

**UNDER EMBARGO – DO NOT PUBLISH UNTIL:**

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**UNITED STATES RANKED 21 OUT OF 128 COUNTRIES ON RULE OF LAW, DROPPING ONE POSITION**

*2020 WJP Rule of Law Index Shows Sustained Negative Slide Toward Weaker  
Rule of Law Around the World*

*United States Placed 15<sup>th</sup> out of 24 in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North  
America Region*

WASHINGTON, DC (11 March 2020) – The World Justice Project (WJP) today released the *WJP Rule of Law Index*<sup>®</sup> 2020, an annual report based on national surveys of more than 130,000 households and 4,000 legal practitioners and experts around the world.

The *WJP Rule of Law Index* measures rule of law performance in 128 countries and jurisdictions across eight primary factors: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice. The Index is the world's leading source for original, independent data on the rule of law.

The United States' overall rule of law score decreased by less than 1% in this year's Index. At 21<sup>st</sup> place out of 128 countries and jurisdictions worldwide, the United States fell one position in global rank. The United States' score places it at 15 out of 24 countries in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America region\* and 21 out of 37 among high income\*\* countries.

Denmark, Norway, and Finland topped the *WJP Rule of Law Index* rankings in 2020. Venezuela, RB; Cambodia; and Democratic Republic of the Congo had the lowest overall rule of law scores—the same as in 2019.

More countries declined than improved in overall rule of law performance for a third year in a row, continuing a negative slide toward weakening and stagnating rule of law around the world. The majority of countries showing deteriorating rule of law in the 2020 Index also declined in the previous year, demonstrating a persistent downward trend. This was particularly pronounced in the Index factor measuring Constraints on Government Powers.

The declines were widespread and seen in all corners of the world. In every region, a majority of countries slipped backward or remained unchanged in their overall rule of law performance since the 2019 *WJP Rule of Law Index*.

Regionally, the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America region top performer in the Index is Denmark (1<sup>st</sup> out of 128 countries globally), followed by Norway and Finland. The three countries with the lowest scores in the region were Greece; Bulgaria; and Hungary (60<sup>th</sup> out of 128 countries globally).

Countries with the strongest improvement in rule of law were Ethiopia (5.6% increase in score, driven primarily by gains in Constraints on Government Powers and Fundamental Rights) and Malaysia (5.1%, driven primarily by gains in Constraints on Government Powers, Fundamental Rights, and Regulatory Enforcement).

The largest declines in the rule of law were seen in Cameroon (-4.4%, driven primarily by falling scores in Order and Security and Fundamental Rights) and Iran (-4.2%, driven primarily by falling scores in Criminal Justice). Over the last five years, countries experiencing the largest average annual percentage drop in the rule of law were Egypt (-4.6 %); Venezuela, RB (-3.9%); Cambodia (-3.0%); Philippines (-2.5%); Cameroon (-2.4%); Hungary (-2.1%); and Bosnia and Herzegovina (-2.1%).

The single biggest decline by factor over the past five years was Egypt’s and Poland’s score for Constraints on Government Powers, with an average annual decline of -8.5% and -6.8%, respectively.

“The rule of law is not just a matter for judges or lawyers,” said William H. Neukom, WJP founder and CEO. “It is the bedrock of communities of justice, opportunity, and peace. We are all stakeholders in the rule of law and therefore we all have a role to play in upholding it. The 2020 Index underscores that we have our work cut out for us.”

The complete 2020 report—including country profiles, data visualizations, methodology, and download options—is available on March 11 at: [www.worldjusticeproject.org/2020-Index](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org/2020-Index)

## UNITED STATES RANKINGS

*WJP Rule of Law Index 2020 performance (1 is best)*

UNITED STATES OVERALL GLOBAL RANK: 21/128

UNITED STATES OVERALL REGIONAL RANK\*: 15/24

FACTOR	GLOBAL RANK	REGIONAL RANK*	INCOME RANK**
Constraints on Government Powers	22/128	16/24	21/37
Absence of Corruption	19/128	13/24	19/37
Open Government	13/128	11/24	13/37
Fundamental Rights	26/128	18/24	25/37
Order and Security	28/128	18/24	24/37
Regulatory Enforcement	20/128	13/24	20/37
Civil Justice	36/128	18/24	30/37
Criminal Justice	22/128	15/24	22/37

\*Countries and jurisdictions measured in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, 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 and jurisdictions: Antigua and Barbuda; Australia; Austria; The Bahamas; Barbados; Belgium; Canada; Chile; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hong Kong SAR, China; Hungary; Italy; Japan; Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Panama; 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 WJP RULE OF LAW INDEX**

The *WJP Rule of Law Index*<sup>®</sup> is the world's leading source for original, independent data on the rule of law. Now covering 128 countries and jurisdictions, the Index relies on more than 130,000 household surveys and 4,000 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 is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace—underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights.

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)

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