

Key findings

The Global State of Democracy 2019

Addressing the Ills, Reviving the Promise



The global democracy landscape

KEY FINDINGS

Positive developments

- More than half of the countries in the world (62 per cent, or 97 countries) covered by the GSoD Indices are now democratic (compared to only 26 per cent in 1975), and more than half (57 per cent) of the world's population now lives in some form of democracy, compared to 36 per cent in 1975.
- The number of democracies continues to rise, from 90 in 2008 to 97 in 2018. This increase has occurred despite a slowdown in global democratic expansion since the mid-1990s.
- Popular demands for democracy are strong even in countries that have never experienced democracy. In 2018, protests and demands for democratic change in Armenia and Malaysia—both seemingly enduring hybrid regimes—led to democratic transitions in those countries. Protests in Algeria, Egypt and Sudan in 2019 demonstrate that democratic aspirations are strong and find expression even in hybrid or non-democratic contexts.
- Other countries (e.g. Ethiopia) have not yet undergone democratic transitions but are experiencing democratic reforms that provide promising prospects for a democratic opening.
- The large majority (81 per cent) of the world's 97 democracies have proven democratically resilient, having maintained their democratic status uninterrupted since 1975 or when they transitioned to democracy.
- On average, democracies have higher levels of Gender Equality and Human Development and lower levels of corruption than non-democracies and hybrid regimes. Democracies are also generally better countries in which to do business than non-democracies and hybrid regimes.
- The aspect of democracy that matters most for Human Development is Absence of Corruption. The less corrupt a country is, the more likely it is to have high levels of Human Development and vice versa.

Challenges to democracy

- Despite the continued quantitative increase in the world's democracies, the quality of the world's democracies is eroding.
- The number of democratic re-transitions is on the increase, pointing to the democratic fragility of many newer democracies. The number of weak democracies with low democratic quality is also increasing. The largest share of weak democracies is in Africa, but they can be found in almost all regions of the world.
- Democratic erosion is on the rise. The share of countries experiencing democratic erosion has more than doubled in the past decade compared to the decade before. North America, Europe, and Asia and the Pacific are the regions most affected by democratic erosion, with more than half of countries in these regions falling into this category. This is also the case for under half of democracies in Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- There are signs that the quality of the world's high-performing democracies is eroding. The share of democracies with high performance on all five democratic attributes has decreased in the last decade.
- Despite some advances in political gender equality in the past decades, serious efforts are still required to achieve political equality for men and women. At the current rate of progress, it will take another 46 years to reach gender parity in parliaments (see Figure 1.23).
- In all regions of the world, and across all regime types, civic space is shrinking.
- Democratic backsliding is a particular form of democratic erosion involving the gradual and intentional weakening of checks and balances and curtailment of civil liberties. This phenomenon has become more frequent in the last decade. A total of 10 countries in the world are currently experiencing democratic backsliding.
- Venezuela represents the most severe democratic backsliding case in the past four decades. Venezuela is the only country that has gone from being a democracy with high levels of Representative Government in 1975 to a non-democracy (since 2017).
- The share of hybrid regimes has increased in the last decades. In the majority of cases, hybridity is not a transitional stage towards democracy but a defining feature of the regime. Of the world's hybrid regimes, 71 per cent have never been democracies. This is also the case for 67 per cent of the world's non-democracies.
- Non-democracies and hybrid regimes, taken together, still represent a significant share of countries (38 per cent) and of the world's population (43 per cent).
- While a number of hybrid regimes and non-democracies have seen some advances in their democratic indicators in the past 10 years, a significant number have also experienced deepening autocratization and become more repressive.

KEY FINDINGS: GLOBAL ISSUES

The crisis of representation of political parties and the rise of populism

- Citizens are disenchanted with traditional political parties' perceived lack of capacity to address societal and economic problems. This has encouraged many voters to support alternative paths of political action, thereby contributing to the rise of extremist parties and movements on both the right and left of the political spectrum.
- Populist actors often show disrespect for the accountability institutions that check government, protect political pluralism and constitute liberal democracy. This inherent predisposition for unconstrained power turns populism into a threat for democracy.
- The GSoD Indices data shows that populist governments diminish the quality of democracy compared to non-populist governments. The only aspect of democracy that has improved more under populist governments is Electoral Participation.
- However, some also argue that populists have helped to put on the agenda important issues (e.g. corruption in democratic systems) that democracies need to tackle in order to regain their legitimacy.

Patterns and conditions of democratic backsliding

- Democratic backsliding is a particular form of democratic erosion that involves the gradual weakening of checks on government and civil liberties by democratically elected governments. This intentional dismantling of checks and balances has more than doubled in the past decade and has, in the case of Venezuela, led to a full democratic breakdown.
- Low levels of popular support for democracy as well as societal and political polarization appear to be linked to an increased probability and extent of backsliding.
- Populist presidents and governments tend to make backsliding more likely and to increase the scope of democratic decline.
- Higher levels of Effective Parliament and Civil Society Participation appear to effectively prevent the start of a backsliding process, make continued backsliding less probable and reduce the scope of backsliding.

The empowerment of civil society in a shrinking civic space

- The global democratic expansion in the past four decades has enabled an expansion of civil society and civic space at the global, regional, national and subnational levels across all regions of the world.
- A transformation of civic space has been observed in recent years, brought about by the use of information and communications technologies and the transformation of political parties, with a shift towards an individualization of civic engagement beyond formal organizational structures, to citizen mobilization and networking into looser and more fluid forms of interactions, often facilitated by social media.
- There are two key challenges related to civic space, in the current global democracy landscape. The first relates to the emergence of uncivil elements in civil society. While such currents have always existed, new forms have acquired a more potent voice and become more visible. Some of these voices (e.g. movements on the extreme right in Germany, Sweden and the United States) are the product of democratic societies and constitutionally acquired rights such as freedom of expression.

- The second key challenge for civil society is a rapidly shrinking civic space in many countries.
- Declines in civic space are seen in countries across all regions of the world and across all levels of democratic performance. These declines in civic space are occurring in contexts of democratic erosion, democratic backsliding and deepening autocratization.

Managing elections as fair competition in challenging environments

- Elections have now become the norm rather than the exception. A total of 62 per cent of countries in the world regularly hold free, fair and competitive elections. Of the world's democracies in 2018, more than half (59 per cent) have high levels of Clean Elections.
- Most electoral processes taking place around the world manage to successfully overcome the inevitable technical hiccups and facilitate orderly transitions of power. However, when confronted with serious technical challenges and significant efforts of delegitimization, electoral processes may fail to deliver credible or trusted results. Failed elections can trigger political crises with profound negative effects on societies.
- For countries undergoing significant democratic reforms as part of transition processes, revising electoral rules and strengthening electoral systems is key to ensuring the sustainability of such processes.
- Many undemocratic regimes strive to uphold elections as means of internal and external legitimization. In country contexts ruled by hybrid or non-democratic regimes, elections can reinforce a democratic façade, both domestically and internationally. The distortion of electoral principles for non-democratic purposes can further undermine public trust in the value of the electoral process in democracies.
- Social media provides a communication channel whereby rumours and disinformation spread at an unprecedented rate and this can also undermine trust in electoral processes. A need for a more rigorous regulation of social media platforms has become increasingly apparent.

Corruption and money in politics

- Absence of Corruption is closely connected to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies and, in particular, SDG 16.5 which aims to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all its forms.
- Absence of Corruption also indirectly contributes to achieving the other SDGs, as corruption can hinder the effective implementation of policies at improving health or education, eradicating poverty, promoting gender equality or fostering economic growth.
- Corruption not only affects people's trust in politicians but can also undermine trust in government and democracy more broadly.
- Democracy matters for corruption. In and of itself, democracy is not sufficient to guarantee low levels of corruption: indeed, 25 per cent of democracies suffer from high levels of corruption. However, democracies are by and large less corrupt than non-democracies and hybrid regimes.
- The lack of progress in reducing corruption has serious implications for the sustainability, stability and health of both older and newer democracies. The perceived inability of some countries to effectively curb corruption is seen as one of the causes for the rise of populism.

The state of democracy in Africa and the Middle East

KEY FINDINGS: AFRICA

Positive developments

- **The expansion of democracy in Africa since 1975 is second only to Latin America and the Caribbean.** Africa has experienced a remarkable democratic expansion in the last few decades, particularly since the early 1990s when many countries in the region introduced multiparty elections.
- In 1975, 41 countries were non-democracies while only 3 countries were classified as democracies. By 2018, the share of democracies had increased fivefold to 20 countries, making democracy the most common regime type in the region (41 per cent).
- **Representative Government has been strengthened in Africa.** Of the 20 countries categorized as democracies, the large majority have mid-range levels of Representative Government. However, only one country (Mauritius) has a high level of Representative Government.
- Between 1975 and 2018, the gains recorded on Representative Government were followed by advances on **Checks on Government** and **Fundamental Rights**.
- **Democratic aspirations in Africa remain strong.** Popular mobilizations demanding democratic change in countries with long-standing autocratic leaders have been seen recently in Ethiopia (2014–2018) and The Gambia (2016), resulting in incipient democratic reforms in the former and a democratic transition in the latter after 22 years of non-democratic rule. The large pro-democracy protests that rocked Algeria and Sudan in 2019 also testify to the growing demands for democracy in enduring hybrid and non-democratic regimes in the region.
- **Civil Liberties are one of the best-performing aspects of democracy in Africa.** In 2018, 33 per cent of countries had high levels of Civil Liberties. The high performance is concentrated in the subregion of West Africa, followed by Southern Africa. Of the countries that score highly on this measure, 87 per cent (14) are democracies, while only 12 per cent (2) are hybrid regimes. No single non-democratic regime has high levels of Civil Liberties.
- **Elections have become the norm rather than the exception throughout Africa.** Only four countries in the region (Eritrea, Libya, Somalia and South Sudan) hold no form of elections, scoring zero on Clean Elections and Inclusive Suffrage and, as a result, on Representative Government. Although Libya and South Sudan held elections in 2014 and 2010 respectively, regular elections are not held in these two countries because of protracted civil war. In countries in West Africa such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, democratic elections and stronger governments have replaced long-standing civil wars.

- **Of the new third-wave democracies, Tunisia has seen most democratic advances and now scores among the top 25 per cent in the world on seven of its democratic subattributes.** The Gambia is another new third-wave democracy that has seen significant democratic advances since its transition in 2017.

Challenges to democracy

- While democracies hold the largest share of regime type in the region, a total of 11 African countries are still categorized as non-democracies, representing 22 per cent of countries in the region.
- Africa also has the largest share of hybrid regimes in the world, with more than one-third of countries (18) in this category. The latest country to regress into hybridity is Tanzania, in 2018.
- **Despite gains in the past decades, the conduct of elections in a number of African countries remains flawed.** While the region has witnessed a rise in the number of transitions from ruling to opposition parties, many countries have failed to enact key reforms that would enhance the integrity of electoral processes. Disputed elections are a common feature of electoral processes in the region, sometimes leading to the outbreak of election-related violence.
- **Another set of challenges to democratic consolidation seen in many parts of Africa today relates to conflict and civil war.** In several countries, earlier gains have been reversed due to violence, a return to military rule, or failure to transform the political process.
- **An array of challenges inhibits the implementation of regional and country-level initiatives in Africa on gender equality.** To varying degrees, women in Africa lack equal access to political power and socio-economic status, and their inclusion remains a major hurdle for most countries.
- **Despite the expansion of democracy in the region, several countries have experienced significant declines in recent years.** Such declines are discernible in countries such as Egypt which, following the Arab Uprisings, experienced further democratic declines and deepening autocratization.
- **Judicial Independence is one of the weakest aspects of democracy in Africa.** Levels of Judicial Independence are low in almost half of the countries in the region.
- **Africa is the region with the highest levels of corruption as well as the highest share of democracies with high levels of corruption.** High levels of corruption are highly correlated with low levels of human development. This, therefore, has detrimental effects for sustainable development in the region.

KEY FINDINGS: THE MIDDLE EAST



Positive developments

- **According to the GSoD Indices, the Middle East contained just two democracies in 2018: Iraq, which is considered a very weak democracy; and Lebanon, which is a weak and fragile democracy.**
- **Iraq is the only country in the Middle East where democracy is proving to be resilient.** Although its democratic institutions remain fragile, it has not backslid into hybridity since its transition to democracy in 2010. The country is a very weak democracy, with low levels of Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement, and has levels of Fundamental Rights among the bottom 25 per cent of countries in the world.
- **Some efforts have been made on Gender Equality in the Middle East.** Much work is still needed, but small steps are observed. Iraq has introduced quotas for women in the legislative branch. Saudi Arabia has established quotas for the appointment of women in the Shura Council (Consultative Council). However, this is perceived as more of an effort to appease Western partners than a reflection of fundamental reform in favour of gender equality.



Challenges to democracy

- **The Arab Uprisings in 2010–2011 raised hopes for democratic progress in the Middle East and seemed to be a turning point in the democratic history of the region.** However, many of the movements that demanded greater democracy for the Middle East and North Africa have since fizzled out. With the exception of Tunisia in North Africa, the expected transitions have been aborted.
- **The Middle East remains the least democratic region in the world.** This is readily apparent from its low number of democracies (2 out of 12 countries in the region). It is also the region with the largest share of non-democracies. More than half of the countries in the Middle East (58 per cent) are non-democracies, while one-quarter are hybrid regimes.
- **Non-democracies in the region have, unfortunately, also proven resilient.** Of the 12 countries in the region, 10 have never experienced democracy. The regime status of six of these countries has never changed, while the remaining four have had periods of hybridity.

The state of democracy in the Americas

KEY FINDINGS: LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



Positive developments

- **Latin America and the Caribbean is the third-most democratic region in the world, after North America and Europe, with all but three countries classified as democracies.** Democracies in the region have proven resilient. Of the five countries that were democracies in 1977, four (Colombia, Costa Rica, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago) have remained democracies uninterrupted. Among the 16 countries that transitioned to democracy after 1977, almost 75 per cent have remained democracies without interruptions.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean has a heterogeneous democratic landscape.** At the same time, a small number of democracies stand out for their high performance. Of the top five countries in the world with the highest levels of Representative Government, three (Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay) are in Latin America. In 2018, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay were the two countries in the region (from a total of 21 in the world) that scored highly on all democratic attributes. Costa Rica, Chile and Jamaica score highly on four of the five attributes. The democratic performance of these five countries is also high compared to the rest of the world—they all score among the top 25 per cent in the world on Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government and, with the exception of Jamaica, Impartial Administration.
- The best performing aspects of Latin American democracy compared to the rest of the world are **Electoral Participation** (on which measure the region has the highest levels in the world, together with Asia and the Pacific) and **Freedom of Religion** (on which measure the region scores higher than Europe). On all other aspects of democracy, Latin America and the Caribbean performs third-best, after North America and Europe.
- Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with most advances in political gender equality in the past decades. Together with Europe, the region has the highest representation of women in parliament, averaging 27 per cent, which is above the world average of 24 per cent.
- **Venezuela is the region's most democratically ailing country.** It has undergone a process of severe democratic backsliding over the past two decades, which resulted in a full democratic breakdown in 2017. In fact, Venezuela is the only country in the world that has gone from being a democracy with high levels of Representative Government (from 1975 to 1996) to a non-democracy.
- **A number of other countries have suffered from backsliding or democratic erosion (or both).** Nicaragua has undergone a process of severe democratic backsliding in recent years, regressing into the category of hybrid regime in 2016. Brazil has experienced democratic erosion in the past five years. It is the democracy in the region with declines on most subattributes (8 out of 16) and among the top five countries in the world with the largest number of declines since 2013. During the same period, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Haiti have experienced declines on at least one subattribute of democracy.
- **Some countries in the region are characterized by democratic fragility.** Of the 16 countries that transitioned to democracy after 1977, 5 have had undemocratic interruptions, backsliding into hybrid regimes, but 4 (Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras and Peru) have since returned to democracy. Dominican Republic, Haiti and Honduras are also the weakest democracies in the region, together with Guatemala, judging from their low performance on one or more of their democratic attributes.
- **The region suffers from the highest levels of socio-economic inequalities in the world, which has translated into highly unequal access to political power.** This has also resulted in Latin America and the Caribbean having the highest rates of crime and violence in the world. Combined with high levels of corruption, this undermines trust in democracy and fuels civic discontent.
- **Political parties in Latin America are suffering from a crisis of representation.** This crisis derives from their difficulty in adapting to societal transformation and increasing expectations of a middle-class population deceived by lack of delivery in reducing corruption and inequalities. It has pushed voters in some countries away from traditional parties towards anti-establishment leaders.



Challenges to democracy

- **The quality of Latin American democracy varies widely: 12 different democratic performance patterns can be identified.** The most common democratic performance patterns are (a) mid-range on four of five attributes; and (b) low performance on at least one attribute of democracy.
- **Cuba is the only country in the region not to have undergone a democratic transition since 1975 and to have persisted as a non-democratic regime for the past four decades.** Cuba's role in the democratic breakdown of Venezuela should not be underestimated. Venezuela has supplied Cuba with oil in exchange for Cuban doctors, teachers and intelligence advisors.
- **Similar to other parts of the world, Latin America and the Caribbean has also experienced a shrinking of civic and media space in recent years.** Limitations on civic space are often, but not always, linked to advocacy or investigation into corruption and illicit networks.
- **The region is also facing new challenges, including migration.** These are driven, in part, by democratic breakdown in Venezuela and Nicaragua, as well as a less porous border between Mexico and the United States, which diverts migration flows from Central America to the rest of the region.
- **There is a marked decline in the support for democracy across the region.** Public opinion surveys show a 12-point drop in support for democracy over the last decade, from 70 per cent in 2008 to 58 per cent in 2017, with close to a 9-point decline in the last three years alone (Latinobarómetro 2018).

The state of democracy in Asia and the Pacific

KEY FINDINGS



Positive developments

- **Asia and the Pacific has experienced a significant democratic expansion in the past four decades.** The number of democracies has doubled (from 7 to 15) and there has been a reduction of non-democracies (from 14 to 10). This expansion has been driven by democratic transitions, with 12 countries becoming democracies for the first time since 1975. Two of these countries (Malaysia and Myanmar) made the transition in the last four years. Sri Lanka, one of the region's five pre-1975 democracies, returned to democracy in 2015, after its second hybrid hiatus.
- Malaysia, one of the region's two most persistent hybrid regimes (together with Singapore), transitioned to democracy for the first time after the 2018 elections ended the ruling party's 60-year monopoly on power.
- **The older democracies in Asia and the Pacific have proven resilient.** Of the seven extant democracies in 1975, five have remained so uninterruptedly until today: Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. Of the 12 countries that became democracies after 1975, all but two remain democracies, and half have not had any undemocratic interruptions.
- **Of all the early third-wave democracies (i.e. those that transitioned between 1975 and 2000), the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and Taiwan have made the most democratic advances.** Of the newer democracies, Timor-Leste stands out for its democratic gains. These are the only third-wave democracies that have high levels of Representative Government.
- **The region's democracies come in many shapes and forms.** Only Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Taiwan have high performance on all five of their democratic attributes, followed by Japan which performs high on four attributes. The most common performance (40 per cent of the region's democracies) is mid-range on all attributes.



Challenges to democracy

- **Half of the countries in Asia and the Pacific do not have democratically elected governments.** Some countries in the region have suffered from deepening autocratization in recent years. For example, Cambodia, which never fully transitioned to democracy, ultimately became a non-democratic regime in 2018. After the Middle East and Africa, Asia is home to the largest number of countries that have never experienced democracy at any time in their history (40 per cent of countries in the region).
- **Democracies in Asia and the Pacific suffer from democratic fragility and weak democratic performance.** Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka have experienced undemocratic interruptions since their transitions. Others, such as Malaysia,

Myanmar and Papua New Guinea, show low performance on at least one of their democratic attributes. Still others have experienced democratic erosion.

- **Asia and the Pacific is one of the regions most affected by democratic erosion, with more than half of its democracies suffering from it.** India is currently experiencing democratic backsliding and has the highest number of democratic subattribute declines since 2013. The Philippines, also a democratically backsliding country, follows India in number of democratic declines. Older democracies such as Australia, Japan and New Zealand have suffered some erosion, as have Indonesia, Mongolia and Timor-Leste.
- **Several countries in the region have experienced democratic fragility, with democratic breakdowns since their first transition to democracy.** Bangladesh (since 2014) and Pakistan (since 2018) have regressed into hybridity. Thailand backslid into military rule in 2014, although elections in 2019 have paved the way for a civilian government.
- **A number of Asian countries suffer from weak human rights protection.** Human rights violations are perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. These violations are sometimes related to internal conflicts which are further aggravated by waves of re-emerging ethnonationalism.
- **Despite advances in gender equality in some countries in the last decades, progress in Asia and the Pacific has not kept the same pace as the rest of the world.** Significant challenges remain to achieve gender equality and SDG 5.5 on political representation of women. Efforts are needed to increase the representation of women, not only in new democracies but also in countries such as Japan and South Korea.
- **Recent attacks on institutions central to the integrity of functioning democracies constitute a significant challenge to democracy in Asia and the Pacific.** Threatened institutions include the judiciary, court systems, electoral commissions, parliaments and institutions fighting corruption.
- **Despite some recent advances in reducing corruption (SDG 16.5), almost half of all countries in Asia and the Pacific still suffer from high levels of corruption.** This situation is compounded by weak judicial systems lacking capacity to combat corruption.
- **There have been attempts throughout the region to undermine civic space, freedom of speech and a free media in recent years.** In Cambodia, for example, the shrinking of civic space has occurred in a context of deepening autocratization, while in Thailand a similar shrinkage occurred after the democratic breakdown in 2014. In other countries, it has occurred in contexts of democratic backsliding and erosion, explained by the rise of nationalist political parties, and justified by arguments of national sovereignty, law and order, national security and responses to terrorism.
- The SDG 16 target that presents most cause for concern is SDG 16.10, with Media Integrity, and Freedom of Association and Assembly, having seen more countries declining than advancing since 2015.

The state of democracy in Europe

KEY FINDINGS



Positive developments

- **After North America, Europe is the second-most democratic region in the world, with 93 per cent of countries classified as democracies.** Europe has the largest share of the world's democracies, with 39 countries classifying as democracies, which constitutes 40 per cent of the global share.
- **The largest share of third-wave democracies can be found in Europe.** Since 1975, a total of 28 countries in the region have transitioned to democracy, of which almost half (12) are new countries that gained independence following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet/Communist bloc. Europe's democracies have proven remarkably resilient. While two third-wave democracies (Albania and Georgia) backslid into hybridity for some time, they have since returned to democracy.
- **Of the 21 democracies in the world with high scores on all five GSoD attributes, 14 are in Europe.** The majority (11) are older democracies in North and West Europe, while one is in South Europe (Spain) and two more (Estonia and Slovenia) are in East-Central Europe.
- **In countries such as Denmark, Finland, Latvia and the United Kingdom,** an increasing number of initiatives give European citizens potential avenues for direct participation in public decision-making, including citizen initiatives at the local level, e-petitions and e-platforms.
- **Armenia was the only country in Europe to transition from being a hybrid regime in 2017 to a democracy in 2018.** It also recorded the highest number of statistically significant advances in Europe for 2018: on Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement, and on eight related democratic subattributes.



Challenges to democracy

- **Although the largest concentration of democracies is in Europe, the region has seen a decline in the quality of its democracies in the last 10 years.** The share of countries with high levels of Checks on Government, Civil Liberties, Media Integrity and Civil Society Participation has declined. Therefore, most democratic declines in Europe are related to weakening Checks on Government and a shrinking civic space, and are occurring in contexts of democratic erosion and democratic backsliding.
- **More than half (56 per cent) of democracies in Europe suffer from democratic erosion.** Of the 10 democracies in the world currently experiencing democratic backsliding, 6—Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Turkey and to a lesser extent, Ukraine—are in Europe.
- **There is a general malaise within mainstream political parties across most of Europe and particularly in Western European countries.** This contributes to the rise of non-traditional parties, such as populist, extremist and anti-establishment parties. Democratic backsliding is often associated with such parties gaining access to government. The phenomenon of ruling political parties showing autocratic tendencies can be discerned in several countries in the region, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe.
- **Europe has recently experienced a populist wave.** Its origins can be traced back to several interacting factors, including economic and cultural globalization, which have transformed the social structure and political culture of many countries in the region. Political drivers of populism include reduced trust in political parties and a crisis of representation as well as the fragmentation and polarization of the public sphere further deepened by the emergence of new technologies and social media. Socio-economic drivers of populism include labour market transformation, an increase in domestic socio-economic disparities and a gap between citizens' expectations of what democracy can deliver and disenchantment with democracy's perceived failure to deliver wellbeing for all.

Where to find the Global State of Democracy report

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International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
Strömsborg, SE-103 34 Stockholm, SWEDEN, Tel: +46 8 698 37 00, info@idea.int, www.idea.int

