

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2016



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Freedom in the World 2016

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This booklet is a summary of findings for the 2016 edition of *Freedom on the World*. The complete analysis including narrative reports on all countries and territories can be found on our website at www.freedomhouse.org.

ON THE COVER

Refugees and migrants arriving at the Greek island of Lesbos, October 2015.

Cover image by Aris Messinis/Getty Images

Anxious Dictators, Wavering Democracies: Global Freedom under Pressure

by Arch Puddington and Tyler Roylance

The world was battered in 2015 by overlapping crises that fueled xenophobic sentiment in democratic countries, undermined the economies of states dependent on the sale of natural resources, and led authoritarian regimes to crack down harder on dissent. These unsettling developments contributed to the 10th consecutive year of decline in global freedom.

The democracies of Europe and the United States struggled to cope with the Syrian civil war and other unresolved regional conflicts. In addition to compounding the misery and driving up the death toll of civilians in the affected territories, the fighting generated unprecedented numbers of refugees and incubated terrorist groups that inspired or organized attacks on targets abroad. In democratic countries, these stresses led to populist, often bigoted reactions as well as new security measures, both of which threaten the core values of an open society.

The year also featured the slowdown of China's economy and a related plunge in commodity prices, which hit profligate, export-dependent authoritarian regimes especially hard. Anticipating popular unrest, dictators redoubled political repression at home and lashed out at perceived foreign enemies.

However, in several important countries, elections offered a peaceful way out of failed policies and mismanagement. Voters in places including Nigeria, Venezuela, and Myanmar rejected incumbents and gave new leaders or parliaments an opportunity to tackle corruption, economic decay, and corrosive security problems. These fresh starts suggest that democratic

systems may ultimately prove more resilient than their brittle authoritarian counterparts.

Democracies in distress

Whatever the underlying strength of their institutions, leading democracies betrayed a worrying lack of self-confidence and conviction during 2015.

Front and center was the democratic world's inability to present a unified and credible strategy to end the murderous war in Syria and deal with the refugee crisis triggered by the conflict. Having failed to support the moderate opposition to authoritarian president Bashar al-Assad in the conflict's early stages, the United States and Europe are now confronted with a crisis of global proportions. With its bewildering interplay of regional powers, proxy forces, jihadist groups, and urgent humanitarian priorities, Syria represents the most complex challenge to peace and stability in years, and thus far the leaders of the free world have fallen short even as fundamental democratic principles come under threat in their own countries.

The impact has been powerfully felt in Europe. The surge of asylum seekers from Syria and other conflict zones in 2015 provoked a confused and often ugly

Freedom in the World Methodology

Freedom in the World 2016 evaluates the state of freedom in 195 countries and 15 territories during calendar year 2015. 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.

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.

For complete information on methodology, visit <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2016/methodology>.

debate among the member states of the European Union (EU). While a few European leaders, notably German chancellor Angela Merkel and Swedish prime minister Stefan Löfven, were initially outspoken in welcoming those fleeing barrel bombs and terrorist massacres, others flatly refused to accept Muslim refugees on their soil. Such hostility grew especially acute after coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic State militant group killed 130 people in Paris in November.

Czech president Miloš Zeman called those arriving from the Middle East an “organized invasion,” while Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán asserted inaccurately that “all the terrorists” in the Paris attacks “are basically migrants.” Even in Germany, despite the government’s welcoming attitude, neo-Nazis and other xenophobes assaulted refugees and set fire to reception facilities. Other European governments maneuvered to evade responsibility, using fences with razor wire, draconian laws, and onerous financial demands to push the flow of migrants away from their borders.

In effect, the European establishment’s inability to manage these new challenges—on top of the lingering economic woes that began nearly a decade ago—gave fresh impetus to those who have long questioned the European project and the liberal, universal values that it represents. In France, for example, Marine Le Pen of the right-wing National Front spoke of a split between “globalists and patriots,” suggesting that the mainstream, pro-EU socialist and conserva-

tive parties were indistinguishable and essentially anti-French.

The United States did not face refugee flows or terrorist attacks on the same scale as Europe, but it too is experiencing a crisis of confidence in its democratic institutions and international role. While the American system remains dynamic and open to the participation of minorities and immigrants, its elections and legislative process have suffered from an increasingly intricate system of gerrymandering and undue interference by wealthy individuals and special interests. Racial and ethnic divisions have seemingly widened, and the past year brought greater attention to police violence and impunity, de facto residential and school segregation, and economic inequality, adding to fears that class mobility, a linchpin of America’s self-image and global reputation, is in jeopardy.

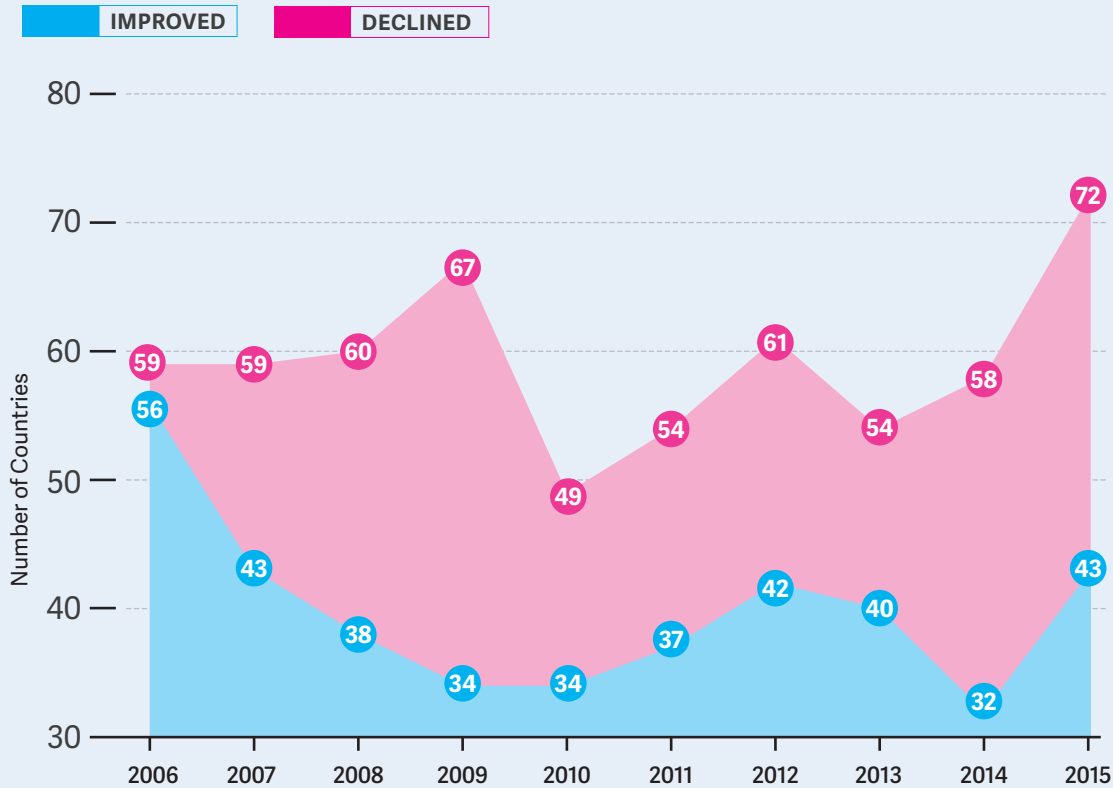
With these concerns as a backdrop, the political debate over immigration and national security—at least on the right—took on an angry, anti-Muslim tone, and Islamophobic hate crimes spiked, especially after 14 people were killed in a terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California. Some elected officials on both sides of the political spectrum also cast doubt on America’s long-standing goal of supporting democracy overseas, arguing that U.S. involvement only causes instability.

The authoritarian economic crisis

Although some authoritarian rulers sought to blame their problems on meddling by democratic powers, it became clear during 2015 that larger economic forces were at work. China’s slowing growth, punctuated by

A DECADE OF DECLINE

Countries with net declines in aggregate score have outnumbered those with gains for the past 10 years.

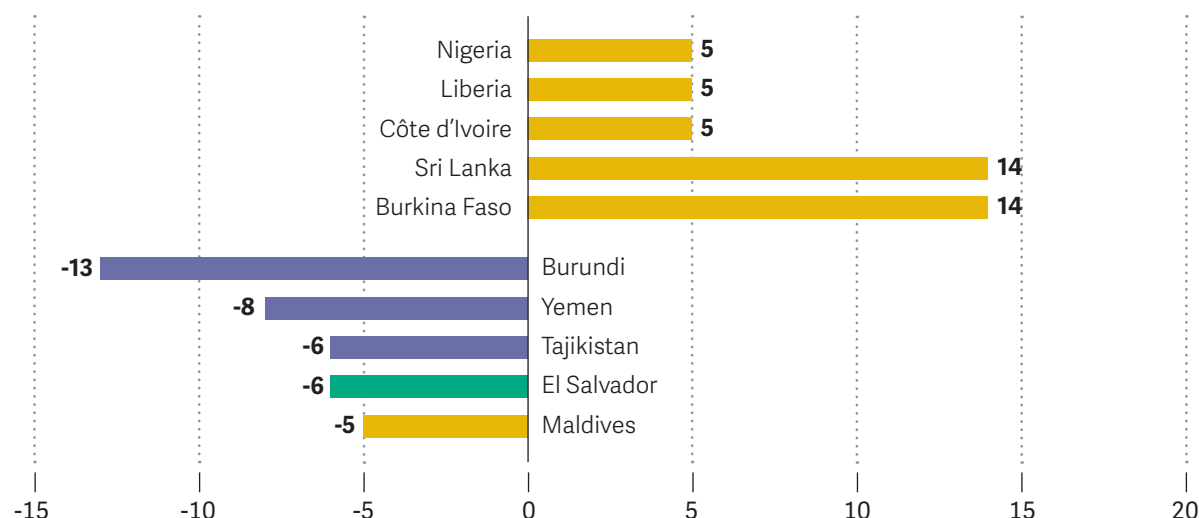


***Freedom in the World* has recorded a decline in global freedom in each of the past 10 years. Among the many factors behind democracy's troubled decade, a few stand out:**

- China's role as a model, in the developing world and beyond, for combining political repression with economic growth, at the cost of human rights.
- Russia's increasingly aggressive challenge to liberal values under Vladimir Putin—domestically, among its neighbors, and in international organizations.
- The authoritarian backlash in the Middle East and North Africa against the 2011 Arab Spring—including harmful interventions by both the Gulf monarchies and Iran—and a surge in terrorism fostered by the ensuing civil conflicts.
- Widespread repression of civil society following the protest-driven “color revolutions” of 2003–05 in Eurasia and elsewhere.
- The rise of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and of other antidemocratic populist leaders in Latin America.
- New, sophisticated methods of censorship, information control, and propaganda messaging developed in countries such as China and Russia, and by the Islamic State militant group, as well as increased use of draconian laws to suppress dissent in settings including Thailand, Ethiopia, and Turkey.
- Rampant corruption in troubled or aspiring democracies such as Nigeria, Brazil, and Moldova, as well as in entrenched authoritarian regimes.
- Division and doubts about global leadership among democratic powers around the world, resulting in wavering support for democracy beyond their borders.

LARGEST ONE-YEAR GAINS AND DECLINES, 2015

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



a stock-market plunge and abrupt devaluations of the currency, helped to reduce the prices of many commodities, slashing the export revenues of dictatorships around the world and threatening the economic underpinnings of their legitimacy.

The price of oil in particular, which was also pushed down by Saudi Arabia's refusal to curb production and a longer-term increase in output by the United States, threatened the economic well-being of repressive petro-states from Angola to Azerbaijan. Wary of spending cuts, declining living standards, and the social unrest they could cause, most of these regimes cracked down on rights activists and other critics.

In China, modest reform measures in 2015—such as incremental judicial changes, relaxation of household registration rules, and a shift to a two-child policy—were more than offset by harsh campaigns against dissent and a renewed emphasis on the Communist Party's leadership in political, social, and economic life. The government of Xi Jinping responded to the stock-market drop with aggressive interventions in the market itself, enhanced censorship and propaganda efforts, and a new crackdown on civil society. Within a 48-hour period in July, for example, over 200 individuals involved in public-interest legal activism were taken into custody in a nationwide sweep. Other targets, whose work the authorities had previously tolerated, included financial journalists, public health advocates, labor rights activists, and women's rights defenders. This escalation illustrated the growing brutality and anxiety of China's leaders.

Prominent businessmen and securities traders were also rounded up, adding new risks to doing business in China. But in a sign that favored firms would join the regime in promoting a rosier view of the country, the Chinese internet giant Alibaba purchased the *South China Morning Post*, pledging to use Hong Kong's most prominent English-language newspaper to improve China's global image.

In many countries, the economic setbacks only compounded existing problems brought on by corruption or foreign policy blunders. Russia was forced to deal with falling oil prices at a time when international sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine—plus countersanctions that hurt Russian consumers at least as much as the intended targets—had already weakened

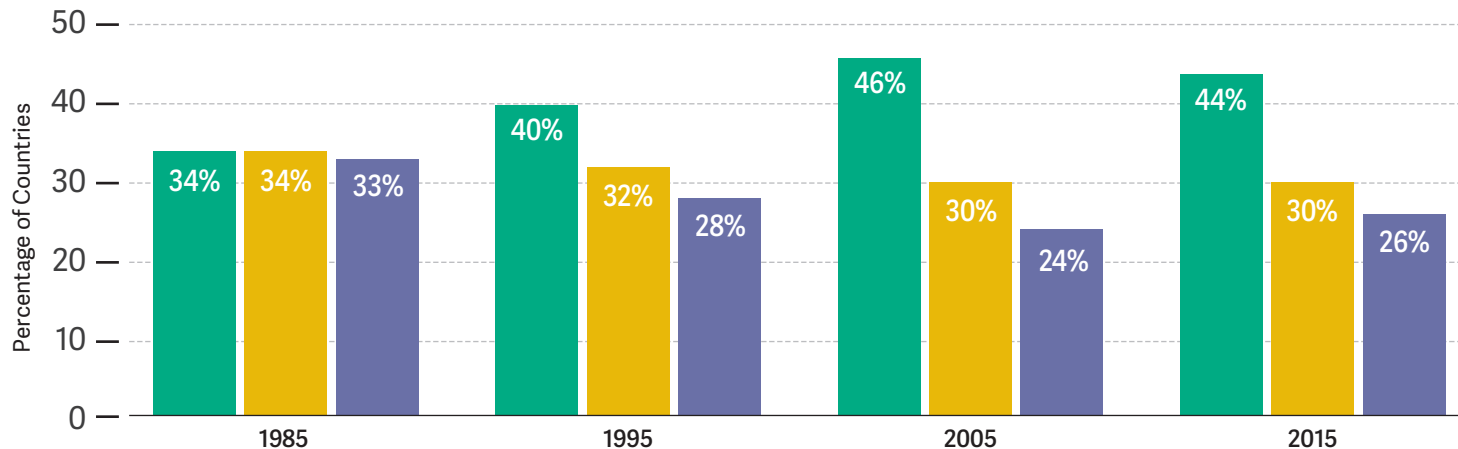
Worst of the Worst

Of the 50 countries and territories designated as Not Free, the following 12 have the worst aggregate scores for political rights and civil liberties.

| Country/territory | Aggregate score |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Syria | -1 |
| Tibet | 1 |
| Somalia | 2 |
| North Korea | 3 |
| Uzbekistan | 3 |
| Eritrea | 3 |
| Turkmenistan | 4 |
| Western Sahara | 4 |
| Sudan | 6 |
| Central African Republic | 7 |
| Equatorial Guinea | 8 |
| Saudi Arabia | 10 |

THE GLOBAL BALANCE OF FREEDOM

After years of major gains, the share of Free countries has declined over the past decade.



its economy and threatened its indebted state-owned companies. Adding to its expensive military occupations in parts of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, the Kremlin intervened in Syria in late 2015 to shore up support for Assad. Analysts warned that it could prove costly in financial, military, and political terms.

The Russian authorities were sensitive to the possibility of popular discontent, using the state's high-volume propaganda apparatus to shift emphasis from the stalemate in Ukraine to the new adventure in Syria. The regime also took measures to stifle criticism of its foreign interventions. Opponents have been derided as traitors, forced from their jobs, arrested, or pushed into exile. To drive home the leadership's intolerance for dissent, President Vladimir Putin issued a decree making it illegal to publish information about military casualties even during peacetime. The head of a committee of soldiers' mothers was convicted of fraud after publicizing the cases of Russian troops killed in eastern Ukraine, where the Kremlin has implausibly denied that any Russian forces are deployed.

Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies, similarly hit by the drop in hydrocarbon prices, leaned heavily on their financial reserves as they sought to prop up the Egyptian regime, battle Shiite-led militants in Yemen, and maintain their domestic spending to avoid social unrest. The nervousness of the region's monarchs was reflected in heightened political repression, with Saudi authorities imposing more death sentences for a variety of crimes, including nonviolent offenses related to freedom of expression.

Low oil prices also posed a problem for Iran, which hoped to rebuild its sanctions-ravaged economy after

reaching an agreement with the international community to limit its nuclear program. Even before the deal was completed, hard-line forces in the regime worked to smother public expectations that it would lead to a more open society. The crackdown featured a spike in executions, the shuttering of civil society organizations, and the arrest of journalists who wrote favorably about liberalizing policies or improved ties with the West. The trial and conviction of *Washington Post* correspondent Jason Rezaian, apparently on spurious espionage charges, ranks among the most notable cases. No details were made public, the trial was carried out in secret, and Rezaian was not allowed to mount a serious defense.

Venezuela experienced an economic freefall due to slumping oil revenues, years of gross mismanagement, and rampant corruption. In the months leading up to December elections, the country faced extreme shortages of staple goods, rising criminal violence, and the world's highest rate of inflation. The government of President Nicolás Maduro responded with more repression, bringing politicized prosecutions against leading opposition figures and tightening its grip on the media.

However, in addition to serving as a cautionary example of authoritarian misrule, Venezuela illustrated the potential of elections to correct a country's course. The electoral system was weighed down by blatant gerrymandering, the misuse of state resources, and pronounced media bias, but a groundswell of public frustration with Maduro's government gave the opposition coalition a two-thirds supermajority in the National Assembly. The results set up a likely confrontation between the legislative and executive branches, and the

Countries to Watch in 2016

In addition to the global powers and regional flashpoints that already receive significant attention, the following countries are among those that may be approaching important turning points in their democratic trajectory and deserve special scrutiny in the coming year.

- **Angola:** Squeezed by low oil prices, Angola's autocratic government is likely to intensify suppression of dissent and expand surveillance of private citizens.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The country could face even worse government dysfunction if a planned Bosnian Serb referendum on the national court's legitimacy takes place.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo:** With the army poised to crush protests, President Kabila is considering a constitutional amendment that would allow him to seek a third term in 2016.
- **Iran:** Moderate reformists are preparing for critical February elections to the parliament and the Assembly of Experts, the body that appoints the supreme leader.
- **Kuwait:** Authorities are quashing dissent with increasing aggression and frequency, galvanizing concerns about citizenship revocation and use of the death penalty.
- **Malaysia:** Political repression in Malaysia could intensify as the prime minister faces increasing pressure over an embezzlement scandal.
- **Myanmar:** Once the newly elected legislature is seated and a government is formed, the National League for Democracy will be under pressure to deliver on its promises.
- **Nigeria:** Observers will be able to assess President Buhari's first year in office, including his efforts to combat entrenched corruption and Boko Haram militants.
- **Poland:** The initial actions of the Law and Justice government in 2015, including attempts to stack key institutions with partisan loyalists, raise serious concerns about Poland's trajectory.
- **Venezuela:** Although the opposition triumphed in the legislative elections, it will need a well-crafted strategy to enact reforms in light of possible resistance by President Maduro.

ultimate outcome remained unclear at year's end. Nevertheless, the election gave Venezuela a real chance to reverse years of democratic and economic decline.

Renewal through elections

Citizens in a number of other troubled societies similarly proved that change was entirely possible, and did so through the most tried-and-true democratic institution—the ballot box.

In Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and largest economy, voters fed up with rampant corruption and insecurity rejected the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, and elected Muhammadu Buhari to replace him, the first time ever that the opposition gained executive power through elections. Buhari, despite a checkered past, has since begun to fulfill pledges to address the country's massive corruption problem and accelerate the military campaign against the terrorist group Boko Haram.

In Myanmar, a huge turnout produced an overwhelming victory in parliamentary elections for longtime

opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD), a remarkable turnaround in a country that until recently ranked among the world's most repressive.

Voters in Sri Lanka ousted their increasingly authoritarian and divisive president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, in favor of Maithripala Sirisena. Upon taking office in January, Sirisena overturned some of Rajapaksa's repressive policies and began repairing relations with both the country's Tamil minority and the international community.

And in Argentina, opposition candidate Mauricio Macri won the presidency by defeating the nominee of incumbent Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who with her late husband, Néstor Kirchner, had dominated the executive branch for over a decade. Combined with the Venezuela results, Macri's victory may be the beginning of a rollback of Latin America's populist movements, which had previously made impressive gains across the region.

There is, of course, no guarantee that electoral victories

in societies with fragile institutions and histories of conflict or dictatorship will lead to stability, peace, and prosperity. But the people in these countries—exemplars of hope in a decade of regression—retained faith in the democratic process even after experiencing hardship after hardship, including military rule (Myanmar), civil war and authoritarian rule (Sri Lanka), entrenched corruption and a terrorist scourge (Nigeria), economic collapse and political repression (Venezuela), and economic setback and unaccountable government (Argentina). They prevailed despite, in some cases, an electoral playing field tilted sharply against the opposition; in other cases, a record of political violence; and in still other cases, apprehensions about what lies ahead when dictatorships give way to normal politics.

Some of these voters were also rejecting political figures who had publicly disdained the world's democracies and drawn closer to authoritarian powers like Russia, China, and Iran. They were willing to listen to candidates who talked about the rule of law, freedom of expression, and the right to be free of payoffs and bribes, and they were unimpressed by those who blamed every step backward on foreign plots.

These voters, in other words, aligned themselves with the universal principles of democracy and human rights—either explicitly or by deciding that the alternatives had simply failed to deliver. Indeed, the most valuable lesson of 2015 may be that when given the opportunity, people will choose the system that works. As all varieties of government face mounting pressure to perform, the coming year could demonstrate whether democracy is truly more responsive and durable than dictatorship.

Notable developments in 2015

In addition to those described above, five major phenomena stood out during the year:

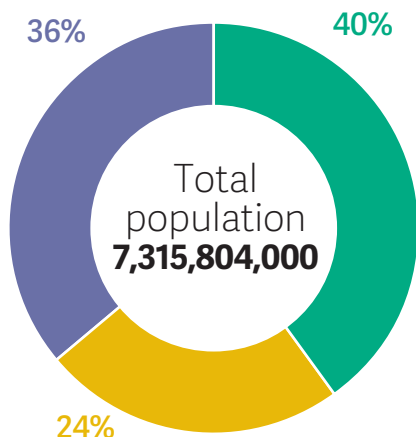
Overstaying their welcome: Leaders in several countries maneuvered to extend their terms in office during 2015. Most prominent among these was Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza, whose decision to run for a constitutionally dubious third term—which he won amid an opposition boycott in July—led to large-scale political violence. Similar schemes were in the works in Bolivia, Ecuador, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, and Rwanda. Although none of these countries has yet seen the violence experienced by Burundi, the moves all serve to perpetuate the rule of entrenched incumbents and deny citizens their right to freely choose their leaders. Meanwhile, Lebanon

again failed to hold legislative elections after sitting lawmakers postponed them in both 2013 and 2014, citing disagreements over the electoral laws and security concerns stemming from the Syrian conflict. Governments in Afghanistan, Somaliland, and South Sudan similarly blamed stalled electoral reforms or security problems when delaying scheduled elections.

Threats to democracy in Central America: Vicious criminal gangs, political violence, and systemic corruption pose a growing threat to freedom and democracy in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The negative trend, though already well under way by 2015, represents a wake-up call for the region, which for years enjoyed comparative political stability after overcoming decades of civil war and military rule. In Guatemala, although prosecutors and protesters forced the president to resign and face corruption charges during the year, the case was built on the work of international investigators, and the subsequent elections featured violence and intimidation. Moreover, observers raised concerns about ties between the military and the party of the new president, Jimmy Morales. In Nicaragua, unlike in the other countries, the main threat to democracy is the political and institutional dominance of the ruling Sandinista party. Over the past several years, the Sandinistas have gained considerable control over the judiciary and security forces, abolished term limits, and shown an intolerance for dissent. Nicaragua also suffers from a cozy relationship between political elites and economic enterprise.

Lack of progress for women: More than 20 years after members of the United Nations met in Beijing to establish principles for advancing gender equality, women remain at a distinct disadvantage around the world in terms of political rights and civil liberties. Despite modest increases in women's political representation and the election of a number of female heads of government, examples of genuine progress are few and far between. The very limited steps that were hailed as victories in 2015—that women in Saudi Arabia, who must still obtain a male guardian's permission to conduct many basic daily activities, were finally able to participate in tightly controlled elections for largely powerless municipal councils, or that a ridiculously outdated law criminalizing adultery was struck down in South Korea—demonstrated just how low the bar has gotten in evaluating progress toward gender equality. Meanwhile, in many parts of the world, women's economic aspirations and the broader economies of their countries continue to suffer from unequal rights to property and inheritance as well as

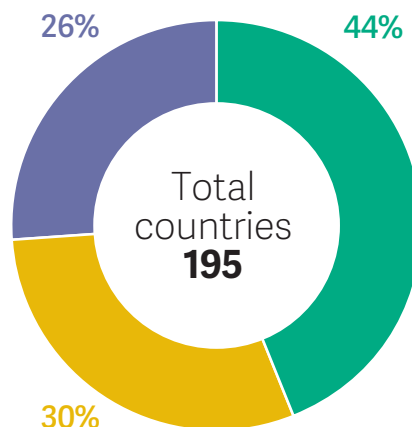
GLOBAL: STATUS BY POPULATION



discriminatory practices that prevent women from working outside the home.

Gridlock in the Balkans: Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo all suffered from crippling government dysfunction in 2015. Macedonia's ruling party was implicated in electoral fraud and an expansive wiretapping scandal, exacerbating a bitter political standoff with the opposition that ultimately required the EU to step in and broker snap elections for 2016. In Kosovo, lawmakers opposed to a deal on normalizing relations with Serbia repeatedly halted parliamentary debate by releasing tear gas within the chamber and pelting ruling party members with eggs. Bosnia and Herzegovina's government, hampered by a complex, ineffective framework established under the 1995 peace accords, remained incapable of addressing the relentless obstructionism and endemic corruption that have plagued it ever since. Tensions were further aggravated when officials in the Republika Srpska, one of the country's two constituent entities, rejected the authority of the national police, courts, and prosecutors, and began planning a referendum on the legitimacy of the national judiciary. Such disputes precluded democratic gains in all three countries, and ensured that EU accession remained a distant prospect. Conversely, Montenegro's progress toward EU membership, even

GLOBAL: STATUS BY COUNTRY



as the entrenched government of Prime Minister Milo Đukanović sanctioned the harassment of independent media, tarnished the bloc's image as a purveyor of good governance and democratic norms.

Unfinished business: Although the world's attention turned to new disasters during 2015, many of the previous year's most dramatic setbacks for freedom continued to fester. Thailand's post-coup government officially lifted martial law, but the military junta remained in complete control of the political system and continued to hunt down and punish any who expressed dissent. The government of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt, formalized in 2014 after the 2013 coup, finally allowed parliamentary elections, but they were marred by large-scale rigging, criminalization of and boycotts by opposition parties, and a tight grip on the media. Meanwhile, an Islamist insurgency continued to gain momentum amid unchecked abuses by security forces. Crimea, which dominated global headlines after Russia's invasion in 2014, languished in a grim status quo, and de facto Russian control of the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine was solidified in both military and economic terms. Finally, South Sudan's bloody civil war continued throughout the year despite a series of attempted cease-fires, subjecting the population to massacres, rapes, and large-scale displacement.

Regional Trends

Middle East and North Africa

Regime security over public safety

The conflicts raging across the Middle East and North Africa began in large part because entrenched rulers put their own interests and security above the safety and well-being of their people. In the countries that remain at peace, many leaders still embrace the same short-sighted priorities, raising the risk that they too could descend into disorder.

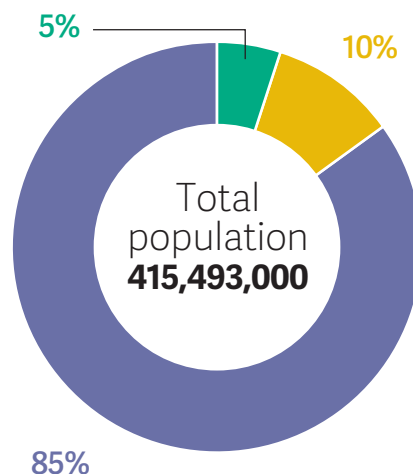
Although the Egyptian regime's self-defeating drive against dissent—a violent campaign enabled by American and Gulf state aid—has been widely criticized, a number of other Middle Eastern states have escaped international attention while they quietly clamp down on already limited political participation and civil liberties. These include Morocco and Kuwait, where journalists and civil society activists found themselves under fresh assault in 2015. The United Arab Emirates sought to further restrict scrutiny of the country's abhorrent labor conditions by denying entry to academic researchers, and Bahrain's government, with little push-back from its U.S. ally, continued its shameful efforts to silence the opposition by stripping its leading critics, most of them Shiites, of their citizenship.

Saudi Arabia, one of the worst human rights abusers in the world, increased the number of executions to its highest level in 20 years, and tried to cover up its failure to safeguard participants in the annual Hajj pilgrimage after a stampede killed more than 2,400 people. The kingdom's military campaign in neighboring Yemen showed a similar indifference toward protecting innocent lives.

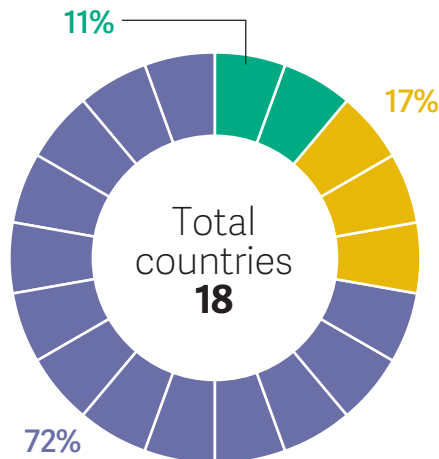
Undergirding all of these cases is a model of governance that erodes the kind of long-term and inclusive stability the region desperately needs. By sacrificing public safety for regime security, these governments alienate and anger their citizens, squander public resources, and enfeeble the institutions that are necessary for sustainable political and economic development.

Also in 2015, relations between Israel and Palestinians remained combustible. In the aftermath of the previous year's war between Israel and Hamas, which caused the deaths of over 2,100 Palestinians and 73 Israelis, the peace process was moribund. Right-leaning Israeli

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA:
STATUS BY POPULATION



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA:
STATUS BY COUNTRY



prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu won reelection in March, and the deeply divided Palestinian political institutions in the West Bank and Gaza were in disarray. The administration of President Barack Obama reportedly concluded that it would be unable to make significant progress on peace talks during the remainder of its term. Meanwhile, individual Palestinians carried out a series of knife and vehicular attacks on Israeli Jews, and Israeli security personnel responded with deadly force.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Struggling with term limits and terrorism

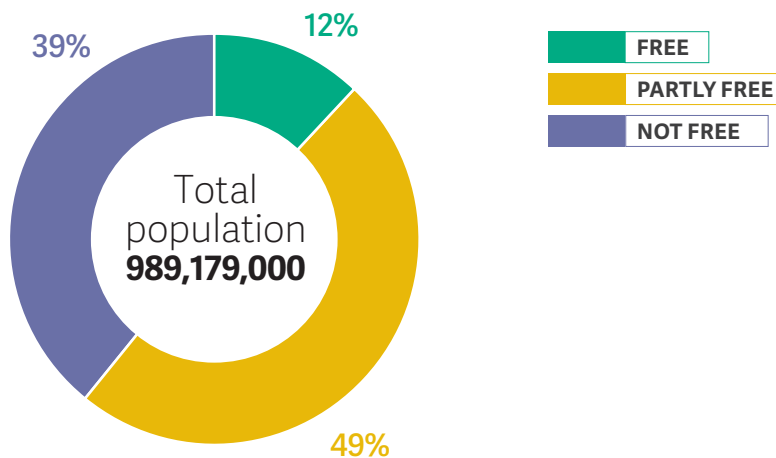
Democratic setbacks and violence triggered by African leaders' manipulation of term limits were offset by successful elections and peaceful transfers of power in key countries during 2015. Meanwhile, nations across the Sahelian belt from Mali to Kenya continued to grapple with threats from Islamist militants.

Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial decision to run for a third term sparked civil unrest, a failed coup, and political violence that threatened to spiral into civil war. In neighboring Rwanda, where President Paul Kagame has efficiently closed the space for political opposition or critical viewpoints, Senate approval and a successful national referendum cleared the way for Kagame to potentially remain in office until 2034. And an October constitutional referendum allowed longtime Congo Republic president Denis Sassou-Nguesso to forego term limits and run to extend his rule in 2016, triggering the largest anti-government demonstration since 1992.

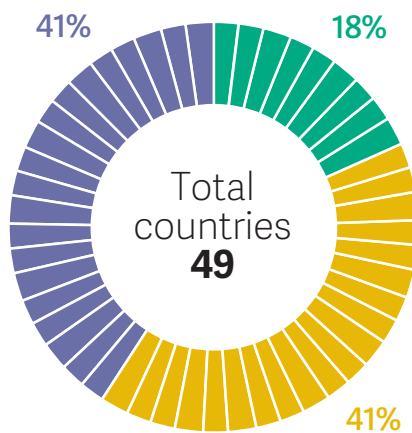
Burkina Faso recovered from a September military coup by supporters of ousted president Blaise Compaoré, who in 2014 had tried to change the constitution and extend his own 27-year rule, leading to a popular uprising. The country went on to hold its most successful presidential and legislative elections ever, marking a turning point in its political transition and serving as an example for other nations contending with leaders who attempt to overstay their mandates. Tanzania, whose presidents have consistently honored the two-term limit, held its most competitive elections since its transition to multiparty rule in the early 1990s, with ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) candidate John Magufuli winning 58 percent of the vote. However, it was unclear whether Magufuli would reform laws passed earlier in the year that severely restricted freedom of expression.

While a deadly terrorist attack on a luxury hotel in Bamako in November triggered a state of emergency in Mali, there were few reports that the government used the incident to restrict citizens' basic freedoms. However, elsewhere in the region, violations of civil liberties and the rule of law continued in the fight against Boko Haram, which spread from northeastern

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION

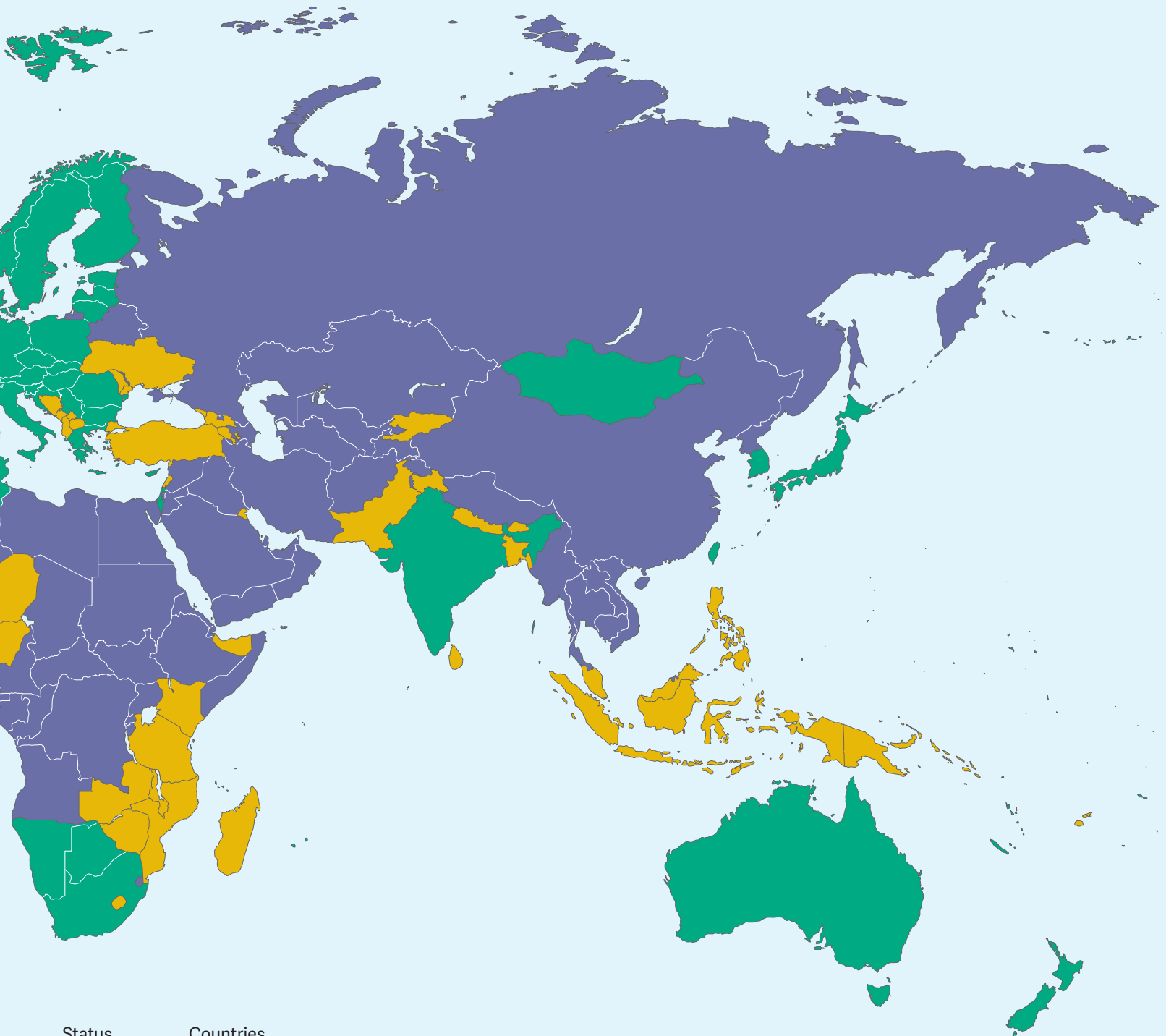


SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY



Nigeria to parts of Cameroon and Chad. In the wake of yet another attack by Somalia's Shabaab militant group, which in April killed nearly 150 people at Garissa University College in northeastern Kenya, the government in Nairobi continued its ham-fisted domestic counter-terrorism campaign. This included alleged extrajudicial killings and disappearances, as well as a crackdown on nongovernmental organizations and critical media.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia used the war on terrorism to justify a deadly crackdown on protests against forced displacement in the Oromia region in November and December, as well as ongoing repression of political opponents, journalists, bloggers, and activists.



| Status | Countries |
|--------------|------------|
| FREE | 86 |
| PARTLY FREE | 59 |
| NOT FREE | 50 |
| Total | 195 |

Freedom in the World 2016 assessed 195 countries around the globe.

Asia-Pacific

Religious nationalism linked to political tensions

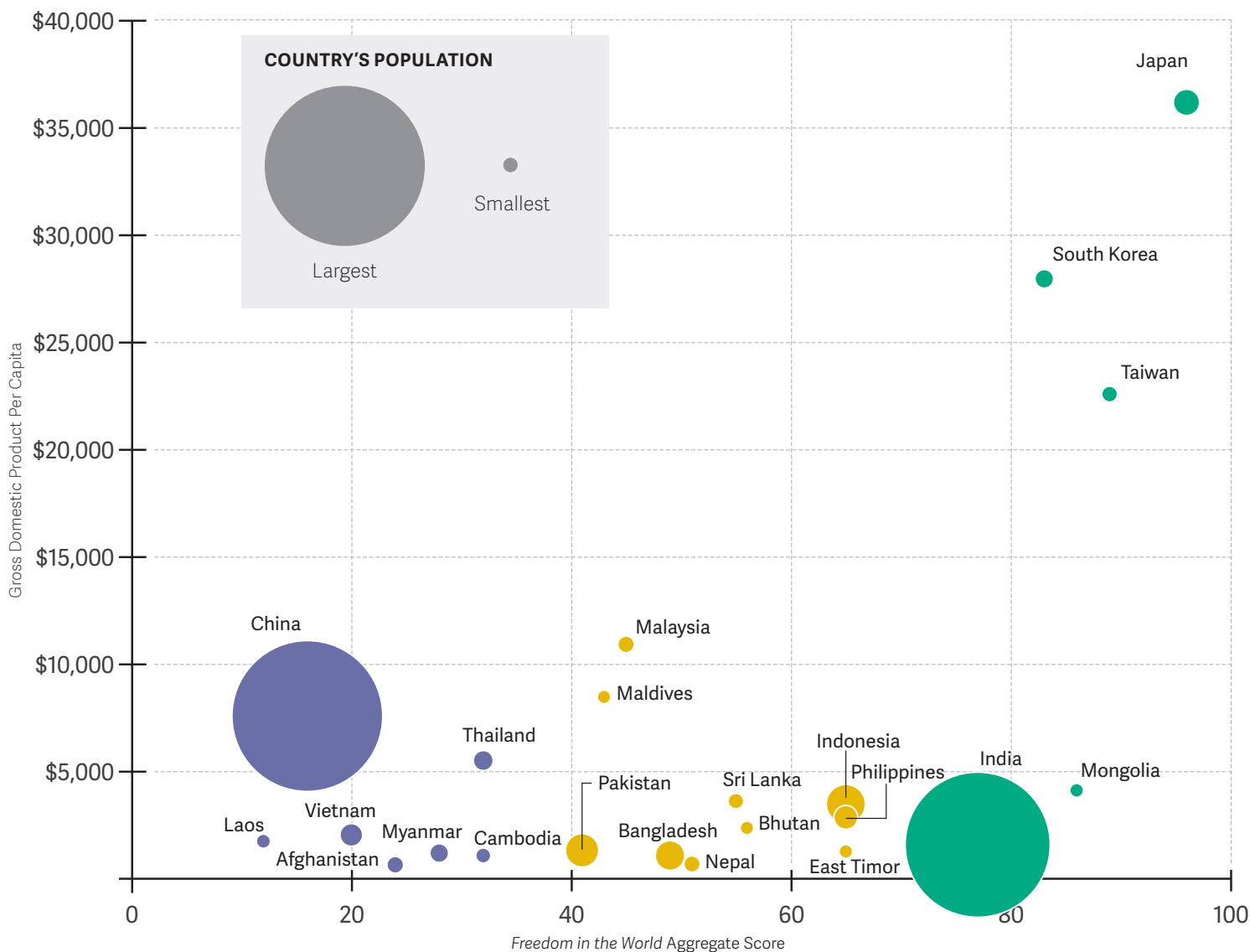
In a wide range of Asian countries, there was a correlation in 2015 between strained political institutions and various forms of religious nationalism or extremism.

India's Hindu nationalist government, under pressure to deliver on its 2014 campaign promises, generally failed to curb a rise in anti-Muslim violence and intimidation,

at times appearing to encourage or take advantage of religious divisions for political gain. In Bangladesh, as the major political parties continued their bitter stand-off, Islamist radicals carried out a series of attacks on secular writers, foreigners, and Shiites.

The authorities in Malaysia stepped up enforcement

FREEDOM AND PROSPERITY IN ASIA



Brunei, North Korea, and Singapore do not appear in this chart. Brunei's *Freedom in the World* aggregate score is 29 and its GDP per capita is \$41,344. Singapore's aggregate score is 51 and its GDP per capita is \$56,287. North Korea's aggregate score is 3; the World Bank does not publish GDP data for North Korea.

of conservative dress codes and persecution of LGBT people at a time when the ruling party was reeling from a major corruption scandal. And in the tiny, oil-dependent sultanate of Brunei, the government restricted minority religious displays and moved toward implementation of a harsh new criminal code based on Sharia.

Anti-Muslim discrimination in Myanmar remained a serious problem during the year, and it was unclear whether a new NLD government would take the political risk of defending Muslims' fundamental rights. However, the failure of Buddhist nationalists to drum up voter support for the military-backed ruling party was a promising sign. The influence of Buddhist nationalists in Sri Lanka clearly waned after that country's change in leadership, with the newly elected administration promising a more inclusive model of governance.

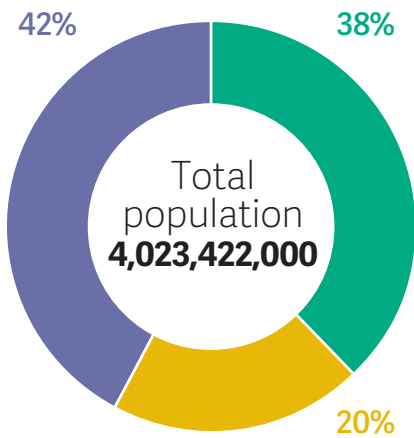
Europe

Migrant crisis threatens solidarity, democratic standards

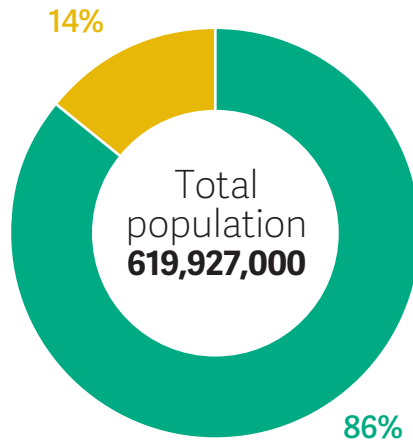
The migration crisis in Europe put unprecedented pressure on the EU's fundamental principles of liberty, solidarity, and respect for human rights. The massive influx of people not only exposed areas of weak institutional capacity across the region, but also cast doubt on the EU's ability to maintain high democratic standards among current and aspiring member states in a time of rising populism.

The year began with the January election victory of the left-populist Syriza party in Greece, whose anti-EU rhetoric struck a chord with voters after years of externally imposed austerity. Although the new government was eventually forced to comply with its

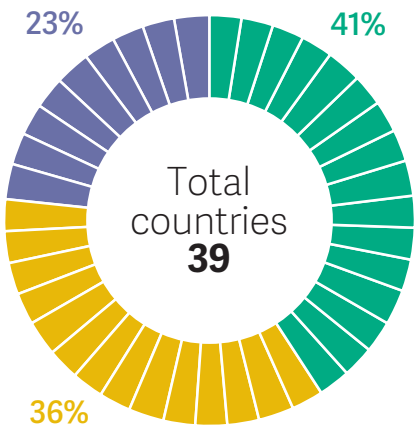
ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY POPULATION



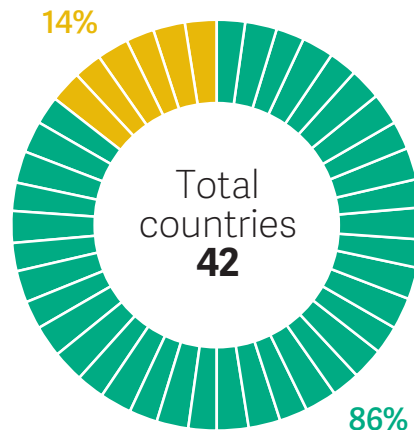
EUROPE: STATUS BY POPULATION



ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY COUNTRY



EUROPE: STATUS BY COUNTRY



creditors' demands, important underlying problems—including governance deficiencies and a debt load that many view as unsustainable—have yet to be addressed. Nevertheless, the attention of Brussels had shifted to the migrants by the second half of 2015.

The EU's attempts to distribute responsibility for the settlement of refugees across the union met with resistance throughout the bloc, particularly from Central and Eastern Europe. These countries' blatant rejection of solidarity with asylum seekers and fellow member states, despite their own 20th-century histories of repression, foreign domination, and mass dislocation on the one hand, and the benefits they received from the EU on the other, represented a stinging blow to the European project.

The bloc's broader retreat from the goal of bolstering democratic values was underscored by its renewed interest in Turkey's membership bid, which had stalled for years as Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan exhibited increasingly authoritarian behavior. EU negotiators, seeking Turkey's assistance in stemming the migrant flow to Europe, apparently turned a blind eye to Erdoğan's repressive actions during 2015, including assaults on critical media and indiscriminate military operations in urban areas in the southeast in advance of the November elections.

Americas

Populists on the defensive, little progress in Cuba

There were several important developments in Latin America during 2015.

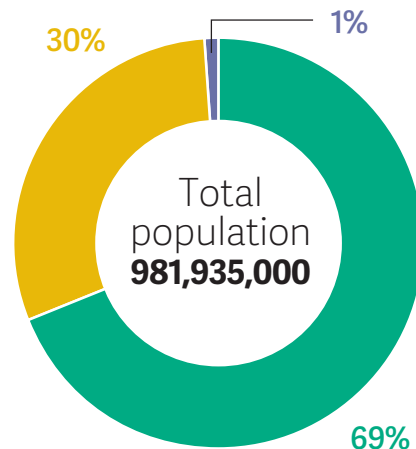
First, although the populist left suffered major electoral reversals in Venezuela and Argentina, incumbent leaders in the region made clear their intention to remain in power. Thus in the wake of his party's overwhelming defeat in Venezuela's parliamentary elections, President Nicolás Maduro took steps to pack the Supreme Court and threatened to refuse to carry out decisions of the new legislative majority. In Ecuador, President Rafael Correa moved forward with a proposal to eliminate term limits and seek a fourth term in office in 2017. Similar plans were under way in Bolivia, and Nicaragua had already abolished term limits in 2014.

Second, a number of regional heads of state were undermined by corruption scandals or an inability to stem violent crime. In Brazil, a democracy hard hit by the crash in commodities prices, President Dilma Rousseff faced impeachment efforts in the wake of

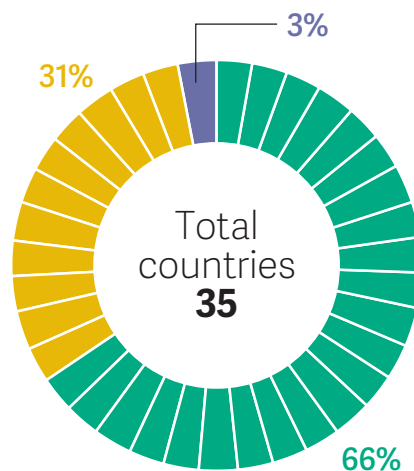
a bribery scandal at the national oil company; Chile's President Michelle Bachelet was seriously weakened by a corruption case that implicated her son; and Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto was politically crippled due to a series of graft allegations and the persistence of organized crime in parts of the country.

Finally, little progress was made toward democratic reform in Cuba despite the resumption of diplomatic relations with the United States. There was a modest expansion of rights for religious believers and private business owners, and more Cubans exercised their new ability to travel abroad. But the political system remained closed to all but Communist Party loyalists, and freedom of expression was highly restricted. Nor were prospects especially bright for significant change in the immediate future. The administration of U.S. president Barack Obama urged patience with Cuba's pace of political change, and negotiations between Washington and Havana concentrated on removing other roadblocks to the lifting of the American trade embargo.

AMERICAS: STATUS BY POPULATION



AMERICAS: STATUS BY COUNTRY



Eurasia

In pursuit of false stability

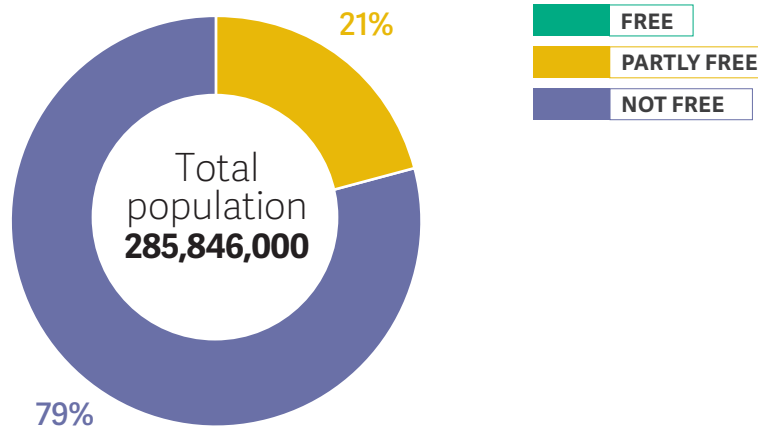
While elections have served as an avenue to recovery for many ill-governed countries, several Eurasian states held national polls in 2015 that served as exhibitions of the unfettered power of longtime incumbents. Faced with slumping economies and security threats linked to foreign conflicts, these regimes sought to fortify themselves against any remaining opposition or dissent.

In Tajikistan, for example, the government of President Emomali Rahmon, who has ruled the country since 1992, ensured that the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) lost all of its seats in legislative elections. The authorities then intensified their assault on the party over the subsequent months, revoking its registration, detaining its leaders, and effectively incapacitating what had been Central Asia's only legal Islamist political grouping.

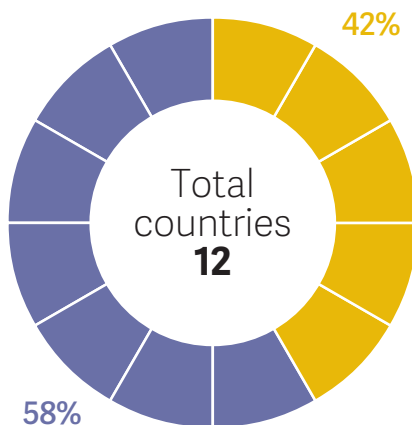
Tightly controlled legislative elections in Azerbaijan, which followed another year of intense suppression of civil society, resulted in a hollow victory for the ruling party, with most opposition groups boycotting the vote. President Ilham Aliyev's government used the polls to show its teeth to the democratic world, barring several foreign journalists from covering the process and imposing restrictions on international observer groups that led some to suspend their monitoring missions.

In contrast, a deeply flawed election in Belarus actually seemed to improve President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's standing with democratic powers. His release of political prisoners before the vote, and the absence of violence in its aftermath, eased the way for plans by the United States and the EU—wavering in their determination to press for true liberalization—to reduce sanctions against Belarusian individuals and entities. There is little chance that Lukashenka's actions are signs of a genuine thaw. Rather, his gestures toward the West seem motivated by growing fears of Russian bellicosity and economic weakness.

EURASIA: STATUS BY POPULATION



EURASIA: STATUS BY COUNTRY



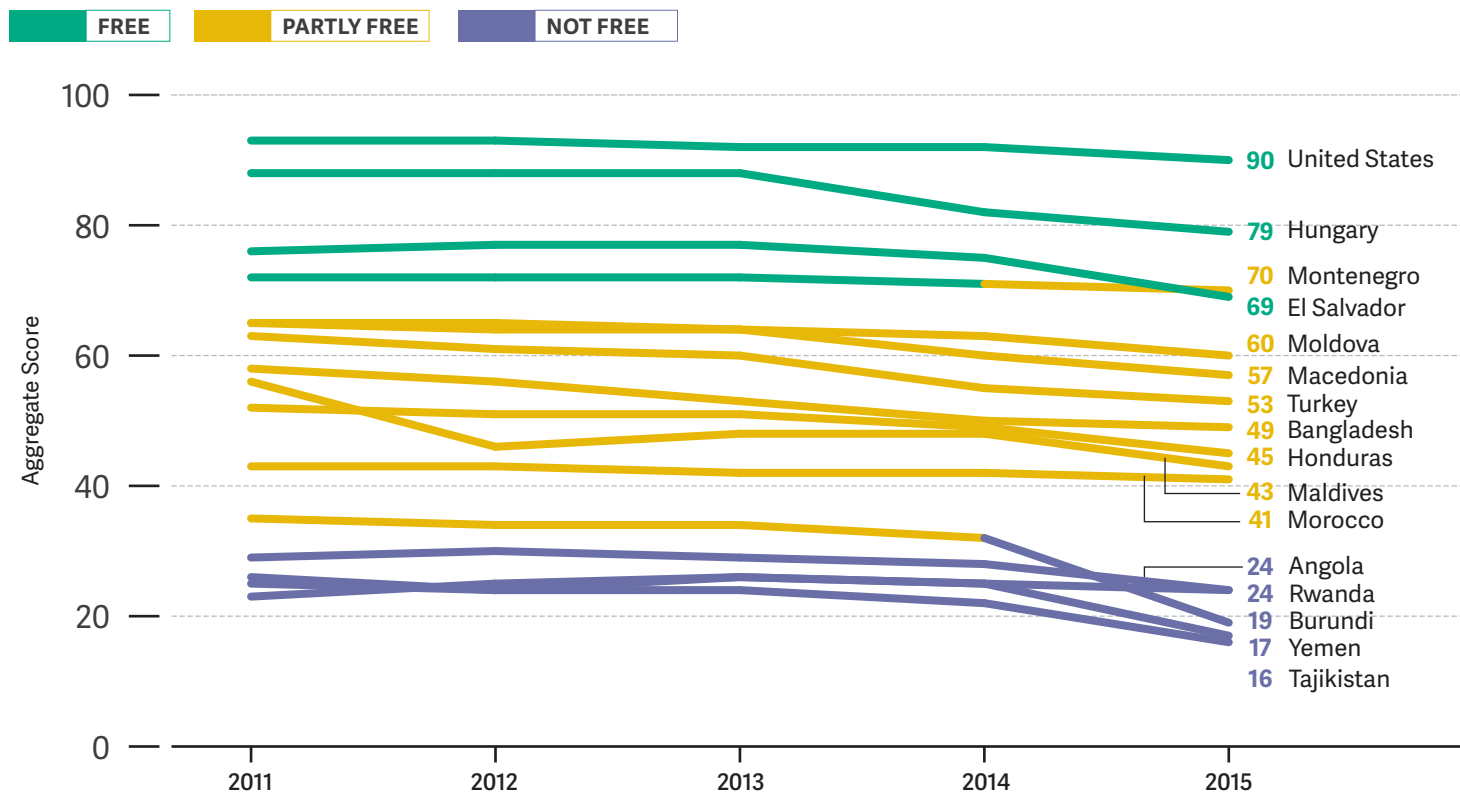
Freedom in the World 2016 Trend Arrows

Downward Trend Arrows

- **Angola** received a downward trend arrow because as the economy deteriorated, the government increased its repressive measures, including the persecution of journalists, young political activists, and certain religious groups.
- **Bangladesh** received a downward trend arrow due to a series of high-profile murders by Islamist militants, increasing restrictions on critical journalists, and censorship of media content.
- **Burundi** received a downward trend arrow due to President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to run for a constitutionally dubious third term in July, which sparked violence including assassinations, arrests, torture of government critics, and escalating attacks by antigovernment forces. The government shut down nearly all private media and stepped up surveillance of citizens.
- **El Salvador** received a downward trend arrow due to flaws in the 2015 legislative elections and increasing criminal violence, including threats against journalists, teachers, and the general public.
- **Honduras** received a downward trend arrow due to the government's failure to address corruption and impunity for crimes against journalists, human rights defenders, land rights activists, and the poor and other marginalized segments of society, who are routinely subject to violence by both state and nonstate forces.
- **Hungary** received a downward trend arrow due to laws, policies, and practices that sharply curtailed the ability of refugees to seek asylum in the country, the ongoing deterioration of the media environment, and the effects of large-scale government corruption on commercial activity and competition.
- **Macedonia** received a downward trend arrow due to further revelations about the grave shortcomings

NEGATIVE TRAJECTORIES

Many countries received downward trend arrows for 2015 after suffering multiyear declines.



of the 2014 elections, which caused an opposition legislative boycott; the new information formed part of a related scandal over widespread government surveillance of political and religious leaders, journalists, and private citizens.

- **Maldives** received a downward trend arrow due to the arrest and detention of hundreds of opposition demonstrators, a “treason” case against the national human rights commission in connection with its submissions to UN human rights monitors, failure to implement critical gender-equality protections, and renewed enforcement of laws against same-sex sexual activity.
- **Moldova** received a downward trend arrow due to new evidence of government dysfunction, including revelations of mass fraud and corruption, and the enormous influence of powerful businessmen on politics and governance.
- **Montenegro** received a downward trend arrow due to restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly, including clashes between police and opposition demonstrators and the repeated postponement of an LGBT pride parade, in the context of years of harassment and discrimination against LGBT people.
- **Morocco** received a downward trend arrow due to the government’s repression of dissent, including disruption of meetings, assaults on activist leaders, and the imposition of long prison sentences on journalists and civil society figures.
- **Rwanda** received a downward trend arrow due to

the approval of a constitutional amendment that would allow President Paul Kagame to run for three additional terms.

- **Tajikistan** received a downward trend arrow due to the government’s mounting persecution of the opposition before and after the 2015 parliamentary elections, including the arrest of opposition leaders and a ban on the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, which violated the guarantees of political pluralism established in the peace agreement that ended the country’s civil war in 1997.
- **Turkey** received a downward trend arrow due to renewed violence between the government and Kurdish militants, terrorist attacks by the Islamic State group, and intense harassment of opposition members and media outlets by the government and its supporters ahead of November parliamentary elections.
- The **United States** received a downward trend arrow because of the cumulative impact of flaws in the electoral system, a disturbing increase in the role of private money in election campaigns and the legislative process, legislative gridlock, the failure of the Obama administration to fulfill promises of enhanced government openness, and fresh evidence of racial discrimination and other dysfunctions in the criminal justice system.
- **Yemen** received a downward trend arrow due to the collapse of the political system and the effects of an escalating civil war and related Saudi-led military intervention on the civilian population.

Upward Trend Arrows

- **Burkina Faso** received an upward trend arrow due to the holding of its most successful presidential and legislative elections ever and the subsequent installation of a civilian government, after the ouster of longtime president Blaise Compaoré in 2014 and a brief and ultimately unsuccessful military coup in September 2015.
- **Myanmar** received an upward trend arrow after the opposition National League for Democracy won a landslide victory in parliamentary elections that were seen as largely free and fair, notwithstanding the disenfranchisement of the Rohingya minority.
- **Nigeria** received an upward trend arrow due to improvements in the quality of the 2015 executive and legislative elections, which featured the first-ever opposition victory at the national level and a peaceful rotation of power, as well as the new government’s initial efforts to combat corruption.
- **Sri Lanka** received an upward trend arrow due to generally free and fair elections for president in January and parliament in August, and improved conditions for freedom of expression, religious freedom, civil society, and judicial independence under the new administration.

INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES

- The number of countries designated as Free stands at 86, representing 44 percent of the world's 195 polities and nearly 2.9 billion people—or 40 percent of the global population. The number of Free countries has decreased by three from the previous year.
- The number of countries qualifying as Partly Free stands at 59, or 30 percent of all countries assessed; they are home to just under 1.8 billion people, or 24 percent of the world's total. The number of Partly Free countries has increased by four from the previous year.
- A total of 50 countries are deemed Not Free, representing 26 percent of the world's polities. The number of people living under Not Free conditions stands at 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 has decreased by one, with Zimbabwe rising from Not Free to Partly Free.
- Three countries fell from Free to Partly Free: Dominican Republic, Lesotho, and Montenegro.

| Country | PR | CL | Aggregate Score | Freedom Status | Freedom of the Press 2015 Status | Freedom on the Net 2015 Status |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Afghanistan | 6 | 6 | 24 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Albania* | 3 | 3 | 67 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Algeria | 6 | 5 | 35 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Andorra* | 1 | 1 | 96 | Free | Free | |
| Angola ↓ | 6 | 6 ▼ | 24 | Not Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Antigua and Barbuda* | 2 | 2 | 82 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Argentina* | 2 | 2 | 79 | Free | Partly Free | Free |
| Armenia | 5 | 4 | 46 | Partly Free | Not Free | Free |
| Australia* | 1 | 1 | 98 | Free | Free | Free |
| Austria* | 1 | 1 | 95 | Free | Free | |
| Azerbaijan | 7 ▼ | 6 | 16 | Not Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Bahamas* | 1 | 1 | 92 | Free | Free | |
| Bahrain | 7 | 6 | 14 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Bangladesh* ↓ | 4 | 4 | 49 | Partly Free | Partly Free | Partly Free |
| Barbados* | 1 | 1 | 98 | Free | Free | |
| Belarus | 7 | 6 | 17 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Belgium* | 1 | 1 | 96 | Free | Free | |
| Belize* | 1 | 2 | 87 | Free | Free | |
| Benin* | 2 | 2 | 82 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Bhutan* | 3 | 4 | 56 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Bolivia* | 3 | 3 | 68 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina* | 4 | 3 | 57 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Botswana* | 3 | 2 | 73 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Brazil* | 2 | 2 | 81 | Free | Partly Free | Free |
| Brunei | 6 | 5 | 29 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Bulgaria* | 2 | 2 | 80 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Burkina Faso ↑ | 4 ▲ | 3 | 59 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Burundi ↓ | 7 ▼ | 6 ▼ | 19 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Cambodia | 6 | 5 | 32 | 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 | 7 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Chad | 7 | 6 | 20 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Chile* | 1 | 1 | 95 | Free | Partly Free | |
| China (PRC) | 7 | 6 | 16 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Colombia* | 3 | 4 | 63 | Partly Free | Partly Free | Partly Free |
| Comoros* | 3 | 4 | 55 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |

| Country | PR | CL | Aggregate Score | Freedom Status | Freedom of the Press 2015 Status | Freedom on the Net 2015 Status |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Congo (Brazzaville) | 6 | 5 | 28 | Not Free | Partly Free | |
| Congo (Kinshasa) | 6 | 6 | 25 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Costa Rica* | 1 | 1 | 90 | Free | Free | |
| Côte d'Ivoire* | 4 ▲ | 4 | 51 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Croatia* | 1 | 2 | 87 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Cuba | 7 | 6 | 16 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Cyprus* | 1 | 1 | 94 | Free | Free | |
| Czech Republic* | 1 | 1 | 95 | Free | Free | |
| Denmark* | 1 | 1 | 98 | Free | Free | |
| Djibouti | 6 | 5 | 28 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Dominica* | 1 | 1 | 95 | Free | Free | |
| Dominican Republic* | 3 ▼ | 3 | 70 | Partly Free ▼ | Partly Free | |
| East Timor* | 3 | 3 | 65 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Ecuador* | 3 | 3 | 59 | Partly Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Egypt | 6 | 5 | 27 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| El Salvador* ↓ | 2 | 3 | 69 | 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 | 15 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Fiji* | 3 | 3 ▲ | 62 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Finland* | 1 | 1 | 100 | Free | Free | |
| France* | 1 | 1 | 91 | Free | Free | Free |
| Gabon | 6 | 5 | 34 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| The Gambia | 7 ▼ | 6 | 18 | 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 | Free | |
| Greece* | 2 | 2 | 83 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Grenada* | 1 | 2 | 89 | Free | Free | |
| Guatemala* | 4 ▼ | 4 | 54 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Guinea | 5 | 5 | 40 | Partly Free | Not Free | |
| Guinea-Bissau | 5 | 5 | 39 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Guyana* | 2 | 3 | 74 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Haiti | 5 | 5 | 41 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Honduras ↓ | 4 | 4 | 45 | Partly Free | Not Free | |
| Hungary* ↓ | 2 | 2 | 79 | Free | Partly Free | Free |
| Iceland* | 1 | 1 | 100 | 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 |
| Iraq | 5 ▲ | 6 | 27 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Ireland* | 1 | 1 | 96 | Free | Free | |
| Israel* | 1 | 2 | 80 | Free | Free | |
| Italy* | 1 | 1 | 89 | Free | Partly Free | 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 2015 Status | Freedom on the Net 2015 Status |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jamaica* | 2 | 3 | 75 | Free | Free | |
| Japan* | 1 | 1 | 96 | Free | Free | Free |
| Jordan | 6 | 5 | 36 | Not Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Kazakhstan | 6 | 5 | 24 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Kenya* | 4 | 4 | 51 | Partly Free | Partly Free | Free |
| Kiribati* | 1 | 1 | 91 | Free | Free | |
| Kosovo* | 3 ▲ | 4 | 52 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Kuwait | 5 | 5 | 36 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Kyrgyzstan | 5 | 5 | 38 | Partly Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Laos | 7 | 6 | 12 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Latvia* | 2 | 2 | 86 | Free | Free | |
| Lebanon | 5 | 4 | 43 | Partly Free | Partly Free | Partly Free |
| Lesotho* | 3 ▼ | 3 | 67 | Partly Free ▼ | Partly Free | |
| Liberia* | 3 | 4 | 61 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Libya | 6 | 6 | 20 | Not Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Liechtenstein* | 1 | 1 | 98 | Free | Free | |
| Lithuania* | 1 | 1 | 91 | Free | Free | |
| Luxembourg* | 1 | 1 | 98 | Free | Free | |
| Macedonia ↓ | 4 | 3 | 57 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Madagascar* | 3 ▲ | 4 | 56 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Malawi* | 3 | 3 ▲ | 64 | Partly Free | Partly Free | Partly Free |
| Malaysia | 4 | 4 | 45 | Partly Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Maldives ↓ | 4 | 5 ▼ | 43 | 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 | 90 | Free | Free | |
| Mexico* | 3 | 3 | 65 | Partly Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Micronesia* | 1 | 1 | 93 | Free | Free | |
| Moldova* ↓ | 3 | 3 | 60 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Monaco* | 2 | 1 | 88 | Free | Free | |
| Mongolia* | 1 | 2 | 86 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Montenegro* ↓ | 3 | 3 ▼ | 70 | Partly Free ▼ | Partly Free | |
| Morocco ↓ | 5 | 4 | 41 | Partly Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Mozambique | 4 | 4 ▼ | 56 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Myanmar ↑ | 6 | 5 ▲ | 28 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Namibia* | 2 | 2 | 77 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Nauru* | 2 ▼ | 2 | 84 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Nepal* | 3 | 4 | 51 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Netherlands* | 1 | 1 | 99 | Free | Free | |
| New Zealand* | 1 | 1 | 98 | Free | Free | |
| Nicaragua | 4 | 3 | 54 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Niger* | 3 | 4 | 52 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Nigeria* ↑ | 4 | 5 | 48 | Partly Free | 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 2015 Status | Freedom on the Net 2015 Status |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 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 | 41 | Partly Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Palau* | 1 | 1 | 92 | Free | Free | |
| Panama* | 2 | 2 | 83 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Papua New Guinea* | 4 | 3 | 59 | Partly Free | Free | |
| Paraguay* | 3 | 3 | 64 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Peru* | 2 | 3 | 71 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Philippines* | 3 | 3 | 65 | Partly Free | Partly Free | Free |
| Poland* | 1 | 1 | 93 | Free | Free | |
| Portugal* | 1 | 1 | 97 | Free | Free | |
| Qatar | 6 | 5 | 27 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Romania* | 2 | 2 | 83 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Russia | 6 | 6 | 22 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Rwanda ↓ | 6 | 6 | 24 | Not Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis* | 2 ▼ | 1 | 88 | Free | Free | |
| Saint Lucia* | 1 | 1 | 92 | Free | Free | |
| Saint Vincent and Grenadines* | 1 | 1 | 91 | Free | Free | |
| Samoa* | 2 | 2 | 80 | Free | Free | |
| San Marino* | 1 | 1 | 100 | 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* | 2 | 2 | 78 | Free | Partly Free | |
| Seychelles* | 3 | 3 | 69 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Sierra Leone* | 3 | 3 | 65 | 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 | 3 | 68 | Partly Free | Free | |
| Somalia | 7 | 7 | 2 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| South Africa* | 2 | 2 | 79 | Free | Partly Free | Free |
| South Korea* | 2 | 2 | 83 | Free | Partly Free | Partly Free |
| South Sudan | 7 | 6 | 14 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Spain* | 1 | 1 | 95 | Free | Free | |
| Sri Lanka* ↑ | 4 ▲ | 4 ▲ | 55 | 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 (ROC)* | 1 | 2 | 89 | Free | Free | |
| Tajikistan ↓ | 7 ▼ | 6 | 16 | Not Free | Not Free | |

INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES

| Country | PR | CL | Aggregate Score | Freedom Status | Freedom of the Press 2015 Status | Freedom on the Net 2015 Status |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Tanzania* | 3 | 4 ▼ | 60 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Thailand | 6 | 5 | 32 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Togo | 4 | 4 | 48 | Partly Free | Not Free | |
| Tonga* | 2 | 2 | 75 | Free | Free | |
| Trinidad and Tobago* | 2 | 2 | 81 | Free | Free | |
| Tunisia* | 1 | 3 | 79 | Free | Partly Free | Partly Free |
| Turkey* ↓ | 3 | 4 | 53 | Partly Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Turkmenistan | 7 | 7 | 4 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Tuvalu* | 1 | 1 | 94 | Free | Free | |
| Uganda | 6 | 5 | 36 | 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 of America* ↓ | 1 | 1 | 90 | Free | Free | Free |
| Uruguay* | 1 | 1 | 98 | Free | Free | |
| Uzbekistan | 7 | 7 | 3 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Vanuatu* | 2 | 2 | 78 | Free | Free | |
| Venezuela | 5 | 5 | 35 | Partly Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Vietnam | 7 | 5 | 20 | Not Free | Not Free | Not Free |
| Yemen ↓ | 7 ▼ | 6 | 17 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Zambia* | 3 | 4 | 60 | Partly Free | Not Free | Partly Free |
| Zimbabwe | 5 | 5 ▲ | 32 | Partly Free ▲ | Not Free | Partly Free |

RELATED AND DISPUTED TERRITORIES

| Country | PR | CL | Aggregate Score | Freedom Status | Freedom of the Press 2015 Status | Freedom on the Net 2015 Status |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Abkhazia | 4 | 5 | 42 | Partly Free | | |
| Crimea | 7 | 6 | 9 | Not Free | Not Free | |
| Gaza Strip | 7 | 6 | 12 | Not Free | Not Free** | |
| Hong Kong | 5 | 2 | 63 | Partly Free | Partly Free | |
| Indian Kashmir | 4 | 4 | 51 | Partly Free | | |
| Nagorno-Karabakh | 5 | 5 | 33 | Partly Free | | |
| Northern Cyprus | 2 | 2 | 79 | Free | | |
| Pakistani Kashmir | 6 | 5 | 28 | Not Free | | |
| Puerto Rico | 1 | 1 ▲ | 91 | 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 | 6 | 5 | 30 | Not Free | Not Free** | |
| Western Sahara | 7 | 7 | 4 | Not Free | | |

**West Bank and Gaza are evaluated together in *Freedom of the Press*

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

“The world in 2015 was battered by overlapping crises that contributed to the 10th consecutive year of decline in global freedom.”





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

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