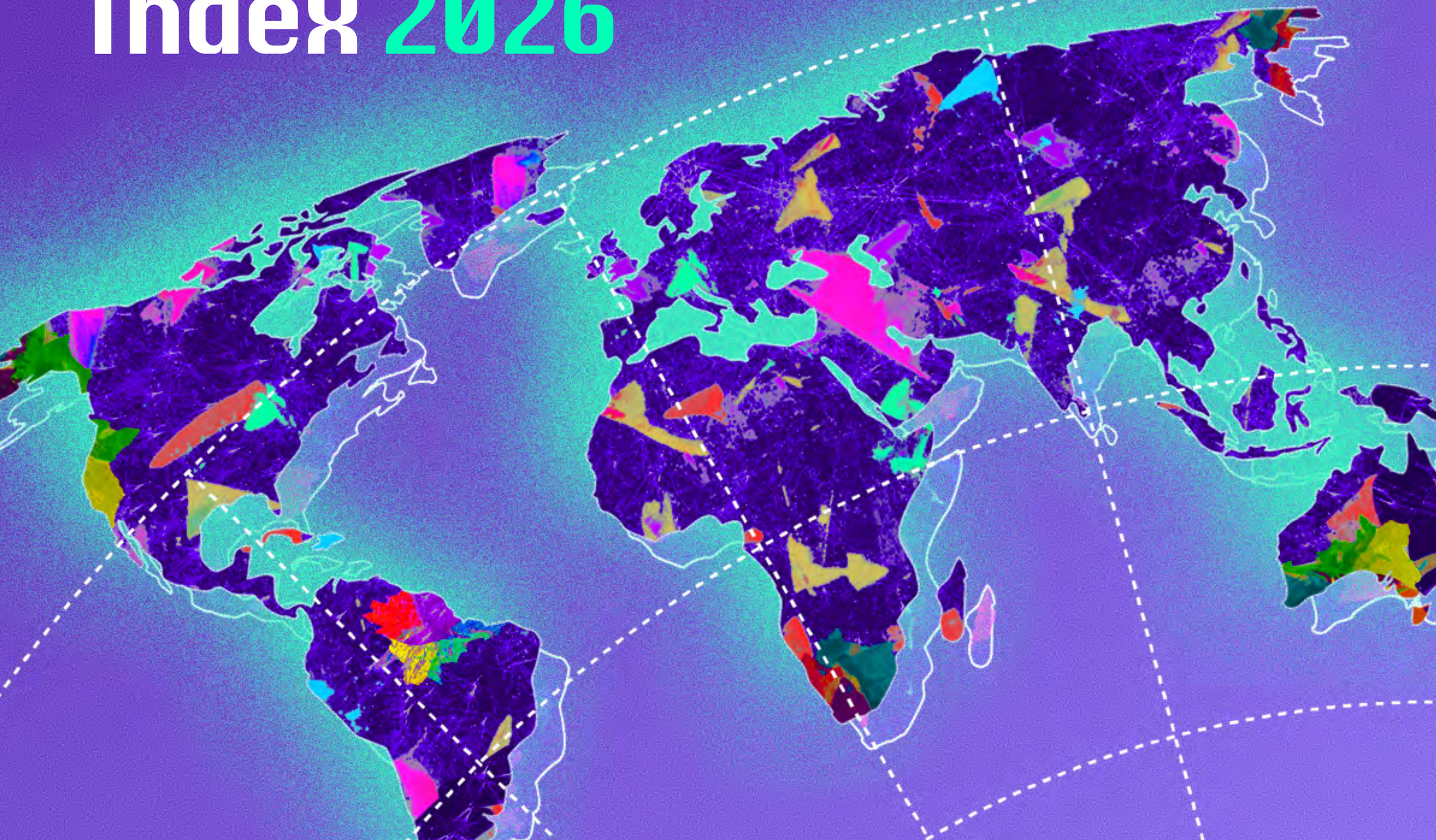
World Justice Project

Rule of Law Index 2026

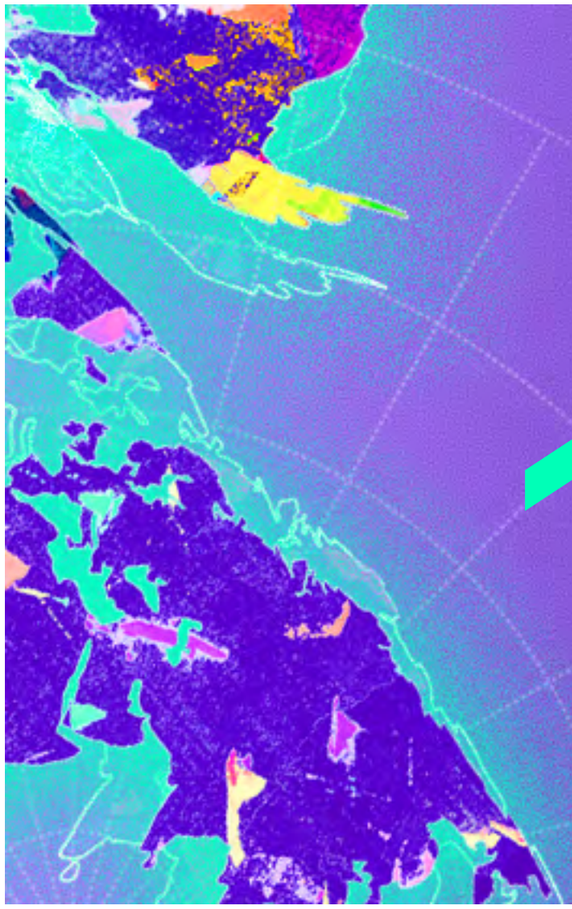




Introduction

The *World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index® 2026* is the latest report in an annual series measuring people's perceptions and experiences of the rule of law around the world. The Index is the world's leading source for original, independent data on the rule of law, and it is WJP's hope that this diagnostic tool will help identify strengths and weaknesses, encourage policy choices, guide program development, and inform research to strengthen the rule of law.

The following pages contain a selection of key insights and data trends from 2026. In contrast with previous versions of the report, WJP has migrated portions of the Index—including country profiles, the methodology, and supplemental data visualizations—online. These and other resources, such as our questionnaires and variable map, are available for download on our website: *worldjusticeproject.org/index*.



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In memory of:

William H. Neukom

1941-2025



"If your cause is just, nothing is impossible."

Foreword



Dr. Alejandro Ponce
Executive Director
World Justice Project

The world is entering a period of greater uncertainty. Geopolitical tensions are rising, economic pressures are reshaping societies, and the rules that have long supported international cooperation are increasingly contested. In this environment, the rule of law matters more, not less.

The rule of law underpins peaceful societies, protects rights, supports justice, and creates the conditions for sustainable economic prosperity. Yet the 2026 *World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index*® shows that its global erosion continues. While the pace of decline has slowed, the global rule of law recession persists. Authoritarianism is no longer merely an emerging trend; it has become entrenched in many parts of the world.

The consequences extend well beyond politics and governance. For businesses and investors, respect for the law provides the predictability and confidence needed for investment, job creation, and growth. When the rule of law weakens, risk increases. Index data reinforces this connection: economic prosperity, price stability, and lower credit risk tend to cluster where the rule of law is strong.

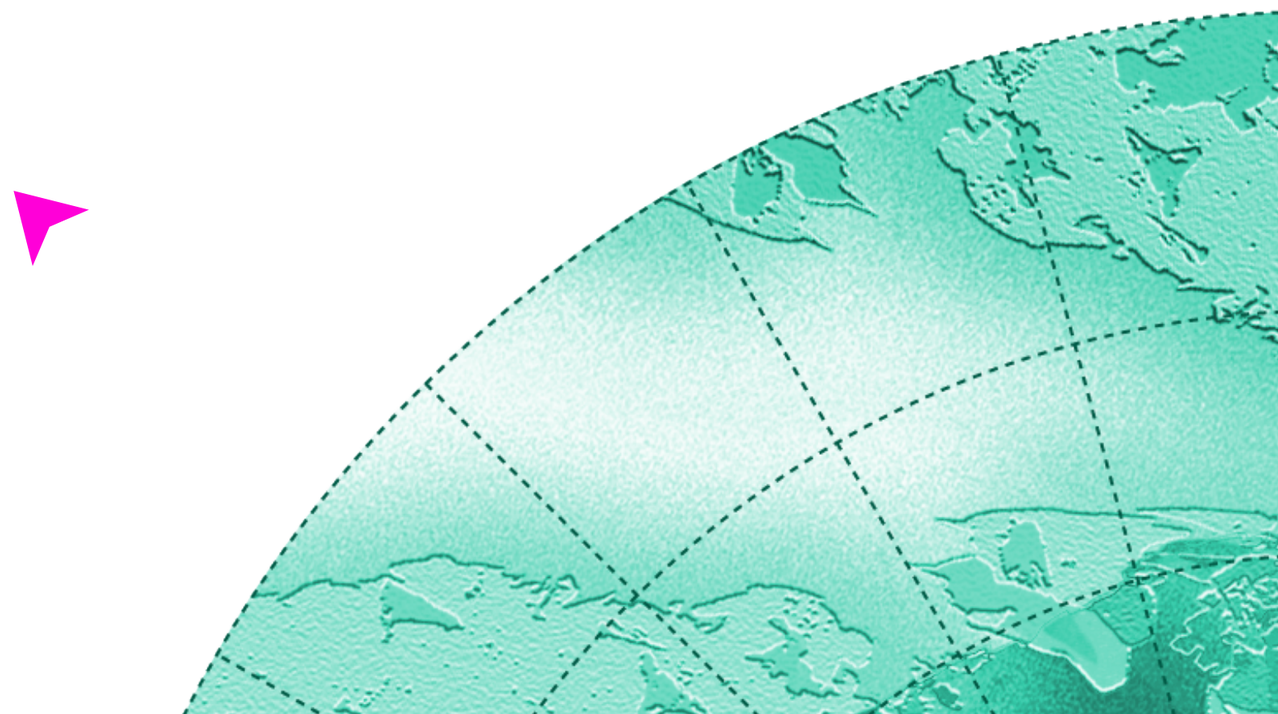
Reliable evidence is essential to understanding these trends and responding to them. The *WJP Rule of Law Index* provides a common evidence base for identifying strengths to build on and weaknesses to address. Drawing on extensive surveys of people around the world and detailed assessments from legal practitioners and experts across 143 countries and jurisdictions, it offers one of the world's most comprehensive measures of the rule of law.

This year's findings demand attention. More than 86% of countries have experienced a sustained five-year decline in at least one of three key safeguards against authoritarian rule: Constraints on Government Powers, Open Government, and Fundamental Rights. Civic space continues to narrow as freedoms of expression, assembly, and participation come under pressure. At the same time, judicial institutions charged with upholding the law and protecting rights face increasing government interference.

These trends are serious, but they are not irreversible. Institutions can be weakened quickly; rebuilding them takes time, sustained commitment, and public trust. But countries can change course. Poland and Brazil recorded the world's two largest improvements over the past three years, demonstrating that institutional momentum can shift and progress is possible.

Reversing these trends will require sustained engagement across society. Governments have a central responsibility, but businesses, civil society, the legal community, and citizens all have a stake in institutions that are effective, accountable, and fair. The World Justice Project stands ready to work with partners across these sectors to strengthen the rule of law and build resilience.

We invite you all to use this data to identify where progress is needed, inform policy and business decisions, and advance the rule of law for everyone.



About the Rule of Law

At its core, the rule of law means that power must answer to the law, no matter who holds that power.

It means that political, economic, and coercive powers have limits: government officials must serve the public, not themselves; businesses should be able to compete, innovate, and grow (on fair terms); police and security forces must protect people, not intimidate them.

Our Definition

rule · of · law

The rule of law is a durable system of laws, institutions, norms, and community commitment that delivers four universal principles: accountability, just law, open government, and accessible and impartial justice.

The Four Universal Principles

WJP's definition of rule of law is built around four universal principles, developed in accordance with internationally accepted standards and norms, in consultation with a wide variety of experts worldwide.

Accountability

The government and private actors **are accountable under the law.**

Just Law

The law is **clear, publicized, and stable and is applied evenly**. It ensures human rights as well as property, contract, and procedural rights.

Open Government

The processes by which the law is adopted, administered, adjudicated, and enforced **are accessible, fair, and efficient**.

Accessible and Impartial Justice

Justice is delivered timely by **competent, ethical, and independent representatives and neutrals** who are accessible, have adequate resources, and reflect the makeup of the communities they serve.

Rule of Law and the Index

The *WJP Rule of Law Index* captures adherence to the rule of law as defined by WJP's universal principles through a comprehensive and multi-dimensional set of outcome indicators. The theoretical framework linking these indicators draws upon two main precepts that measure the relationship between the state and the governed:

Whether the law imposes limits on the exercise of power by the state and its agents, as well as individuals and private entities. This concept is measured in Factors:

1 Constraints on Government Powers
2 Absence of Corruption
3 Open Government
4 Fundamental Rights

Whether the state limits the actions of its people and fulfills its basic duties towards its population so that the public interest is served, people are protected from violence, and all members of society have access to dispute settlement and grievance mechanisms. This concept is measured in Factors:

5 Order and Security
6 Regulatory Enforcement
7 Civil Justice
8 Criminal Justice

For more on the framework, factors, and indicators see page 16.

The rule of law is a notoriously difficult concept to define and measure, but it can be simplified by focusing on certain outcomes that the rule of law brings to societies. The *WJP Rule of Law Index* seeks to embody these outcomes within a simple and coherent framework.

Although broad in scope, this framework assumes very little about the functions of the state, and when it does, it incorporates functions that are recognized by practically all societies, such as the provision of justice or the guarantee of order and security.

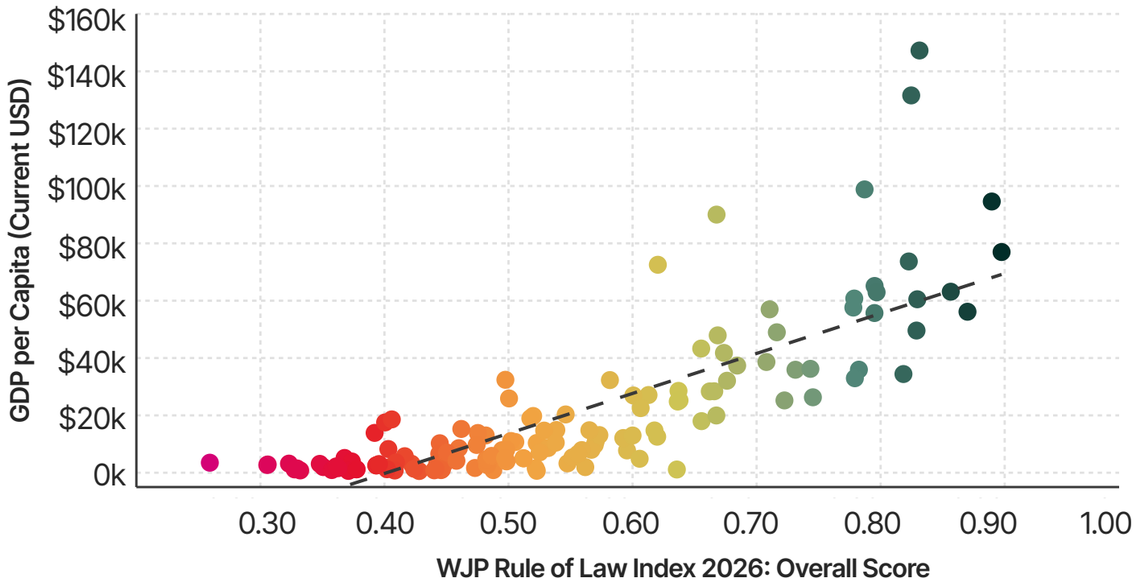
The resulting set of indicators is also an effort to strike a balance between what scholars call a "thin" or minimalist conception of the rule of law that focuses on formal, procedural rules, and a "thick" conception that includes substantive characteristics, such as self-governance and various fundamental rights and freedoms. Striking this balance between "thin" and "thick" conceptions of the rule of law enables the Index to apply to different types of social and political systems, including those that lack many of the features that characterize democratic nations, while including sufficient substantive characteristics to render the rule of law as more than a system of rules.

The Index recognizes that a system of law that fails to respect core human rights guaranteed under international law is at best "rule by law" and does not deserve to be called a rule of law system.

Benefits of Effective Rule of Law

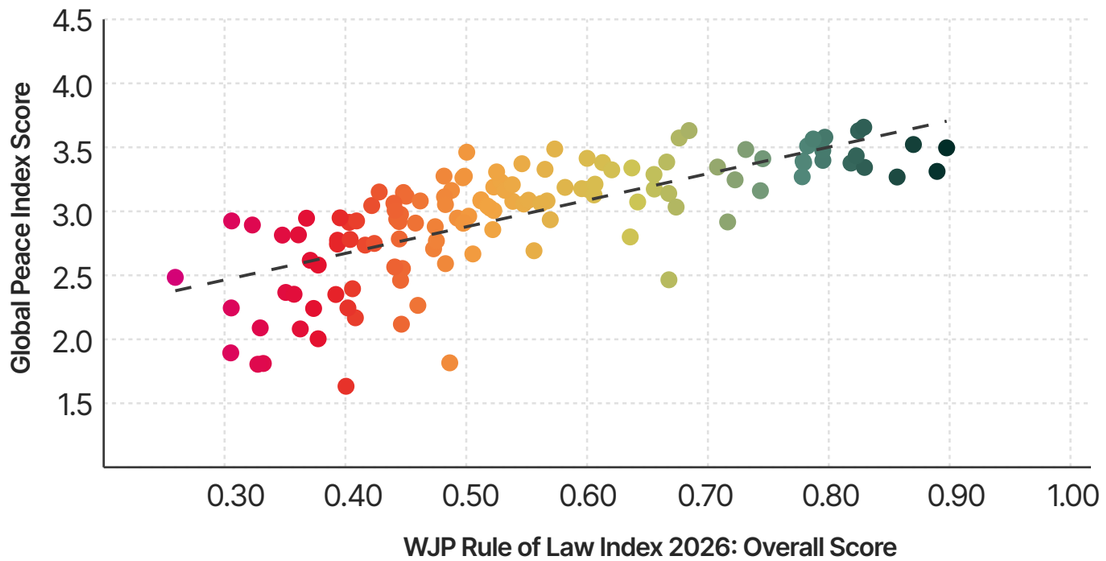
ECONOMY

Where rule of law is stronger, so is the economy.[1]



PEACE

More peaceful countries enjoy greater rule of law.[2]



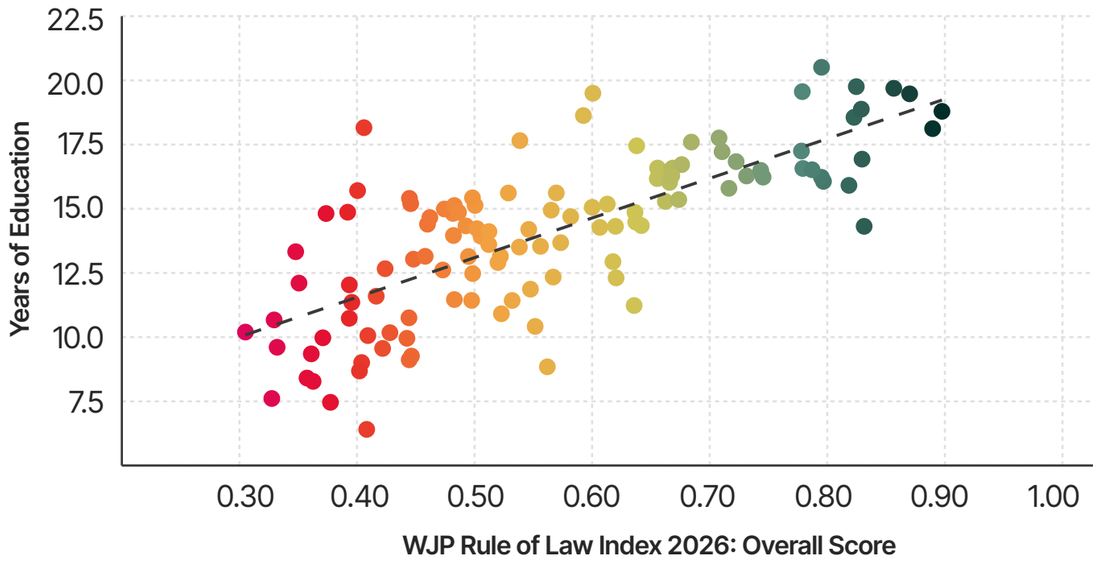
No matter who we are or where we live, the rule of law affects us all. It is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace – underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights.

Research shows that rule of law correlates to higher economic growth, greater peace, more education, and improved health outcomes.*

1. Source: *WJP Rule of Law Index 2026*, World Bank national accounts data and OECD national accounts data (2025).
2. Source: *WJP Rule of Law Index 2026*, Global Peace Index 2026 (inverted)– Vision of Humanity.
* Note that data for these indicators is not available in every country. As such, each chart may not display data for all 143 countries and jurisdictions covered by the 2026 Index.

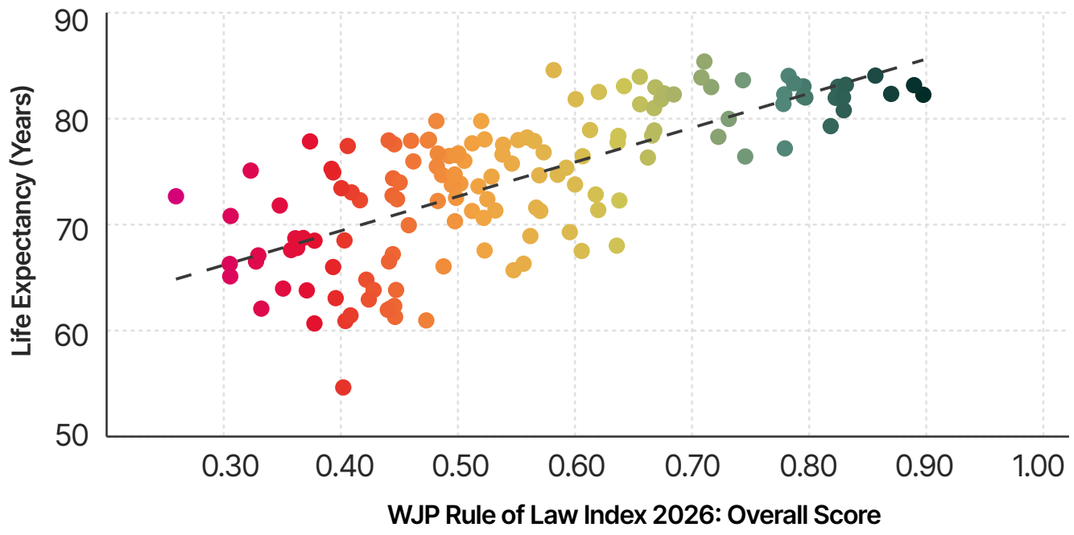
EDUCATION

People are more educated where rule of law prevails.[3]



LIFE EXPECTANCY

People live longer in countries with higher rule of law scores.[4]



3. Source: *WJP Rule of Law Index 2026*, World Bank's Education Statistics (most recent data for each country); The World Factbook.
4. Source: *WJP Rule of Law Index 2026*, Life expectancy 2024 – World Bank's World Development Indicators.

Overview of Overall Scores and Rankings

The table below shows the overall scores and rankings of the *WJP Rule of Law Index 2026* in alphabetical order. Scores range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the strongest adherence to the rule of law.

Negative Change Positive Change

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	% Change in Overall Score*	Global Rank	Change in Global Rank
Afghanistan	0.31	-0.8%	142	0
Albania	0.48	-1.5%	91	-4
Algeria	0.49	0.8%	85	3
Angola	0.42	-0.3%	113	0
Antigua and Barbuda	0.64	-0.1%	39	-1
Argentina	0.54	-0.4%	64	1
Australia	0.80	-0.1%	12	-1
Austria	0.80	0.3%	11	1
The Bahamas	0.59	0.2%	51	0
Bangladesh	0.39	0.6%	123	2
Barbados	0.66	0.2%	33	0
Belarus	0.44	0.0%	104	1
Belgium	0.78	-0.3%	17	0
Belize	0.49	-0.3%	84	-2
Benin	0.47	0.2%	94	0
Bolivia	0.37	0.7%	130	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.52	0.5%	70	0
Botswana	0.60	0.0%	49	1
Brazil	0.51	0.5%	76	2
Bulgaria	0.55	-1.2%	63	-2
Burkina Faso	0.45	-1.2%	101	0
Cambodia	0.31	-1.4%	140	1
Cameroon	0.35	-1.6%	134	0
Canada	0.80	0.1%	13	0
Chile	0.66	0.1%	34	1
China	0.48	-0.4%	92	0
Colombia	0.46	-2.5%	96	-1
Congo, Dem. Rep.	0.33	-2.1%	136	0
Congo, Rep.	0.39	-1.5%	124	-1
Costa Rica	0.67	-1.2%	31	-3
Côte d'Ivoire	0.44	-0.4%	107	-1
Croatia	0.61	0.9%	44	2
Cyprus	0.67	0.1%	28	2
Czechia	0.73	-1.0%	21	-1
Denmark	0.90	0.0%	1	0
Dominica	0.57	-1.1%	54	0
Dominican Republic	0.50	-0.3%	77	-1
Ecuador	0.45	-2.2%	102	-3
Egypt, Arab Rep.	0.35	0.5%	135	0
El Salvador	0.42	-0.8%	114	0
Estonia	0.82	-0.1%	10	0
Ethiopia	0.36	-1.3%	133	-1
Finland	0.87	-0.1%	3	0
France	0.72	-1.0%	23	-1
Gabon	0.40	0.3%	119	3
The Gambia	0.49	0.3%	86	3
Georgia	0.57	-2.0%	55	-3
Germany	0.83	-0.5%	6	0
Ghana	0.55	0.5%	62	1
Greece	0.60	0.6%	47	1
Grenada	0.59	-0.7%	50	-1
Guatemala	0.44	1.1%	106	4
Guinea	0.40	-1.2%	118	-1
Guyana	0.50	-0.5%	81	-1
Haiti	0.31	-5.6%	141	-1
Honduras	0.41	-0.5%	115	1
Hong Kong SAR, China	0.71	-1.1%	24	0
Hungary	0.50	-0.4%	78	1
India	0.48	-1.3%	88	-2
Indonesia	0.51	-2.3%	75	-6
Iran, Islamic Rep.	0.37	-2.3%	128	0
Ireland	0.82	0.1%	8	0
Italy	0.66	-0.2%	35	-1
Jamaica	0.57	-0.5%	56	1
Japan	0.78	-0.2%	15	0
Jordan	0.55	0.0%	61	1
Kazakhstan	0.53	-1.4%	67	-1
Kenya	0.45	-0.8%	100	2

* Scores are rounded to two decimal places and percentage changes in score are rounded to one decimal place.

Negative Change Positive Change

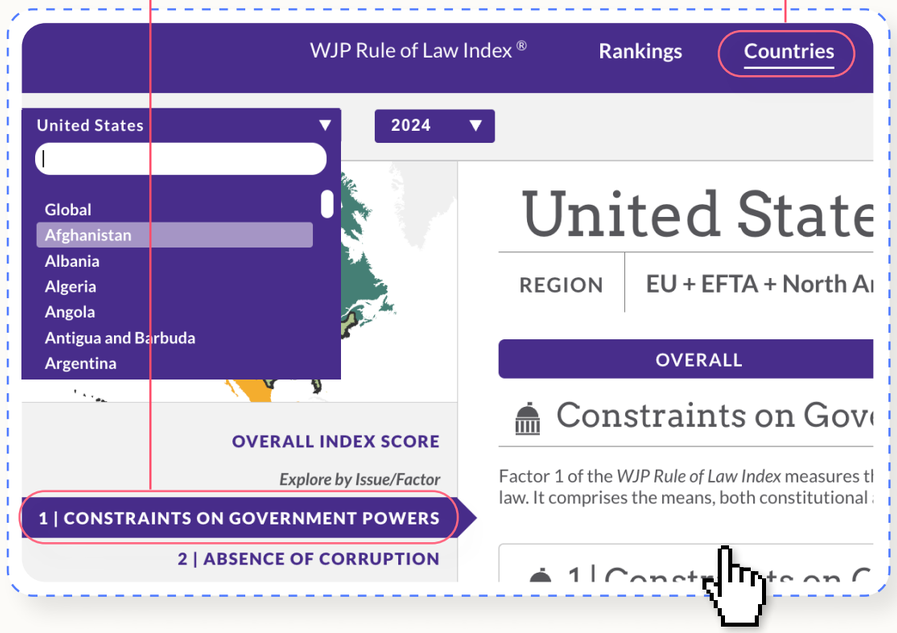
Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	% Change in Overall Score*	Global Rank	Change in Global Rank
Korea, Rep.	0.74	0.0%	20	-1
Kosovo	0.56	-0.3%	59	0
Kuwait	0.58	0.5%	52	1
Kyrgyz Republic	0.45	-0.1%	99	5
Latvia	0.75	1.6%	19	2
Lebanon	0.44	-0.2%	109	-2
Liberia	0.45	0.9%	103	5
Lithuania	0.78	0.7%	16	2
Luxembourg	0.83	0.2%	5	2
Madagascar	0.43	-1.0%	111	1
Malawi	0.52	0.6%	69	2
Malaysia	0.57	0.6%	53	3
Mali	0.38	-2.0%	127	-1
Malta	0.67	-0.2%	29	2
Mauritania	0.36	-0.2%	132	1
Mauritius	0.60	-0.6%	48	-1
Mexico	0.39	-2.7%	125	-4
Moldova	0.53	0.3%	66	2
Mongolia	0.53	-1.3%	68	-1
Montenegro	0.57	-1.0%	57	-2
Morocco	0.48	0.3%	90	1
Mozambique	0.37	-0.8%	129	0
Myanmar	0.33	-1.9%	137	1
Namibia	0.61	-0.5%	46	-1
Nepal	0.52	0.5%	71	1
Netherlands	0.82	0.2%	9	0
New Zealand	0.83	-0.6%	7	-2
Nicaragua	0.32	-2.5%	139	0
Niger	0.41	-2.0%	116	-1
Nigeria	0.40	-0.9%	120	0
North Macedonia	0.54	-0.6%	65	-1
Norway	0.89	-0.1%	2	0
Pakistan	0.36	-2.1%	131	-1
Panama	0.52	0.2%	72	1
Paraguay	0.45	-0.8%	98	2
Peru	0.47	-0.5%	93	0
Philippines	0.46	-1.0%	97	0
Poland	0.67	0.6%	32	0
Portugal	0.68	0.3%	27	2
Qatar	0.62	0.6%	41	0
Romania	0.61	-1.1%	45	-1
Russian Federation	0.40	-1.7%	121	-2
Rwanda	0.64	0.3%	40	-1
Senegal	0.56	0.1%	58	0
Serbia	0.46	-0.9%	95	1
Sierra Leone	0.44	0.1%	110	-1
Singapore	0.79	0.5%	14	2
Slovak Republic	0.64	-1.0%	38	-2
Slovenia	0.68	0.1%	26	0
South Africa	0.56	-0.6%	60	0
Spain	0.71	-0.4%	25	0
Sri Lanka	0.51	0.0%	74	0
St. Kitts and Nevis	0.64	0.8%	37	3
St. Lucia	0.62	0.4%	43	0
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	0.62	0.8%	42	0
Sudan	0.33	-2.8%	138	-1
Suriname	0.50	0.2%	83	1
Sweden	0.86	0.5%	4	0
Tanzania	0.44	-3.6%	105	-7
Thailand	0.50	-0.9%	80	-3
Togo	0.42	-2.0%	112	-1
Trinidad and Tobago	0.52	1.2%	73	2
Tunisia	0.48	-1.4%	89	-4
Türkiye	0.41	-0.4%	117	1
Uganda	0.38	-1.7%	126	1
Ukraine	0.49	0.6%	87	3
United Arab Emirates	0.64	0.3%	36	1
United Kingdom	0.78	-0.8%	18	-4
United States	0.67	-1.8%	30	-3
Uruguay	0.72	0.6%	22	1
Uzbekistan	0.50	0.3%	79	2
Venezuela, RB	0.26	-0.2%	143	0
Vietnam	0.50	0.3%	82	1
Zambia	0.44	-1.9%	108	-5
Zimbabwe	0.40	0.7%	122	2

* Scores are rounded to two decimal places and percentage changes in score are rounded to one decimal place.

Your Guide to the Index Website

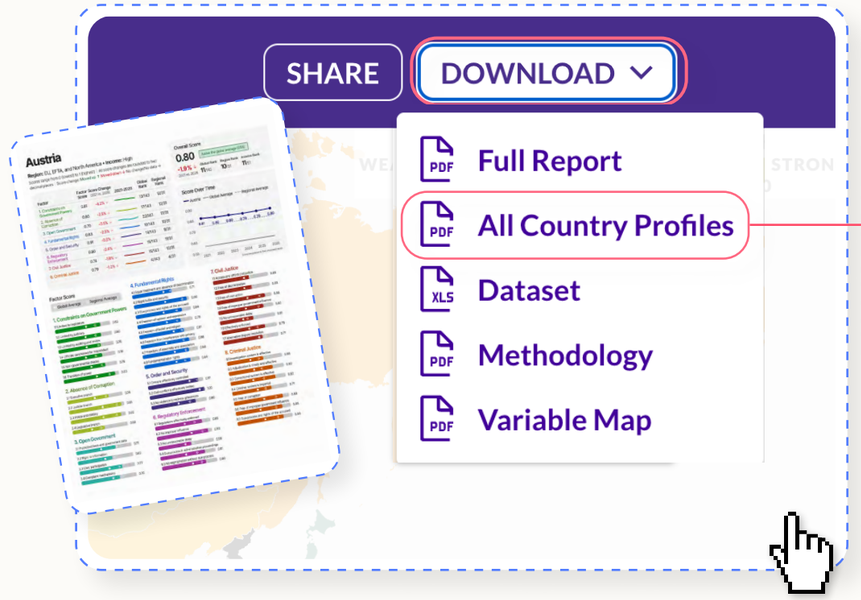
View by Country or Rule of Law Factor

Use the "Countries" tab to view individual country pages or select any of the eight factors listed under the "Factors" tab to see how countries compare on specific rule of law issues.



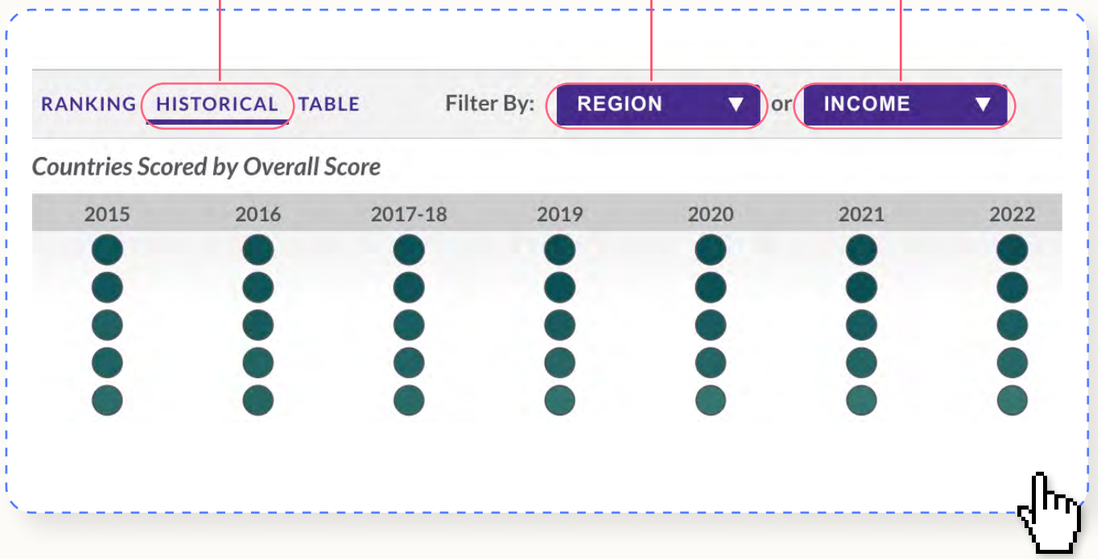
Download Country Profile PDFs

Click on "Country Profiles" in the "Download" drop-down menu for a PDF containing full rule of law profiles for each of the 143 countries covered in the Index.



Review Changes Over Time

Use the historical view to see how country scores have changed over time. This data is also presented on each country page under the "Countries" tab.



Compare by Region or Income Group

Filter rule of law data by region or income to compare countries against their peers in the same region or income bracket.

The Conceptual Framework of the WJP Rule of Law Index

The conceptual framework of the *WJP Rule of Law Index* is comprised of eight factors further disaggregated into 44 sub-factors. These factors and sub-factors are presented as follows:

1 Constraints on Government Powers

- **1.1** Government powers are effectively limited by the legislature
- **1.2** Government powers are effectively limited by the judiciary
- **1.3** Government powers are effectively limited by independent auditing and review
- **1.4** Government officials are sanctioned for misconduct
- **1.5** Government powers are subject to non-governmental checks
- **1.6** Transition of power is subject to the law

2 Absence of Corruption

- **2.1** Government officials in the executive branch do not use public office for private gain
- **2.2** Government officials in the judicial branch do not use public office for private gain
- **2.3** Government officials in the police and the military do not use public office for private gain
- **2.4** Government officials in the legislative branch do not use public office for private gain

3 Open Government

- **3.1** Publicized laws and government data
- **3.2** Right to information
- **3.3** Civic participation
- **3.4** Complaint mechanisms

4 Fundamental Rights

- **4.1** Equal treatment and absence of discrimination
- **4.2** The right to life and security of the person is effectively guaranteed
- **4.3** Due process of the law and rights of the accused
- **4.4** Freedom of opinion and expression is effectively guaranteed
- **4.5** Freedom of belief and religion is effectively guaranteed
- **4.6** Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy is effectively guaranteed
- **4.7** Freedom of assembly and association is effectively guaranteed
- **4.8** Fundamental labor rights are effectively guaranteed

5 Order and Security

- **5.1** Crime is effectively controlled
- **5.2** Civil conflict is effectively limited
- **5.3** People do not resort to violence to redress personal grievances

6 Regulatory Enforcement

- **6.1** Government regulations are effectively enforced
- **6.2** Government regulations are applied and enforced without improper influence
- **6.3** Administrative proceedings are conducted without unreasonable delay
- **6.4** Due process is respected in administrative proceedings
- **6.5** The government does not expropriate without lawful process and adequate compensation

7 Civil Justice

- **7.1** People can access and afford civil justice
- **7.2** Civil justice is free of discrimination
- **7.3** Civil justice is free of corruption
- **7.4** Civil justice is free of improper government influence
- **7.5** Civil justice is not subject to unreasonable delay
- **7.6** Civil justice is effectively enforced
- **7.7** Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are accessible, impartial, and effective

8 Criminal Justice

- **8.1** Criminal investigation system is effective
- **8.2** Criminal adjudication system is timely and effective
- **8.3** Correctional system is effective in reducing criminal behavior
- **8.4** Criminal system is impartial
- **8.5** Criminal system is free of corruption
- **8.6** Criminal system is free of improper government influence
- **8.7** Due process of the law and rights of the accused

Indicators of the WJP Rule of Law Index

1. Constraints on Government Powers

1.1 Government powers are effectively limited by the legislature

Measures whether legislative bodies have the independence and the ability in practice to exercise effective checks on and oversight of the government.

1.2 Government powers are effectively limited by the judiciary

Measures whether the judiciary has the independence and the ability in practice to exercise effective checks on and oversight of the government.

1.3 Government powers are effectively limited by independent auditing and review

Measures whether comptrollers or auditors, as well as national human rights ombudsman agencies, have sufficient independence and the ability to exercise effective checks on and oversight of the government.

1.4 Government officials are sanctioned for misconduct

Measures whether government officials in the executive, legislature, judiciary, and the police are investigated, prosecuted, and punished for official misconduct and other violations.

1.5 Government powers are subject to non-governmental checks

Measures whether an independent media, civil society organizations, political parties, and individuals are free to report and comment on government policies without fear of retaliation.

1.6 Transition of power is subject to the law

Measures whether government officials are elected or appointed in accordance with the rules and procedures set forth in the constitution. Where elections take place, it also measures the integrity of the electoral process, including access to the ballot, the absence of intimidation, and public scrutiny of election results.

2. Absence of Corruption

2.1 Government officials in the executive branch do not use public office for private gain

Measures the prevalence of bribery, informal payments, and other inducements in the delivery of public services and the enforcement of regulations. It also measures whether government procurement and public works contracts are awarded through an open and competitive bidding process, and whether government officials at various levels of the executive branch refrain from embezzling public funds.

2.2 Government officials in the judicial branch do not use public office for private gain

Measures whether judges and judicial officials refrain from soliciting and accepting bribes to perform duties or expedite processes, and whether the judiciary and judicial rulings are free of improper influence by the government, private interests, or criminal organizations.

2.3 Government officials in the police and the military do not use public office for private gain

Measures whether police officers and criminal investigators refrain from soliciting and accepting bribes to perform basic police services or to investigate crimes, and whether government officials

in the police and the military are free of improper influence by private interests or criminal organizations.

2.4 Government officials in the legislative branch do not use public office for private gain

Measures whether members of the legislature refrain from soliciting or accepting bribes or other inducements in exchange for political favors or favorable votes on legislation.

3. Open Government

3.1 Publicized laws and government data

Measures whether basic laws and information on legal rights are publicly available, presented in plain language, and made accessible in all languages used in the country or jurisdiction. It also measures the quality and accessibility of information published by the government in print or online, and whether administrative regulations, drafts of legislation, and high court decisions are made accessible to the public in a timely manner.

3.2 Right to information

Measures whether requests for information held by a government agency are granted, whether these requests are granted within a reasonable time period, if the information provided is pertinent and complete, and if requests for information are granted at a reasonable cost and without having to pay a bribe. It also measures whether people are aware of their right to information, and whether relevant records are accessible to the public upon request.

3.3 Civic participation

Measures the effectiveness of civic participation mechanisms, including the protection of the freedoms of opinion and expression, assembly and association, and the right to petition the government. It also measures whether people can voice concerns to various government officers and whether government officials provide sufficient information and notice about decisions affecting the community.

3.4 Complaint mechanisms

Measures whether people are able to bring specific complaints to the government about the provision of public services or the performance of government officers in carrying out their legal duties in practice, and how government officials respond to such complaints.

4. Fundamental Rights

4.1 Equal treatment and absence of discrimination

Measures whether individuals are free from discrimination—based on socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity—with respect to public services, employment, court proceedings, and the justice system.

4.2 The right to life and security of the person is effectively guaranteed

Measures whether the police inflict physical harm upon criminal suspects during arrest and interrogation, and whether political dissidents or members of the media are subjected to unreasonable searches, arrest, detention, imprisonment, threats, abusive treatment, or violence.

4.3 Due process of the law and rights of the accused

Measures whether the basic rights of criminal suspects are respected, including the presumption of innocence and the freedom from arbitrary arrest and unreasonable pre-trial detention. It also measures whether criminal suspects are able to access and challenge evidence used against them, whether they are subject to abusive treatment, and whether they are provided with adequate legal assistance. In addition, it measures whether the basic rights of prisoners are respected once they have been convicted of a crime.

4.4 Freedom of opinion and expression is effectively guaranteed

Measures whether an independent media, civil society organizations, political parties, and individuals are free to report and comment on government policies without fear of retaliation.

4.5 Freedom of belief and religion is effectively guaranteed

Measures whether members of religious minorities can worship and conduct religious practices freely and publicly, and whether non-adherents are protected from having to submit to religious laws.

4.6 Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy is effectively guaranteed

Measures whether the police or other government officials conduct physical searches

without warrants, or intercept electronic communications of private individuals without judicial authorization.

4.7 Freedom of assembly and association is effectively guaranteed

Measures whether people can freely attend community meetings, join political organizations, hold peaceful public demonstrations, sign petitions, and express opinions against government policies and actions without fear of retaliation.

4.8 Fundamental labor rights are effectively guaranteed

Measures the effective enforcement of fundamental labor rights, including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the absence of discrimination with respect to employment, and freedom from forced labor and child labor.

5. Order and Security

5.1 Crime is effectively controlled

Measures the prevalence of common crimes, including homicide, kidnapping, burglary and theft, armed robbery, and extortion, as well as people's general perceptions of safety in their communities.

5.2 Civil conflict is effectively limited

Measures whether people are effectively protected from armed conflict and terrorism.

5.3 People do not resort to violence to redress personal grievances

Measures whether people resort to intimidation or violence to resolve civil disputes amongst themselves or to seek redress from the government, and whether people are free from mob violence.

6. Regulatory Enforcement

6.1 Government regulations are effectively enforced

Measures whether government regulations, such as labor, environmental, public health, commercial, and consumer protection regulations are effectively enforced.

6.2 Government regulations are applied and enforced without improper influence

Measures whether the enforcement of regulations is subject to bribery or improper influence by private interests, and whether public services, such as the issuance of permits and licenses and the administration of public health services, are provided without bribery or other illegal inducements.

6.3 Administrative proceedings are conducted without unreasonable delay

Measures whether administrative proceedings at the national and local levels are conducted without unreasonable delay.

6.4 Due process is respected in administrative proceedings

Measures whether due process of the law is respected in administrative proceedings conducted by national and local authorities in issue areas such as the environment, taxes, and labor.

6.5 The government does not expropriate without lawful process and adequate compensation

Measures whether the government respects the property rights of people and corporations, refrains from the illegal seizure of private property, and provides adequate compensation when property is legally expropriated.

7. Civil Justice

7.1 People can access and afford civil justice

Measures the accessibility and affordability of civil courts, including whether people are aware of available remedies; can access and afford legal advice and representation; and can access the court system without incurring unreasonable fees, encountering unreasonable procedural hurdles, or experiencing physical or linguistic barriers.

7.2 Civil justice is free of discrimination

Measures whether the civil justice system discriminates in practice based on socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

7.3 Civil justice is free of corruption

Measures whether the civil justice system is free of bribery and improper influence by private interests.

7.4 Civil justice is free of improper government influence

Measures whether the civil justice system is free of improper government or political influence.

7.5 Civil justice is not subject to unreasonable delay

Measures whether civil justice proceedings are conducted and judgments are produced in a timely manner without unreasonable delay.

7.6 Civil justice is effectively enforced

Measures the effectiveness and timeliness of the enforcement of civil justice decisions and judgments in practice.

7.7 Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are accessible, impartial, and effective

Measures whether alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (ADRs) are affordable, efficient, enforceable, and free of corruption.

8. Criminal Justice

8.1 Criminal investigation system is effective

Measures whether perpetrators of crimes are effectively apprehended and charged. It also measures whether police, investigators, and prosecutors have adequate resources, are free of corruption, and perform their duties competently.

8.2 Criminal adjudication system is timely and effective

Measures whether perpetrators of crimes are effectively prosecuted and punished. It also measures whether criminal judges and other judicial officers are competent and produce speedy decisions.

8.3 Correctional system is effective in reducing criminal behavior

Measures whether correctional institutions are secure, respect prisoners' rights, and are effective in preventing recidivism.

8.4 Criminal system is impartial

Measures whether the police and criminal judges are impartial and whether they discriminate in practice based on socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

8.5 Criminal system is free of corruption

Measures whether the police, prosecutors, and judges are free of bribery and improper influence from criminal organizations.

8.6 Criminal system is free of improper government influence

Measures whether the criminal justice system is independent from government or political influence.

8.7 Due process of the law and rights of the accused

Measures whether the basic rights of criminal suspects are respected, including the presumption of innocence and the freedom from arbitrary arrest and unreasonable pre-trial detention. It also measures whether criminal suspects can access and challenge evidence used against them, whether they are subject to abusive treatment, and whether they are provided with adequate legal assistance. In addition, it measures whether the basic rights of prisoners are respected once they have been convicted of a crime.

9. Informal Justice

The conceptual framework of the Index includes a ninth factor on informal justice that is not included in the Index's aggregate scores and rankings. Informal justice systems often play a large role in countries and jurisdictions where formal legal institutions are weak, remote, or perceived as ineffective. As such, WJP has devoted effort to collecting data on informal justice through our surveys. Nonetheless, the complexities of these systems and the difficulties of systematically measuring their fairness and effectiveness make cross-country assessments extraordinarily challenging. For this reason, the informal justice factor is not included in the Index scores and rankings.

9.1 Informal justice is timely and effective

9.2 Informal justice is impartial and free of improper influence

9.3 Informal justice respects and protects fundamental rights

Methodology Snapshot



The *WJP Rule of Law Index®* is built upon an original conceptual framework, which WJP developed in consultation with academics, legal practitioners, and community leaders from around the world.

The methodology* can be broken down into the following five-step process:

1. Questionnaires

WJP administers a set of five original questionnaires to experts and the general public. These questionnaires are translated into several languages and adapted to reflect commonly used terms and expressions.



4 Expert Questionnaires

Qualified Respondents' Questionnaires (QRQs)

Every year, WJP invites legal practitioners and academics from around the world to participate in expert surveys covering four disciplines: civil and commercial law, criminal justice, labor law, and public health.

1 Household Questionnaire

General Population Poll (GPP)

Every few years, WJP engages the services of leading local polling companies to conduct surveys of the general public in each country.



*To read more about the methodology of the *WJP Rule of Law Index*, please refer to the "Methodology" document available for download on WJP's website: https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/downloads/Index-Methodology-2026.pdf

2. Codification

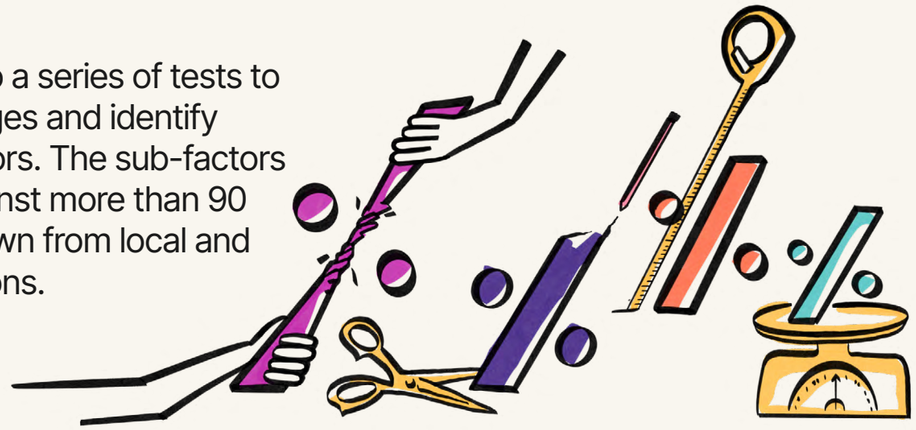
WJP maps collected data onto 44 rule of law sub-factors. Final scores are constructed using a five-step process:



1. Codify questionnaire items as numeric values.
2. Produce raw country scores by aggregating the individual responses.
3. Normalize raw scores.
4. Aggregate the scores into sub-factors and factors using simple averages.
5. Produce the final scores and rankings.

3. Testing

The data is subjected to a series of tests to detect significant changes and identify possible biases and errors. The sub-factors are cross-checked against more than 90 third-party sources drawn from local and international organizations.



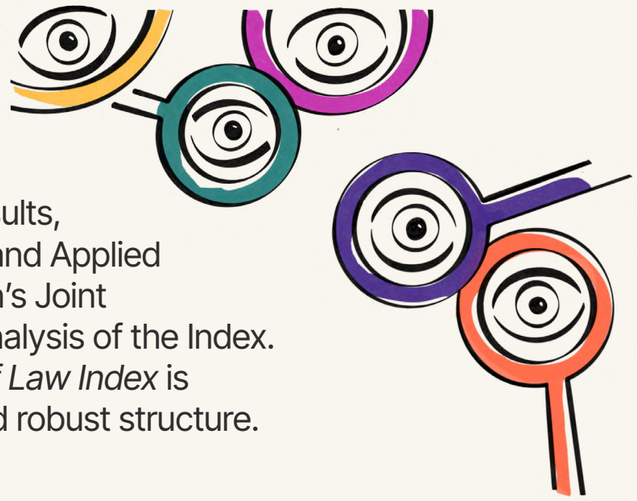
4. Presentation

Data is organized into country profiles, tables, and figures to facilitate its presentation and interpretation. The full report, key insights, and historical datasets can be accessed on WJP's website: *worldjusticeproject.org/index*.



5. External Review and Validation

To assess the statistical reliability of our results, WJP periodically invites the Econometrics and Applied Statistics Unit of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre to perform a sensitivity analysis of the Index. This analysis confirms that the *WJP Rule of Law Index* is a reliable tool with statistical coherence and robust structure.





2

Scores and Rankings

24 Rule of Law Around the World

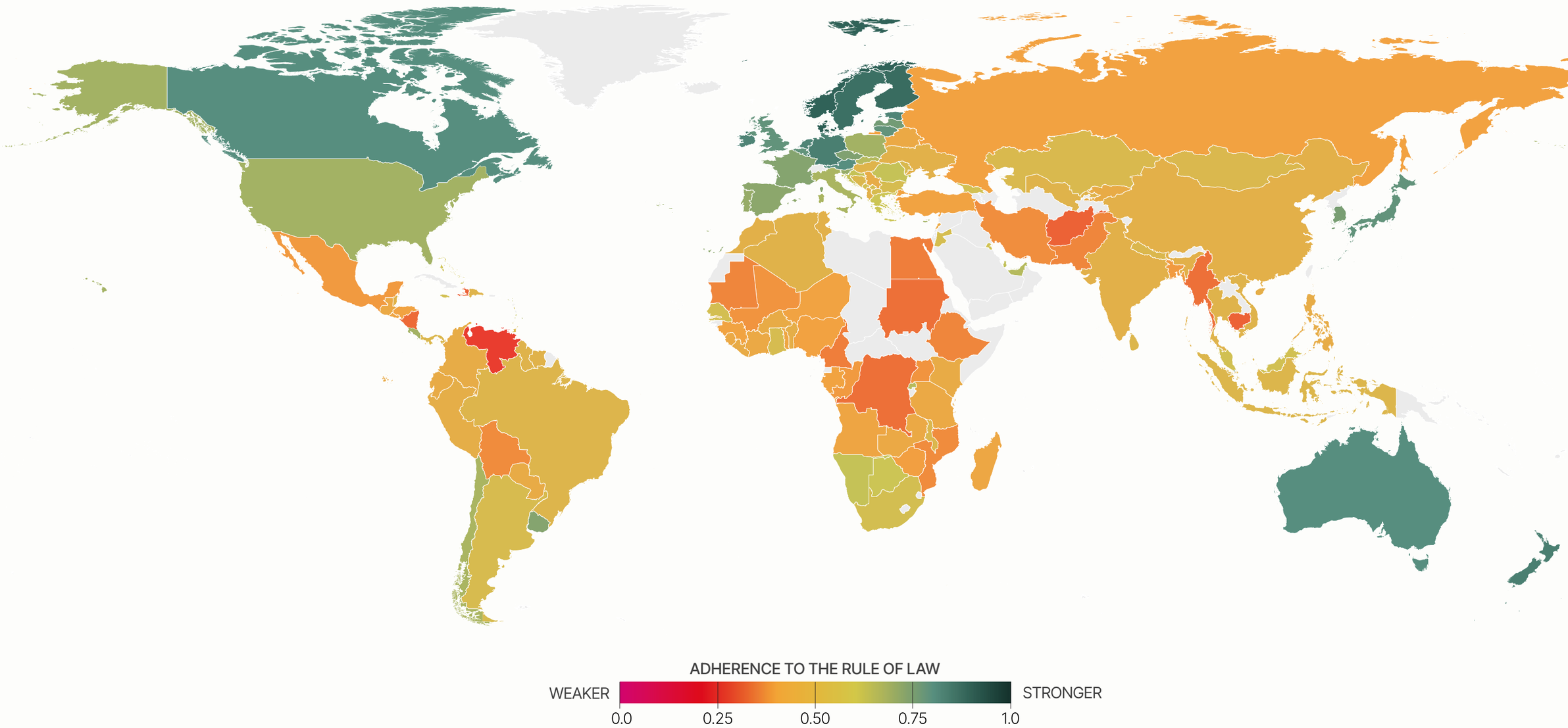
27 Top Decliners and Improvers from 2025 to 2026

28 Rule of Law Declining

29 Rule of Law by Region

Rule of Law Around the World

Scores and rankings of the 143 countries and jurisdictions included in the *WJP Rule of Law Index® 2026* in order of score. Scores range from 0 to 1, where 1 signifies the highest possible score (strong adherence to rule of law) and 0 signifies the lowest possible score (weak adherence to the rule of law).





Global Rank	Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*
1	Denmark	0.90
2	Norway	0.89
3	Finland	0.87
4	Sweden	0.86
5	Luxembourg	0.83
6	Germany	0.83
7	New Zealand	0.83
8	Ireland	0.82
9	Netherlands	0.82
10	Estonia	0.82
11	Austria	0.80
12	Australia	0.80
13	Canada	0.80
14	Singapore	0.79
15	Japan	0.78
16	Lithuania	0.78
17	Belgium	0.78
18	United Kingdom	0.78
19	Latvia	0.75
20	Korea, Rep.	0.74
21	Czechia	0.73
22	Uruguay	0.72
23	France	0.72
24	Hong Kong SAR, China	0.71
25	Spain	0.71
26	Slovenia	0.68
27	Portugal	0.68
28	Cyprus	0.67
29	Malta	0.67
30	United States	0.67
31	Costa Rica	0.67
32	Poland	0.67
33	Barbados	0.66
34	Chile	0.66
35	Italy	0.66
36	United Arab Emirates	0.64
37	St. Kitts and Nevis	0.64
38	Slovak Republic	0.64
39	Antigua and Barbuda	0.64
40	Rwanda	0.64
41	Qatar	0.62
42	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	0.62
43	St. Lucia	0.62
44	Croatia	0.61
45	Romania	0.61
46	Namibia	0.61
47	Greece	0.60
48	Mauritius	0.60
49	Botswana	0.60
50	Grenada	0.59
51	The Bahamas	0.59
52	Kuwait	0.58
53	Malaysia	0.57
54	Dominica	0.57
55	Georgia	0.57
56	Jamaica	0.57
57	Montenegro	0.57
58	Senegal	0.56
59	Kosovo	0.56
60	South Africa	0.56
61	Jordan	0.55
62	Ghana	0.55
63	Bulgaria	0.55
64	Argentina	0.54
65	North Macedonia	0.54
66	Moldova	0.53
67	Kazakhstan	0.53
68	Mongolia	0.53
69	Malawi	0.52
70	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.52
71	Nepal	0.52
72	Panama	0.52
73	Trinidad and Tobago	0.52
74	Sri Lanka	0.51
75	Indonesia	0.51
76	Brazil	0.51
77	Dominican Republic	0.50
78	Hungary	0.50

* Scores are rounded to two decimal places.

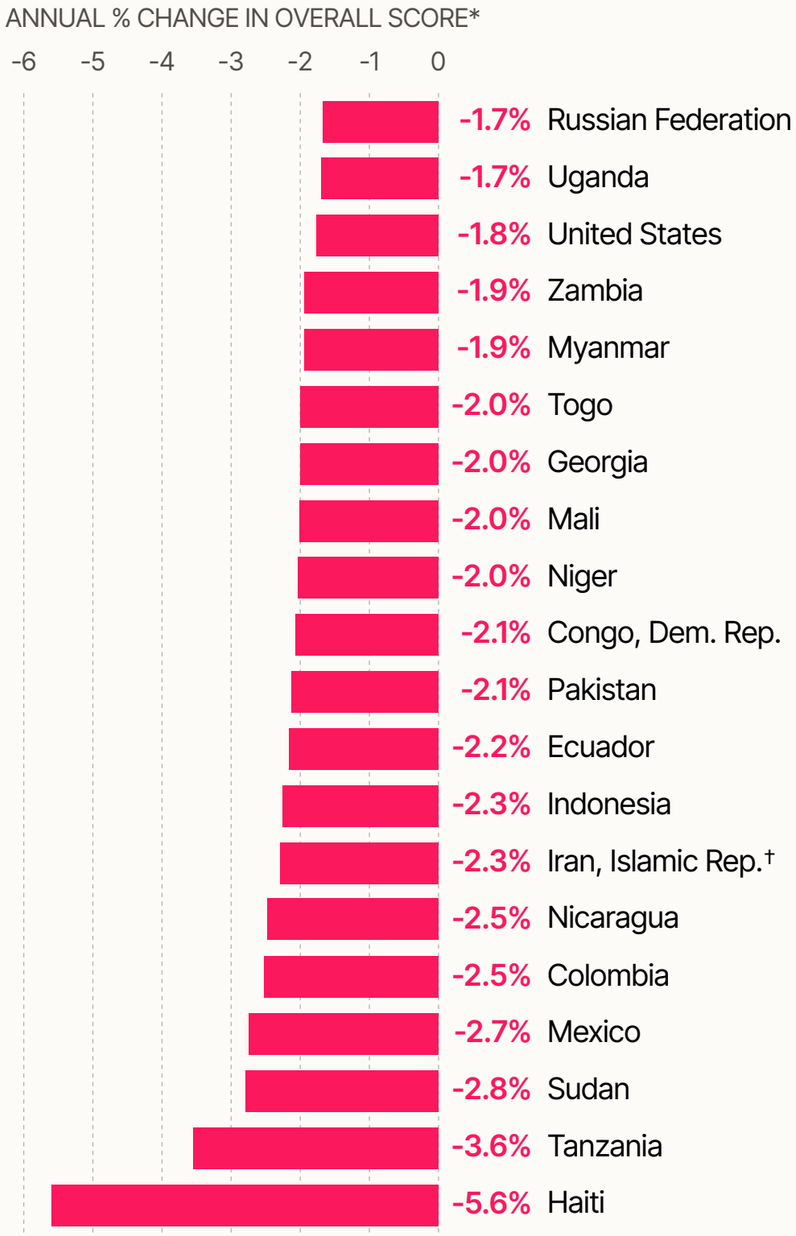


Global Rank	Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*
79	Uzbekistan	0.50
80	Thailand	0.50
81	Guyana	0.50
82	Vietnam	0.50
83	Suriname	0.50
84	Belize	0.49
85	Algeria	0.49
86	The Gambia	0.49
87	Ukraine	0.49
88	India	0.48
89	Tunisia	0.48
90	Morocco	0.48
91	Albania	0.48
92	China	0.48
93	Peru	0.47
94	Benin	0.47
95	Serbia	0.46
96	Colombia	0.46
97	Philippines	0.46
98	Paraguay	0.45
99	Kyrgyz Republic	0.45
100	Kenya	0.45
101	Burkina Faso	0.45
102	Ecuador	0.45
103	Liberia	0.45
104	Belarus	0.44
105	Tanzania	0.44
106	Guatemala	0.44
107	Côte d'Ivoire	0.44
108	Zambia	0.44
109	Lebanon	0.44
110	Sierra Leone	0.44
111	Madagascar	0.43
112	Togo	0.42
113	Angola	0.42
114	El Salvador	0.42
115	Honduras	0.41
116	Niger	0.41
117	Türkiye	0.41
118	Guinea	0.40
119	Gabon	0.40
120	Nigeria	0.40
121	Russian Federation	0.40
122	Zimbabwe	0.40
123	Bangladesh	0.39
124	Congo, Rep.	0.39
125	Mexico	0.39
126	Uganda	0.38
127	Mali	0.38
128	Iran, Islamic Rep.	0.37
129	Mozambique	0.37
130	Bolivia	0.37
131	Pakistan	0.36
132	Mauritania	0.36
133	Ethiopia	0.36
134	Cameroon	0.35
135	Egypt, Arab Rep.	0.35
136	Congo, Dem. Rep.	0.33
137	Myanmar	0.33
138	Sudan	0.33
139	Nicaragua	0.32
140	Cambodia	0.31
141	Haiti	0.31
142	Afghanistan	0.31
143	Venezuela, RB	0.26

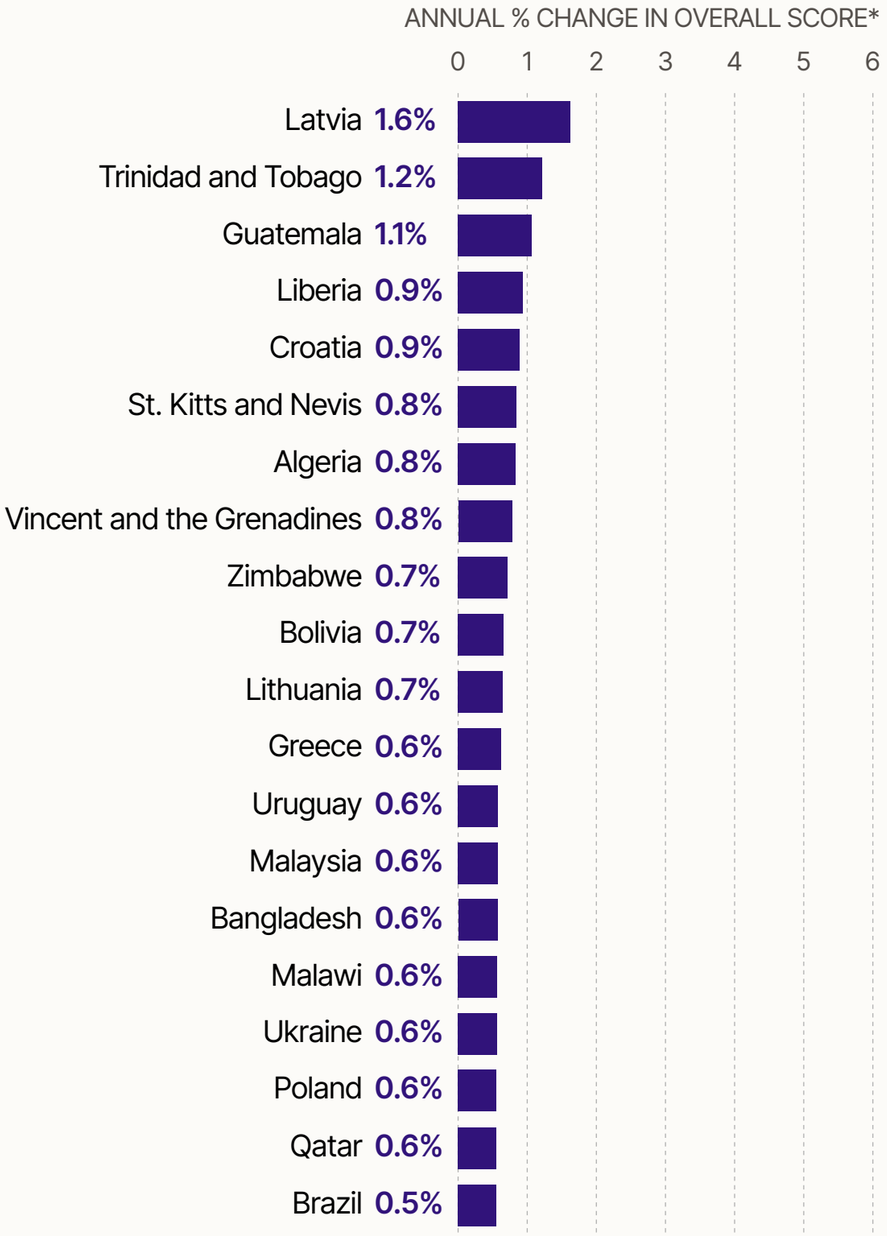
* Scores are rounded to two decimal places.

Top Decliners and Improvers from 2025 to 2026

Biggest Rule of Law Decliners



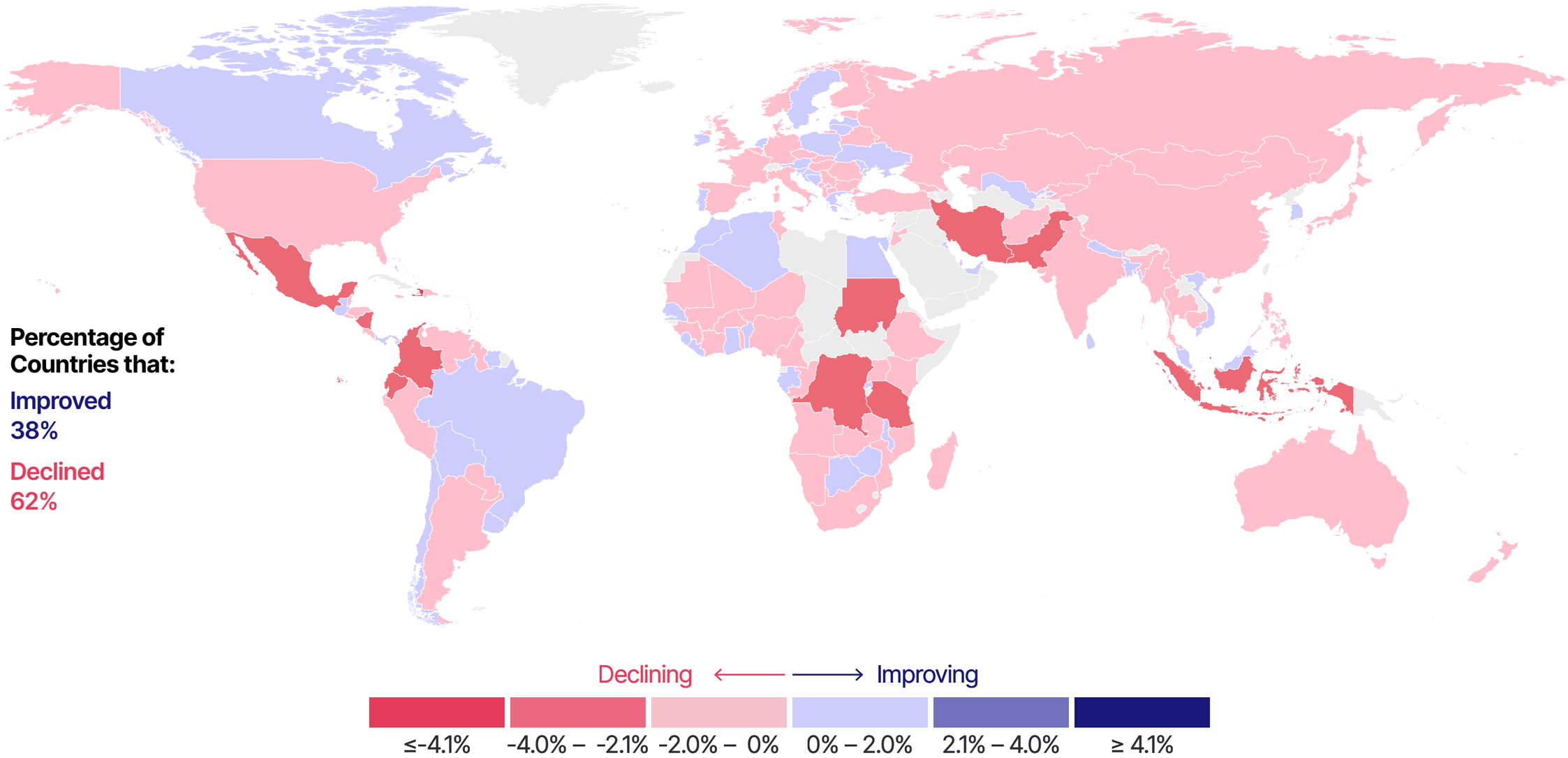
Biggest Rule of Law Improvers



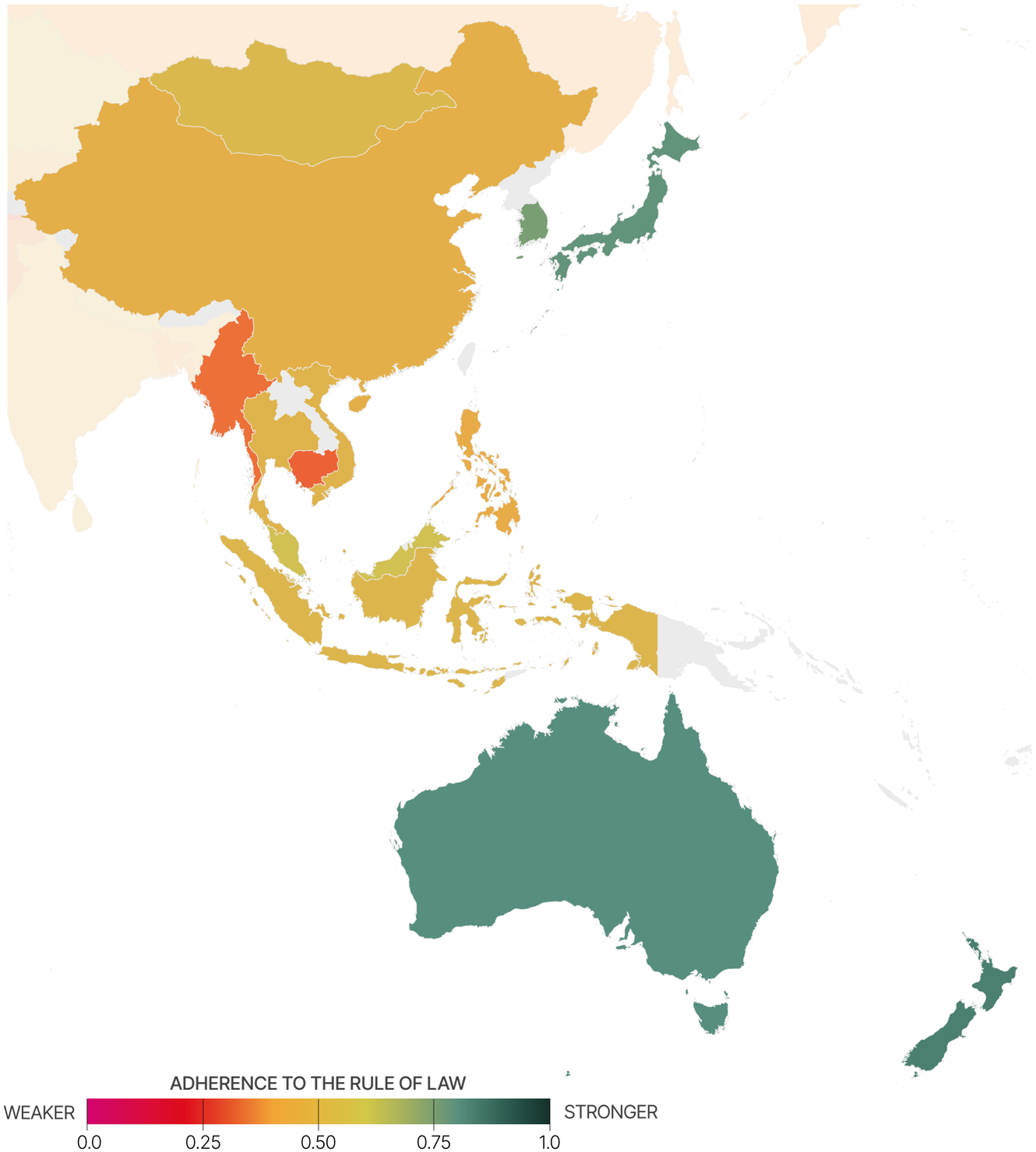
* Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place.
† WJP was unable to collect new data in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2026 due to ongoing conflicts. Changes in score in this year's profile are driven by changes from Third Party Sources (see 2026 Index Variable Map for details)

Rule of Law Declined in 62% of Countries from 2025 to 2026

For the ninth consecutive year, the rule of law weakened in more countries than those in which it improved (62% declined vs. 38% improved). On average, overall rule of law scores dropped by 0.5%. Figures in the map below reflect annual percentage change* in overall scores from 2025 to 2026.



* Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place. Countries with annual percentage changes in scores that round to 0.0% have been graphed according to their unrounded scores in order to show changes.



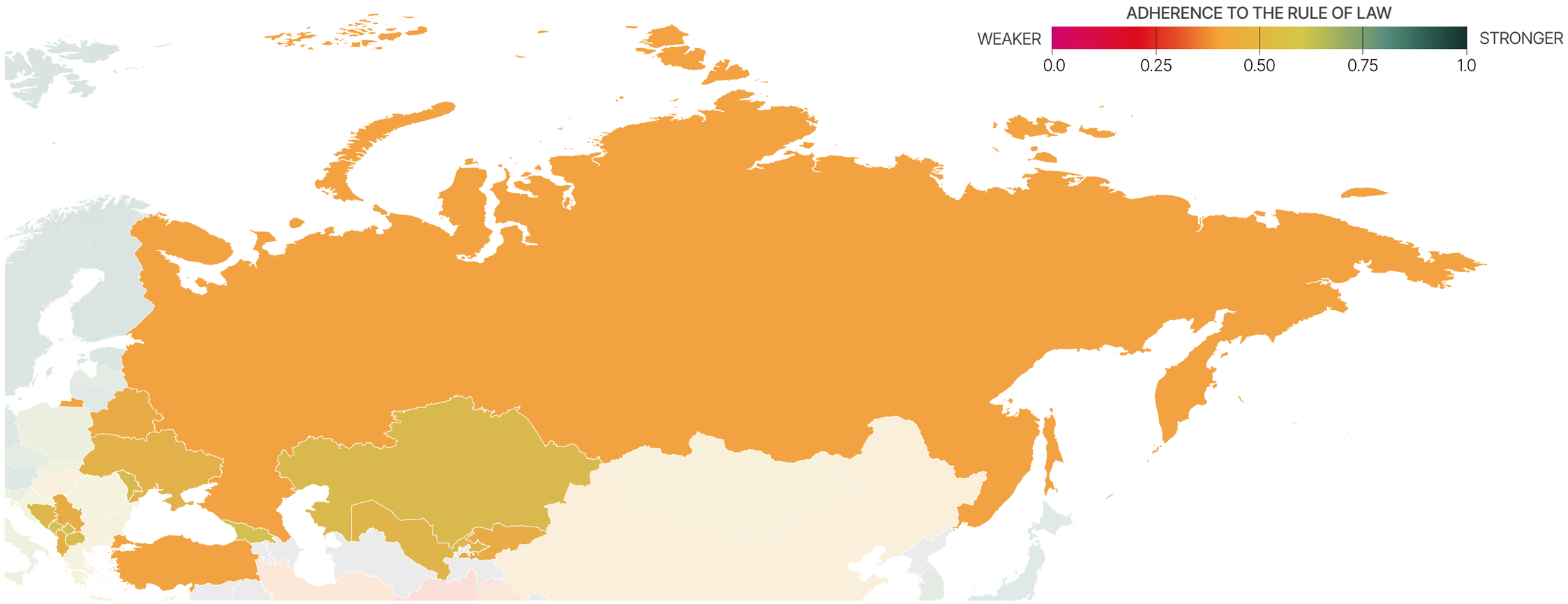
Rule of Law in East Asia and the Pacific from 2025 to 2026

Regional Average Score:

0.59

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
New Zealand	0.83	-0.6%
Australia	0.80	-0.1%
Singapore	0.79	0.5%
Japan	0.78	-0.2%
Korea, Rep.	0.74	0.0%
Hong Kong SAR, China	0.71	-1.1%
Malaysia	0.57	0.6%
Mongolia	0.53	-1.3%
Indonesia	0.51	-2.3%
Thailand	0.50	-0.9%
Vietnam	0.50	0.3%
China	0.48	-0.4%
Philippines	0.46	-1.0%
Myanmar	0.33	-1.9%
Cambodia	0.31	-1.4%

* Scores are rounded to two decimal places. Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place.



Rule of Law in Eastern Europe and Central Asia from 2025 to 2026

Regional Average Score:

0.50

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
Georgia	0.57	-2.0%
Montenegro	0.57	-1.0%
Kosovo	0.56	-0.3%
North Macedonia	0.54	-0.6%
Moldova	0.53	0.3%
Kazakhstan	0.53	-1.4%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.52	0.5%
Uzbekistan	0.50	0.3%
Ukraine	0.49	0.6%

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
Albania	0.48	-1.5%
Serbia	0.46	-0.9%
Kyrgyz Republic	0.45	-0.1%
Belarus	0.44	0.0%
Türkiye	0.41	-0.4%
Russian Federation	0.40	-1.7%

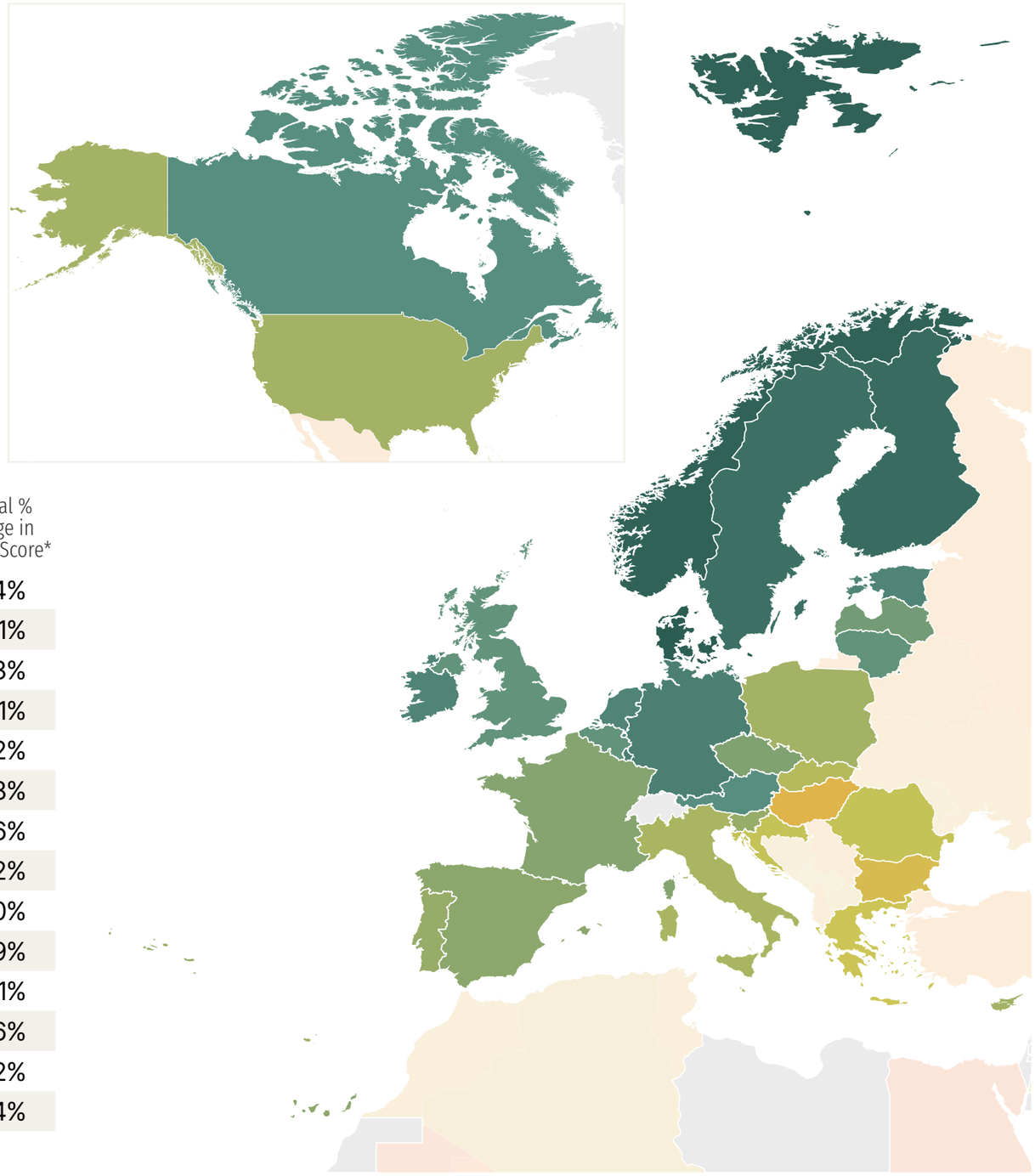
* Scores are rounded to two decimal places. Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place.

Rule of Law in the EU, EFTA†, and North America from 2025 to 2026

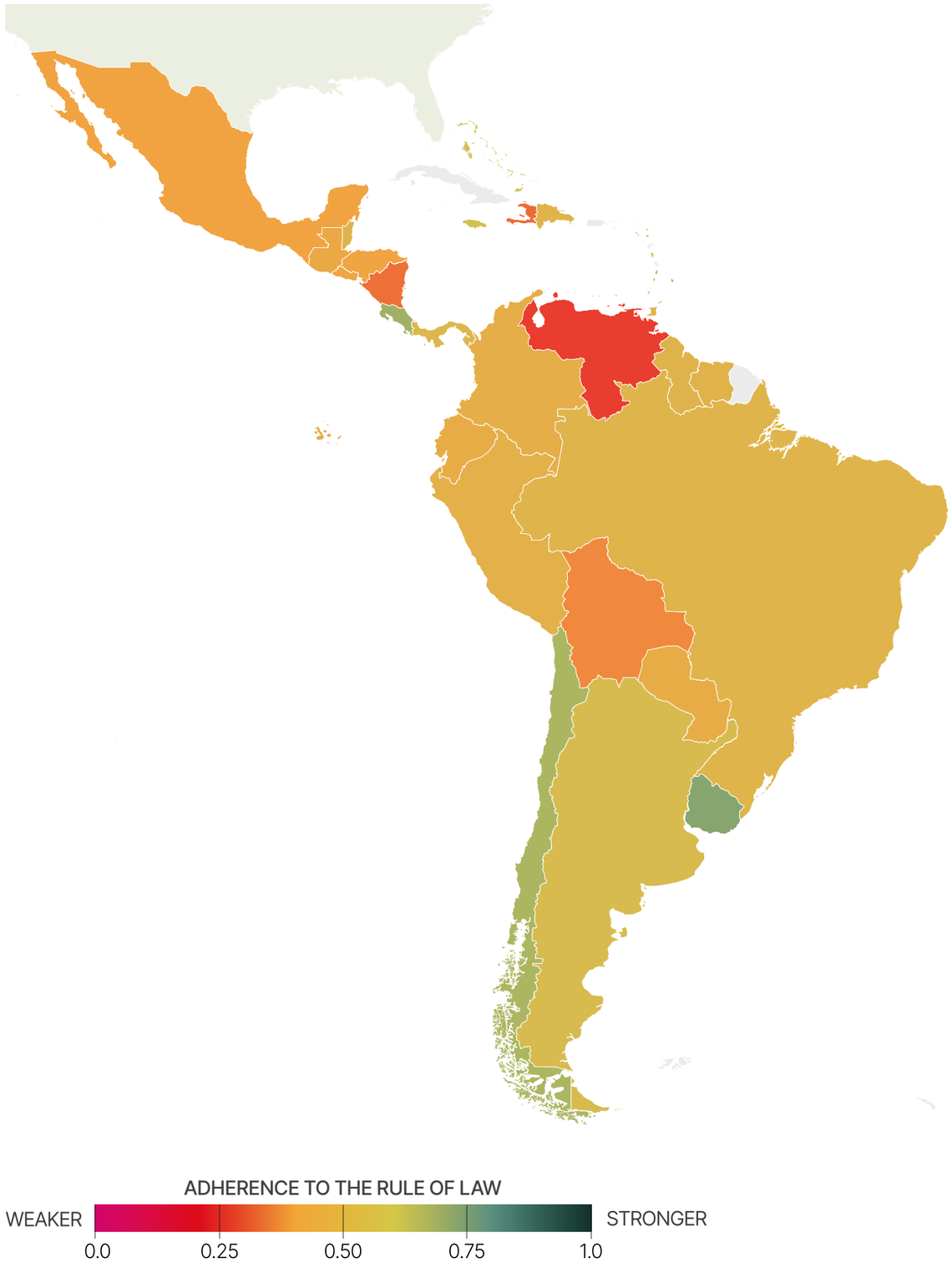
Regional Average Score:

0.73

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
Denmark	0.90	0.0%
Norway	0.89	-0.1%
Finland	0.87	-0.1%
Sweden	0.86	0.5%
Luxembourg	0.83	0.2%
Germany	0.83	-0.5%
Ireland	0.82	0.1%
Netherlands	0.82	0.2%
Estonia	0.82	-0.1%
Austria	0.80	0.3%
Canada	0.80	0.1%
Lithuania	0.78	0.7%
Belgium	0.78	-0.3%
United Kingdom	0.78	-0.8%
Latvia	0.75	1.6%
Czechia	0.73	-1.0%
France	0.72	-1.0%
Spain	0.71	-0.4%
Slovenia	0.68	0.1%
Portugal	0.68	0.3%
Cyprus	0.67	0.1%
Malta	0.67	-0.2%
United States	0.67	-1.8%
Poland	0.67	0.6%
Italy	0.66	-0.2%
Slovak Republic	0.64	-1.0%
Croatia	0.61	0.9%
Romania	0.61	-1.1%
Greece	0.60	0.6%
Bulgaria	0.55	-1.2%
Hungary	0.50	-0.4%



* Scores are rounded to two decimal places. Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place.
† EU refers to the European Union; EFTA to the European Free Trade Association.



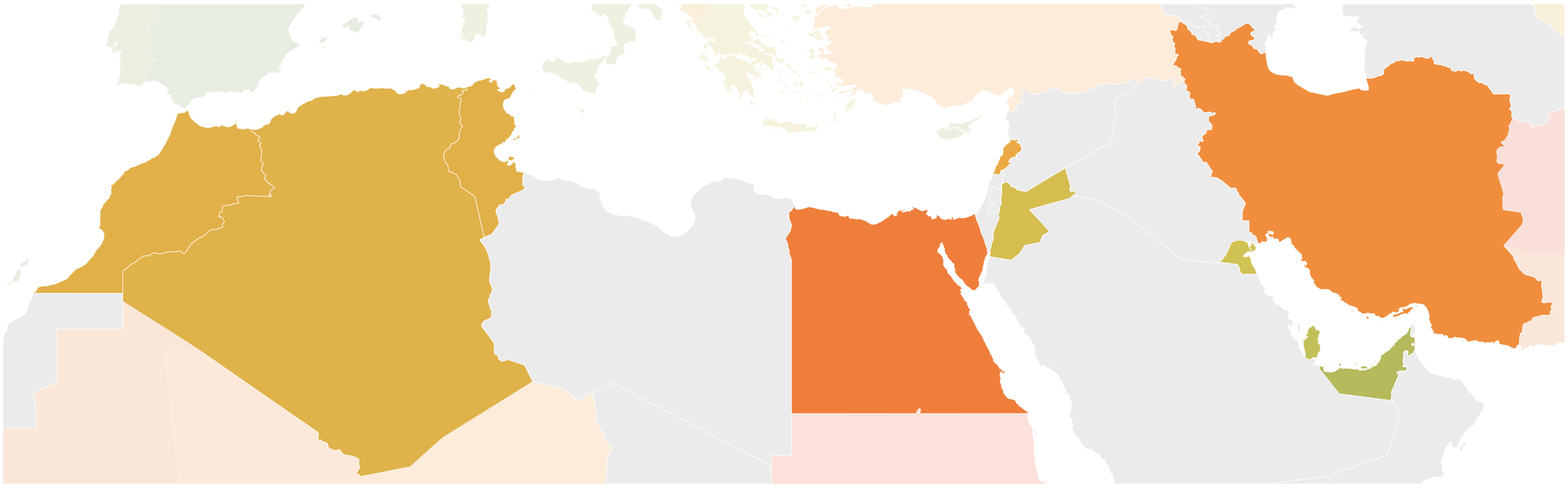
Rule of Law in Latin America and the Caribbean from 2025 to 2026

Regional Average Score:

0.51

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
Uruguay	0.72	0.6%
Costa Rica	0.67	-1.2%
Barbados	0.66	0.2%
Chile	0.66	0.1%
St. Kitts and Nevis	0.64	0.8%
Antigua and Barbuda	0.64	-0.1%
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	0.62	0.8%
St. Lucia	0.62	0.4%
Grenada	0.59	-0.7%
The Bahamas	0.59	0.2%
Dominica	0.57	-1.1%
Jamaica	0.57	-0.5%
Argentina	0.54	-0.4%
Panama	0.52	0.2%
Trinidad and Tobago	0.52	1.2%
Brazil	0.51	0.5%
Dominican Republic	0.50	-0.3%
Guyana	0.50	-0.5%
Suriname	0.50	0.2%
Belize	0.49	-0.3%
Peru	0.47	-0.5%
Colombia	0.46	-2.5%
Paraguay	0.45	-0.8%
Ecuador	0.45	-2.2%
Guatemala	0.44	1.1%
El Salvador	0.42	-0.8%
Honduras	0.41	-0.5%
Mexico	0.39	-2.7%
Bolivia	0.37	0.7%
Nicaragua	0.32	-2.5%
Haiti	0.31	-5.6%
Venezuela, RB	0.26	-0.2%

* Scores are rounded to two decimal places. Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place.



Rule of Law in the Middle East and North Africa from 2025 to 2026

Regional Average Score:

0.50

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
United Arab Emirates	0.64	0.3%
Qatar	0.62	0.6%
Kuwait	0.58	0.5%
Jordan	0.55	0.0%
Algeria	0.49	0.8%
Tunisia	0.48	-1.4%
Morocco	0.48	0.3%
Lebanon	0.44	-0.2%
Iran, Islamic Rep.	0.37	-2.3%
Egypt, Arab Rep.	0.35	0.5%



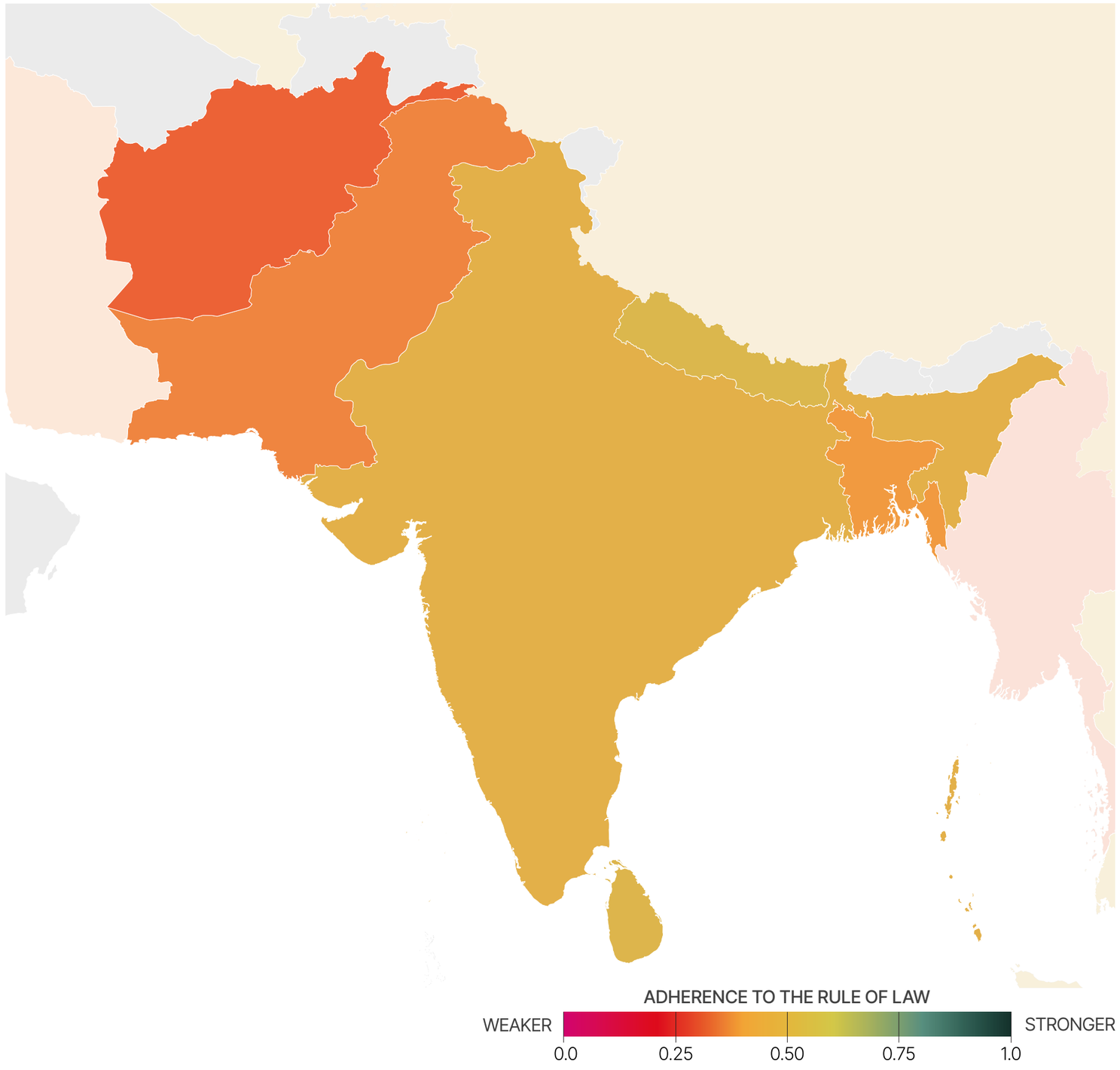
* Scores are rounded to two decimal places. Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place.

Rule of Law in South Asia from 2025 to 2026

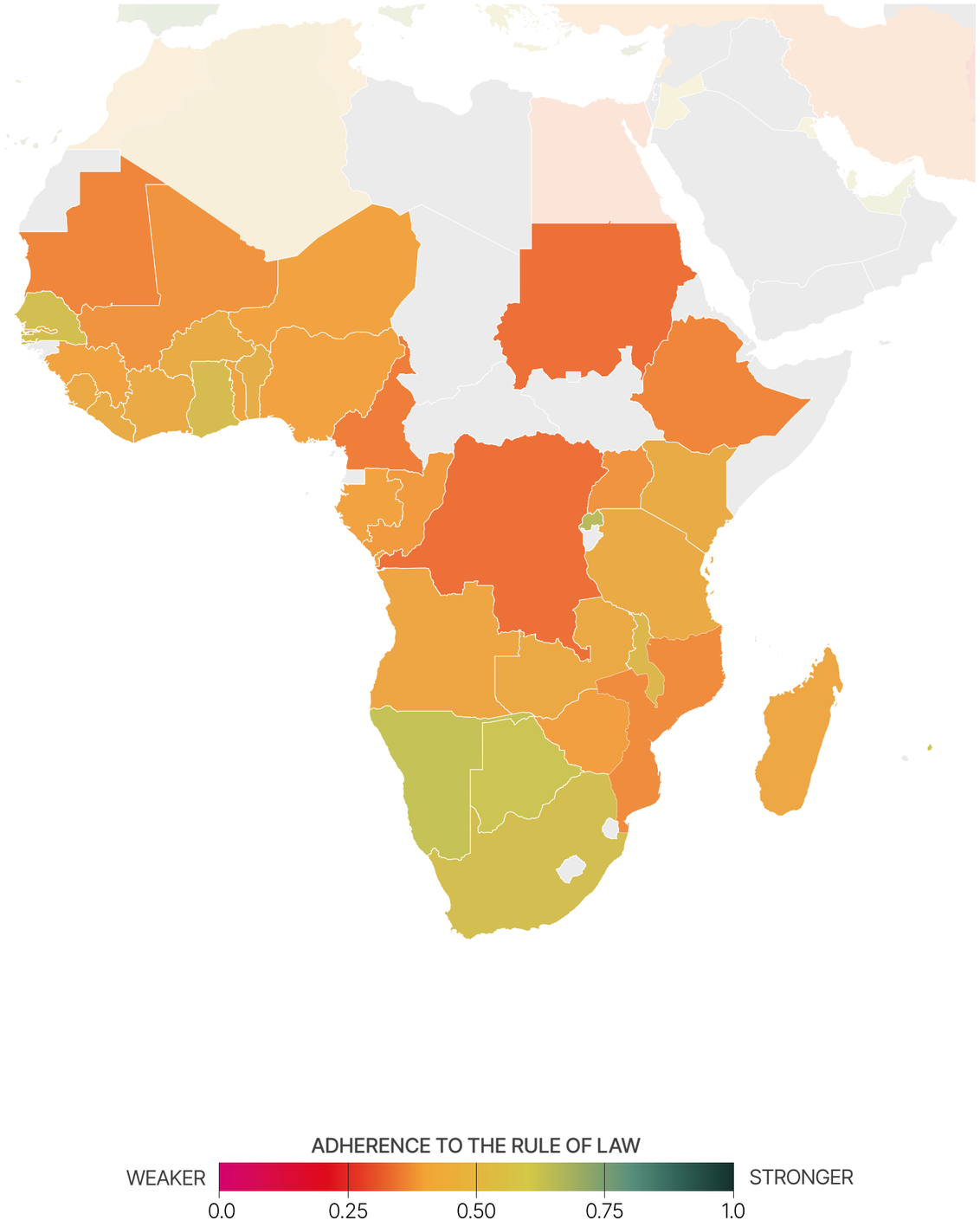
Regional Average Score:

0.43

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
Nepal	0.52	0.5%
Sri Lanka	0.51	0.0%
India	0.48	-1.3%
Bangladesh	0.39	0.6%
Pakistan	0.36	-2.1%
Afghanistan	0.31	-0.8%



* Scores are rounded to two decimal places. Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place.



Rule of Law in Sub-Saharan Africa from 2025 to 2026

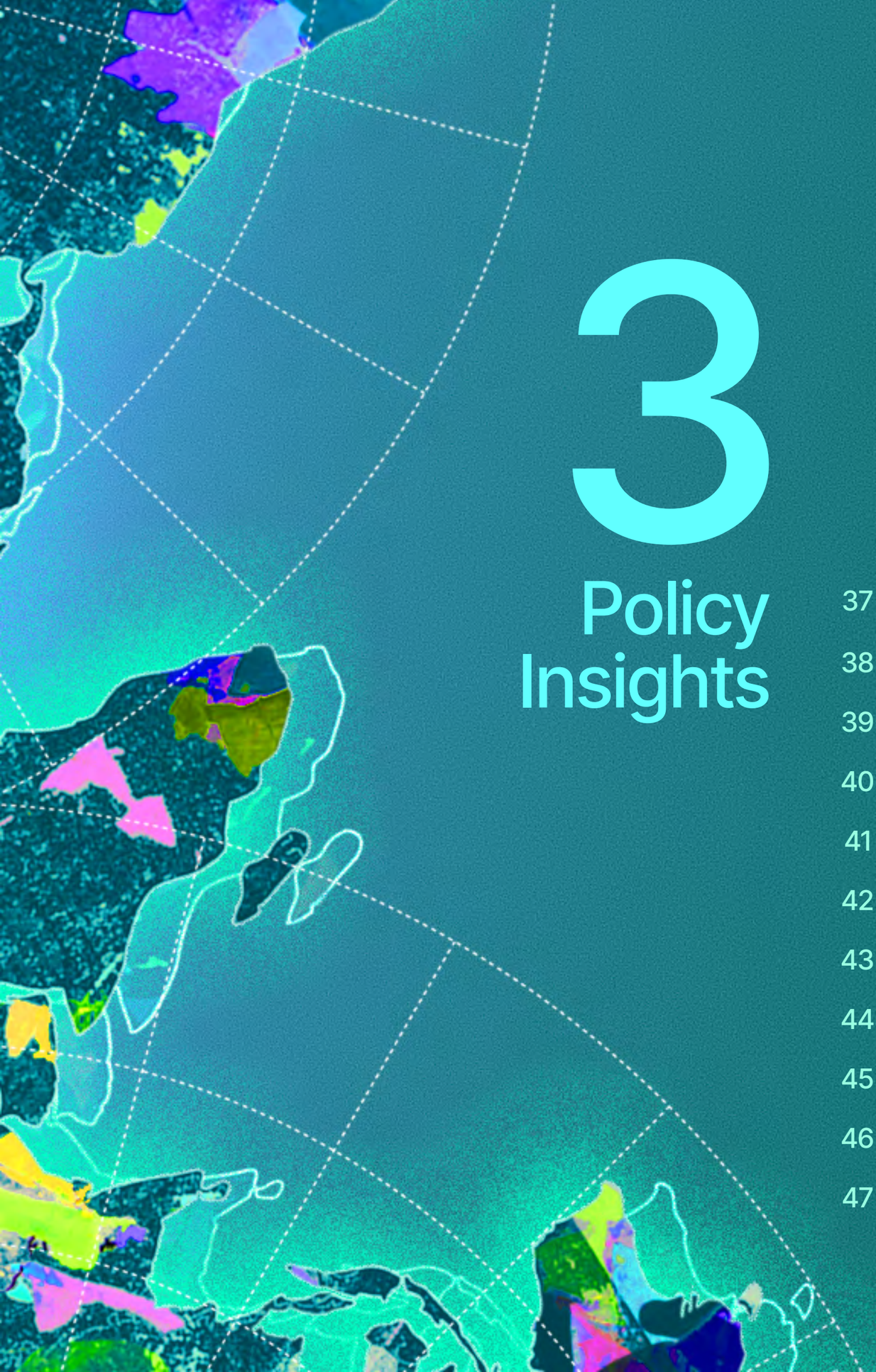
Regional Average Score:

0.45

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
Rwanda	0.64	0.3%
Namibia	0.61	-0.5%
Mauritius	0.60	-0.6%
Botswana	0.60	0.0%
Senegal	0.56	0.1%
South Africa	0.56	-0.6%
Ghana	0.55	0.5%
Malawi	0.52	0.6%
The Gambia	0.49	0.3%
Benin	0.47	0.2%
Kenya	0.45	-0.8%
Burkina Faso	0.45	-1.2%
Liberia	0.45	0.9%
Tanzania	0.44	-3.6%
Côte d'Ivoire	0.44	-0.4%
Zambia	0.44	-1.9%
Sierra Leone	0.44	0.1%
Madagascar	0.43	-1.0%

Country/Jurisdiction	Overall Score*	Annual % Change in Overall Score*
Togo	0.42	-2.0%
Angola	0.42	-0.3%
Niger	0.41	-2.0%
Guinea	0.40	-1.2%
Gabon	0.40	0.3%
Nigeria	0.40	-0.9%
Zimbabwe	0.40	0.7%
Congo, Rep.	0.39	-1.5%
Uganda	0.38	-1.7%
Mali	0.38	-2.0%
Mozambique	0.37	-0.8%
Mauritania	0.36	-0.2%
Ethiopia	0.36	-1.3%
Cameroon	0.35	-1.6%
Congo, Dem. Rep.	0.33	-2.1%
Sudan	0.33	-2.8%

* Scores are rounded to two decimal places. Annual percentage change in score is rounded to one decimal place.



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46 Prices are stable in countries where the rule of law is stronger.

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Rule of law erosion is slowing, but the recession persists.



62%
of countries have declined

Rule of Law Highlights

While fewer countries saw their rule of law scores fall this year compared to last, **declines continue to outnumber improvements** for the ninth year in a row (62% vs. 38%). Recovery remains sluggish: countries that improved gained an average of just 0.45%, down from 0.52% last year.

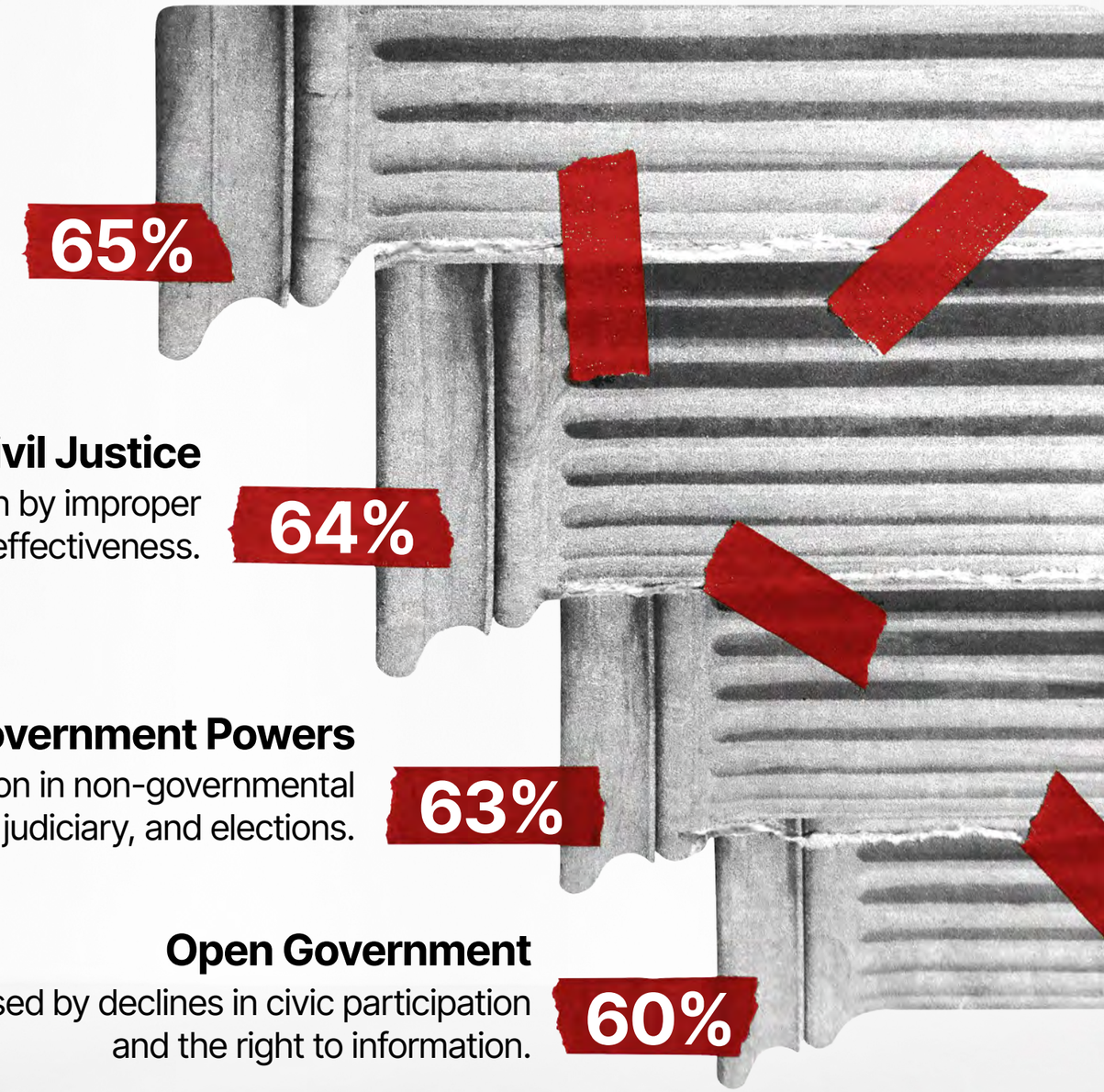
Over the past year, **narrowing civic space, crackdowns on freedoms of speech and assembly, and government interference in both civil and criminal justice** have continued to erode the integrity of rule of law systems. Despite this year's modest improvements in the accessibility and affordability of civil justice, executive overreach and political pressure across justice systems remain the defining drivers of global institutional decay.

Our data reveals that authoritarianism has transitioned from an emerging threat to an entrenched reality, as 86% of nations have logged five-year declines in at least one pillar protecting against autocratic control: Constraints on Government Powers, Open Government, or Fundamental Rights.

Factors Influencing the Rule of Law Recession

The ongoing global deterioration of rule of law can be explained by an erosion in Constraints on Government Powers, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, and Civil Justice.

Percentage of countries that declined in 2026:



Fundamental Rights
Restrictions center around freedoms of assembly, of expression, and of privacy.

Civil Justice
Falling scores were driven by improper government influence and effectiveness.

Constraints on Government Powers
Declines driven by deterioration in non-governmental checks, limits by the judiciary, and elections.

Open Government
Caused by declines in civic participation and the right to information.

Avenues for civic space are narrowing.

Civic space, which enables people to participate in public life, has experienced sustained rollbacks.

Percentage of countries that declined in 2026:

65%
Civic participation

64%
Freedom of speech

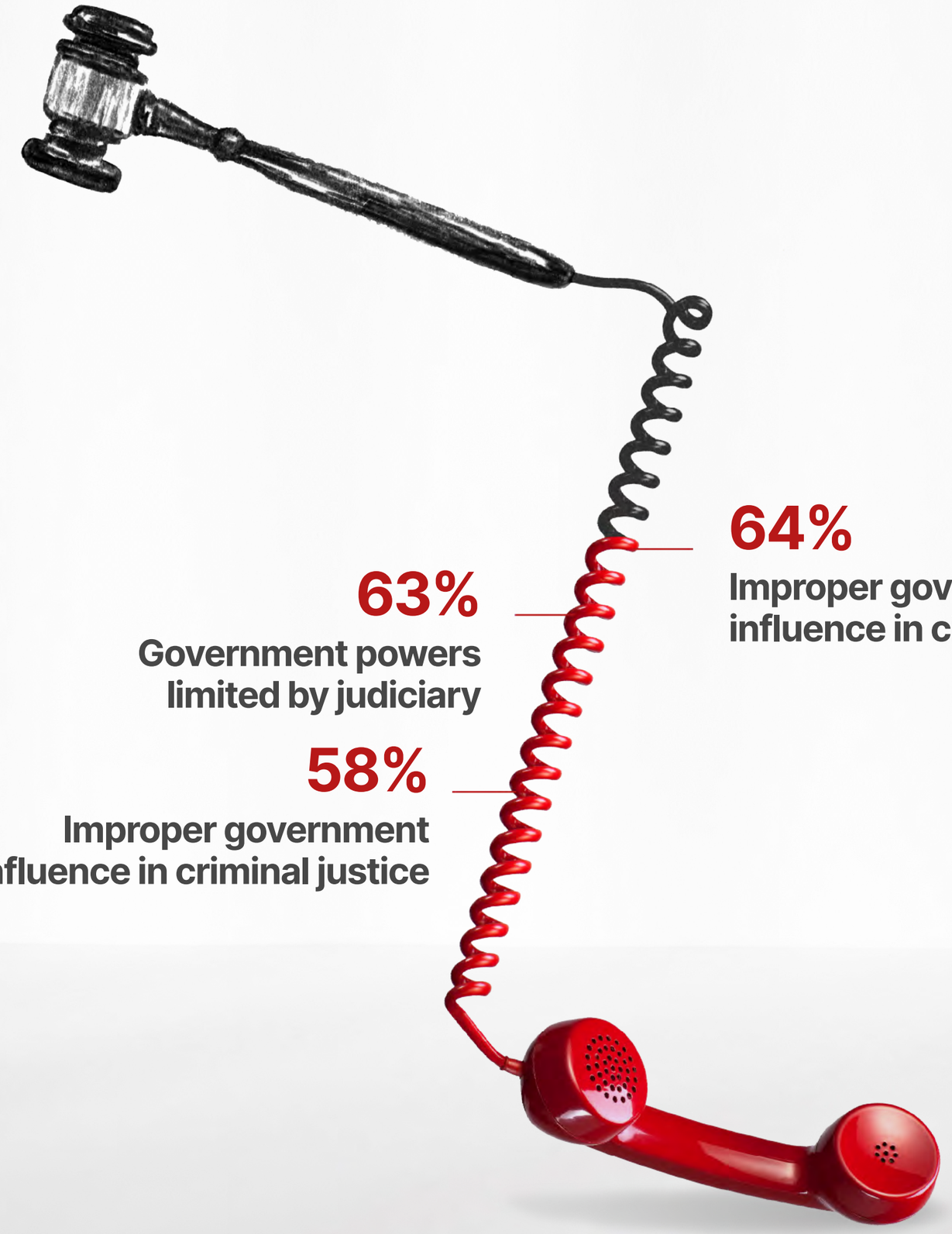
67%
Freedom of assembly



Government interference is compromising justice systems.

Across criminal and civil systems alike, undue executive pressure and interference have become the leading drivers of institutional decay.

Percentage of countries that declined in 2026:



64%
Improper government influence in civil justice

63%
Government powers limited by judiciary

58%
Improper government influence in criminal justice

Authoritarianism is no longer an emerging trend —it is entrenched.

86%
of countries have suffered a sustained five-year decline



in at least one of the mechanisms that keep authoritarianism in check:

Constraints on Government Powers
Open Government
Fundamental Rights

Civil justice is becoming more accessible, affordable, and equitable.

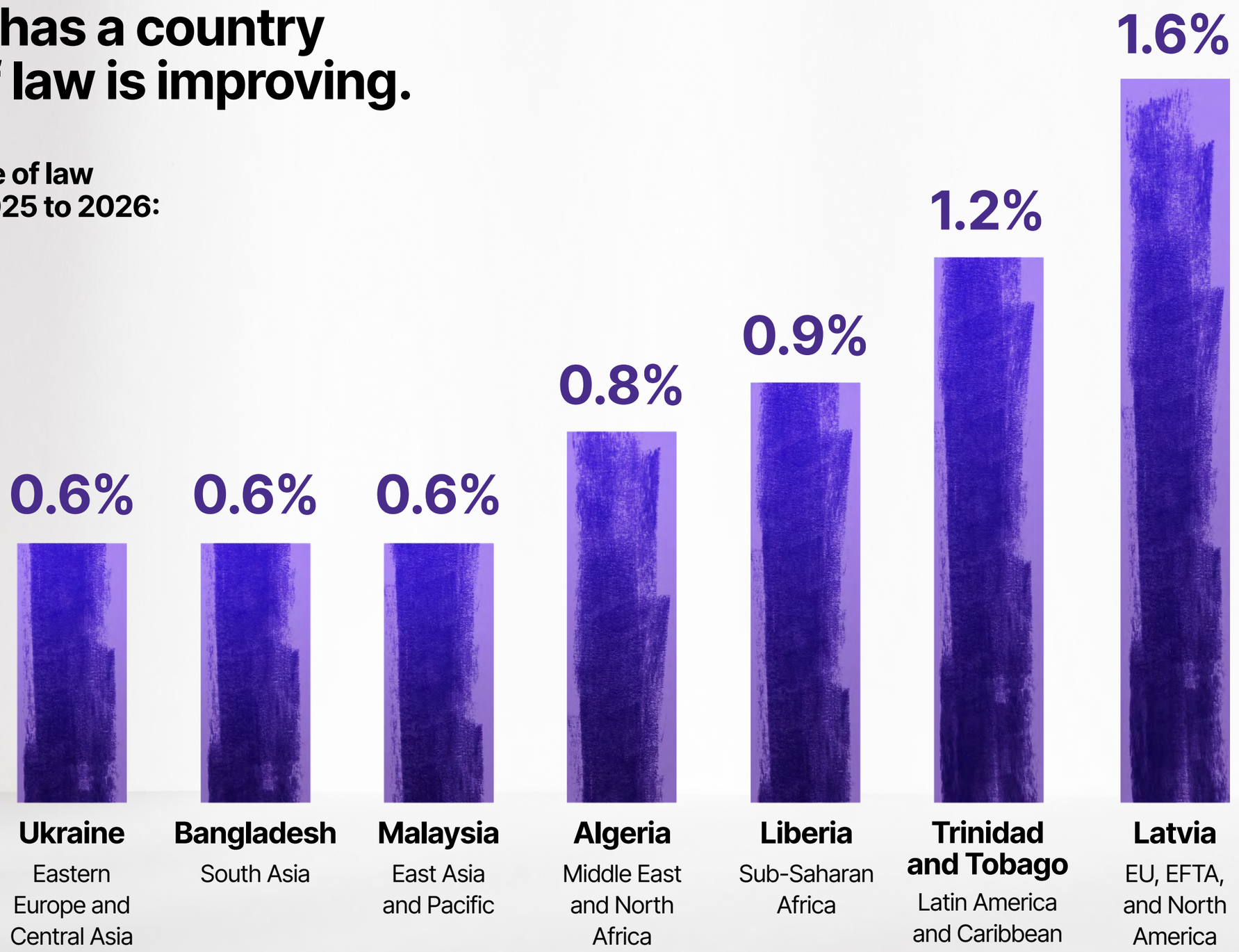
In the past year, the majority of countries have seen improvements in access to civil justice.

Percentage of countries that improved in 2026:



Every region has a country where rule of law is improving.

Regional leaders in rule of law improvements from 2025 to 2026:



Rule of Law and the Economy

The rule of law serves as the backbone of economic opportunity, shaping how markets function and how everyday business is conducted. Effective regulatory enforcement and independent judiciaries curb improper interference in private affairs, dismantle corrupt practices that impede commerce, and ensure that contracts are honored and property rights are protected.

When rules are transparent, predictable, and applied equally to all, the private sector gains a level of certainty required for long-term planning. Index data demonstrates that strong legal protections directly correlate with price stability, lower sovereign credit risk, and higher levels of GDP—proving that sound governance is essential for lasting economic resilience.



*To read more about the relation between the rule of law and economic development, please visit: https://worldjusticeproject.org/news/economic-benefits-rule-of-law

Prosperous nations share a foundation in the rule of law.

Economies with high GDPs reflect greater judicial independence, secure property protections, and reliable institutional checks.

Countries with scores over

0.68

tend to have a GDP/Capita above the global average ($14,405.80)



*To read more about the relation between the rule of law and economic development, please visit: https://worldjusticeproject.org/news/economic-benefits-rule-of-law

Prices are stable in countries where the rule of law is stronger.

Strong rule of law environments correlate with contained inflation, while weaker governance structures consistently coincide with higher price volatility and severe inflationary spikes.



Above 0.60:

Countries tend to unlock stable prices with below-median rates of inflation.

0.60

Below 0.60:

Inflation rates are higher than 3.23% median.



*To read more about the relation between the rule of law and economic development, please visit: https://worldjusticeproject.org/news/economic-benefits-rule-of-law

Risk is lower where the rule of law is stronger.

When Index scores reach 0.66, countries tend to have high Sovereign Credit Ratings; below that score, countries tend to have speculative grade borrowing penalties.

Countries with a good investment grade rating
(AAA to BBB)

0.66

Countries with speculative grade credit rating
(BB and below)



*To read more about the relation between the rule of law and economic development, please visit: https://worldjusticeproject.org/news/economic-benefits-rule-of-law

4

Behind the Numbers

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Our Approach

Traditionally, the rule of law has been viewed as the domain of lawyers and judges. However, everyday issues of safety, rights, justice, and governance affect us all; everyone is a stakeholder in the rule of law. Based on this, WJP builds and supports a global, multidisciplinary movement for the rule of law by:

Building evidence: collecting, organizing, and analyzing original, independent rule of law data, as in the *WJP Rule of Law Index*;

Supporting stronger institutions: helping institutions turn evidence into improvements. We work with judiciaries, governments and organizations to understand risks and develop practical approaches; and

Creating dialogue and shared learning: Connecting and building an engaged global network of policy-makers and advocates to advance the rule of law through strategic partnerships, convenings, coordinated advocacy, and support for locally-led initiatives. These efforts include the *World Justice Forum*, local forums, the *World Justice Challenge*, *In the Robe* podcast and the *Anthony Lewis Journalism Prize*.

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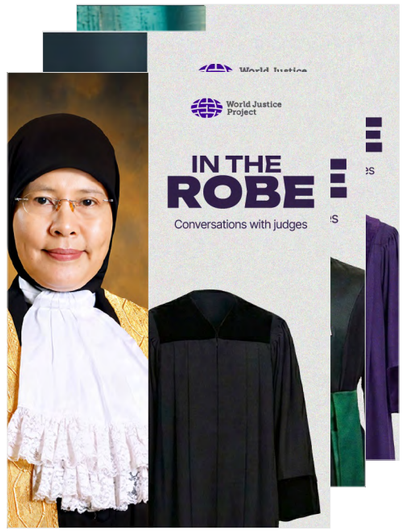
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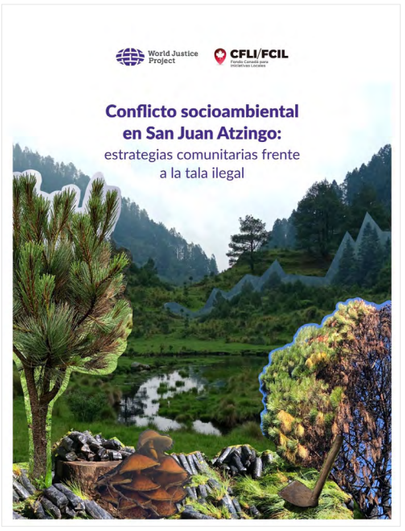
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