

# FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2017



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# Freedom in the World 2017

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This booklet is a summary of findings for the 2017 edition of *Freedom in the World*. The complete analysis including narrative reports on all countries and territories can be found on our website at [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org).

### ON THE COVER

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Protesters shouting nationalist and anti-immigrant slogans disrupt a tribute in Brussels, Belgium, to victims of terrorist attacks, March 2016.

Cover image by Kristof van Accom/AFP/Getty Images

# Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy

by Arch Puddington and Tyler Roylance

In 2016, populist and nationalist political forces made astonishing gains in democratic states, while authoritarian powers engaged in brazen acts of aggression, and grave atrocities went unanswered in war zones across two continents.

All of these developments point to a growing danger that the international order of the past quarter-century—rooted in the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law—will give way to a world in which individual leaders and nations pursue their own narrow interests without meaningful constraints, and without regard for the shared benefits of global peace, freedom, and prosperity.

The troubling impression created by the year's headline events is supported by the latest findings of *Freedom in the World*. A total of 67 countries suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties in 2016, compared with 36 that registered gains. This marked the 11th consecutive year in which declines outnumbered improvements.

While in past years the declines in freedom were generally concentrated among autocracies and dictatorships that simply went from bad to worse, in 2016 it was established democracies—countries rated Free in the report's ranking system—that dominated the list of countries suffering setbacks. In fact, Free countries accounted for a larger share of the countries with declines than at any time in the past decade, and nearly one-quarter of the countries registering declines in 2016 were in Europe.

As the year drew to a conclusion, the major democracies were mired in anxiety and indecision after a

series of destabilizing events. In the United States, the presidential victory of Donald Trump, a mercurial figure with unconventional views on foreign policy and other matters, raised questions about the country's future role in the world. Britain's vote to leave the European Union, the collapse of the Italian government after a failed referendum on constitutional reform, a series of antidemocratic moves by the new government in Poland, and gains by xenophobic nationalist parties elsewhere in Europe similarly cast doubt on the strength of the alliances that shaped the institutions of global democracy.

At the same time, Russia, in stunning displays of hubris and hostility, interfered in the political processes of the United States and other democracies, escalated its military support for the Assad dictatorship in Syria, and solidified its illegal occupation of Ukrainian territory. China also flouted international law, ignoring a tribunal's ruling against its expansive claims of sovereignty over the South China Sea and intensifying its repression of dissent within its borders. And unscrupulous leaders from South Sudan and Ethiopia to Thailand and the Philippines engaged in human rights violations of varying scale with impunity.

In the wake of last year's developments, it is no longer possible to speak with confidence about the long-term durability of the EU; the incorporation of democracy and human rights priorities into American foreign

## Freedom in the World Methodology

*Freedom in the World 2017* evaluates the state of freedom in 195 countries and 14 territories during calendar year 2016. Each country and territory is assigned between 0 and 4 points on a series of 25 indicators, for an aggregate score of up to 100. These scores are used to determine two numerical ratings, for political rights and civil liberties, with a rating of 1 representing the most free conditions and 7 the least free. A country or territory's political rights and civil liberties ratings then determine whether it has an overall status of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free.

For complete information on the methodology, visit <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2017/methodology>.

The methodology, which is derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is applied to all countries and territories, irrespective of geographic location, ethnic or religious composition, or level of economic development.

*Freedom in the World* assesses the real-world rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals, rather than governments or government performance per se. Political rights and civil liberties can be affected by both state and nonstate actors, including insurgents and other armed groups.

policy; the resilience of democratic institutions in Central Europe, Brazil, or South Africa; or even the expectation that actions like the assault on Myanmar's Rohingya minority or indiscriminate bombing in Yemen will draw international criticism from democratic governments and UN human rights bodies. No such assumption, it seems, is entirely safe.

### Syria's impact on democracies

While the democratic world stood aside throughout the year, a coalition of repressive dictatorships bombed and shelled Aleppo and other Syrian cities where opponents of President Bashar al-Assad had gained footholds. Assad, with crucial assistance from Russia, Iran, and a multinational array of Iranian-backed Shiite militias, clearly regained the initiative in the five-year civil war, whose grinding violence has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions more. A U.S.-led coalition pounded the Islamic State (IS) militant group in the east, but left the pro-Assad alliance undisturbed as it focused its military might on non-IS rebels and civilians.

Since the war began, each new horror has appeared to deter rather than motivate a coordinated international response. The conflict has only grown more complex and intractable, however, and democratic governments continue to reap the consequences of their hesitation.

The enormous refugee flows and IS-inspired terrorism generated by the Syrian conflict have played an important role in the weakening of democratic standards in Europe and the United States. Arrivals of asylum seekers in Europe declined in 2016, largely due to the

hardening of borders in the Balkans and an agreement between the EU and Turkey in which Ankara pledged to block irregular departures. But the drop in numbers failed to stem anti-refugee rhetoric, as European political leaders routinely smeared those fleeing conflict zones as criminals, rapists, and terrorists.

Moreover, the agreement with Turkey—an already dubious haven for refugees given its raging Kurdish insurgency and regular terrorist attacks—became a deeper source of embarrassment after Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan embraced an unvarnished form of authoritarianism in response to a failed coup attempt in July. Having put down the coup, the government imposed emergency rule that resulted in the arrest of nearly 40,000 civilians, the imprisonment of dozens of journalists for their work, the shuttering of hundreds of media outlets and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the arrest of the leaders and hundreds of officials from the third-largest party in the parliament, and the firing of more than a hundred thousand civil servants.

Terrorism continued to fuel political upheaval in Europe and the United States despite major territorial losses suffered by IS and other extremist groups such as Boko Haram. France, Belgium, and Germany endured high-profile terrorist attacks, an IS-inspired mass shooting struck the U.S. state of Florida, and smaller assaults elsewhere in Europe were foiled or interrupted by the authorities.

Several European governments reacted by adopting laws that gave enhanced powers to security forces

## Referendums and Democratic Fragility

A constant refrain among democracy advocates is that “democracy is more than just elections.” A truly democratic system includes a variety of other checks and balances that ensure freedom and resilience over time, such as a free press, independent courts, legal protections for minorities, a robust opposition, and unfettered civil society groups.

Referendums represent a radical reduction of democracy to its most skeletal form: majority rule. Too often, they are called in order to circumvent some obstacle thrown up by political or legal institutions—a failure by elected officials to reach consensus, for example, or a constitutional barrier that powerful actors find inconvenient. Whatever the intent, such referendums are an end run around the structures and safeguards of democracy.

The prominence of consequential referendums in 2016 could therefore be interpreted as another sign that global democracy is in distress.

Britain’s referendum on whether to leave the European Union—organized by Prime Minister David Cameron largely as a means of papering over deep rifts in his Conservative Party—has left the public sharply divided, and the government is still struggling to agree on a strategy to implement the outcome. In Italy, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi was

forced to resign after voters rejected his political reform plans, as the debate shifted from the merits of the proposals to Renzi’s own popularity.

Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos put his peace agreement with the FARC rebel group to a referendum, hoping to end a decades-old civil war and overcome bitter opposition from conservatives. After the measure failed by a narrow margin, however, he made a number of revisions to broaden consensus and then passed the agreement through the legislature, effectively returning to the more adaptive, give-and-take methods of representative democracy.

Among the year’s other referendums were several examples in less democratic countries, which typically involved an incumbent leader seeking to extend his own power beyond constitutional limits. Azerbaijan’s Ilham Aliyev strengthened his authoritarian grip on the presidency through 29 constitutional amendments that won more than 90 percent approval in a tightly controlled plebiscite.

By contrast, popular Bolivian president Evo Morales lost a referendum that would have allowed him to seek a fourth term in office, underscoring the fact that many voters still value the checks and balances of democracy, even when it means limiting their own choices.

and eased constraints on surveillance. More ominously, persistent fears over the upsurge in terrorist attacks stoked public hostility toward Muslim minorities and immigrants, deepening existing social rifts and threatening civil liberties. During the American presidential campaign, Donald Trump at various times promised to prevent all Muslims from entering the United States, deport Syrians already in the country, and carry out “extreme vetting” of the beliefs of refugees and immigrants.

### Radicalizing authoritarian states

The conflicts in the Middle East and political upheavals in the democracies often deflected the world’s attention from worsening domestic repression in China, Russia, and other authoritarian countries, which stand to gain

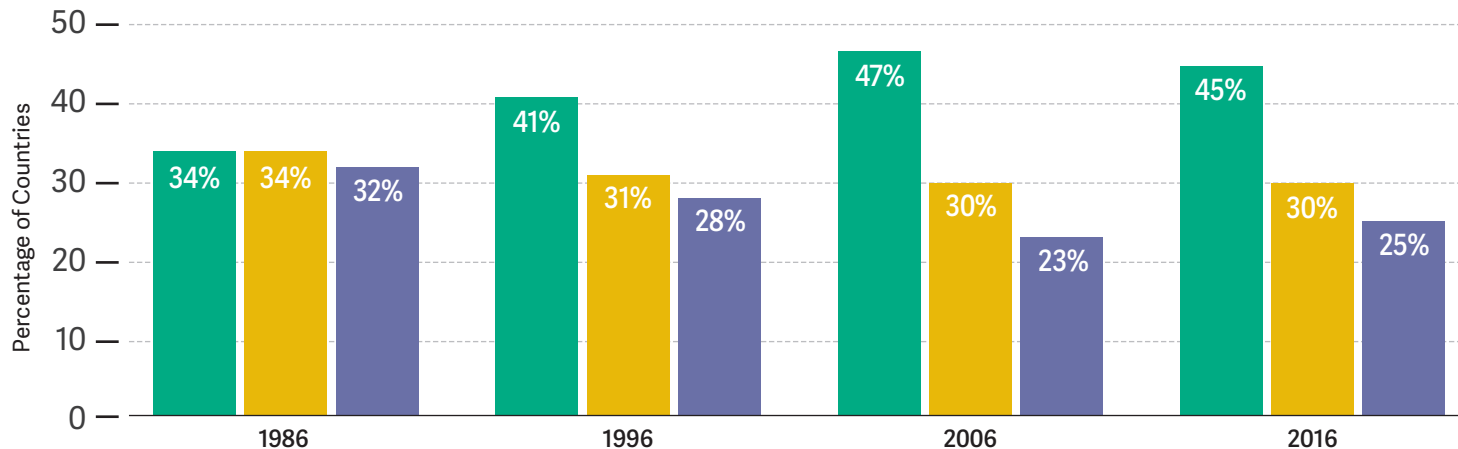
from a breakdown in democratic norms at the international level. In fact, both Beijing and Moscow stepped up efforts to reshape the world in their own image.

In China, the Communist Party regime led by President Xi Jinping tightened its grip with the adoption of new laws and regulations on cybersecurity, foreign nonprofits, and religious affairs. Heavy sentences handed down to human rights lawyers, microbloggers, grassroots activists, and religious believers dealt an additional blow to those seeking to improve conditions in the country.

As Xi consolidated his personal power, moving rapidly away from the existing pattern of collective leadership within the party elite, he sought to enforce greater

**FREEDOM IN THE BALANCE**

After years of major gains, the share of Free countries has declined over the past decade, while the share of Not Free countries has risen.



ideological discipline through a propaganda campaign that forbade intraparty dissent and relentlessly criticized “Western” democratic values. The regime also advanced plans to introduce a “social credit” system that would connect each citizen’s financial, social, political, and legal data to produce a single numerical rating of his or her behavior and trustworthiness. A misstep in one area would presumably have repercussions in every other aspect of an individual’s life.

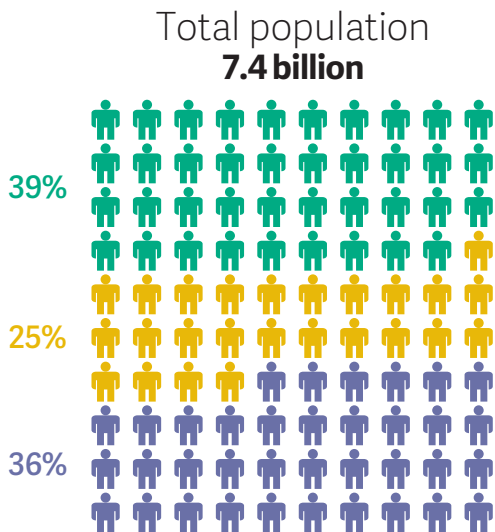
Beijing’s growing intolerance for individual autonomy at home was mirrored by its intrusions into the affairs of neighboring societies. The leadership issued an unprecedented ruling on Hong Kong’s Basic Law with the aim of preventing pro-independence and prodemocracy politicians from taking their seats in the self-governing territory’s legislature. The Chinese government

similarly adopted a hostile attitude toward Taiwan after the local opposition party, which opposes unification with China, swept to victory in presidential and parliamentary elections. And Beijing has intensified its pressure on governments in the region to return those who have fled China to escape persecution, especially members of the Uighur Muslim minority.

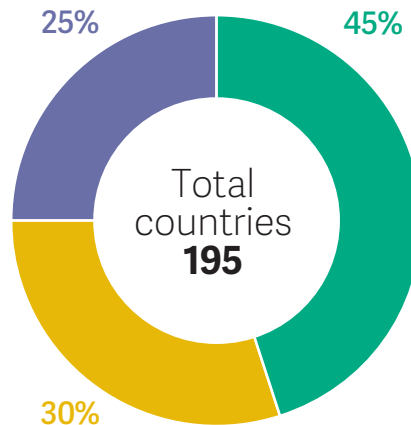
Russia followed a comparable pattern, combining domestic repression with an ambitious program of regional intimidation and long-distance political sabotage. The regime of President Vladimir Putin stage-managed Russia’s parliamentary and regional elections, leading to record low turnout and the total extinction of liberal opposition in the legislature. The Kremlin also added to its blacklists of “extremist” websites and NGOs that it considers “foreign agents” or “undesirable.”



**GLOBAL: STATUS BY POPULATION**

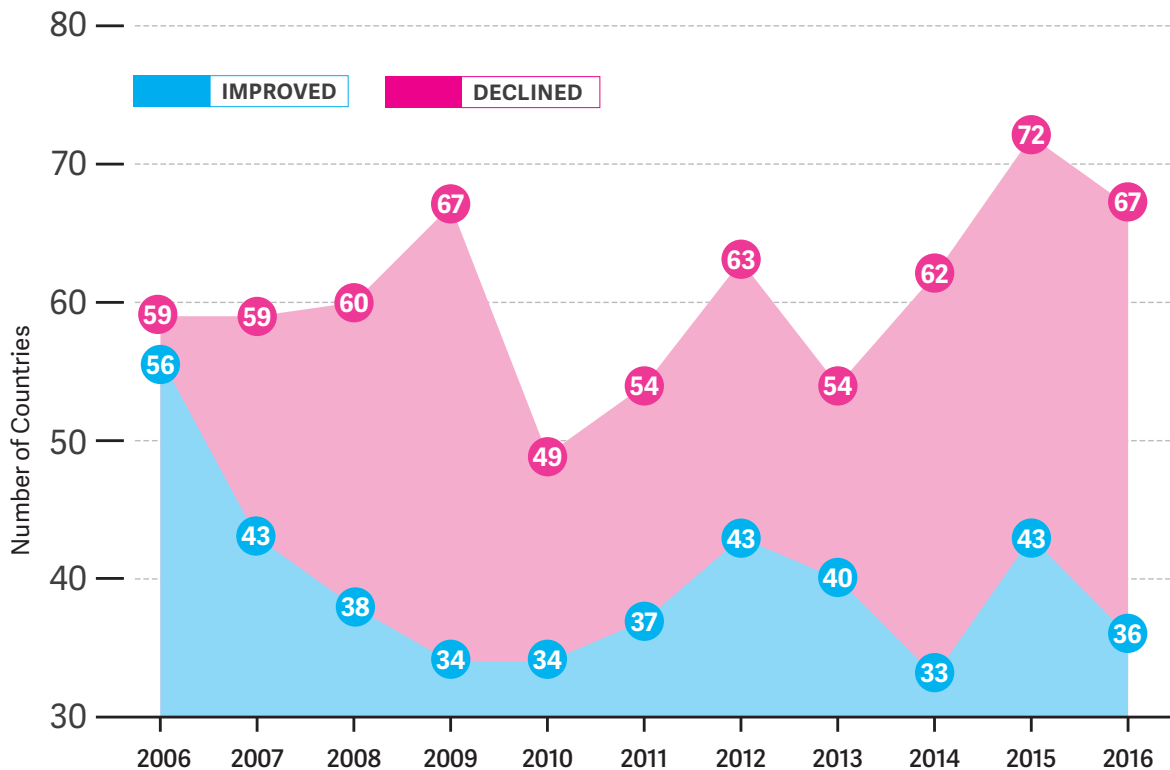


**GLOBAL: STATUS BY COUNTRY**



## 11 YEARS OF DECLINE

Countries with net declines in aggregate score have outnumbered those with gains for the past 11 years.



Outside its borders, Russia radically accelerated its indiscriminate bombing campaign against population centers held by anti-Assad rebels in Syria, contributing little to the fight against IS elsewhere in the country. Moscow also deepened its interference in elections in established democracies through a strategy that combined support for populist and nationalist parties, theft and publication of the internal documents of mainstream parties and candidates, and the aggressive dissemination of fake news and propaganda. Russia's efforts to influence the Italian constitutional referendum and the presidential election in the United States represented a major leap forward in Putin's bid to undermine the integrity and even change the outcome of democratic processes.

### The American election

The success of Donald Trump, an outsider candidate who challenged the mainstream forces of both major parties, demonstrated the continued openness and dynamism of the American system. It also demonstrated that the United States is not immune to the kind of populist appeals that have resonated across the Atlantic in recent years. The campaign featured

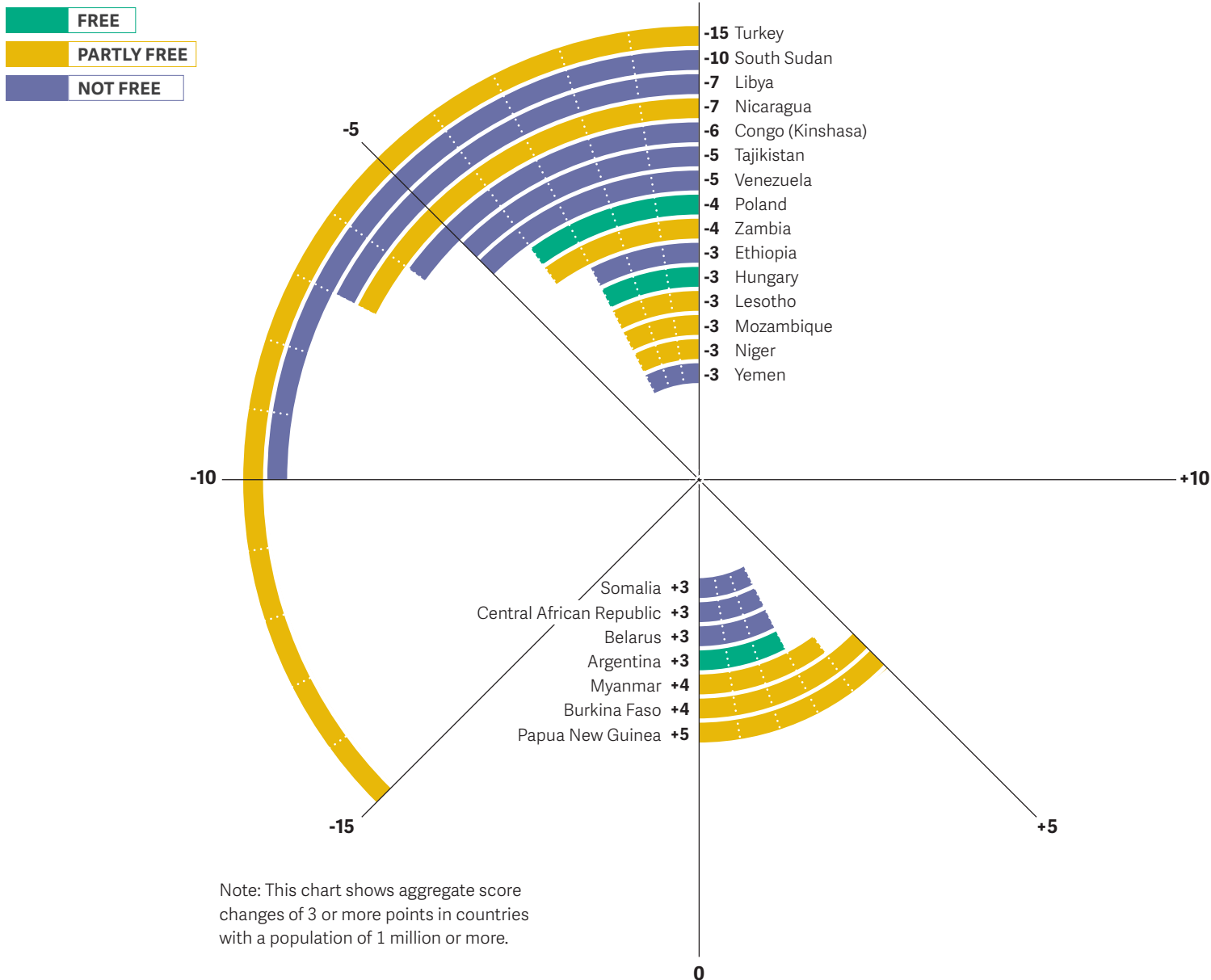
a series of disturbing events, stemming mainly from Trump's own remarks and the actions of his supporters, and punctuated by Trump's insistence, without evidence and even after he won, that the election results were marred by massive fraud.

Trump's statements and actions during the postelection transition period suggested that he had abandoned or softened a number of his more contentious campaign promises, including mass deportations of immigrants, lowering the legal bar for libel suits, and the prosecution of his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton—something he had frequently vowed to pursue during the campaign. At the same time, Trump did not immediately make clear the guiding principles of his foreign policy or his vision for America's role in the world. Before the election, he belittled the country's treaty alliances and was critical of the EU. He repeatedly praised Vladimir Putin, spoke dismissively of broadly accepted evidence that Russia had interfered in the campaign, and indicated a willingness to accept Russia's occupation of Crimea.

After eight years as president, Barack Obama left

**LARGEST ONE-YEAR GAINS AND DECLINES, 2016**

Gains in aggregate score reflect improvements in conditions for political rights and civil liberties.



office with America’s global presence reduced and its role as a beacon of world freedom less certain. Trump’s positions during 2016 raised fears of a foreign policy divorced from America’s traditional strategic commitments to democracy, human rights, and the rules-based international order that it helped to construct beginning in 1945.

**The menace of counter-democratic transitions**

Recent developments in Central Europe have raised the possibility that some of the most remarkable transitions

from dictatorship to democracy in the 1980s and ‘90s will be substantially reversed by elected populist leaders.

After little more than a year in power, the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party has already delivered several serious blows to Poland’s democratic institutions. The government passed legislation that has politicized public media, neutered the constitutional court, handed the security services sweeping powers of surveillance, and restricted the right of public protest. It has also proposed worrisome regulations on NGOs. Observers have described the PiS’s actions as an



## The False Promise of Strongman Rule

However much they may appreciate the benefits of their own systems, observers in democracies sometimes watch with envy or admiration as foreign strongmen smash through obstacles to implement their desired policies. But events in three key countries in 2016 illustrated once again that these bold enterprises often founder due to the very lack of checks and balances that initially seemed so advantageous.

### Egypt

Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who seized power in a 2013 coup, has been praised by some democratic politicians—especially those on the right—for toppling an unpopular Islamist incumbent and ruthlessly cracking down on both the former president's peaceful supporters and an armed insurgency led by the Islamic State militant group. Sisi is held up as a promising partner in the fight against Islamist terrorism.

A closer look at his performance reveals not just a feckless and thuggish security apparatus that has failed to quell the insurgency, but also a pattern of corruption and economic mismanagement that is bringing Egypt to its knees. The ongoing violence and political repression have crippled the vital tourism industry. Billions of dollars in aid from the Persian Gulf monarchies have been wasted, partly on megaprojects of dubious value that enrich regime cronies. And in 2016 the government began implementing austerity measures in exchange for an emergency bailout from the International Monetary Fund, driving up prices for food staples and angering an already desperate population.

### Venezuela

Former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez earned foreign admirers—in his case on the political left—by nationalizing private industries, taking on the moneyed classes behind the country's conservative political establishment, and redistributing wealth to the poor through a variety of housing, education, and social programs. He also denounced U.S. “imperialism” and used his country's oil wealth to support likeminded governments across the region.

By 2016, the regime Chávez built, now in the hands of his chosen successor, Nicolás Maduro, was facing economic and political collapse. The national oil company had been hollowed out by

corruption, political projects, and neglect under Chávez, long before the arrival of low global oil prices. The currency, weakened by the world's highest inflation rates, made it difficult to import basic goods including food and medical supplies, leading to chronic shortages and repeated riots during the year. And Maduro, relying in part on the regime's control of the courts, responded to an opposition victory in recent legislative elections by stripping the legislature of meaningful power and blocking a presidential recall referendum, effectively cutting off the only route to an orderly change of leadership.

### Ethiopia

Ethiopia, ruled since 1991 by the authoritarian Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), has long been a darling of democratic donors, who portray it as a haven of economic progress and stability in an insecure region. They effectively argue that the regime's vigorous suppression of political dissent and media freedom is excusable given its proven ability to carry out ambitious development projects and deliver impressive rates of macroeconomic growth year after year.

However, protests that began in late 2015—in response to a controversial development project that would have expanded the capital into neighboring regions—grew throughout 2016. The security forces used deadly force, and demonstrators raised accumulated grievances including ethnic discrimination and long-standing exclusion from the political process. As many as 1,000 people may have been killed, and more than 11,000 were detained under a state of emergency declared in October. The protests were supported by many members of Ethiopia's two largest ethnic groups, and there was a genuine risk at year's end that the unrest could begin to unravel the EPRDF's accomplishments in the economic and security spheres.

accelerated and condensed version of what the ruling Fidesz party has accomplished in Hungary since 2010. Both governments have repudiated liberal values, attacked the institutions of pluralism, and sought to use the economic power of the state for partisan political ends. While the PiS has focused on providing economic benefits to its core constituents, Fidesz has manipulated laws and state contracts to enrich an affiliated business elite that can buttress its future political dominance.

The system pioneered by Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán stands as an appealing model for elected political leaders with authoritarian leanings. A further spread of such “illiberal democracy” in Central Europe and the Balkans seems likely given the orientation

of major figures in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Serbia, among others.

While none of these leaders have moved their countries entirely outside the democratic sphere as of yet, the record in places like Venezuela and Turkey suggests that elected populists who initially limit their authoritarian impulses can graduate to political purges and prosecutions, the militarization of government, sweeping controls on journalism, and politicized wrecking of the economy.

### A populist-authoritarian nexus

Over the past decade or more, authoritarian powers have formed loose coalitions to counter the influence

## Breakdown of the Political Mainstream

One of the main casualties of the nationalist and populist wave that rolled over the world’s democracies in 2016 was the de facto two-party system, a traditional division of the political spectrum into two mainstream parties or coalitions of the center-right and center-left, which has long ensured stable government and a strong opposition in much of the free world.

Left in its place were dominant ruling parties with few checks on their power, fragmented parliaments with no governing majority, or an infusion of radical factions whose core constituencies gave them little incentive to moderate or compromise in the public interest.

Spain was without a fully functioning government for much of the year because major gains by two new parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos, denied a majority to both establishment parties—the conservative People’s Party and the center-left Socialist Party—and none of the four were able to form a coalition.

In Britain, the ruling Conservative Party effectively co-opted the positions of the upstart UK Independence Party as a result of the Brexit referendum, and took a more populist and nationalist direction under Prime Minister Theresa May. Meanwhile, the main opposition Labour Party’s shift to the left under leader Jeremy Corbyn caused internal rifts and appeared to dim Labour’s national election prospects, which were already badly damaged

by the rise of the pro-independence Scottish National Party. The changes served to cement the Conservatives’ political dominance for the foreseeable future.

Germany’s ruling Christian Democrats, led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, were challenged from the right by the populist Alternative for Germany party, which gained ground in subnational elections. Right-wing nationalist factions continued a multiyear march from the fringe to the heart of governing coalitions elsewhere in Northern Europe.

The French Socialist Party was widely considered a lost cause as the country prepared for the 2017 presidential election, and the deeply unpopular Socialist incumbent, François Hollande, announced that he would not seek a second term. The election was expected to be a contest between hard-line conservative François Fillon and Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front.

Even in the United States, home to the world’s most entrenched two-party system, challengers with minimal ties to their respective parties—Bernard Sanders and Donald Trump—contributed to major intraparty fractures during the presidential primary campaign. Trump’s eventual victory appeared likely to transform the Republican Party’s policy orthodoxy, though it remained unclear whether this would ultimately weaken or strengthen the Republicans’ hold on power.

of the United States and its democratic allies. Initially, they focused on neutralizing efforts at the United Nations and other transnational bodies to enforce global standards on democracy and human rights. They also worked to mobilize support for fellow dictators facing domestic or international pressure, like Syria's Assad.

More recently, however, the authoritarian regimes have reached out to sympathetic parties, movements, and political figures from democracies in Europe and elsewhere. Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's National Front, frequently praises Vladimir Putin, has received financial assistance from Russian sources, and has called for France to align with Russia as a counterweight to the United States. Populist politicians in the Netherlands, Britain, Italy, and Austria meet regularly with Russian officials, criticize the sanctions imposed by the

EU after the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine, and support Russia's interests in votes at the European Parliament.

This affection for authoritarians like Putin probably represents a minority view in Europe. Polls still show that Europeans regard Russia as repressive and dangerous. But many have come to have doubts about certain core values that underpin the European idea. They are increasingly inclined to question the economic and social benefits of European integration and democratic solidarity in general. They tend to regard sovereign states rather than supranational entities as best equipped to address problems like economic inequality and displacement, surging rates of immigration, and humanitarian crises. And they are less likely to support a foreign policy that requires their nation to assist others for the greater good.

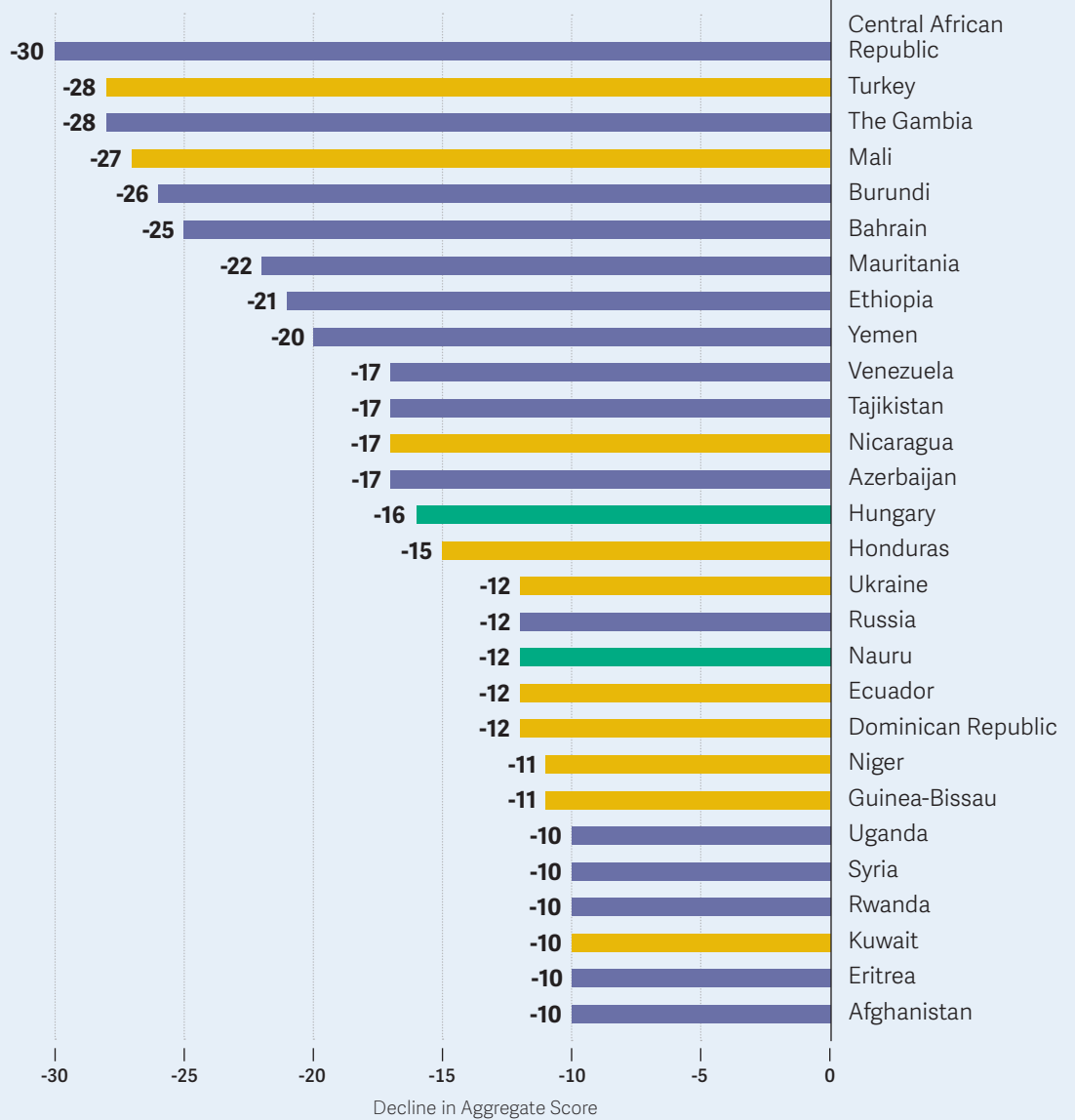
## Countries to Watch in 2017

The following countries are among those that may be approaching important turning points in their democratic trajectory, and deserve special scrutiny during the coming year.

- **Czech Republic:** October 2017 elections will see the rise or defeat of the populist and nationalist ANO party, which has been compared to the ruling parties in Hungary and Poland.
- **Denmark:** The parliament is considering a series of bills that, if adopted, would further restrict immigrant and refugee rights and damage Denmark's reputation for liberal values.
- **Ecuador:** Voters will elect a successor to President Rafael Correa, whose crackdowns on political opposition, critical journalists, demonstrators, and NGOs have led to a steady decline in freedom during his tenure.
- **Iraq:** As the battle to retake territory from Islamic State militants continues, the weak and fragmented government will face the challenge of reintegrating the Sunni minority population into the national system and containing the power of Shiite militias.
- **Kyrgyzstan:** The term of President Almazbek Atambayev expires in late 2017, but recently approved constitutional amendments could pave the way for him to retain power by shifting to the prime minister's seat.
- **Philippines:** After his extrajudicial war on drugs claimed thousands of lives in 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte may continue his extreme policies with strong parliamentary backing.
- **South Africa:** A weakened African National Congress will choose a new leader in 2017, and state institutions could be drawn into intraparty rivalries ahead of the ANC conference, testing the strength of the country's democracy.
- **Tanzania:** The next year will be a test of President John Magufuli's authoritarian tendencies, which have already emerged through the government's use of the Cybercrimes Act against critics and the passage of a new media law late in the year.
- **United States:** Donald Trump's unorthodox presidential campaign left open questions about the incoming administration's approach to civil liberties and the role of the United States in the world.
- **Zimbabwe:** Politicians and officials in the ruling ZANU-PF party will continue to jockey for position to succeed aging president Robert Mugabe against a backdrop of burgeoning popular protests and increasing economic woes.

**LARGEST 10-YEAR DECLINES**

Dramatic declines in freedom have been observed in every region of the world.



For all of these reasons, citizens of democracies may look to Putin, Xi, and other authoritarian rulers as proof that nation-states can and should buck international commitments and do what they must to protect their own interests. Partnering with such leaders is equated with an embrace of hard-nosed national opportunism.

History shows that this strategy leads to ruin. When universal values and international law are cast aside, global affairs are governed by force. Small-state nationalists who admire foreign dictators today could find their countries subjugated by the same leaders tomorrow. Worse still, they could simply be trampled amid the lawless competition of great powers.

**Orphaned democrats**

Citizens in many vulnerable democracies, such as Taiwan and the Baltic states, are alert to these threats. Others in places like Hong Kong, Tunisia, and Ukraine understand that the survival of their freedoms depends on international democratic solidarity. Protesters, activists, refugees, and besieged civilians around the world rely on the promise of international aid and advocacy backed by democratic governments.

The question is whether the United States and Europe will ignore their own long-term interests and retreat from their responsibilities as global leaders. If they do, Russia, China, Iran, and their ilk can be expected to fill the void.

# Regional Trends

## Sub-Saharan Africa

### Entrenched autocrats, fragile institutions

Several major countries in sub-Saharan Africa faced critical tests in the form of elections, popular protests, or surges in political violence during 2016.

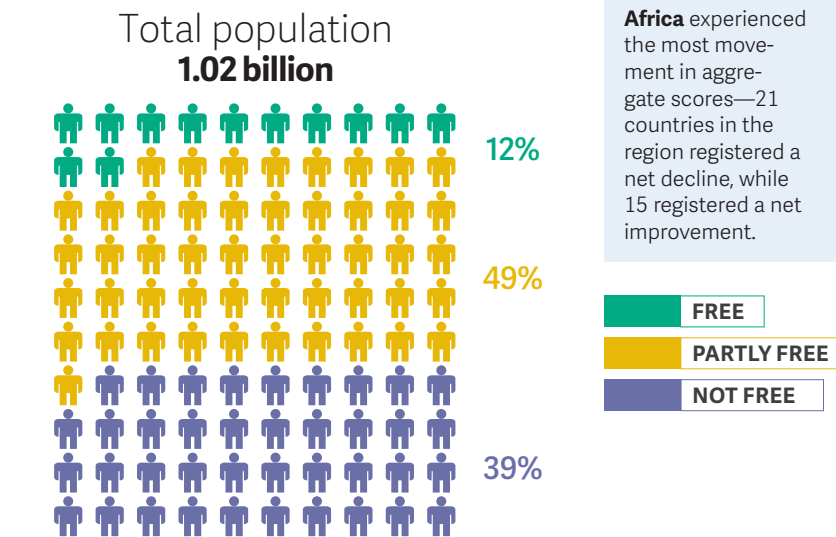
Ethiopia experienced its worst political upheaval in many years, when protests by the Oromo people over ethnic and land rights broadened into a general eruption of popular discontent after decades of ethnicity-based political marginalization by the authoritarian ruling party, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Security forces used disproportionate and lethal force against protesters in the Oromia and Amhara regions, killing hundreds of people over the course of the year. Tens of thousands were detained, the internet and social media were periodically blocked, and a state of emergency imposed in October further expanded the government’s already vast powers to crack down on the rights to expression, assembly, and movement.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, unpopular president Joseph Kabila successfully maneuvered to delay constitutionally mandated elections, reaching a fragile “consensus” deal to extend his term beyond its scheduled December 2016 expiration; while the deal is supported by the main opposition coalition and much of civil society, skepticism remains over implementation. Kabila’s regime violently suppressed protests against the election delay, and blocked social media in an effort to thwart protest organizers—taking a page from the playbook of the EPRDF and other repressive regimes around the world.

Some of the stronger democracies in Southern and East Africa exhibited worrying signs of dysfunction during the year. In South Africa, revelations about the vast political influence of the wealthy Gupta family placed even greater pressure on President Jacob Zuma, who was also contending with protests over service delivery and university governance and the ruling African National Congress’s unprecedented losses in subnational elections. Meanwhile, Zuma’s administration moved to withdraw South Africa from the International Criminal Court, tarnishing the country’s commitment to the rule of law.

Political violence in Mozambique reached dangerous

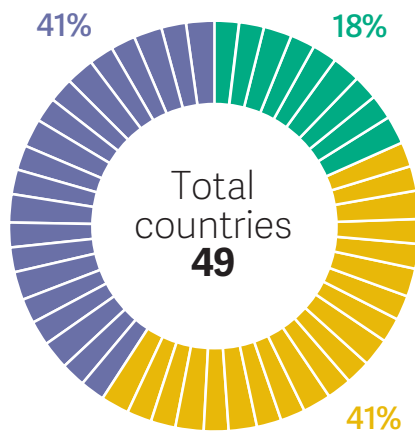
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION



Sub-Saharan Africa experienced the most movement in aggregate scores—21 countries in the region registered a net decline, while 15 registered a net improvement.



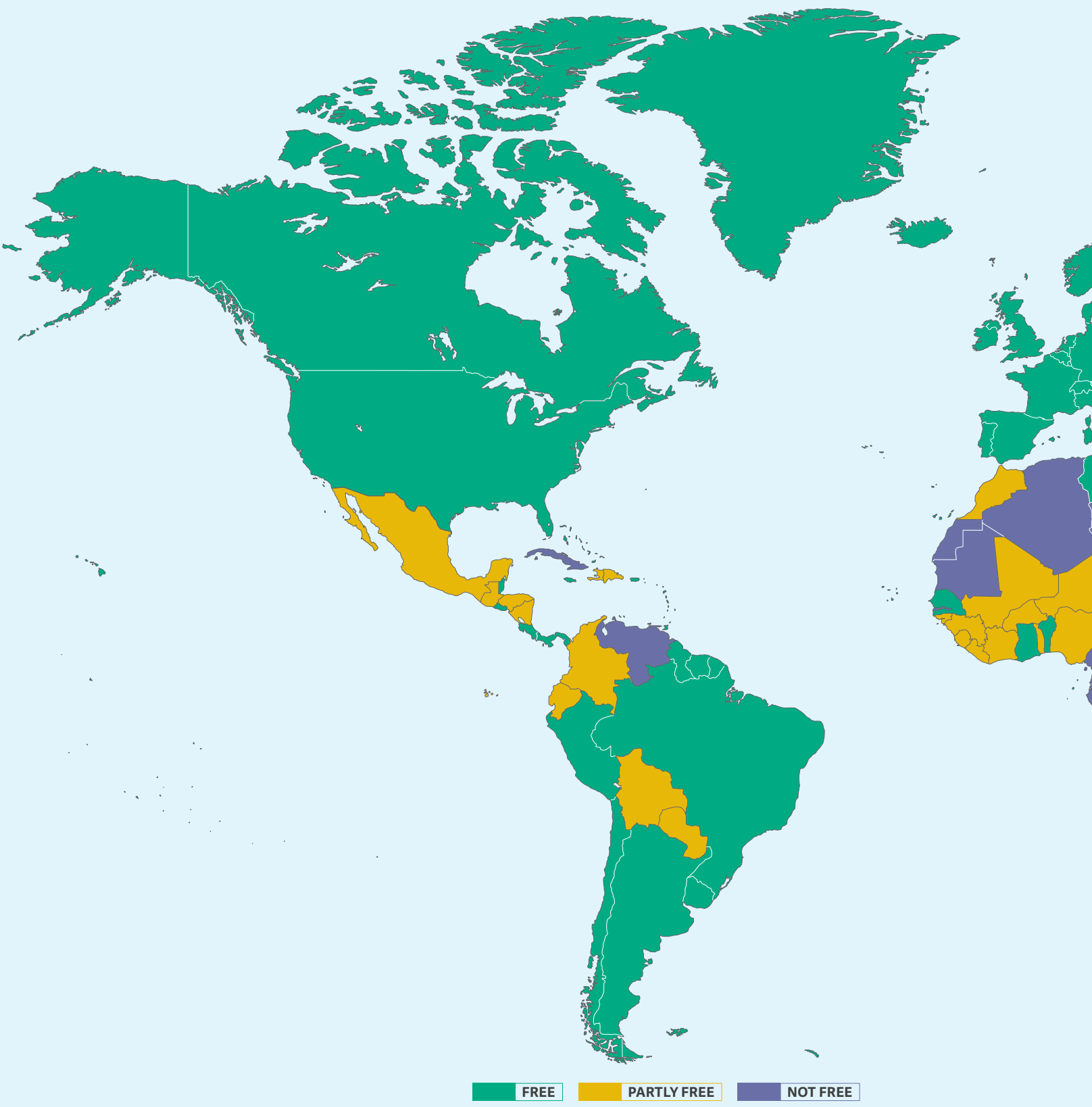
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY

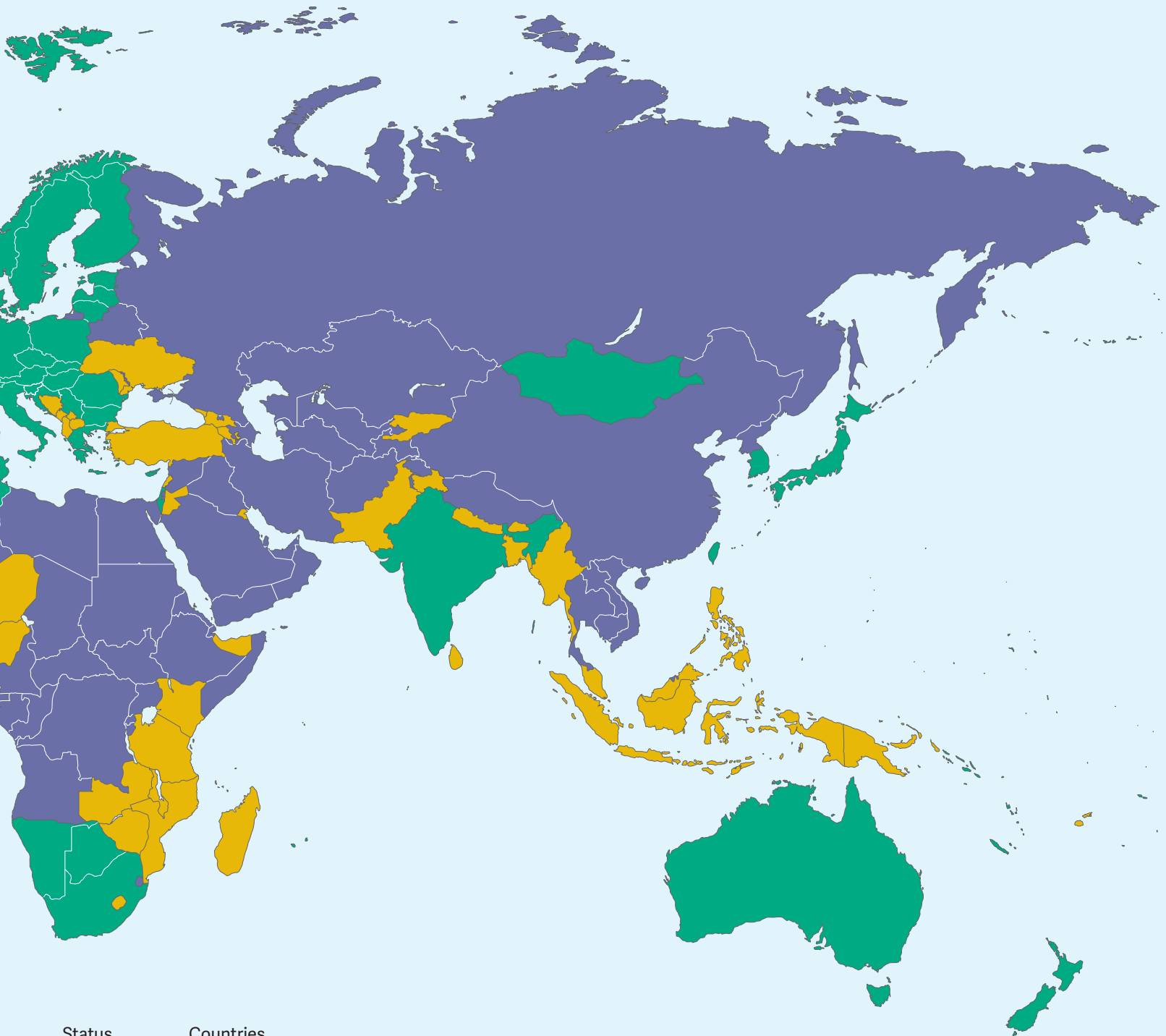


new levels, as supporters of the opposition Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) and ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) engaged in assassinations. Clashes erupted between the army and RENAMO fighters, and security forces’ abuse of civilian populations in the country’s central region forced thousands to flee to Malawi.

In Zimbabwe, citizens increasingly frustrated with an inept and corrupt government vented their dissatisfaction through social protest movements, prompting violence, arrests, and demonstration bans. The protests,

# FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2017





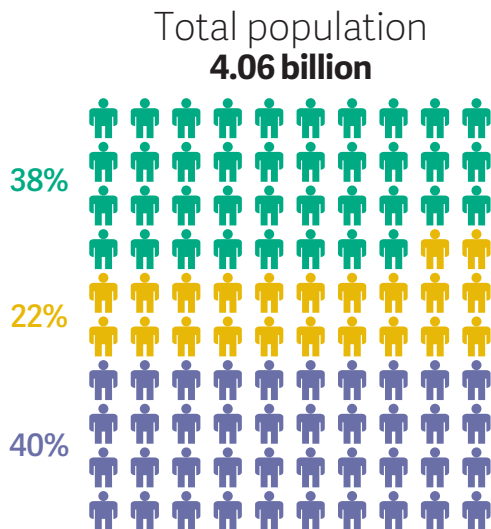
Status	Countries
FREE	87
PARTLY FREE	59
NOT FREE	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>

*Freedom in the World 2017* assessed 195 countries around the globe.

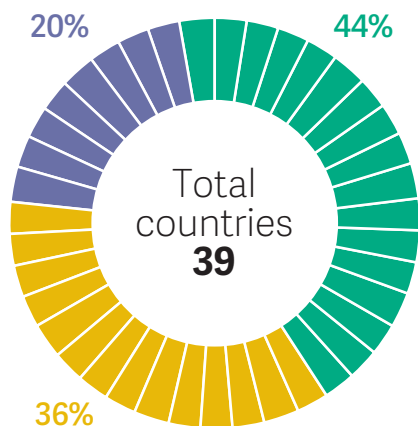
**Asia-Pacific** has the most diverse mix of Free, Partly Free, and Not Free countries in the world.



**ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY POPULATION**



**ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY COUNTRY**



combined with factional rivalries in the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) and a self-inflicted economic crisis, have further weakened the regime of 92-year-old president Robert Mugabe.

In a bright spot at year’s end, Ghana consolidated its position as one of the most stable democracies on the continent when opposition candidate Nana Akufo-Addo defeated incumbent John Mahama in the December presidential election.

Also that month, The Gambia seemed poised to deliver a major democratic breakthrough when authoritarian president Yahya Jammeh initially conceded defeat to opposition candidate Adama Barrow in a shock election result. However, Jammeh later reneged, and at year’s end he continued to dispute Barrow’s victory despite intense pressure from domestic, regional, and international officials to turn over power on schedule in January 2017.

**Asia-Pacific**

**Silencing critics of arbitrary rule**

A number of repressive rulers in Asia reined in free speech and assembly during 2016 to smother public criticism of their own crimes and abuses.

Thailand’s military junta, which seized power in a 2014 coup, maintained its grip on power by prosecuting even the slightest criticism under an array of restrictive laws. In this constrained atmosphere, voters approved a draft constitution that guaranteed the military outsized influence over civilian politics even after general elections scheduled for 2017. In China, an intrusive new cybersecurity law made it easier for authorities to monitor and prosecute online criticism of President Xi Jinping’s Communist Party regime, while authorities in both Malaysia and the Maldives cracked down on demonstrators responding to allegations that top politicians had embezzled vast amounts of money from state coffers.

In the Philippines, newly elected president Rodrigo Duterte won widespread support for his policy of extrajudicial killings of suspected drug dealers and addicts, which by some counts claimed as many as 6,000 lives. Duterte admitted to shooting suspected criminals himself as mayor of Davao, and his aggressive public admonitions of his critics contributed to a climate of fear among activists in the country.

However, in a demonstration of democratic strength, enormous protests calling for the ouster of President Park Geun-hye in response to corruption allegations went forward peacefully in South Korea. The hundreds of thousands of citizens who took to the streets demanded an end to cronyism and opacity among political and business elites, and the protest movement ultimately led to Park’s impeachment.

**Americas**

**Political turmoil and the promise of peace**

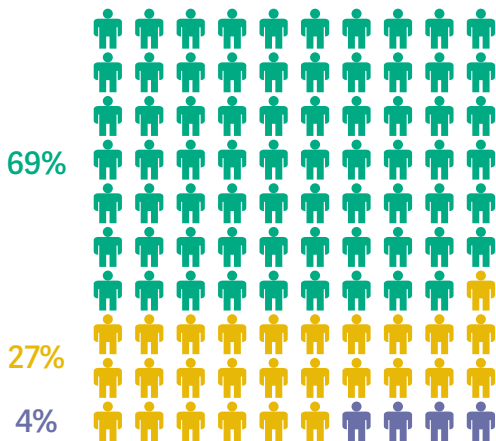
Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro’s combination of strong-arm rule and dire economic mismanagement pushed his country to a status of Not Free for the first time in 2016. Venezuela had served as a model for populist regimes in the region, but today it epitomizes the suffering that can ensue when citizens are unable to hold their leaders to account.

The likeminded regime of President Daniel Ortega



**AMERICAS: STATUS BY POPULATION**

Total population  
**992.31 million**



**MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION**

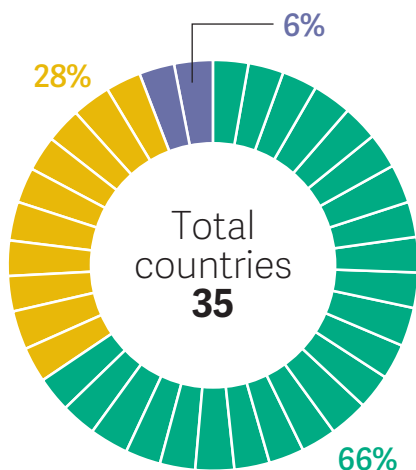
Total population  
**424.8 million**



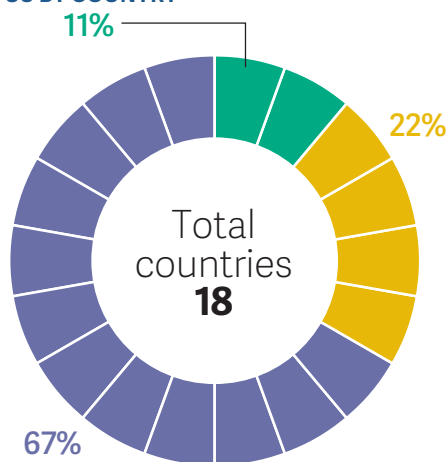
**In the Americas,** Venezuela, joining Cuba, became the second Not Free country in the region in 2016.

**The Middle East and North Africa** remained the world's worst-performing region in 2016, followed closely by Eurasia.

**AMERICAS: STATUS BY COUNTRY**



**MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY**



brought Nicaragua to its lowest point in more than 20 years. Having stacked the judiciary in his favor and whittled away the independent media, Ortega was able to nearly eliminate the opposition in presidential and legislative elections. With Venezuela, Nicaragua is one of the few countries in the Americas on an extended downward trajectory.

In Brazil, the ouster of President Dilma Rousseff dominated the political scene in 2016. However history may judge the impeachment itself, the process impeded government functions by absorbing executive and legislative attention for months, and it did little to resolve a broader corruption crisis in which virtually the entire political class faced allegations of bribery, influence peddling, and embezzlement. The year's events only increased public frustration, as elected officials seemed more concerned

with their own fates than with the country's severe economic recession and soaring unemployment.

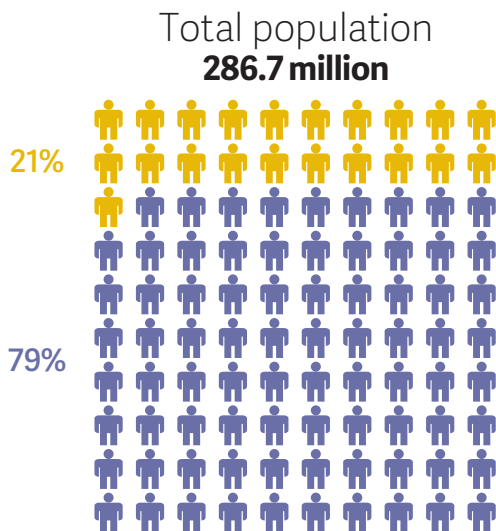
The peace deal in Colombia offered a welcome counterpoint to the economic and political breakdown in neighboring Venezuela. The agreement, which was rejected in a popular referendum but then revised and passed into law, augurs well for a democracy that has long been crippled by violence. However, a political opening in Cuba, which helped broker the peace, still seemed far off despite the death of Fidel Castro and two years of warming relations with the United States.

**Middle East and North Africa**  
**The open wounds of civil conflict**

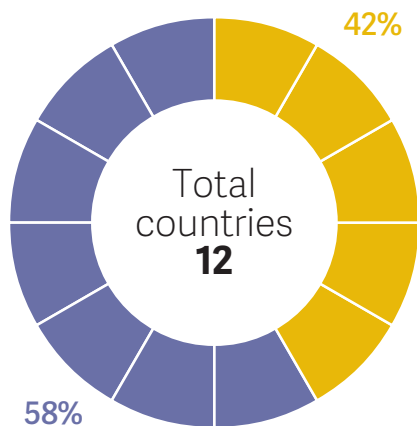
The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has long

Eurasia remained the only region in the world without any Free countries.

**EURASIA: STATUS BY POPULATION**



**EURASIA: STATUS BY COUNTRY**



been one of the world's two worst-performing regions. In 2016, it demonstrated the depths to which human freedom can fall after decades of authoritarian misrule, corruption, and erratic foreign interventions.

Libya was further plagued by political and security crises during the year. Despite a UN-brokered political

agreement and the formation of a presidential council, the country's governance remained crippled by the existence of multiple, competing state authorities, autonomous militias, and the presence of IS fighters opposed to all sides. The humanitarian situation and conditions for human rights have worsened as a result of insecurity and widespread impunity, and prospects for improvement are dim.

The war in Yemen continued to devastate what was already the poorest country in the region. The Houthi rebels occupying the capital and most of the north sought to form their own government given the failure of peace talks with the recognized government, which holds territory in the south. In the process they have made no guarantee that they will restore the country's past political pluralism. Media independence has been all but eliminated as a result of the conflict, and civil liberties in general have effectively been suspended.

Syria remained the world's least free country. Most of those living behind the front lines were governed by a dictatorship, IS extremists, or Kurdish militants, and many others were trapped in the middle of appalling violence. The humanitarian crisis reached a nadir toward the end of the year as regime forces bombarded and finally recaptured eastern Aleppo from rebel militias.

**Eurasia**

**Incumbents armored against the future**

Eurasia was divided between a more European-oriented fringe and a core of rigid autocracies in 2016. While Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova struggled to build on fragile democratic gains, several leaders to the east took steps to shore up their power in the face of economic and political uncertainty.

Apparently unnerved by the repercussions of a

**Worst of the Worst**

Of the 49 countries designated as Not Free, the following 11 have the worst aggregate scores for political rights and civil liberties.

Country	Aggregate score
Syria	-1
Eritrea	3
North Korea	3

Country	Aggregate score
Uzbekistan	3
South Sudan	4
Turkmenistan	4
Somalia	5
Sudan	6
Equatorial Guinea	8
Central African Republic	10
Saudi Arabia	10

lengthy slump in oil prices, the rulers of Azerbaijan and the Central Asian states used tightly controlled constitutional referendums to extend their rule into the future. In Azerbaijan, the authorities declared voter approval for a longer presidential term, among dozens of other changes. As a result, President Ilham Aliyev, who already enjoyed freedom from term limits, will not need to seek reelection again until 2020.

In Tajikistan, a referendum cleared the way for President Emomali Rahmon to run for an unlimited number of terms and lowered the age of eligibility for the presidency—a move likely meant to allow Rahmon’s son to succeed him.

The Kyrgyz political elite also turned to a plebiscite to serve its own interests, rushing through a constitutional overhaul that will shift power from the presidency to the prime minister. The amendments drew allegations that President Almazbek Atambayev, whose single term is set to expire in 2017, aimed to retain power by moving to the premiership.

## Europe

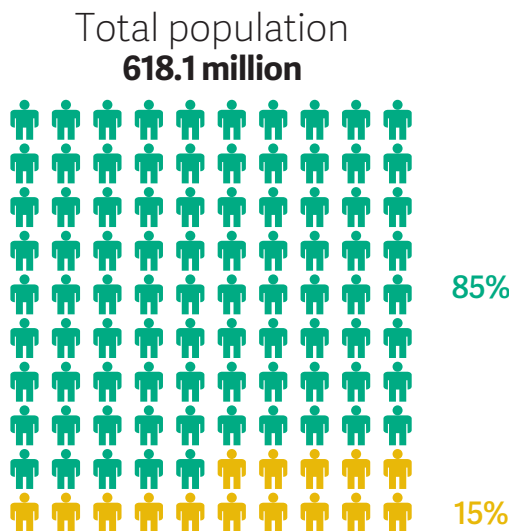
### Cracks in a pillar of global freedom

From the Brexit vote to antidemocratic reforms by Poland’s new government, the many internal strains within Europe exposed vulnerabilities that were previously hidden or ignored. Combined with external pressures like Russian interference and the migrant crisis, these problems made it clear that the continent can no longer be taken for granted as a bastion of democratic stability.

The rise of antiestablishment parties in Poland, France, Germany, and elsewhere is changing Europe’s political landscape. It is also shifting the debate in ways that undermined the fundamental values of democracy. Xenophobia, religious intolerance, and in some cases the neutering of democratic institutions for partisan ends are gaining acceptance among both voters and government officials. Even German chancellor Angela Merkel seemed to pander to anti-Muslim sentiment by calling for a ban on the full-face veil toward the end of the year.

The Czech Republic’s October 2017 elections could make it the next Central European domino to fall to a populist leader, and France’s upcoming presidential race was already being closely watched in 2016 as a potential watershed for Europe as a whole. However, these trends are not inexorable. Austrian voters made it clear

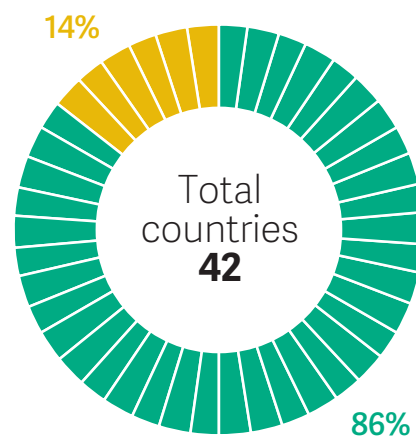
#### EUROPE: STATUS BY POPULATION



European countries accounted for nearly a quarter of all net declines in 2016.



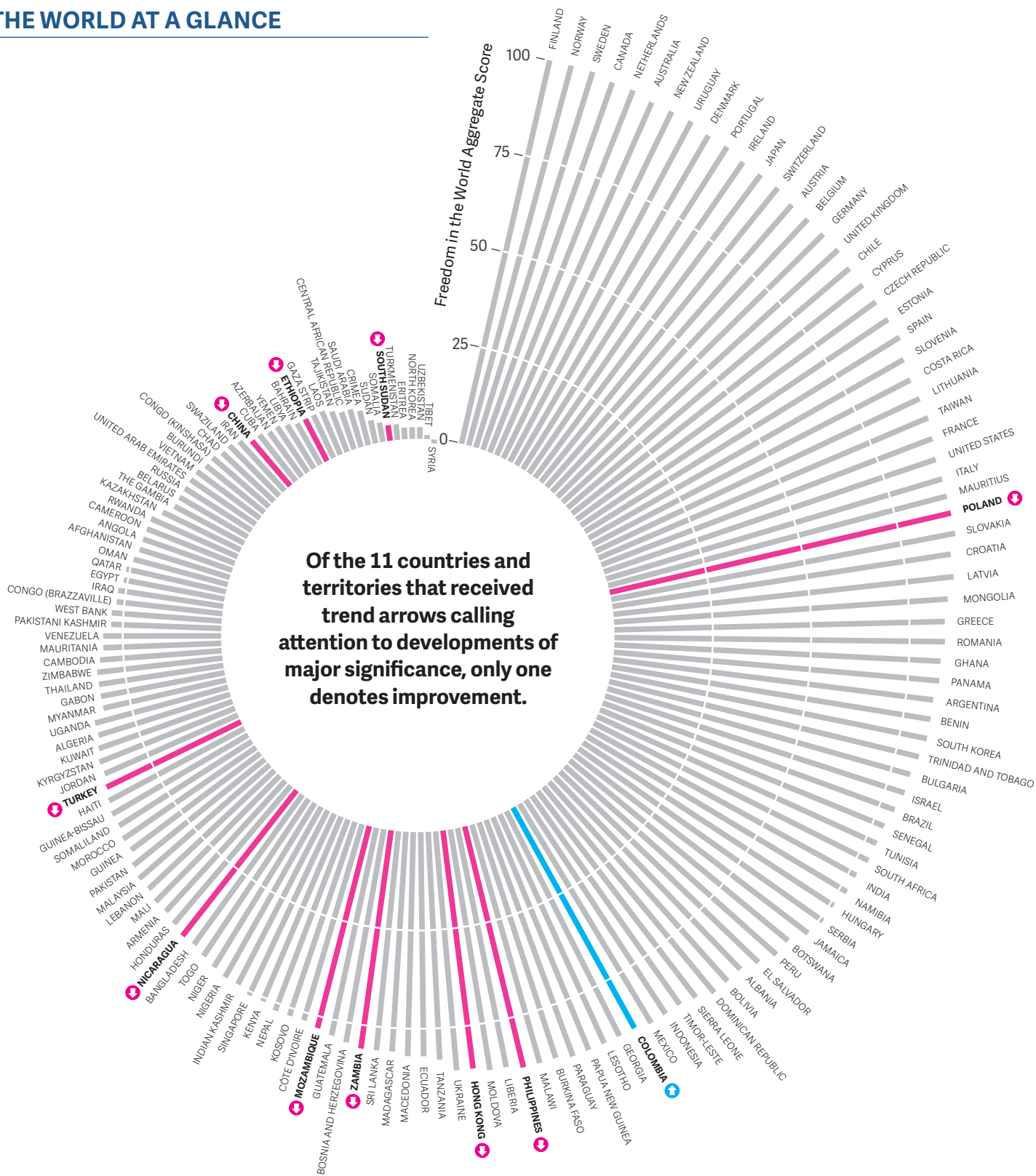
#### EUROPE: STATUS BY COUNTRY



that a far-right head of state was unacceptable to them, choosing the Green Party’s Alexander van der Bellen over Freedom Party candidate Norbert Hofer by a solid margin.

In the Balkans, meanwhile, fair election processes and the rule of law further deteriorated as the EU neglected its role in promoting democracy among aspiring member states. While there might have been deference to EU norms in the past, leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia harassed civil society critics, obstructed investigations of government wrongdoing, and ignored constitutional procedures even as EU accession talks went on, largely unfazed. Observers expressed concerns that progress toward democratic standards was being replaced by a toxic mix of nationalism, corruption, governmental dysfunction, and Russian interference.


THE WORLD AT A GLANCE





Note: This chart shows countries and territories with a population of 1 million or more.

⬇️ ⬆️ indicate negative or positive trend designations


## Freedom in the World 2017 Trend Arrows


 **Colombia** received an upward trend arrow due to a historic reduction in violence resulting from the peace process between the government and left-wing FARC guerrillas.


 **China** received a downward trend arrow due to the chilling effect on private and public discussion, particularly online, generated by cybersecurity and foreign NGO laws, increased internet surveillance, and heavy sentences handed down to human rights lawyers, microbloggers, grassroots activists, and religious believers.


 **Ethiopia** received a downward trend arrow due to the security forces' disproportionate and often violent response to massive, primarily peaceful antigovernment protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions, as well as an emergency declaration in October that gave the military sweeping powers to crack down on freedoms of expression and association.


 **Hong Kong** received a downward trend arrow due to Beijing's encroachment on freedoms in the territory, reflected in the detention by mainland authorities of five Hong Kong booksellers, shrinking journalistic and academic independence, and the central government's unilateral reinterpretation of the Basic Law in an apparent bid to exclude pro-independence and prodemocracy lawmakers from the Legislative Council.


 **Mozambique** received a downward trend arrow due to an increase in political tensions and violence, including the abuse of civilian populations by security forces, which caused thousands of people to flee to Malawi.


 **Nicaragua** received a downward trend arrow due to a court's ouster of the leader of the main opposition party and the National Assembly's expulsion of 16 opposition lawmakers in the run-up to November elections, combined with government efforts to silence journalists and academics with opposing views.

 **Philippines** received a downward trend arrow due to the thousands of extrajudicial killings carried out as part of newly elected president Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs, as well as assassinations and threats against civil society activists.

 **Poland** received a downward trend arrow due to sustained attempts by the ruling Law and Justice party, through hastily drafted legislation and other measures, to increase government influence over the country's media, judiciary, civil service, and education system.

 **South Sudan** received a downward trend arrow due to the collapse of a peace deal, the resumption of civil war, and the egregious human rights abuses carried out against civilians, in many cases by government forces.

 **Turkey** received a downward trend arrow due to the security and political repercussions of an attempted coup in July, which led the government to declare a state of emergency and carry out mass arrests and firings of civil servants, academics, journalists, opposition figures, and other perceived enemies.

 **Zambia** received a downward trend arrow due to the restrictive environment for the opposition in the run-up to general elections, including unequal media access for opposition candidates and the use of the Public Order Act to ban opposition rallies.

## INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES

- The number of countries designated as Free stands at 87, representing 45 percent of the world's 195 polities and approximately 2.9 billion people—or 39 percent of the global population. The number of Free countries increased by one from the previous year's report.
- The number of countries qualifying as Partly Free stood at 59, or 30 percent of all countries assessed, and they were home to nearly 1.9 billion people, or 25 percent of the world's total. The number of Partly Free countries stayed the same from the previous year.
- A total of 49 countries were deemed Not Free, representing 25 percent of the world's polities. The number of people living under Not Free conditions stood at just over 2.6 billion people, or 36 percent of the global population, though it is important to note that more than half of this number lives in just one country: China. The number of Not Free countries decreased by one from 2015.
- Jordan and Myanmar rose from Not Free to Partly Free, and the Solomon Islands rose from Partly Free to Free. Venezuela fell from Partly Free to Not Free.
- The number of electoral democracies stood at 123, two fewer than in 2015. Burkina Faso achieved electoral democracy status, while three countries—Niger, Turkey, and Zambia—lost their designation as electoral democracies.

Country	PR	CL	Aggregate Score	Freedom Status	Freedom of the Press 2016 Status	Freedom on the Net 2016 Status
Afghanistan	6	6	24	Not Free	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	68	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	35	Not Free	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	95	Free	Free	
Angola	6	6	24	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Antigua and Barbuda*	2	2	83	Free	Partly Free	
Argentina*	2	2	82	Free	Partly Free	Free
Armenia	5	4	45	Partly Free	Not Free	Free
Australia*	1	1	98	Free	Free	Free
Austria*	1	1	95	Free	Free	
Azerbaijan	7	6	14	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Bahamas*	1	1	91	Free	Free	
Bahrain	7	6	12	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Bangladesh*	4	4	47	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Barbados*	1	1	97	Free	Free	
Belarus	7	6	20	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Belgium*	1	1	95	Free	Free	
Belize*	1	2	87	Free	Free	
Benin*	2	2	82	Free	Partly Free	
Bhutan*	3	4	55	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	68	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Bosnia and Herzegovina*	4	4 ▼	55	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3	2	72	Free	Partly Free	
Brazil*	2	2	79	Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Brunei	6	5	29	Not Free	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	80	Free	Partly Free	
Burkina Faso*	4	3	63	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Burundi	7	6	19	Not Free	Not Free	
Cambodia	6	5	31	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Cameroon	6	6	24	Not Free	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	99	Free	Free	Free
Cape Verde*	1	1	90	Free	Free	
Central African Republic	7	7	10	Not Free	Not Free	
Chad	7	6	18	Not Free	Not Free	

Country	PR	CL	Aggregate Score	Freedom Status	Freedom of the Press 2016 Status	Freedom on the Net 2016 Status
Chile*	1	1	94	Free	Free	
China ↓	7	6	15	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Colombia* ↑	3	3 ▲	64	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Comoros*	3	4	55	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	7 ▼	5	27	Not Free	Partly Free	
Congo (Kinshasa)	7 ▼	6	19	Not Free	Not Free	
Costa Rica*	1	1	91	Free	Free	
Côte d'Ivoire*	4	4	52	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Croatia*	1	2	87	Free	Partly Free	
Cuba	7	6	15	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Cyprus*	1	1	94	Free	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	94	Free	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	97	Free	Free	
Djibouti	6	5	26	Not Free	Not Free	
Dominica*	1	1	95	Free	Free	
Dominican Republic*	3	3	68	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	4 ▼	57	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Egypt	6	5	26	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
El Salvador*	2	3	70	Free	Partly Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	8	Not Free	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7	3	Not Free	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	94	Free	Free	Free
Ethiopia ↓	7	6	12	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Fiji*	3	4 ▼	59	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	100	Free	Free	
France*	1	2 ▼	90	Free	Free	Free
Gabon	6	5	32	Not Free	Not Free	
The Gambia	6 ▲	6	20	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Georgia*	3	3	64	Partly Free	Partly Free	Free
Germany*	1	1	95	Free	Free	Free
Ghana*	1	2	83	Free	Partly Free	
Greece*	2	2	84	Free	Partly Free	
Grenada*	1	2	89	Free	Free	
Guatemala*	4	4	54	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Guinea	5	5	41	Partly Free	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau	5	5	40	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	74	Free	Partly Free	
Haiti	5	5	39	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Honduras	4	4	46	Partly Free	Not Free	
Hungary*	3 ▼	2	76	Free	Partly Free	Free
Iceland*	1	1	97	Free	Free	Free
India*	2	3	77	Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Indonesia*	2	4	65	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Iran	6	6	17	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. A larger aggregate score indicates a greater level of freedom.

↑↓ indicate positive or negative trend designations

▼▲ up or down indicates an improvement or decline in ratings or status since the last survey

\* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy

## INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES

Country	PR	CL	Aggregate Score	Freedom Status	Freedom of the Press 2016 Status	Freedom on the Net 2016 Status
Iraq	5	6	27	Not Free	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	96	Free	Free	
Israel*	1	2	80	Free	Partly Free	
Italy*	1	1	89	Free	Partly Free	Free
Jamaica*	2	3	75	Free	Free	
Japan*	1	1	96	Free	Free	Free
Jordan	5 ▲	5	37	Partly Free ▲	Not Free	Partly Free
Kazakhstan	7 ▼	5	22	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Kenya*	4	4	51	Partly Free	Partly Free	Free
Kiribati*	1	1	92	Free	Free	
Kosovo*	3	4	52	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Kuwait	5	5	36	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	5	5	37	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Laos	7	6	12	Not Free	Not Free	
Latvia*	1 ▲	2	87	Free	Free	
Lebanon	5	4	44	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Lesotho*	3	3	64	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Liberia*	3	4	62	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Libya	7 ▼	6	13	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Liechtenstein*	2 ▼	1	91	Free	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	91	Free	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	98	Free	Free	
Macedonia	4	3	57	Partly Free	Not Free	
Madagascar*	3	4	56	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3	3	63	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Malaysia	4	4	44	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Maldives	5 ▼	5	40	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Mali	5	4	45	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Malta*	1	1	96	Free	Free	
Marshall Islands*	1	1	92	Free	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	30	Not Free	Partly Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	89	Free	Free	
Mexico*	3	3	65	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Micronesia*	1	1	93	Free	Free	
Moldova*	3	3	62	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Monaco*	3 ▼	1	84	Free	Free	
Mongolia*	1	2	85	Free	Partly Free	
Montenegro*	3	3	69	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Morocco	5	4	41	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Mozambique ↓	4	4	53	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Myanmar	5 ▲	5	32	Partly Free ▲	Not Free	Not Free
Namibia*	2	2	77	Free	Partly Free	
Nauru*	2	2	81	Free	Partly Free	
Nepal*	3	4	52	Partly Free	Partly Free	

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. A larger aggregate score indicates a greater level of freedom.

↑↓ indicate positive or negative trend designations

▼▲ up or down indicates an improvement or decline in ratings or status since the last survey

\* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy



Country	PR	CL	Aggregate Score	Freedom Status	Freedom of the Press 2016 Status	Freedom on the Net 2016 Status
Netherlands*	1	1	99	Free	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	98	Free	Free	
Nicaragua ↓	5 ▼	4 ▼	47	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Niger	4 ▼	4	49	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Nigeria*	3 ▲	5	50	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
North Korea	7	7	3	Not Free	Not Free	
Norway*	1	1	100	Free	Free	
Oman	6	5	25	Not Free	Not Free	
Pakistan*	4	5	43	Partly Free	Not Free	Not Free
Palau*	1	1	92	Free	Free	
Panama*	2	2	83	Free	Partly Free	
Papua New Guinea*	3 ▲	3	64	Partly Free	Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	64	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	72	Free	Partly Free	
Philippines* ↓	3	3	63	Partly Free	Partly Free	Free
Poland* ↓	1	2 ▼	89	Free	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	97	Free	Free	
Qatar	6	5	26	Not Free	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	84	Free	Partly Free	
Russia	7 ▼	6	20	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Rwanda	6	6	24	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1 ▲	1	89	Free	Free	
Saint Lucia*	1	1	92	Free	Free	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*	1	1	91	Free	Free	
Samoa*	2	2	80	Free	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	97	Free	Free	
São Tomé and Príncipe*	2	2	81	Free	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	7	10	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Senegal*	2	2	78	Free	Partly Free	
Serbia*	3 ▼	2	76	Free	Partly Free	
Seychelles*	3	3	71	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	66	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Singapore	4	4	51	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Slovakia*	1	1	89	Free	Free	
Slovenia*	1	1	92	Free	Free	
Solomon Islands*	3	2 ▲	71	Free ▲	Free	
Somalia	7	7	5	Not Free	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	78	Free	Partly Free	Free
South Korea*	2	2	82	Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
South Sudan ↓	7	7 ▼	4	Not Free	Not Free	
Spain*	1	1	94	Free	Free	
Sri Lanka*	3 ▲	4	56	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Sudan	7	7	6	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Suriname*	2	3	77	Free	Free	
Swaziland	7	5	18	Not Free	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	100	Free	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	96	Free	Free	
Syria	7	7	-1	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Taiwan*	1	1 ▲	91	Free	Free	
Tajikistan	7	6	11	Not Free	Not Free	

## INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES

Country	PR	CL	Aggregate Score	Freedom Status	Freedom of the Press 2016 Status	Freedom on the Net 2016 Status
Tanzania*	3	4	58	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Thailand	6	5	32	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Timor-Leste*	3	3	65	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Togo	4	4	48	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Tonga*	2	2	74	Free	Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	81	Free	Free	
Tunisia*	1	3	78	Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Turkey ↓	4 ▼	5 ▼	38	Partly Free	Not Free	Not Free
Turkmenistan	7	7	4	Not Free	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	94	Free	Free	
Uganda	6	5	35	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Ukraine*	3	3	61	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
United Arab Emirates	6	6	20	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
United Kingdom*	1	1	95	Free	Free	Free
United States*	1	1	89	Free	Free	Free
Uruguay*	1	1	98	Free	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	3	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Vanuatu*	2	2	80	Free	Free	
Venezuela	6 ▼	5	30	Not Free ▼	Not Free	Partly Free
Vietnam	7	5	20	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Yemen	7	6	14	Not Free	Not Free	
Zambia ↓	4 ▼	4	56	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Zimbabwe	5	5	32	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free

## RELATED AND DISPUTED TERRITORIES

Territory	PR	CL	Aggregate Score	Freedom Status	Freedom of the Press 2016 Status	Freedom on the Net 2016 Status
Abkhazia	4	5	41	Partly Free		
Crimea	7	6	9	Not Free	Not Free	
Gaza Strip	5	6	12	Not Free	Not Free**	
Hong Kong ↓	5	2	61	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Indian Kashmir	4	4	50	Partly Free		
Nagorno-Karabakh	5	5	33	Partly Free		
Northern Cyprus	2	2	80	Free		
Pakistani Kashmir	6	5	28	Not Free		
Somaliland	5	5	40	Partly Free	Partly Free	
South Ossetia	7	6	11	Not Free		
Tibet	7	7	1	Not Free		
Transnistria	6	6	24	Not Free		
West Bank	7 ▼	5	28	Not Free	Not Free**	
Western Sahara	7	7	4	Not Free		

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. A larger aggregate score indicates a greater level of freedom.

↑↓ indicate positive or negative trend designations

▼▲ up or down indicates an improvement or decline in ratings or status since the last survey

\* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy, does not apply to territories

\*\* the Gaza Strip and West Bank are covered in one report in *Freedom of the Press*

“When universal values  
and international law are  
cast aside, global affairs  
are governed by force.”





Freedom House is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights.

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