UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL OCTOBER 21, 2026 9AM EDT

United States Ranks 30 out of 143 in the WJP Rule of Law Index

- *2026 WJP Rule of Law Index®* finds authoritarian practices have become entrenched
- Rising government interference and rollbacks in freedom of speech and participation demand urgent attention
- The United States' score decreased, ranks 23 out of 31 regionally

WASHINGTON (October 21, 2026) – The **global rule of law recession persists**, according to the new ***WJP Rule of Law Index® 2026***, released today by the World Justice Project (WJP). While fewer countries declined this year compared to last, the global balance remains deeply uneven—with a 62% decline continuing to outnumber improvements—including the United States.

The United States' overall rule of law score decreased 1.8% in this year's Index. It ranks 30th out of 143 countries worldwide.

Regionally, the United States ranks 23rd out of 31 countries in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America.* The region's top performer is Denmark (ranked 1st out of 143 globally), followed by Norway and Finland. The three countries with the lowest scores in the region are Greece, Bulgaria, and Hungary (78th globally).

In the last year, 17 out of 31 countries declined in the European Union, European Free Trade Association, and North America. Of those 17 countries, 15 had also declined in the previous year.

Among high income countries, the United States ranks 30th out of 51.**

United States and Global trends

Authoritarianism is no longer an emerging trend—it has become entrenched: over 86% of countries have suffered a sustained five-year decline in at least one safeguard against authoritarian rule: **constraints on government powers, open government**, or **fundamental rights**. This includes the United States.

Freedoms essential to civic space, public debate and government oversight are shrinking across most countries:

- **"Freedom of opinion and expression"** declined in **64%** of countries, including the United States.
- **"Freedom of assembly and association"** declined in **67%** of countries, including the United States.
- **"Civic participation"** declined in **65%** of countries, including the United States.

Across criminal and civil systems alike, **undue executive pressure and interference** have become the leading drivers of institutional decay. **Civil justice** weakened in **64%** of countries and **criminal justice** in **58%**, with **improper government influence** emerging as a central factor in both areas. Judiciaries are also losing ground to executive overreach more broadly: **government powers limited by the judiciary** fell in **63%** of countries. This includes the United States.

However, **civil justice is becoming more accessible, affordable, and equal:**

- **"Access and afford civil justice** improved in **54%"** of countries, but not in the United States.
- **"Civil justice is free of discrimination"** improved in **52%** of countries, but not in the United States.

Index data shows that **economic prosperity, price stability, and low credit risk cluster** in countries with robust rule of law:

- **GDP per capita**: Countries with a GDP per capita above the world's average ($14,406) score 0.68 or higher in the *WJP Rule of Law Index*.
- **Inflation**: Countries with inflation rates lower than the median (3.23%) have an Index score of 0.60 or above.
- **Sovereign credit ratings**: Countries with an investment-grade sovereign credit rating (AAA to BBB) maintain Index scores of 0.66 or higher.

In 2026, the United States' overall score is 0.67.

Global rankings

Globally, the top-ranked country in the 2026 *WJP Rule of Law Index* is Denmark, followed by Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Luxembourg. The country with the lowest score is Venezuela, followed by Afghanistan, Haiti, Cambodia, and Nicaragua.

The United States' WJP Rule of Law Index rankings

Overall score global rank: 30/143
Overall score regional rank: 23/31

Factor score rankings:

FACTOR	GLOBAL RANK	REGIONAL RANK*	INCOME RANK**
Constraints on Government Powers	37/143	24/31	34/51
Absence of Corruption	27/143	20/31	27/51
Open Government	20/143	16/31	20/51
Fundamental Rights	49/143	29/31	41/51
Order and Security	31/143	20/31	29/51
Regulatory Enforcement	28/143	18/31	28/51
Civil Justice	47/143	24/31	38/51
Criminal Justice	41/143	26/31	38/51

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

To see the United States' performance across all 44 sub-factors the Index measures, visit: www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2026/United%20States/

***Explore the full rankings and findings of the 2026* World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index *at: www.worldjusticeproject.org/index/*.**

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- Find graphics (regional rankings, global rankings, and comparative maps) **here.**
- Find 143 country press releases organized by region **here.**

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 rule of law data. Its rigorous methodology draws on expert and household surveys to measure the rule of law in 143 countries and jurisdictions, covering 95% of the world's population.

The Index relies on more than 215,000 household surveys and 3,400 practitioner and expert surveys to measure how the rule of law is experienced and perceived worldwide. Published annually since 2009, the

Index is used by governments, multilateral organizations, businesses, academia, media, and civil society organizations.

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.

*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, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guyana, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, St. Kitts and Nevis, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay