

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL:**

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**UNITED STATES RANKED 19 OUT OF 113 COUNTRIES ON RULE OF LAW — SEES DECLINE IN CHECKS ON GOVERNMENT POWERS AND DEEPENING DISCRIMINATION**

*Globally, More Countries Declined Than Improved in 2017-2018 WJP Rule of Law Index;  
Human Rights, Checks on Government Powers Weakened Worldwide*

WASHINGTON, DC (31 January 2018) – The World Justice Project (WJP) today released the *2017-2018 WJP Rule of Law Index*<sup>®</sup> which measures rule of law adherence in 113 countries worldwide based on more than 110,000 household and 3,000 expert surveys. Featuring primary data, the *WJP Rule of Law Index* measures countries' rule of law performance across eight factors: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice.

The United States dropped one position for overall rule of law performance (from 18 in the *2016 WJP Rule of Law Index*) to 19 out of 113 countries in the 2017-2018 edition. Its score places it at 14 out of 24 countries in the Western Europe and North America (defined as EU + EFTA + North America) region\* and 19 out of 35 among high income\*\* countries.

- **The most significant trend for U.S. rule of law performance was a deterioration in Factor 1, Constraints on Government Powers.** While all sub-factors in this dimension declined at least slightly from 2016, the score for lawful transition of power—based on responses to survey questions on confidence in national and local election processes and procedures—declined most markedly.
- **Continuing a long-term trend, the U.S. scored notably poorly on several measurements of discrimination.** With scores of .50 for equal treatment and absence of discrimination (on a scale of 0 to 1), .48 for discrimination in the civil justice system, and .37 for discrimination in the criminal justice system, the U.S. finds itself ranked 78 out of 113 countries on all three sub-factors. These scores are below the average not only for other high-income countries, but also below the average for low-income countries. Compared regionally, the U.S. discrimination scores were below the average scores of every region in the world except one, South Asia.

**Globally, a majority of countries worldwide saw their scores decline since the publication of the last *WJP Rule of Law Index* (in October 2016) in the areas of human rights, checks on government powers, and civil and criminal justice.**

- The greatest decline was seen in Factor 4, Fundamental Rights (71 countries dropped out of 113), which measures absence of discrimination, right to life and security, due process, freedom

of expression and religion, right to privacy, freedom of association, and labor rights. The second greatest decline was seen in Factor 1, Constraints on Government Powers (64 countries dropped out of 113), which measures the extent to which those who govern are bound by law.

- **In addition, more countries’ overall rule of law score declined (34%) than improved (29%)** as compared to their 2016 *Index* scores—a troubling trend. Thirty-seven percent of countries’ overall rule of law score remained the same.

The biggest mover in this year’s *WJP Rule of Law Index* (calculated by comparing countries against the 2016 rankings) was the Philippines, which fell 18 positions, now ranking 88<sup>th</sup> out of 113 countries overall and 13<sup>th</sup> out of 15 countries in the East Asia and Pacific region.

The *WJP Rule of Law Index*<sup>®</sup> is the world’s leading source for original data on the rule of law. The *Index* relies on more than 110,000 household and 3,000 expert surveys to measure how the rule of law is experienced and perceived in practical, everyday situations by the general public worldwide. Performance is measured using 44 indicators across eight primary rule of law factors, each of which is scored and ranked globally and against regional and income peers: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice.

“Effective rule of law is the foundation for communities of equity, opportunity, and peace,” said William H. Neukom, WJP founder and CEO. “No country has achieved a perfect realization of the rule of law. The *WJP Rule of Law Index* is intended to be a first step in setting benchmarks, informing reforms, stimulating programs, and deepening appreciation and understanding for the foundational importance of the rule of law.”

The complete 2017-2018 report—including country profiles, data visualizations, methodology, and download options—is available on January 31 at: [www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index)

## UNITED STATES RANKINGS

*WJP Rule of Law Index 2017-2018* performance (1 is best)

UNITED STATES OVERALL GLOBAL RANK: 19/113

UNITED STATES OVERALL REGIONAL RANK\*: 14/24

FACTOR	REGIONAL RANK*	INCOME RANK**	GLOBAL RANK
Constraints on Government Powers	13/24	15/35	16/113
Absence of Corruption	12/24	19/35	19/113
Open Government	11/24	13/35	13/113
Fundamental Rights	17/24	24/35	26/113
Order and Security	17/24	23/35	31/113
Regulatory Enforcement	13/24	19/35	19/113
Civil Justice	15/24	25/35	26/113
Criminal Justice	13/24	20/35	20/113

\*Countries measured in the Western Europe and North America region: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States

\*\*High-income countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong SAR, China, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, St. Kitts and Nevis, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay

#### **ABOUT THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT:**

The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to advance the rule of law worldwide. Effective rule of law reduces corruption, combats poverty and disease, and protects people from injustices large and small. It is the foundation for communities of equity, opportunity, and peace—underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights. Learn more at: [www.worldjusticeproject.org](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org)

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