

Measuring democracy and academic freedom

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The V-Dem Project creates quantitative measures of these concepts using expert ratings, allowing us to (roughly) track them across time and space.

To measure academic freedom, V-Dem aggregates five indicators of concepts related to academic freedom:

- ▶ Freedom to research and teach
- ▶ Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination
- ▶ Institutional autonomy
- ▶ Campus integrity
- ▶ Freedom of academic and cultural expression

Note: V-Dem Academic Freedom Index represents collaborative work between V-Dem and Katrin Kinzelbach (PI) and researchers at FAU; academic-freedom-index.net/

V-Dem measures each of these five concepts at the country-year level using expert coders.

The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project

- ▶ V-Dem is an international project that measures democratic institutions across time and space
 - ▶ (Almost) All countries
 - ▶ 1789-2023, updated yearly
 - ▶ Indices aggregated upward from indicators
 - ▶ Research assistants code 228 indicators
 - ▶ Country experts code 321 indicators
 - ▶ Aggregated into 158 mid-level indices, then five democracy indices
- ▶ V-Dem dataset includes data on many concepts in addition to academic freedom
- ▶ All data freely available and easily usable on v-dem.net

What are country-experts?

- ▶ Many concepts are difficult to directly observe
- ▶ Coding these concepts requires in-depth conceptual and country knowledge
- ▶ V-Dem uses a network of over 4,200 country experts
 - ▶ Generally five or more per country-year-indicator
 - ▶ Most experts have a PhD
 - ▶ Goal: A majority of country experts are local

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V-Dem aggregates expert scores using a statistical model that accounts for variation in expert reliability and scale perception.

The Academic Freedom Index is an aggregation of the following five expert-coded indicators:

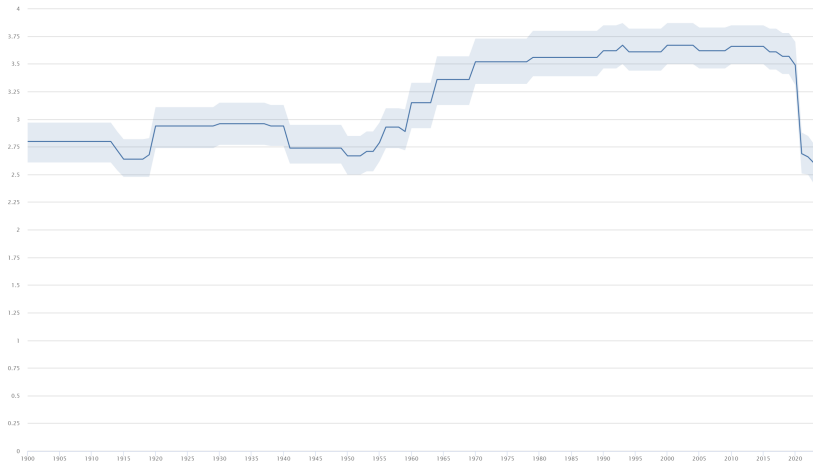
- ▶ **Freedom to research and teach**
- ▶ Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination
- ▶ Institutional autonomy
- ▶ Campus integrity
- ▶ Freedom of academic and cultural expression

Freedom to research and teach

To what extent are scholars free to develop and pursue their own research and teaching agendas without interference?

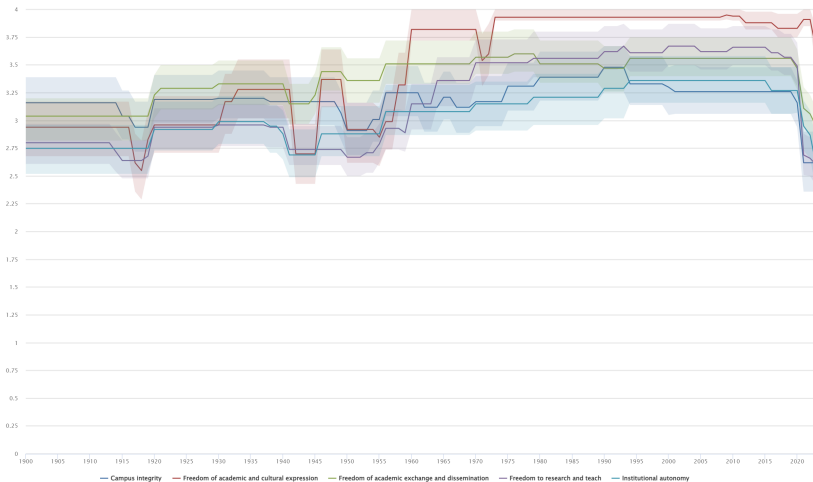
0. Completely restricted. When determining their research agenda or teaching curricula, scholars are, across all disciplines, consistently subject to interference or incentivized to self-censor.
1. Severely restricted. When determining their research agenda or teaching curricula, scholars are, in some disciplines, consistently subject to interference or incentivized to self-censor.
2. Moderately restricted. When determining their research agenda or teaching curricula, scholars are occasionally subject to interference or incentivized to self-censor.
3. Mostly free. When determining their research agenda or teaching curricula, scholars are rarely subject to interference or incentivized to self-censor.
4. Fully free. When determining their research agenda or teaching curricula, scholars are not subject to interference or incentivized to self-censor.

USA has shown a decline in freedom to research and teach in recent years

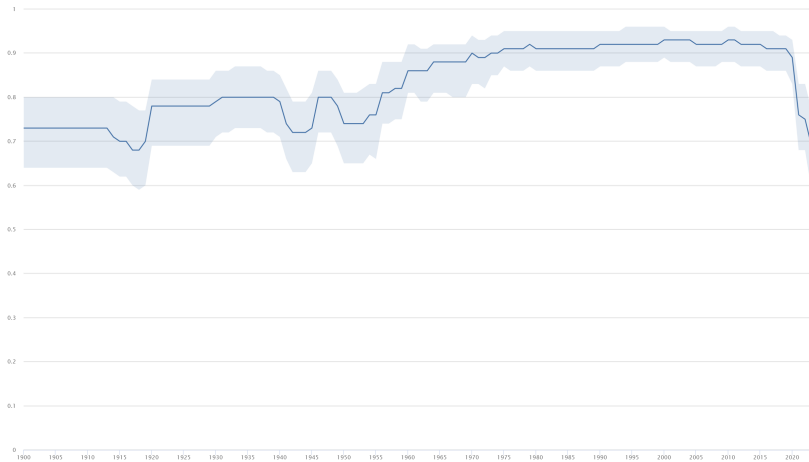


Original scale values 1900-2023; v-dem.net

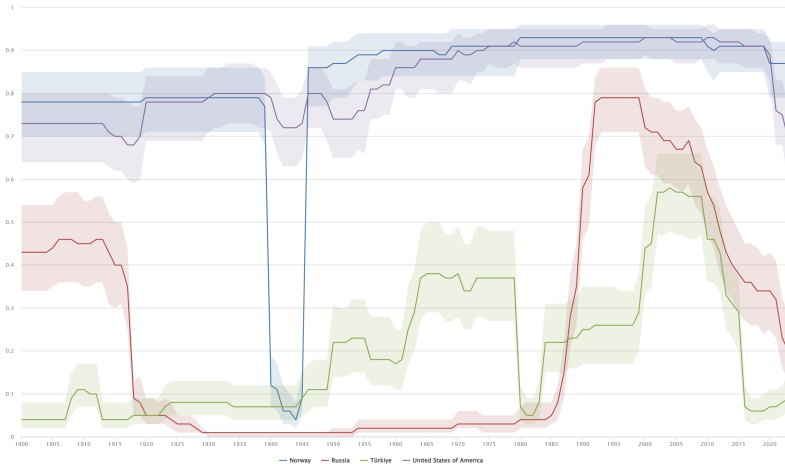
USA has shown a decline in most academic freedom indicators in recent years



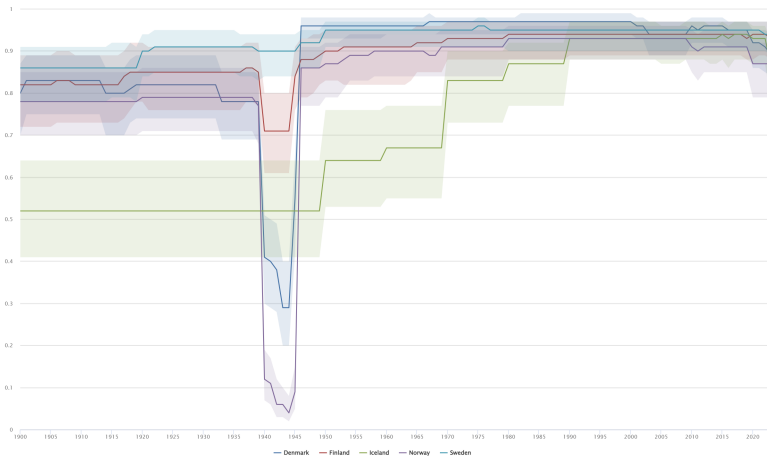
Overall academic freedom index shows a decline in the USA in recent years



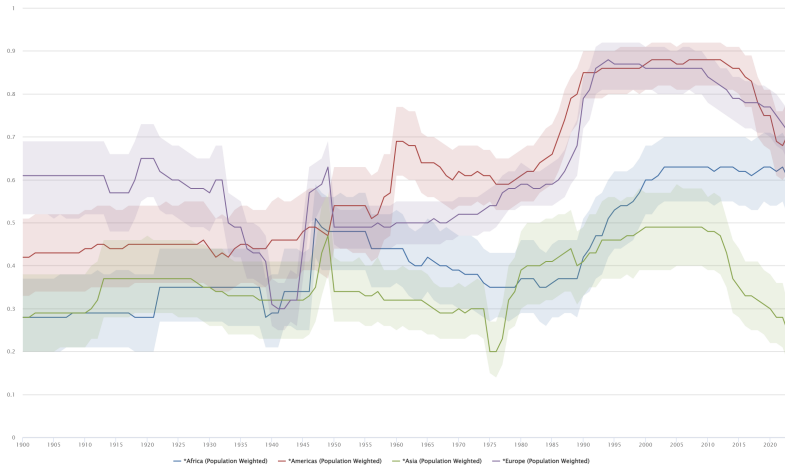
USA is doing worse than Norway, better than Russia or Turkey



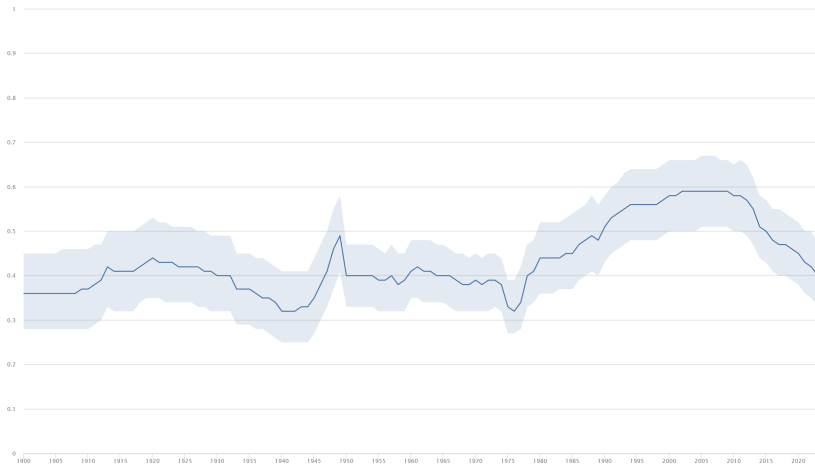
Nordic countries doing quite well in general in post-war period



Decline in academic freedom is particularly noticeable in Asia and the Americas

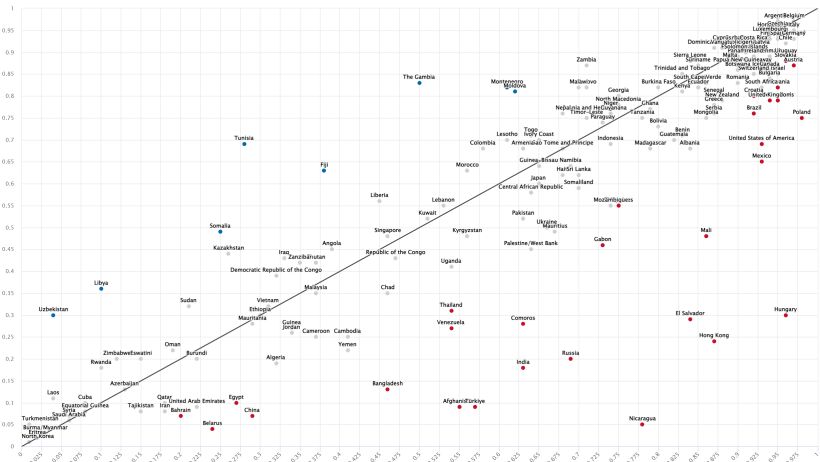


According to V-Dem, academic freedom has shown substantial worldwide decline in recent years



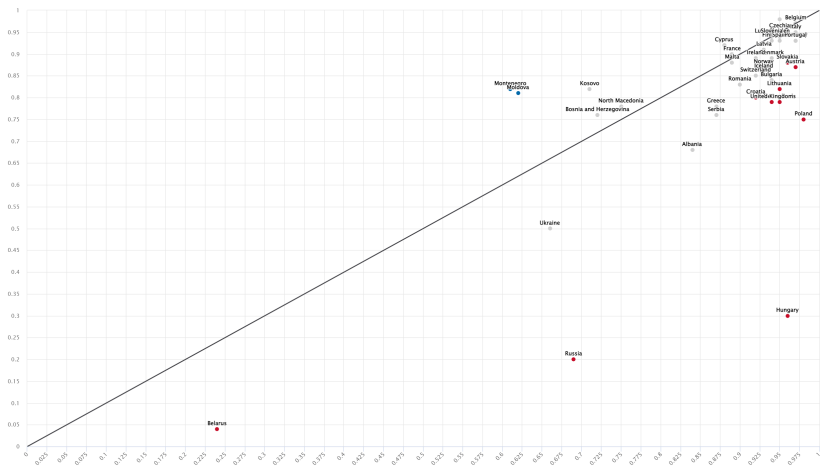
Population-weighted worldwide average 1900-2023; v-dem.net

Can use the index to identify backsliders

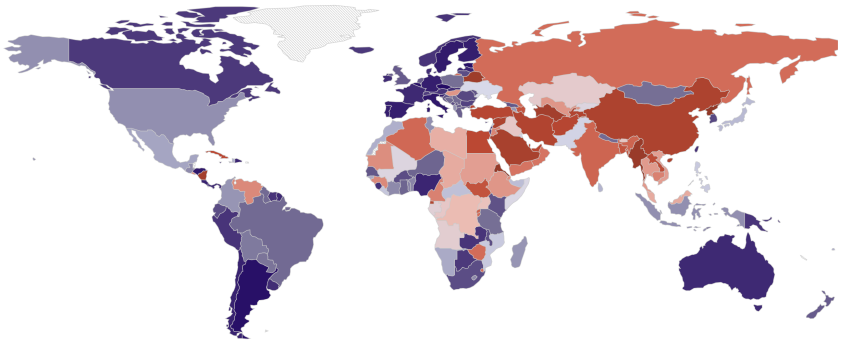


AFI 2013 vs. 2023; v-dem.net

... and focus on specific region

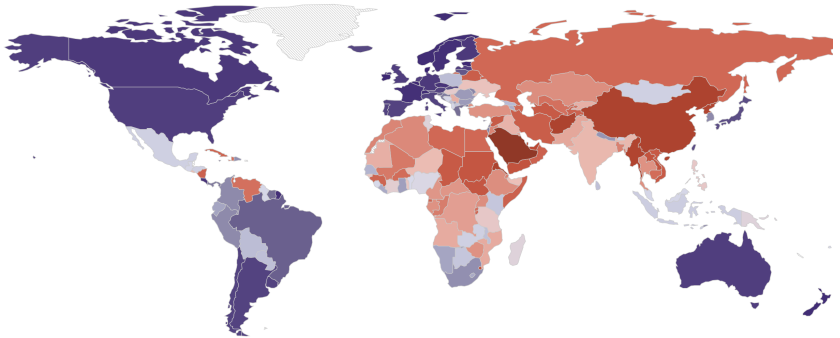


V-Dem data show that there is substantial variation in academic freedom across world regions



Purple is good; red is bad; v-dem.net

Academic freedom correlates with electoral democracy

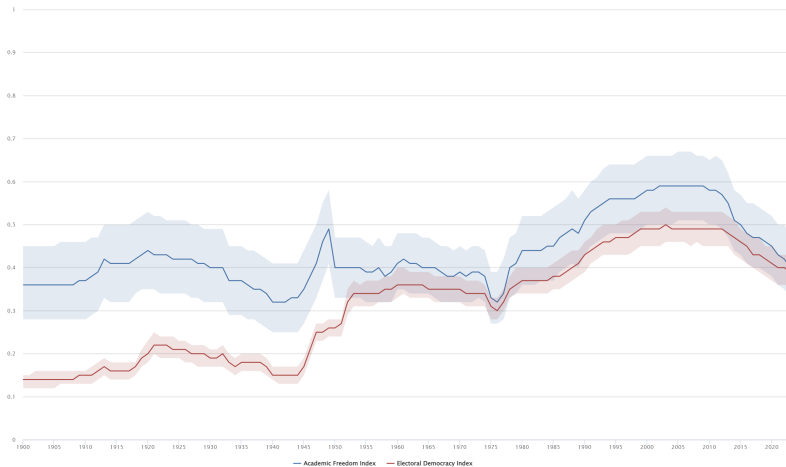


Purple is good; red is bad; v-dem.net

Electoral democracy index

- ▶ Freedom of expression (expert-coded index; nine indicators)
- ▶ Freedom of association (expert-coded index)
 - ▶ Party ban
 - ▶ Barriers to parties
 - ▶ Opposition party autonomy
 - ▶ Multiparty elections
 - ▶ CSO entry and exit
 - ▶ CSO oppression
- ▶ Free and fair elections (expert-coded index; eight indicators)
- ▶ Elected officials (directly-coded indicator)
- ▶ Proportion suffrage (directly-coded indicator)

Worldwide trends in democracy and academic freedom over time also clearly align



Population-weighted worldwide average 1900-2023; v-dem.net

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