2.2.22	CSO repression (v2csreprss)	ES: Does the government attempt to repress civil society organizations?	V-Dem
2.2.23	Freedom of peaceful assembly (v2caassemb)	ES: To what extent do state authorities respect and protect the right of peaceful assembly?	V-Dem
2.2.24	Freedom of association and assembly (freass)	IC: The extent to which individuals and groups have freedom of assembly and association, that is, the right of the citizens to gather freely and carry out peaceful demonstrations as well as to join, form and participate with other persons in political parties, cultural organizations, trade unions or the like of their choice without being subject to actual limitations or restrictions.	CLD
2.2.25	Freedom of assembly and association (assn)	IC: Citizens' rights to freedom of assembly and association are severely restricted or denied completely to all citizens; limited for all citizens or severely restricted or denied for select groups; virtually unrestricted and freely enjoyed by practically all citizens.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.26	Union practices (union_p)	IC: Workers' rights to association are severely restricted; somewhat restricted; fully protected.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.27	Collective bargaining practices (barg_p)	IC: Workers' rights to collective bargaining are severely restricted; somewhat restricted; fully protected.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.28	Associational and Organizational Rights (E1)	IC: Is there freedom of assembly?	Freedom in the World
2.2.29	Associational and Organizational Rights (E2)	IC: Is there freedom for non-governmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work?	Freedom in the World
2.2.30	Associational and Organizational Rights (E3)	IC: Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labour organizations?	Freedom in the World

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.31	Association/ assembly rights (assembly)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Association and assembly rights are denied. Independent civic groups do not exist or are prohibited' to 'Association and assembly rights are guaranteed against interference or government restrictions. Residents and civic groups can fully exercise these rights'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The principle of Freedom of Expression has for centuries been considered a core component of democracy. For some theorists, any restriction therefore constitutes a less democratic polity (Meiklejohn 1948; Rawls 1993). For others, the value of freedom of expression to democracy is more instrumental—it helps democratic polities to produce the outcomes its citizens want, or maintains the political equality necessary to the functioning of a democracy (Arneson 2009; Dewey 2001). While the specific nature of its contribution to democracy is a matter of philosophical debate, the importance of freedom of expression to democracy is not; it is a core component of all functioning democratic systems. As a freedom that is vitally connected to communication, Freedom of Expression addresses both the speaker and the hearer, protecting the rights of both (Steel 1971).

Definition: Freedom of expression is a measure of the ability of individuals both to express themselves and to hear from others on private and public matters, free from censorship and without fear of retribution or outsized legal or social consequences.

The relationship between less legal restrictions on speech and greater freedom of expression is not always linear—in the case of hate speech, for example, legal restrictions may be justified to protect against calls to violence or credible threats that may directly inhibit the free speech rights of certain members of a community (Waldron 2012).

Within the general concept of Freedom of Expression there are more specific ideas, including the degree to which news media are able to report without intimidation, censorship or punishment. The GSoD framework treats these matters separately from Freedom of Expression in general and considers media freedom under the concept Freedom of the Press.

The concept of Freedom of Expression has also grown broader as advances in information and communications technology have radically altered the scale of expression that is possible. Freedom of Expression now also involves the receivers of electronic information, covering the right both to receive desired information and to be protected from receiving harmful information (such as disinformation and hate speech) (Cavaliere 2024). Within the GSoD framework, many aspects of public access to information are considered to be part of Freedom of Expression.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: Events that demonstrate changes in the level of Freedom of Expression are reported, especially events in which this freedom is infringed upon or expanded. These events are not limited to state actions and may also include actions taken by private or religious authorities when there is a significant national-level impact.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Freedom of Expression aggregates a variety of indicators from expert-coded data sets on the freedom of expression in public and private, censorship, academic freedom and restrictions to freedom of expression online.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.1	Freedom of discussion for women (v2cldiscw)	ES: Are women able to openly discuss political issues in private homes and in public spaces?	V-Dem
2.2.2	Freedom of discussion for men (v2cldiscm)	ES: Are men able to openly discuss political issues in private homes and in public spaces?	V-Dem
2.2.3	Freedom of academic and cultural expression (v2clacfree)	ES: Is there academic freedom and freedom of cultural expression related to political issues?	V-Dem
2.2.4	Freedom of opinion and expression (freexp)	IC: The extent to which individual citizens, groups and the media have freedom of opinion and expression, that is, the right of the citizens, groups and the press to hold views freely and to seek, obtain and pass on information on political issues broadly understood without being subject to actual limitations or restrictions.	CLD
2.2.5	Freedom of speech and press (speech)	IC: Government censorship and/or ownership of the media (including radio, TV, Internet, and/or domestic news agencies) is: Complete; Some; None.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.6	Obstacles to access (A)	IC: Details infrastructural, economic and political barriers to access; government decisions to shut off connectivity or block specific applications or technologies; legal, regulatory and ownership control over Internet service providers; and the independence of regulatory bodies.	Freedom on the Net
2.2.7	Limits on content (B)	IC: Analyses legal regulations on content; technical filtering and blocking of websites; other forms of censorship and self-censorship; the vibrancy and diversity of online information space; and the use of digital tools for civic mobilization.	Freedom on the Net
2.2.8	Violations of user rights (C)	IC: Tackles legal protections and restrictions on free expression; surveillance and privacy; and legal and extralegal repercussions for online speech and activities, such as imprisonment, cyberattacks, or extralegal harassment and physical violence.	Freedom on the Net
2.2.9	Freedom of Expression and Belief (D3)	IC: Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	Freedom in the World
2.2.10	Freedom of Expression and Belief (D4)	IC: Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	Freedom in the World

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.11	Freedom of expression (express)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Freedom of expression is denied. Independent media do not exist or are prohibited' to 'Freedom of expression is guaranteed against interference or government restrictions. Individuals, groups and the press can fully exercise these rights'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The principle of Freedom of Movement is one of the most ancient and intrinsic expressions of personal liberty. Throughout written history, liberty and freedom of movement are intertwined concepts, where liberty often derives from the notion of the right to move freely. In ancient Greece, Epictetus described freedom as meaning 'I go wherever I wish; I come from whence I wish' (McAdam 2011: 32). As a legal principle in the West, it dates back to 13th century England and the Magna Carta (McAdam 2011). Since then, the principle has become a fundamental human right and a common characteristic of democratic societies, enshrined in several international treaties, most notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNGA 1948). As a right, freedom of movement exists to varying degrees almost globally, but the ease of this movement varies greatly (Dowty 1987).

Definition: Freedom of Movement is a measure of the ability of individuals to reside and move freely within a country or between countries, including the ability to leave and return to a country, for purposes of leisure, employment, emigration and asylum-seeking, without undue impediments or fear of repercussions from governments. The extent to which this right can be infringed upon is subject to national laws, issues of national security, public order and health (United Nations 1966a). Freedom of Movement does not require that governments allow any person to enter their territory for any purpose. The Covid-19 pandemic is one such example of when worldwide restrictions on the freedom of movement were deemed justifiable in the name of public health (Mezzadra and Stierl 2020).

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The Democracy Tracker reports events that expand or reduce the degree to which this freedom is enjoyed. The measurement of this right is two-dimensional, distinguishing between the movement of people within the borders of a state and outside the borders. The assessment of this right pertains to the actions of the state, as the ability to impose restrictions on freedom of movement, internally and externally, is within the sole jurisdiction of the state. The right can also be impacted by the activities of non-state actors (in a war, for example).

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Freedom of Movement aggregates a variety of indicators from expert-coded data sets on the freedom of movement, encompassing the freedom of foreign and domestic movement for men and women, as well as the freedom to choose a place of residence.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data Set
2.2.41	Freedom of foreign movement (v2clfmov)	ES: Is there freedom of foreign travel and emigration?	V-Dem
2.2.42	Freedom of domestic movement for women (v2cldmovew)	ES: Do women enjoy freedom of movement within the country?	V-Dem
2.2.43	Freedom of domestic movement for men (v2cldmovem)	ES: Do men enjoy freedom of movement within the country?	V-Dem
2.2.44	Freedom of movement and residence (fremov)	IC: The extent to which individuals and groups have freedom of movement and residence, that is, the right of the citizens to settle and travel within their country as well as to leave and return to their country of own choice without being subject to actual limitations or restrictions.	CLD
2.2.45	Freedom of foreign movement (formov)	IC: Foreign movement and travel is severely restricted; somewhat restricted; unrestricted.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.46	Freedom of domestic movement (dommov)	IC: Domestic travel is severely restricted; somewhat restricted; unrestricted.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.47	Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (G1)	IC: Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	Freedom in the World

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Freedom of Religion is an essential component of democracies and a human right. It is established in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other regional instruments that elaborate on the meaning and boundaries of religious freedom (African Union 1981: article 8; Organization of American States 1969: article 9; Council of Europe 1950: article 9). Provisions on equality before the law in international instruments, including the ICCPR, establish states' obligations to ensure the same protections to all people without distinction, including on account of religious beliefs. Religious freedom, however, may also be perceived as a fault line, particularly when its politicization contributes to polarization and social and cultural cleavages (Bielefeldt, Pinto and Petersen 2022).

Definition: Freedom of Religion entails the right to express or practise one's religion or faith, both publicly and privately, and individually or collectively (United Nations 1966a: article 18). It also encompasses the freedom not to practise any religion at all and to be free from the imposition of religion. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has further asserted that freedom of religion includes the right of a person to change or leave their religion, establish a new religious group (United Nations Human Rights Committee 1993), or to be non-religious. The rights of religious minorities should be equally protected (including, for example, in access to

education or healthcare) and their members not discriminated against. Freedom of religion may only be subject to restrictions established in law that are necessary for public order, safety or health ([United Nations 1966a: article 18](#)).

What the Democracy Tracker measures: Democracy Tracker reports highlight evidence of change in the ability of people to profess their faith (or lack of faith), be it in legislation, jurisprudence, executive decisions, or other obstacles to religious freedom stemming from the actions of private individuals, for example, acts of religiously motivated violence. Reports also track repression and harassment of religious orders, the invocation of necessity to impose restrictions on freedom of religion, or those that result in a disproportionate burden to people expressing their faith, including members of religious minorities. How authorities ponder and balance the potential collision of certain rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion, may also be relevant for Democracy Tracker reports.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Freedom of Religion aggregates indicators including those related to religious organization repression, restrictions on religious practices, and private and public religious expressions.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.32	Freedom of religion (v2clrelig)	ES: Is there freedom of religion? V-Dem	V-Dem
2.2.33	Religious organization repression (v2csrlgrop)	ES: Does the government attempt to repress religious organizations?	V-Dem
2.2.34	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (frerel)	IC: The extent to which individuals and groups have freedom of thought, conscience and religion, that is, the right of citizens to have and change religion or belief of their own volition and alone or in community, manifest their religion or belief in practice, worship, observance and teaching in private or public, as well as proselytize peacefully without being subject to actual limitations or restrictions.	CLD
2.2.35	Freedom of religion (rel_free)	IC: Government restrictions on religious practices are severe and widespread; moderate; practically absent.	CIRIGHTS
2.2.36	Freedom of Expression and Belief (D2)	IC: Are individuals free to practise and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	Freedom in the World

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Freedom of the press is a fundamental democratic principle which upholds the idea that communication and expression through news media is a fundamental right ([UNGA 1948: article 19](#)). It guarantees the right of journalists, media organizations and individuals to gather, disseminate and access information without undue interference, censorship or intimidation. The concept is closely linked to other civil liberties, such as Freedom of Expression and access to information, and it supports the role of the media in holding those in power accountable and in facilitating informed public discourse. Freedom of the Press can be understood to be a more specific concept within the larger concept of Freedom of Expression. However, the GSoD framework includes the specific concept in order to facilitate specific attention to this aspect of expression.

Freedom of the Press can sometimes be compromised by state ownership or control of media outlets, suppression of dissent via censorship or other means, and legal or physical intimidation of journalists. To uphold Freedom of the Press, the state must refrain from censorship, protect journalists from harassment or threats ([OSCE 2020](#)) and promote an independent media environment favourable to the dissemination of diverse viewpoints. In some legal frameworks, boundaries of the concept include incitement of violence, defamation, the dissemination of false information, or the protection of national security ([United Nations 1966a: article 19\[3\]](#)).

Definition: Freedom of the Press refers to the right of media organizations and individuals to report, publish and distribute information and opinions without governmental censorship, interference or fear of retribution. It rests on three key principles: (1) independence, allowing journalists and media outlets to operate free from undue political or corporate influence; (2) protection, ensuring journalists are safeguarded from physical harm, intimidation and unjust prosecution; and (3) transparency, promoting access to accurate information and enabling the press to scrutinize institutions, thereby fostering accountability and public discourse.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The core focus is on events that positively or negatively impact the freedom of professional news media to operate. This may include changes to the legal environment such as updates to press laws, media ownership regulations and censorship policies that specifically address the work of journalists and media organizations. Reports may also address threats to journalists' safety, including instances of prosecution, harassment or intimidation when such events differ substantially from the status quo, as well as events that have an impact on the exercise of the right in the digital space. Overlaps with Freedom of Expression coding are avoided wherever possible.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices assess the latent concept of Freedom of the Press by aggregating indicators related to censorship, harassment and intimidation of journalists, diversity of political perspectives, media bias and corruption, and the broader context of media freedom and freedom of expression.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.2.12	Print/broadcast censorship effort (v2mecenefm)	ES: Does the government directly or indirectly attempt to censor the print or broadcast media?	V-Dem
2.2.13	Harassment of journalists (v2meharjrn)	ES: Are individual journalists harassed, i.e. threatened with libel, arrested, imprisoned, beaten or killed, by governmental or powerful non-governmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities?	V-Dem
2.2.14	Media self-censorship (v2meslfcen)	ES: Is there self-censorship among journalists when reporting on issues that the government considers politically sensitive?	V-Dem
2.2.15	Print/broadcast media critical (v2mecrit)	ES: Of the major print and broadcast outlets, how many routinely criticize the government?	V-Dem
2.2.16	Print/broadcast media perspectives (v2merange)	ES: Do the major print and broadcast media represent a wide range of political perspectives?	V-Dem
2.2.17	Media bias (v2mebias)	ES: Is there media bias against opposition parties or candidates?	V-Dem
2.2.18	Media corrupt (v2mecorrpt)	ES: Do journalists, publishers or broadcasters accept payments in exchange for altering news coverage?	V-Dem
2.2.19	Media freedom	IC: Is criticism of government and government officials a common and normal part of the political dialogue in the mediated public sphere?	Media Freedom Data
2.2.20	Freedom of Expression and Belief (D1)	IC: Are there free and independent media?	Freedom in the World

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

GENDER EQUALITY

Democracy is understood to require both popular control and political equality. As such, democracy requires that a person's sex or gender identity does not impede their ability to participate in politics or access to public goods and institutions. In contemporary practice, gender equality—and especially women's full and equal participation in economic, social and political life—is central to ensuring prosperous and inclusive democracies ([International IDEA n.d.](#)). Gender Equality is also a fundamental human right which upholds the equal economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of women and men. International law has developed a principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination based on sex and gender ([United Nations 1979](#)). These rights are featured prominently in the International Bill of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international instruments.¹

¹ The International Bill of Human Rights includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

In practice, due to longstanding patterns of discrimination in many countries, the concept is often focused on discrimination directed towards women and girls. The importance of the concept is illustrated in CEDAW's requirements that state parties take measures to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure the advancement of women towards achieving gender equality. The concept has expanded in recent decades to include more diverse expressions of gender. Protection against discrimination and violence based on gender identity and sexual orientation is called for by the United Nations Human Rights Council ([Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.c](#)).

Definition: Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities and opportunities for people of any gender expression. It requires that the interests, needs and priorities of all genders in their diversity are considered ([UN Women 2022](#)). The concept is understood based on diverse perspectives of feminists and gender theorists, who have found the roots of gender inequality in social constructs rather than biological differences, critiqued gender norms which have focused on masculine ideals and challenged gender as a binary conception or an inherent identity ([Beauvoir 2011](#); [Irigaray 1977](#); [Butler 1990](#)). Gender equality calls for greater opportunities for women in the workforce and public life, and the need to apply an intersectional lens to analysis, recognizing that factors such as race and class shape (and are shaped by) gender inequality. The concept also addresses the ability of traditionally marginalized genders to make substantial improvements to their lives, going beyond representation and access to resources.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: Gender Equality primarily focuses on the extent to which gender expression impacts individuals' ability to engage in (and influence) political and democratic processes, as well as their level of access to social and economic rights. The Democracy Tracker also tracks evidence of change in the prevalence of gender-based violence. Reports monitor developments related to legislation, administrative measures, court rulings, processes and events which expand or limit gender equality and in particular women's rights. The events covered may include the impact of gender quotas to increase women's political representation, expansion of reproductive rights, or harsher/lighter penalties for gender-based violence, and other actions by the state, civil society or engaged citizens. The Democracy Tracker also measures the extent to which laws and practices impact the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly the right to gender identity, including laws and provisions that recognize or enable changes to gender identities.² Rights related to sexual orientations and same-sex relations are covered under the Social Group Equality indicator.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Gender Equality aggregates indicators related to political power, representation, empowerment and exclusion, participation in civil society organizations, mean years of schooling, participation in the labour force and control of finance, as well as the extent to which laws both guarantee women's political and economic rights and are enforced.

² International IDEA uses the acronym LGBTQIA+ to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual people as a group or groups.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.4.15	Power distributed by gender (v2pepwrgen)	ES: Is political power distributed according to gender?	V-Dem
2.4.16	CSO women's participation (v2csgender)	ES: Are women prevented from participating in civil society organizations?	V-Dem
2.4.17	Female vs. male mean years of schooling	OD	GHDx
2.4.18	Lower chamber female legislators (v2lgfemleg)	OD	V-Dem
2.4.19	Exclusion by gender index (v2xpe_exlgender)	ES: Index of political exclusion by gender.	V-Dem
2.4.20	Women's political rights (wopol)	IC: How extensive are laws pertaining to women's political rights (right to vote, to run for political office, to hold elected and appointed government positions, to join political parties, to petition government officials); how effectively does the government enforce the laws?	CIRIGHTS
2.4.21	Women's economic rights (wecon)	IC: How extensive are laws pertaining to women's economic rights (equal pay for equal work, free choice of profession, right to gainful employment, non-discrimination etc.); how effectively does the government enforce the laws?	CIRIGHTS
2.4.22	Political empowerment	CM: The Global Gender Gap Index examines the gap between men and women across four fundamental categories (subindexes): Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.	Global Gender Gap Report
2.4.23	Labour force participation rate (women – men) (EAP_DWAP_SEX_AGE_RT)	OD	ILO
2.4.24	Share of managerial positions held by women (SDG_T552_NOC_RT)	OD	ILO
2.4.25	Control of bank accounts (women – men) (FX.OWN.TOTL.FE.ZS, FX.OWN.TOTL.MA.ZS)	OD	World Bank

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding; OD = observational data; CM = composite measures.

INCLUSIVE SUFFRAGE

A democratic government must be representative of the people it represents, and it follows that any such government requires ensuring every member of the political community has a vote of equal weight. The question of how ‘the people’ who are to be represented are delineated is a contested philosophical question, commonly referred to as the ‘boundary problem’ that does not have a straightforward or universally agreed-upon answer (Abizadeh 2008; Dahl 1990; Song 2012; Whelan 1983). The Democracy Tracker focuses not on philosophical or academic discussions but the real-world ground on which the boundaries of a political community and the exercise of suffrage is contested: the right to citizenship, incidences of disenfranchisement, and discrimination.

Definition: As the Democracy Tracker uses modern nation-states as its unit of analysis, for our purposes the ‘boundary problem’ is mostly solved by the necessity of adherence to definitive and legal borders for matters of coding. However, existing states may choose to extend the franchise to non-citizens living within or without its boundaries, change the voting age, or extend/restrict the franchise to diaspora communities. Changes of this nature are included in the Democracy Tracker, which recognizes a ‘thin’ commitment to the two principles stated above. A state may also make technical or legal changes that limit or expand the practical ability of enfranchised adults to cast a vote (such as changing the distribution or voting stations or registration procedures), or it could permit a private actor, political party, or any similar such entity to act in such a way that the same effect is observed.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The extent to which a country’s electorate both is legally enfranchised and has the practical ability to exercise their right to vote. Inclusive Suffrage is closely related to Credible Elections, but the former is more closely related to the ability to take part in an election, not broader issues of electoral conduct and finance or the quality of choices presented on the ballot. Given differing legal conceptions of citizenship and patterns of disenfranchisement globally, events in which the franchise expands or is limited in the broadest sense are included, regardless of national legal definitions of or constraints on citizenship or voting rights.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Inclusive Suffrage aggregates two indicators from the Varieties of Democracy data set on the legal right to vote of adult citizens and the accuracy of the voter registry.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
1.2.1	Suffrage (v2elsuffrage)	OD: What percentage (%) of adult citizens (as defined by statute) has the legal right to vote in national elections?	V-Dem
1.2.2	Election voter registry (v2elrgstry)	ES: In this national election, was there a reasonably accurate voter registry in place and was it used?	V-Dem

Note: ES = expert surveys; OD = observational data.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Legitimate mechanisms for the resolution of disputes are vital to democracies. In most cases today, the mechanism is a professional court, staffed by judges selected through a legally defined process. The independence of these judges is necessary to ensure the impartial administration of justice, and the effective resolution of disputes between branches or levels of government.

Judicial Independence is also key for supporting the broader commitments of the Rule of Law. Holding those in power accountable for their actions and ensuring that no one is above the law is a crucial task of an independent and impartial judiciary. Judicial Independence is moreover and evidently necessary to guarantee the separation of powers between branches of government. Further, it is vital to ensure people's right to a fair trial and their trust in judicial institutions ([United Nations 1966a: article 14](#); [UNODC n.d.](#)).

Judicial Independence also requires that other actors (be they private individuals, corporate entities, or other governmental institutions) effectively implement court rulings. Courts themselves rarely have the ability to enforce their rulings, and rely on voluntary compliance from other governmental institutions, or the assistance of executive agencies in order to enforce their decisions.

Finally, the appropriate level of Judicial Independence is a political matter. While judges must be free from outside influences and pressure, they must not be completely immune from censure, or completely ignorant of democratic pressures. An equal horizontal balance of powers is vital to most contemporary democracies.

Definition: Judicial Independence entails the justice system functioning free from influence from both government and non-state actors. Basic requisites for a judicial system that is independent and impartial are laid out in international standards and doctrine, and comprise aspects such as: the duty of government and other institutions to refrain from direct or indirect pressures, interferences or threats to the judicial process; the ability of courts to assert their competence and jurisdiction; the prohibition of special courts; the establishment of objective factors (such as appropriate qualifications and experience) for appointments and promotions; security of tenure, salary and conditions of service; and adequate provisions for disciplinary measures and their independent review ([United Nations 1985](#)).

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The extent to which judiciaries are able to carry out their functions free from interference, pressure or threats from other government officials or private individuals. Whether a judicial system meets basic elements for the independent and impartial discharge of its duties is also measured in the Democracy Tracker. Efforts to influence judicial proceedings by the executive or legislative branches may be evidence of change in Judicial Independence. The ability of courts to exercise judicial or constitutional review may also be relevant to assess this factor. Disciplinary measures and other changes to conditions of service could also be relevant to reporting.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Judicial Independence aggregates indicators such as those related to the independence of high and lower courts, government compliance with judicial orders and separation of powers.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
3.1.1	High Court independence (v2juhcind)	ES: When the High Court in the judicial system is ruling in cases that are salient to the government, how often would you say that it makes decisions that merely reflect government wishes regardless of its sincere view of the legal record?	V-Dem
3.1.2	Lower court independence (v2juncind)	ES: When judges not on the High Court are ruling in cases that are salient to the government, how often would you say that their decisions merely reflect government wishes regardless of their sincere view of the legal record?	V-Dem
3.1.3	Compliance with High Court (v2juhccomp)	ES: How often would you say the government complies with important decisions of the High Court with which it disagrees?	V-Dem
3.1.4	Compliance with judiciary (v2jucomp)	ES: How often would you say the government complies with important decisions by other courts with which it disagrees?	V-Dem
3.1.5	Independent judiciary (injud)	IC: The extent to which the judiciary is not independent; partially independent; generally independent of control from other sources, such as another branch of the government or the military.	CIRIGHTS
3.1.6	Rule of Law (F1)	IC: Is there an independent judiciary?	Freedom in the World
3.1.7	Separation of power (separation)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'There is no separation of powers, neither de jure nor de facto' to 'There is a clear separation of powers with mutual checks and balances'.	BTI
3.1.8	Independent judiciary (judiciary)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'The judiciary is not independent and not institutionally differentiated' to 'The judiciary is independent and free both from unconstitutional intervention by other institutions and from corruption. It is institutionally differentiated, and there are mechanisms for judicial review of legislative or executive acts'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY

The core of democracy is self-governance, and in many cases democratic processes are more responsive and representative when they are closest to the people being governed. Therefore, a functioning democracy requires the division of certain powers and administrative capacities among national, regional and local authorities. This is measured in the Democracy Tracker under the concept of Local Democracy (Sisk 2001). Local democratic governments are frequently better suited than national ones at providing and apportioning public goods and services (Arora et al. 2023; Reiss 2021; Stiglitz 1982). Local democratic governments are also more attuned to and representative of local populations, and therefore more suited to resolving social conflicts

and finding solutions to pressing local issues than oft-distant national governments (Sisk 2001). This relationship is not unidirectional, and over-localized government can result in poor service delivery and public good management, or contribute to the creation of localized autocracies (Bulmer 2015).

Definition: Local Democracy is the ability of subnational governments to conduct fair and credible elections, and the extent to which they are selected through them, as well as the degree to which they competently exercise the vested powers and responsibilities inherent in their offices. The GSoD Indices use a strict definition of local, that is municipal, government but the Democracy Tracker is slightly broader and considers higher-level subnational forms as well.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: Local Democracy is coded when an event reflects a significant change to local and subnational electoral procedures, or when the ability of subnational elections to be contested in a free, fair and credible manner is similarly altered. Similarly, Local Democracy is also relevant when there are significant changes in the capacity of subnational governments to govern effectively. Local and regional elections themselves are not normally covered by the Democracy Tracker, but exceptions are made when the results of an election can be clearly shown to be of national significance.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Local Democracy aggregates two measures of local government capacity and electoral credibility from V-Dem.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
1.6.1	Local government index (v2xel_locelec)	CM: Are there elected local governments, and if so to what extent can they operate without interference from unelected bodies at the local level?	V-Dem
1.6.2	Subnational elections free and fair (v2elffelr)	ES: Taking all aspects of the pre-election period, election day and the post-election process into account, would you consider subnational elections (regional and local, as previously identified) to be free and fair on average?	V-Dem

Note: ES = expert surveys; CM = composite measures.

PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND SECURITY

The concept that we call Personal Integrity and Security brings together several interrelated matters that have been considered as distinct rights in national and international law, but which all share a concern for human dignity (Rodley 2010). Many of these rights are included in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations 1966a), including: the right to life (art. 6), freedom from torture (art. 7), freedom from slavery (art. 8), right to liberty and security of person (art. 9), right to humane treatment in detention (art. 10), right to recognition as a person (art. 16), and the right to privacy (art. 17). The broad sense of the concept is that individuals have rights against physical harm to their person, unwarranted interference with their fundamental freedom, and unwarranted violations of their privacy.

Definition: Personal Integrity and Security is a measure of the extent to which individuals' physical person, personal autonomy, and personal information are free from unwarranted harm or interference from the state or other actors. Personal Integrity and Security can be harmed in many ways, including through actions that kill, maim or injure people; deprive people of their freedom without due process; limit people's bodily autonomy; or expose information about people without their consent.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The primary focus is on events in which state or non-state actors physically harm people who have the right to expect protection from the state. Police brutality, torture and mistreatment of detained persons feature prominently. However, the Tracker also covers non-state violence, including events that indicate changes in the overall level of security in the country. The Tracker also covers violations of privacy, particularly those in which personal information is published without an individual's consent.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of the latent concept of Personal Integrity and Security aggregates measures that primarily consider the extent to which state actors kill, injure or mistreat their own citizens.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
3.4.1	Freedom from torture (v2cltort)	ES: Is there freedom from torture?	V-Dem
3.4.2	Freedom from political killings (v2clkill)	ES: Is there freedom from political killings?	V-Dem
3.4.3	Political terror scale (PTSsd)	IC: What is the level of political violence and terror?	Gibney et al.
3.4.4	Internal conflict (D)	ES: Is there political violence in the country? The rating assigned is the sum of three subcomponents: civil war/coup threat, terrorism/political violence and civil disorder.	ICRG
3.4.5	Physical integrity rights index (physint)	IC: Additive index ranging from 0 (no government respect for the prohibition of torture, extrajudicial killing, political imprisonment and disappearance) to 8 (full government respect for these four rights).	CIRIGHTS
3.4.6	Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (G4)	IC: Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	Freedom in the World
3.4.7	Rule of Law (F3)	IC: Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	Freedom in the World

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

POLITICAL EQUALITY

As understood by International IDEA, democracy has two core principles—popular control and political equality. As such, the measure of Political Equality is central not only to the Rights category, but to the whole array of concepts that capture the extent of democracy in a polity. International IDEA essentially adopted this concept of democracy from David Beetham, and his definition of political equality is therefore most apt for us to also adopt.

Definition: ‘all adult members of the political community should have an equal right to have their voices heard, and be given equal consideration in the formulation of public policy’ (Beetham 2009: 282). Following this definition, any reduction in an individual’s voice and influence due to an ascriptive characteristic or non-political personal choice (such as place of residence or occupation) is detrimental to the overall level of political equality, and thus to the fundamental extent of democracy in the polity. As the concept of Political Equality is so broad, we measure it with reference to three subfactors: Social Group Equality, Economic Equality and Gender Equality.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The Democracy Tracker does not cover Political Equality directly, instead addressing improvements and declines in each of the subfactors of the concept. When one of the subfactors is coded, the factor is of course also coded accordingly.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure Political Equality by aggregating the three subfactors.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
Social Group Equality			
2.4.1	Social group equality in respect for civil liberties (v2clsocgrp)	ES: Do all social groups, as distinguished by language, ethnicity, religion, race, region or caste, enjoy the same level of civil liberties, or are some groups generally in a more favourable position?	V-Dem
2.4.2	Power distributed by social group (v2pepwsoc)	ES: Is political power distributed according to social groups?	V-Dem
2.4.3	Power distributed by sexual orientation (v2pepwort)	ES: Is political power distributed according to sexual orientation?	V-Dem
2.4.4	Exclusion by political group index (v2xpe_exlpol)	ES: Index of political exclusion by political group.	V-Dem
2.4.5	Exclusion by social group index (v2xpe_exlsocgr)	ES: Index of political exclusion by social group.	V-Dem
2.4.6	Political Pluralism and Participation (B4)	IC: Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	Freedom in the World

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.4.7	Rule of Law (F4)	IC: Do laws, policies and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	Freedom in the World
2.4.8	Equal opportunity (equal)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Equality of opportunity is not achieved. Women and/or members of ethnic, religious and other groups have only very limited access to education, public office and employment. There are no legal provisions against discrimination' to 'Equality of opportunity is achieved. Women and members of ethnic, religious and other groups have equal access to education, public office and employment. There is a comprehensive and effective legal and institutional framework for the protection against discrimination'.	BTI
Economic Equality			
2.4.9	Social class equality in respect for civil liberties (v2clacjust)	ES: Do poor people enjoy the same level of civil liberties as rich people?	V-Dem
2.4.10	Power distributed by socio-economic position (v2pepwrses)	ES: Is political power distributed according to socio-economic position?	V-Dem
2.4.11	Exclusion by socio-economic Group (v2xpe_exlecon)	ES: Index of political exclusion by socio-economic group.	V-Dem
2.4.12	Exclusion by urban–rural location index (v2xpe_exlgeo)	ES: Index of political exclusion by urban–rural location.	V-Dem
2.4.13	Socio-economic barriers (barriers)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Poverty and inequality are extensive and structurally ingrained' to 'Poverty and inequality are minor and not structurally ingrained'.	BTI
2.4.14	Gini coefficient	OD	SWIID
Gender Equality			
2.4.15	Power distributed by gender (v2pepwrgen)	ES: Is political power distributed according to gender?	V-Dem
2.4.16	CSO women's participation (v2csgender)	ES: Are women prevented from participating in civil society organizations?	V-Dem
2.4.17	Female vs. male mean years of schooling	OD	GHDx
2.4.18	Lower chamber female legislators (v2lgfemleg)	OD	V-Dem

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.4.19	Exclusion by gender index (v2xpe_exlgender)	ES: Index of political exclusion by gender.	V-Dem
2.4.20	Women's political rights (wopol)	IC: How extensive are laws pertaining to women's political rights (right to vote, to run for political office, to hold elected and appointed government positions, to join political parties, to petition government officials); how effectively does the government enforce the laws?	CIRIGHTS
2.4.21	Women's economic rights (wecon)	IC: How extensive are laws pertaining to women's economic rights (equal pay for equal work, free choice of profession, right to gainful employment, non-discrimination etc.); how effectively does the government enforce the laws?	CIRIGHTS
2.4.22	Political empowerment	CM: The Global Gender Gap Index examines the gap between men and women across four fundamental categories (subindexes): Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.	Global Gender Gap Report
2.4.23	Labour force participation rate (women – men)	OD	ILO
2.4.24	Share of managerial positions held by women	OD	ILO
2.4.25	Control of bank accounts (women – men)	OD	World Bank

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding; OD = observational data; CM = composite measures.

PREDICTABLE ENFORCEMENT

Predictable enforcement serves both as a governance principle and a foundational element of a legal and administrative system. As a governance principle, it reflects the commitment of public officials to uphold the Rule of Law through consistent actions and decision making, ensuring that laws are applied fairly and equally at all levels of society. To some extent, this requires that the state maintains a monopoly on the legitimate use of force across its internationally recognized territory. Additionally, the effective application of this principle is closely dependent upon the existence of a professional public service with high levels of Absence of Corruption. Laws that are accessible and comprehensible enable predictable enforcement. In contrast, a lack of predictability is evidenced in inconsistent enforcement, arbitrary decisions, and potential abuse of power.

Definition: Predictable Enforcement refers to the consistent, transparent and impartial application and enforcement of laws by public servants, including bureaucrats, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. It rests on three key principles: (1) transparency, with laws that are clear, accessible, and publicly communicated, (2) consistency, with laws uniformly applied and interpreted across different cases and individuals, and (3) impartiality, with equal enforcement of laws, regardless of an individual or entity's status or position.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: The core focus is on events that may increase or decrease the predictable enforcement of the laws in a given country. This may include legislative changes—such as new laws or amendments—that affect legal clarity and consistency; inconsistent or opaque court judgments; actions by public servants that demonstrate a significant change in the consistent application of laws; or appointments or dismissals of public servants that deviate from the norms of that country.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices assess the latent concept of Predictable Enforcement by aggregating indicators related to the executive's adherence to constitutional provisions, the consistency and transparency of laws, public sector compliance, appointment practices, bureaucratic strength, government transparency, law and order, administrative capacity, and monopoly on the use of force.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
3.3.1	Executive respects constitution (v2exrescon)	ES: Do members of the executive (the head of state, the head of government and cabinet ministers) respect the constitution?	V-Dem
3.3.2	Transparent laws with predictable enforcement (v2cltrnslw)	ES: Are the laws of the land clear, well-publicized, coherent (consistent with each other), relatively stable from year to year and enforced in a predictable manner?	V-Dem
3.3.3	Rigorous and impartial public administration (v2clrspct)	ES: Are public officials rigorous and impartial in the performance of their duties?	V-Dem
3.3.4	Criteria for appointment decisions in the state administration (v2stcritrecadm)	To what extent are appointment decisions in the state administration based on personal and political connections, as opposed to skills and merit?	V-Dem
3.3.5	Criteria for appointment decisions in the armed forces (v2stcritapparm)	To what extent are appointment decisions in the armed forces based on personal or political connections or alternatively based on skills and merit?	V-Dem
3.3.6	Bureaucratic quality (L)	ES: Bureaucracy has the strength and expertise to govern without drastic changes in policy or interruptions in government services.	ICRG
3.3.7	Law and order (I)	ES: To what extent is the legal system strong and impartial and to what degree is there popular observance of the law?	ICRG

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
3.3.8	Functioning of Government (C3)	IC: Does government operate with openness and transparency?	Freedom in the World
3.3.9	Monopoly on the use of force (monopoly)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'There is no state monopoly on the use of force' to 'There is no competition with the state's monopoly on the use of force throughout the entire territory'.	BTI
3.3.10	Basic administration (admin)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'The administrative structures of the state are limited to keeping the peace and maintaining law and order. Their territorial scope is very limited, and broad segments of the population are not covered' to 'The state has a differentiated administrative structure throughout the country which provides all basic public services'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

SOCIAL GROUP EQUALITY

Social Group Equality is a subfactor (along Economic Equality and Gender Equality) of Political Equality, a core principle of International IDEA's definition of democracy. Social Group Equality is rooted in the right to non-discrimination and equal treatment before the law. As established in the main human rights treaties, people's access to rights, including participation of citizens in politics, should be guaranteed without distinction 'such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status' ([United Nations 1966a](#), articles 2.1, 25–27, [1966b](#), article 2.2), or a particular descent or ethnic origin ([United Nations 1979](#), article 1.1). At present, the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (which is covered under the subfactor of Gender Equality) is also recognized by human rights bodies and experts ([UNGA 2017](#); [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights n.d.c](#)), and covered by the Global State of Democracy framework. Although certain rights, such as those related to political participation and representation, may be only applicable to citizens ([United Nations Human Rights Committee 1986](#)), authorities' respect for the rights of non-citizens (including migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons) also constitutes an important component of Social Group Equality.

Membership in a social group is often ascribed to individuals, sometimes against their wishes. For our purposes, the most important matter is that assumed membership in a group may have impacts on how an individual is treated, in some cases diminishing their legal and political rights.

Definition: Social Group Equality measures the extent to which members of all social groups can enjoy the same degree of civil liberties, political power and opportunities. It also measures whether a particular group (or groups) has a more favourable position in comparison with others in the enjoyment of these rights, and conversely, if a particular group (or groups) faces

repression, discrimination or persecution. Regarding the treatment of non-citizens, Social Group Equality relates to the extent to which the rule of law is ensured consistently and without discrimination, and laws and practices are applied in compliance with States' international obligations.

What the Democracy Tracker measures: Democracy Tracker reports on Social Group Equality primarily relate to changes in the ability of social groups (whether they be racial, national, ethnic, linguistic, political, sexual or any other category of difference) to access rights, political power and opportunities without discrimination and free of violence. The occurrence of violence against a social group is also monitored in the tracker as is the extent to which States ensure the rights of non-citizens.

What the GSoD Indices measure: The GSoD Indices measure of Social Group Equality aggregates indicators that measure variation in the distribution of political power on the basis of political or social group or sexual orientation, pluralism and participation, equal treatment and equal opportunity.

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.4.1	Social group equality in respect for civil liberties (v2clsocgrp)	ES: Do all social groups, as distinguished by language, ethnicity, religion, race, region or caste, enjoy the same level of civil liberties, or are some groups generally in a more favourable position?	V-Dem
2.4.2	Power distributed by social group (v2pepwsoc)	ES: Is political power distributed according to social groups?	V-Dem
2.4.3	Power distributed by sexual orientation (v2pepwrt)	ES: Is political power distributed according to sexual orientation?	V-Dem
2.4.4	Exclusion by political group index (v2xpe_exlpol)	ES: Index of political exclusion by political group.	V-Dem
2.4.5	Exclusion by social group index (v2xpe_exlsocgr)	ES: Index of political exclusion by social group.	V-Dem
2.4.6	Political Pluralism and Participation (B4)	IC: Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	Freedom in the World
2.4.7	Rule of Law (F4)	IC: Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	Freedom in the World

No.	Indicator	Description/question	Data set
2.4.8	Equal opportunity (equal)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Equality of opportunity is not achieved. Women and/or members of ethnic, religious and other groups have only very limited access to education, public office and employment. There are no legal provisions against discrimination' to 'Equality of opportunity is achieved. Women and members of ethnic, religious and other groups have equal access to education, public office and employment. There is a comprehensive and effective legal and institutional framework for the protection against discrimination'.	BTI

Note: ES = expert surveys; IC = standards-based in-house coding.

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We develop policy-friendly research related to elections, parliaments, constitutions, digitalization, climate change, inclusion and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and Democracy Tracker.

We provide capacity development and expert advice to democratic actors including governments, parliaments, election officials and civil society. We develop tools and publish databases, books and primers in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to gender quotas.

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The Democracy Tracker is a data project that provides event-centric information on democracy developments in 173 countries, with a data series beginning in August 2022. The monthly event reports include (a) a narrative summary of the event; (b) indications of the specific aspects of democracy that have been impacted; (c) the magnitude of the impact on a five-point scale ranging from exceptionally positive to exceptionally negative; (d) links to original sources; and (e) keywords to enable further research.

This guide explains the methodology behind the Democracy Tracker and provides recommendations on how it can be used.