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## For the First Time in 5 Years, U.S. Improves on Rule of Law

- **United States ranks 26<sup>th</sup> out of 140 globally in 2022 *WJP Rule of Law Index*®**
- **As global declines in rule of law continue, U.S. regains some lost ground**

**WASHINGTON** (October 26, 2022) – The rule of law in the United States grew stronger in 2022 when compared to 2021, according to the [2022 World Justice Project \(WJP\) Rule of Law Index®](#), released today.

The United States ranks 26<sup>th</sup> out of 140 countries and jurisdictions on rule of law this year, up one position from last year's Index.

It is one of a small handful of countries that improved its rule of law score across all eight factors the Index measures. In a year when the majority of countries again declined in rule of law, **the United States is among the top five improving countries.**

Still, rule of law in the United States remains at a lower level than in 2020 and previous years, according to the *WJP Rule of Law Index*. This year, the country regained some, but not all, of the rule of law ground it lost during the previous pandemic year.

### Gains follow big losses from 2016 to 2021

Before improving this year, **the U.S. had experienced some of the world's biggest declines** in the rule of law in recent years – similar in magnitude to those in Hungary, Philippines, Myanmar, and Nicaragua.

The sharpest U.S. declines from 2016-2021 were in the **Index factors that gauge authoritarianism**: "Constraints on Government Powers" -- which includes checks on executive power by the legislature, courts, and media – and "Fundamental Rights," which measures respect for core human rights and freedoms. Even with this year's gains, U.S. performance in these areas remains well below 2016 levels – **down 15% and 9%**, respectively.

"The United States has broken a five-year losing streak in the rule of law," said Elizabeth Andersen, executive director of the World Justice Project (WJP). "**However, the U.S. is not out of the woods by a long stretch.** Authoritarian trends have weakened both trust and accountability, and **our democracy is not as healthy as it should be.**"

The [WJP Rule of Law Index](#) is the world's leading source of original, independent rule of law data. Now covering 140 countries, this year's Index relies on surveys of more than 154,000 households and 3,600 legal practitioners and experts to determine how the rule of law is experienced and perceived around the world.

## U.S. performance across eight factors

The Index measures 44 rule of law indicators, or subfactors, which feed into scores for eight factors: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice. These scores are then averaged to assign an overall rule of law score and ranking to each country.

While the United States improved in all eight factors this year, the largest gains were seen in the factors covering Fundamental Rights (2.6%), Order and Security (3.0%) and Criminal Justice (2.1%).

Overall, the rule of law in the United States **increased 1.8% from 2021 to 2022**. Over the previous five years it had **declined by 6%**.

Even before the dramatic rule of law declines in recent years, the United States has faced long-term rule of law challenges in a number of areas, especially those related to discrimination, access to justice, and labor rights.

The United States continues to score well below the global average in the Index subfactors measuring these areas. This year, on the subfactors measuring lack of discrimination in the criminal and civil justice systems, the United States ranks 106<sup>th</sup> and 121<sup>st</sup> out of 140, respectively. On accessibility and affordability of civil justice, it ranks 115<sup>th</sup> out of 140. On fundamental labor rights it ranks 77<sup>th</sup>, under Guinea, Georgia, and Madagascar.

## United States and global trends

The World Justice Project's original data in 140 countries and jurisdictions shows that adherence to the rule of law fell in 61% of countries this year. It is the **5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the rule of law has declined globally**.

Some of the biggest global declines this year were in the Index factors associated with rising authoritarianism and the longer-term erosion of rule of law. **This year, respect for fundamental rights declined in two-thirds of countries.**

Checks on government power fell in 58% of countries this year.

The other top factor driving this year's global declines is "**Civil Justice**," largely due to continued pandemic-related delays, weakened enforcement, and rising discrimination in civil justice systems. Scores for this factor fell in 61% of countries this year, but not in the United States.

**Globally, 4.4 billion people live in countries where rule of law has declined over the past year.**

However, declines are less widespread and extreme than last year, when Covid shutdowns dramatically disrupted justice systems, and governments exercised emergency powers that curtailed civic freedoms and bypassed transparency mechanisms.

The chart below shows the factors driving the United States' score changes this year. To see the United States' performance across all 44 subfactors the Index measures, please visit:

[www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2022/United%20States](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2022/United%20States).

### UNITED STATES RANKINGS AND SCORE CHANGES

	Global Rank	Regional Rank	Score (1 is best)	1-year change in score (2021-2022)	6-year change In score (2016-2022)
<b>Overall Rule of Law Score</b>	<b>#26 of 140</b>	<b>#19 of 31</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>+1.8%</b>	<b>- 4.3%</b>
By factor:					
Constraints on Government Powers	28/140	21/31	0.69	1.3%	- 15%
Absence of Corruption	22/140	15/31	0.73	1.6%	0.3%
Open Government	16/140	14/31	0.76	0.5%	- 2.5%
Fundamental Rights	37 /140	25/31	0.68	2.6%	- 9.1%
Order and Security	31/140	22/31	0.83	3.0%	3.7%
Regulatory Enforcement	22/140	16/31	0.72	1.3%	2.1%
Civil Justice	36/140	22/31	0.63	1.6%	- 3.6%
Criminal Justice	30/140	22/31	0.61	2.1%	- 10%

The complete 2022 report—including country profiles, data visualizations, methodology, and download options—is available at [www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/).

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- Access the complete 2022 Rule of Law Index and "Insights" booklet [here](#).
- Find graphics (regional rankings, global rankings, and comparative maps) [here](#).
- Find 140 country press releases organized by region [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 140 countries and jurisdictions, the Index relies on more than 154,000 household surveys and 3,600 legal practitioner and expert surveys to measure how the rule of law is experienced and perceived worldwide. The Index provides current and reliable information to policy makers, civil society organizations, academics, citizens, and legal professionals, among others, and is intended to encourage policy reforms, guide program development, and inform research to strengthen the rule of law.

**ABOUT THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT:**

The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, 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, 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](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org).