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South Africa Ranks 57 out of 142 in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index

- The 2024 WJP Rule of Law Index® finds rule of law fell globally for the 7th consecutive year
- Progress emerges in the fight against corruption
- South Africa's score decreased, ranks 5 out of 34 regionally

WASHINGTON (23 October 2024) – For the seventh year in a row, the rule of law has eroded in a majority of countries, according to the [World Justice Project \(WJP\) Rule of Law Index 2024](#).

In the last year, the rule of law declined in 57% of countries surveyed—including South Africa.

South Africa's overall rule of law score decreased by -1.0% in this year's Index. It ranks 57th out of 142 countries worldwide.

Regionally, South Africa ranks 5th out of 34 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.* The region's top performer is Rwanda (ranked 40th out of 142 globally), followed by Namibia and Mauritius. The three countries with the lowest scores in the region are Cameroon, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (136th globally).

In the last year, 21 out of 34 countries declined in Sub-Saharan Africa. Of those 21 countries, 14 had also declined in the previous year.

Among upper-middle income countries, South Africa ranks 13th out of 41.**

South Africa and global trends

Since 2016, a global rule of law recession has affected 77% of countries studied, including South Africa.

Globally, the declines were largely driven by authoritarian trends. Between 2016 and 2024, the Index factor measuring Fundamental Rights fell in 81% of countries, but not in South Africa.

Over the past seven years, Index scores for Constraints on Government Powers have fallen in 77% of countries, but not in South Africa. Around the world, legislatures,

judiciaries, and civil society—including the media—have all lost ground on checking executive power, the Index shows.

While these and other authoritarian trends had slowed a little last year, they expanded in 2024. South Africa is not among the 63% of countries where Fundamental Rights fell in the past year. South Africa is among the 59% of countries where Constraints on Government Powers fell in the past year.

Despite this global backsliding, a smaller majority of countries experienced overall rule of law declines this year (57%) as compared to the last two (59% and 61%).

One reason is that some progress was made globally in the fight against corruption between 2023 and 2024. This year, 59% of countries saw their Index scores for Absence of Corruption improve, but not South Africa.

“After years of rule of law declines it can be easy to focus on the negative. But to do so would ignore accomplishments in anti-corruption and the hard work occurring to improve justice systems globally,” **WJP Co-founder and President William H. Neukom** said. “We must redouble our efforts to expand these rule of law gains in all areas.”

Global rankings

Globally, the top-ranked country in the 2024 WJP Rule of Law Index is Denmark, followed by Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Germany. The country with the lowest score is Venezuela, followed by Cambodia, Afghanistan, Haiti, and Myanmar.

South Africa’s WJP Rule of Law Index rankings

Overall score global rank: 57 / 142

Overall score regional rank: 5 / 34

Factor score rankings:

FACTOR	GLOBAL RANK	REGIONAL RANK*	INCOME RANK**
Constraints on Government Powers	42/142	3/34	5/41
Absence of Corruption	69/142	7/34	17/41
Open Government	36/142	1/34	3/41
Fundamental Rights	48/142	3/34	9/41
Order and Security	120/142	23/34	35/41
Regulatory Enforcement	63/142	8/34	16/41
Civil Justice	50/142	5/34	10/41
Criminal Justice	55/142	5/34	12/41

(1 is best in WJP Rule of Law Index rankings)

To see South Africa's performance across all 44 sub-factors the Index measures, visit:
www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2024/South%20Africa

Explore the full rankings and findings of the 2024 World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index at: www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/.

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- Find the global press release and all 142 country press releases by region [here](#).
- Access the complete 2024 WJP Rule of Law Index and "Insights" booklet [here](#).
- See graphics (regional rankings, global rankings, and comparative maps) [here](#).

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ABOUT THE WJP RULE OF LAW INDEX:

The [World Justice Project \(WJP\) Rule of Law Index](#)® is the world's leading source for original, independent data on the rule of law. Now covering 142 countries and jurisdictions, the Index relies on more than 214,000 household surveys and 3,500 legal expert surveys to measure how the rule of law is experienced and perceived worldwide. Published annually since 2009 and subject to a rigorous methodology, the Index is used by governments, multilateral organizations, businesses, academia, media, and civil society organizations around the world to assess and address gaps in the rule of law.

ABOUT THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT:

The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, nonpartisan, multidisciplinary organization working to create knowledge, build awareness, and stimulate action 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 underpins development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights, and it is the foundation for communities of justice, health, opportunity, and peace.

The World Justice Project defines the rule of law as a durable system of laws, institutions, norms, and community commitment that delivers: accountability, just laws, open government, and

accessible justice. Learn more about these four universal principles and our work at:
www.worldjusticeproject.org.

*Countries and jurisdictions measured in the Sub-Saharan Africa region: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

**Upper-middle income countries and jurisdictions: Albania, Argentina, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gabon, Georgia, Grenada, Guatemala, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Namibia, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Peru, Russia, Serbia, South Africa, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Thailand, Türkiye, Venezuela.