

United States ranked 27 out of 139 countries on rule of law, dropping two positions

- *Deterioration in rule of law is spreading worldwide, as seen in the WJP Rule of Law Index® 2021.*
- *Areas of greatest decline globally include constraints on government powers, civic space, timeliness of justice, and absence of discrimination.*
- *United States placed 20th out of 31 in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America region.*

WASHINGTON, DC (14 October 2021) – The World Justice Project (WJP) today released the *WJP Rule of Law Index® 2021*, which evaluates rule of law in 139 countries or jurisdictions. The report is the first in this annual series issued since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020, and it **shows multi-year negative trends worsening during this period.**

“With negative trends in so many countries, this year’s WJP Rule of Law Index should be a wake-up call for us all.” said WJP Co-Founder and CEO Bill Neukom. “Rule of Law is the very foundation of communities of justice, opportunity and peace. Reinforcing that foundation should be a top priority for the coming period of recovery from the pandemic.”

The *WJP Rule of Law Index®* is an annual report based on national surveys of more than 138,000 households and 4,200 legal practitioners and experts around the world. The WJP’s framework for the rule of law covers eight factors: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice.

Rule of Law in United States

United States’ overall rule of law score decreased 2.9% in this year’s Index. At 27th place out of 139 countries and jurisdictions worldwide, **United States fell two positions in global rank.** United States’ score places it at 20 out of 31 countries in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America region* and 27 out of 46 among high income** countries.

Significant trends for United States included deteriorations in the factors measuring Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, and Fundamental Rights.

Regionally, the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America’s top performer in the Index is Denmark (1st out of 139 countries globally), followed by Norway and Finland. The three countries with the lowest scores in the region were Greece; Bulgaria; and Hungary (69th out of 139 countries globally).

Seven new countries in the EU, EFTA, and North America region were added to the Index this year: Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, and Slovak Republic.



In the last year, 17 out of 24 countries declined in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America. Of those 17 countries, 11 had also declined in the previous year.

Rule of Law Around the World

The 2021 Index shows that globally more countries declined than improved in overall rule of law performance for the fourth consecutive year.

In a year dominated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, 74.2% of countries covered experienced declines in rule of law performance, while 25.8% improved. **The 74.2% of countries that experienced declines this year account for 84.7% of the world’s population, or approximately 6.5 billion people.**

The declines were widespread and seen in all corners of the world. For the second year in a row, **in every region, a majority of countries slipped backward** or remained unchanged in their overall rule of law performance.

Over the past year, **82% of countries in the Index experienced a decline in at least one dimension of civic space** (civic participation, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of assembly and association) and **94% of countries in the Index experienced increased delays in administrative, civil, or criminal proceedings.**

The top three performers this year were Denmark, Norway, and Finland. Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cambodia, and Venezuela, RB had the lowest overall rule of law scores.

The countries with the biggest improvement in rule of law in the past year were Uzbekistan (4.1%), Moldova (3.2%), and Mongolia (2.0%). The countries with the biggest decline in rule of law in the past year were Belarus (-7.5%) and Myanmar (-6.3%). Nigeria, Nicaragua, Kyrgyz Republic, and Argentina tie for the third biggest decline (-3.7%).

United States Rankings

WJP Rule of Law Index 2021 performance (1 is best)

UNITED STATES OVERALL GLOBAL RANK: 27/139
 UNITED STATES OVERALL REGIONAL RANK*: 20/31

FACTOR	GLOBAL RANK	REGIONAL RANK*	INCOME RANK**
Constraints on Government Powers	28/139	21/31	27/46
Absence of Corruption	23/139	16/31	23/46
Open Government	16/139	14/31	16/46
Fundamental Rights	42/139	27/31	38/46
Order and Security	38/139	26/31	33/46
Regulatory Enforcement	22/139	16/31	22/46
Civil Justice	41/139	23/31	36/46
Criminal Justice	30/139	22/31	29/46



*Countries and jurisdictions measured in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America region: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States

**High income countries and jurisdictions: Antigua and Barbuda; Australia; Austria; The Bahamas; Barbados; Belgium; Canada; Chile; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hong Kong SAR, China; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Korea, Rep.; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Mauritius; Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Panama; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Singapore; Slovak Republic; 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® is the world's leading source for original, independent data on the rule of law. Now covering 139 countries and jurisdictions, the Index relies on more than 138,000 household surveys and 4,200 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.

Materials under embargo until October 14

Access the complete report and insights booklet [here](#).

Consult complimentary media (graphs, rankings, and comparative maps) [here](#).

Regional country press releases, with issue specific scores and rankings [here](#).

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