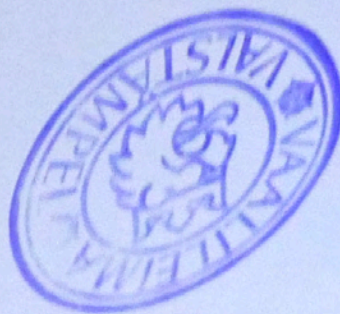


DEMOCRACY'S CORE INSTITUTION

# Clean Elections Across the World



## Produced by the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Elections are the centerpiece of democracy. They allow citizens to hold leaders accountable for their performance.
- Elections are more than simple voting. For elections to have integrity, voting must be free and fair, inclusive, transparent, and devoid of government intimidation of the opposition, vote buying, and violence.
- The integrity of elections is now increasingly threatened both in democracies and autocracies.
- Free- and fairness of elections and EMB autonomy are most frequently under attack, worsening substantially in 45 and 42 countries, respectively.
- 61% of all deteriorations in the integrity of elections since 2000, are found in countries that are now classified as autocracies.
- EMB autonomy is the most frequently attacked aspect of elections in autocracies. 74% of all declines in EMB autonomy correspond to autocracies.
- The quality of elections is also increasingly worsening in democracies, with the level of electoral violence and the free- and fairness of elections deteriorating the most.
- The intensity of attacks on the EMB autonomy separates democracies from autocracies the most clearly, suggesting that their autonomy is a bedrock of electoral integrity.
- Autocratizing countries have dramatic declines on the Clean Elections Index. Democratizing countries show noticeable increases. Attacks on elections are thus part and parcel of autocratization process, and improving electoral integrity is critical for rekindling democracy.
- Over 60 countries are holding national elections in 2024. Of these, 31 are worsening on their democracy levels, while only 3 are improving.
- Protecting electoral integrity is important. Elections are critical events that can either reinforce or counteract an autocratization trend.

## 1 | ELECTIONS AS A CORE INSTITUTION OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is more than elections, but there can be no democracy without elections. Elections are the centerpiece of democracy, allowing citizens to participate in the selection of their leaders and representatives and holding them accountable to the public for their performance.

Elections are more than simple voting. For elections to express the will of the people, voting must be free and fair, inclusive, transparent, without government intimidation of the opposition, vote buying, and election violence. There must be equitable opportunities to contest the elections and genuine political competition, and all those entitled to vote must be free to make their choice.

If elections are credible, they help make sure everyone gets to have a say in how their society is run, increase the legitimacy of political institutions, and can advance a country's democratic development. When elections go wrong, they can undermine political processes and democratic institutions, and contribute to democratic backsliding.

Constant vigilance is thus required to protect electoral integrity. Protecting electoral integrity means preventing, withstanding, or recovering from negative occurrences that may undermine the integrity of electoral process and results.





FIGURE 1. STATE OF ELECTORAL INTEGRITY, 2023

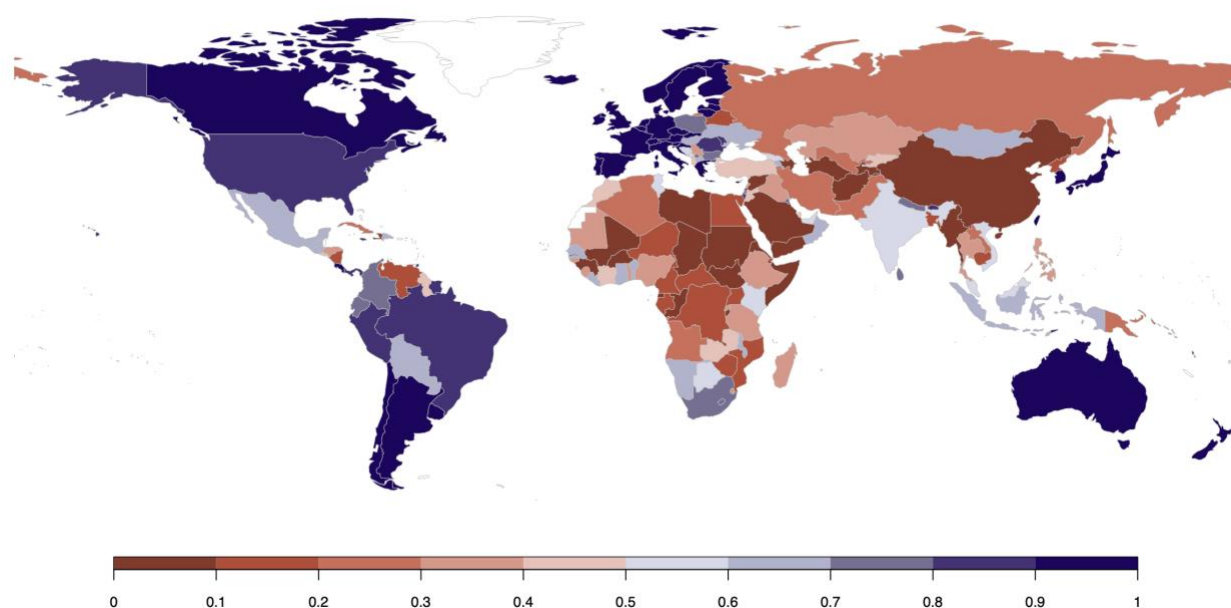


Figure 1 shows the state of electoral integrity in 2023 based on the Clean Elections Index from the V-Dem dataset. The Clean Elections Index measures the extent to which elections are free and fair, meaning an absence of registration fraud, systematic irregularities, government intimidation of the opposition, vote buying, and election violence.

## 2 | ELECTORAL INTEGRITY ACROSS THE WORLD

Electoral integrity refers to the fairness of the entire voting process and how well the process protects against election subversion, voter suppression, and other threats to free and fair elections.

The world map in Figure 1 shows the state of electoral integrity in 2023 based on the Clean Elections Index from the V-Dem dataset v14. Elections are largely free and fair in Western Europe and North America, South America, and the Pacific. Countries where elections are less free and fair are concentrated in East Asia, South and Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 2 details developments in the level of clean elections in 2000-2023. The left panel shows that for the average country in the world the quality of elections remains relatively unchanged, with some minor improvements in the 2000s and early 2010s and minor deteriorations during the last several years. By population-weighted averages, however, the level of clean elections has dropped somewhat during the last ten years. This comes at the back of a few of the most populous countries undergoing

negative changes, as well as the change in the relative distribution of the world's population.

A more detailed look at the seven regions of the world (Figure 2, right panel) shows that in most regions, the average level of clean elections did not change much for better or for worse. South and Central Asia and the Middle East and North Africa have seen improvements in the quality of elections compared to the start of the century. In the latter case, the current state is below the peak of the early

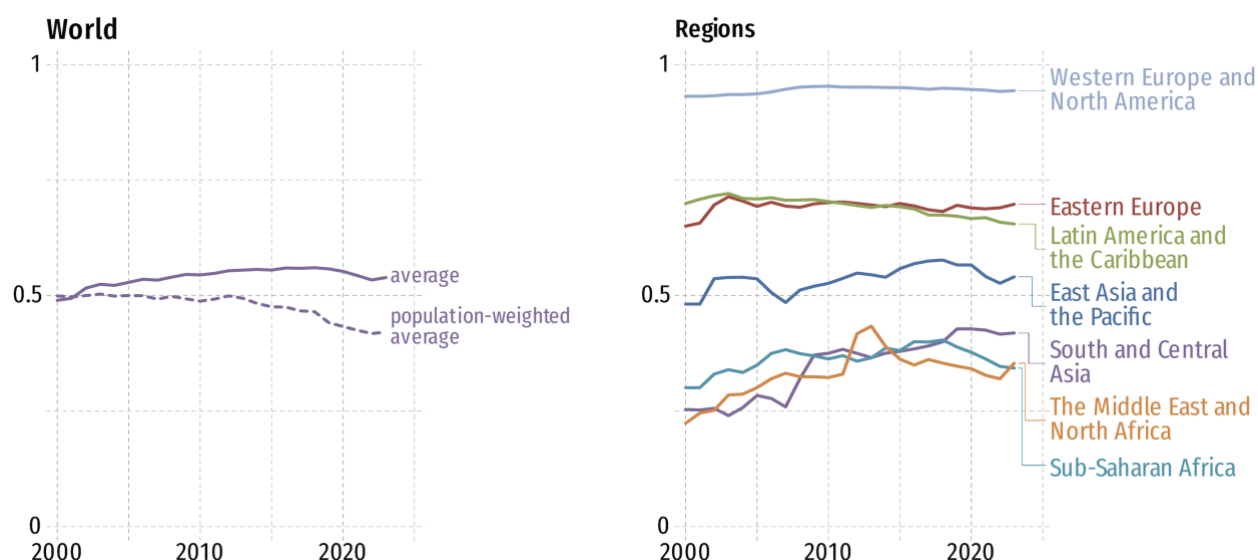
### V-Dem Clean Elections Index

The Clean Elections Index measures to what extent elections are free and fair, understood as absence of registration fraud, systematic irregularities, government intimidation of the opposition, vote buying, and election violence. It ranges from 0 to 1.

As a high-level index, it brings together eight specific indicators, measuring different aspects of electoral integrity: EMB autonomy, EMB capacity, election voter registry, election vote buying, election other voting irregularities, election government intimidation, election other electoral violence, and election free and fair.

See [V-Dem Codebook](#) for more details.

**FIGURE 2. CLEAN ELECTIONS ACROSS THE WORLD AND WORLD REGIONS, 2000–2023**



The lines on the graphs represent global and regional averages on the Clean Elections Index. Left panel shows global country average and population-weighted average. Right panel shows regional country averages.

2010s, commonly known as the Arab Spring. Sub-Saharan Africa is also somewhat better than in the early 2000s, but also has seen some deteriorations in the last years. East Asia and the Pacific has seen some minor improvements, while Latin America – some minor deteriorations compared to the early 2000s.

### QUALITY OF ELECTIONS AND EMB AUTONOMY ARE UNDER ATTACK

Figure 3 provides a more nuanced picture of the state of the integrity of elections across the world by focusing on specific aspects of clean elections that are most frequently under attack. The figure displays

the number of countries that declined statistically significantly on each of the indicators of the Clean Elections Index since 2000. It reveals that certain aspects of electoral integrity are increasingly threatened worldwide.

Notably, the **free- and fairness of elections** is clearly worsening in 45 countries across the world, suggesting that it is the aspect of elections that is attacked most often and to the greatest degree. This relates less to how elections are organized on the election day and more to the deteriorating democratic environment in general.<sup>1</sup>

**FIGURE 3. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS DECLINING, 2000–2023**

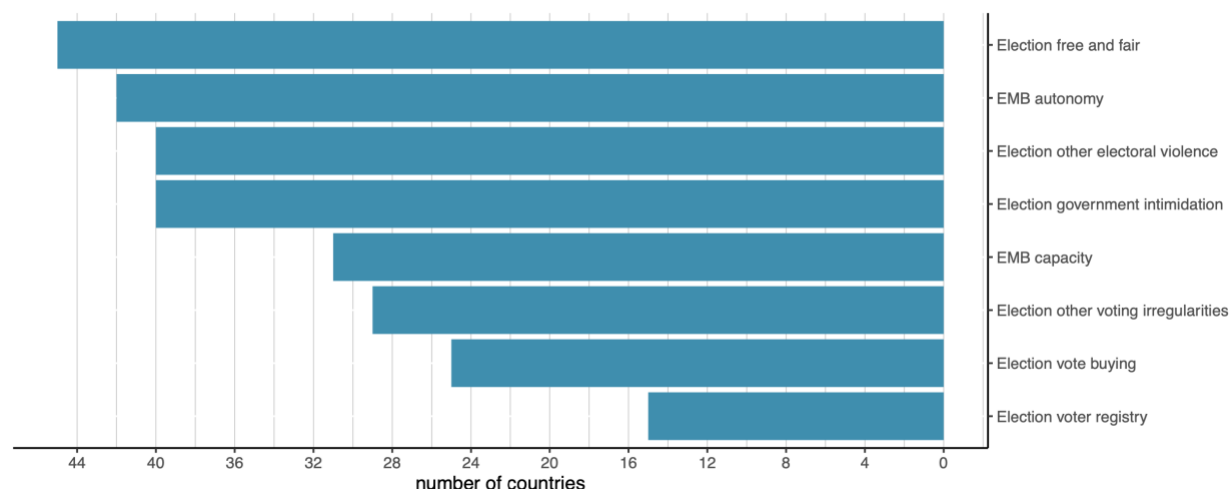


Figure 3 plots the number of countries declining statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index. An indicator is declining statistically significantly if its 2023 values is smaller than its maximum value between 2000 and 2022, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

<sup>1</sup> See Nord., M. et al. 2024. [Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot](#), V-Dem Institute.

## Regimes of the World – Democratization and Autocratization

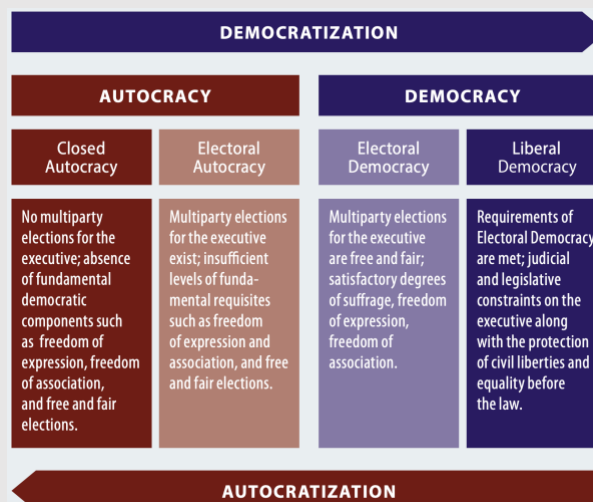
**Democratization** means that a country is making moves away from autocracy and toward democracy. **Autocratization** is the opposite, meaning any move away from democracy toward autocracy. It follows that democratization can happen in an autocracy without the country becoming a democracy, or inversely autocratization can occur in a democracy that does not become an autocracy.

We distinguish between **four types of regimes**: Closed and Electoral Autocracies, and Electoral and Liberal Democracies. For this, we use the Regimes of the World (RoW) measure that builds on the V-Dem data, and Liberal and Electoral Democracy Indices. The classification allows for compact analysis of distinct regime changes and differences between autocracies and democracies in a way that democracy indices do not.

See also:

Lührmann, A., Tannenberg, M., & Lindberg, S. I. (2018).

[Regimes of the World](#). *Politics and Governance*, 6(1).



The **Election Management Body (EMB) autonomy** is the second most attacked aspect of clean elections, weakening in 42 countries. EMBs are institutions that are mandated to organize or, in some instances, supervise the essential elements of electoral process. EMB autonomy is thus important for the institution's ability to resist incumbent manipulation and deter electoral fraud.

**Electoral violence and intimidation, repression, or harassment** of the opposition **by the government** before and during election are also becoming increasingly common – deteriorations are registered in 40 countries on each of these indicators,

demonstrating that election-related violence and intimidation are becoming a serious challenge.

### 3 | ELECTIONS IN DEMOCRACIES AND AUTOCRACIES

Figures 4 and 5 reveal further details about the worrying trend using the Regimes of the World (RoW) typology (see Box). Figure 4 replicates Figure 3 focusing on changes in autocracies only. It shows that more than half of all deteriorations in the integrity of elections registered since 2000 (61%) happened in countries that are now classified as autocracies.

FIGURE 4. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS DECLINING IN AUTOCRACIES, 2000–2023

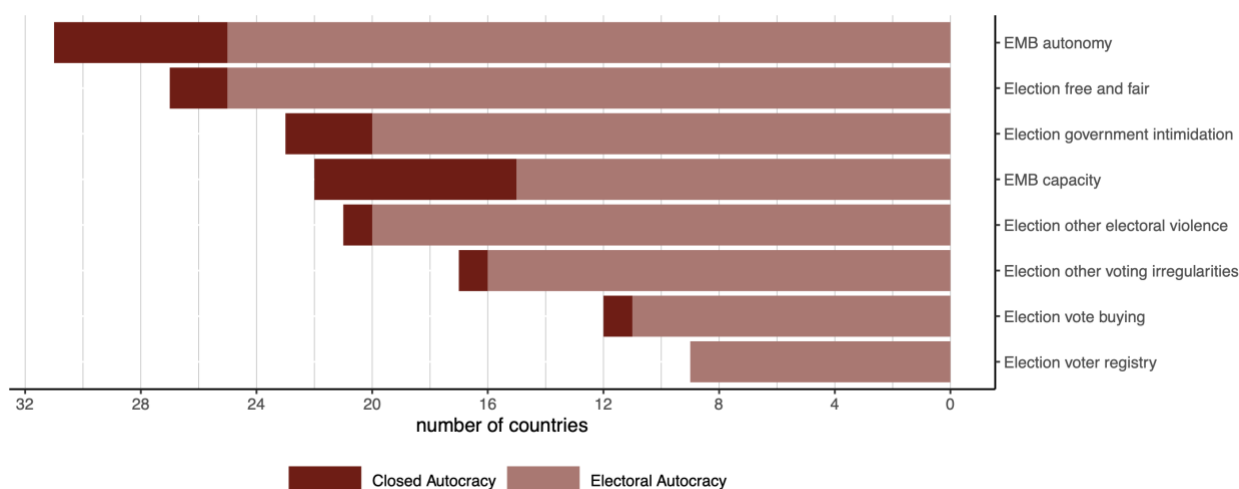


Figure 4 plots the number of countries classified as autocracies in 2023 that decline statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index, distinguishing between closed and electoral autocracies. An indicator is declining statistically significantly if its 2023 values is smaller than its maximum value between 2000 and 2022, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

The **EMB autonomy** is the most frequently attacked aspect of clean elections in countries that are now classified as autocracies. It weakens clearly and substantially in 31 countries, which corresponds to 74% of all declines in this component worldwide (N=42 in Figure 3).

The **free- and fairness of elections** deteriorates in 27 countries that are now classified as autocracies (60% of all declines shown in Figure 3), while **government intimidation of the opponents** gets worse in 23 countries (58% of all declines shown in Figure 3).

These numbers suggest that attacks on electoral integrity often lead to democratic breakdown, and that attacks on elections continue even after countries turn into autocracies.

Figure 5 replicates Figure 3 focusing on countries that are classified as democracies in 2023. It reveals a worrying trend that the quality of elections is also increasingly worsening in democracies. Notably, this core institution of democracy used to be relatively unaffected during earlier years of the third wave of autocratization.<sup>2</sup>

The level of **electoral violence** has clearly increased in 19 democracies, making it the worst affected aspect of the Clean Elections in democracies.



The **free- and fairness of elections** is declining in 18 democracies, while **government intimidation of the opposition** is becoming more common in 17 democracies. These trends mean that there is a need to broaden efforts to protect electoral integrity.

FIGURE 5. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS DECLINING IN DEMOCRACIES, 2000–2023

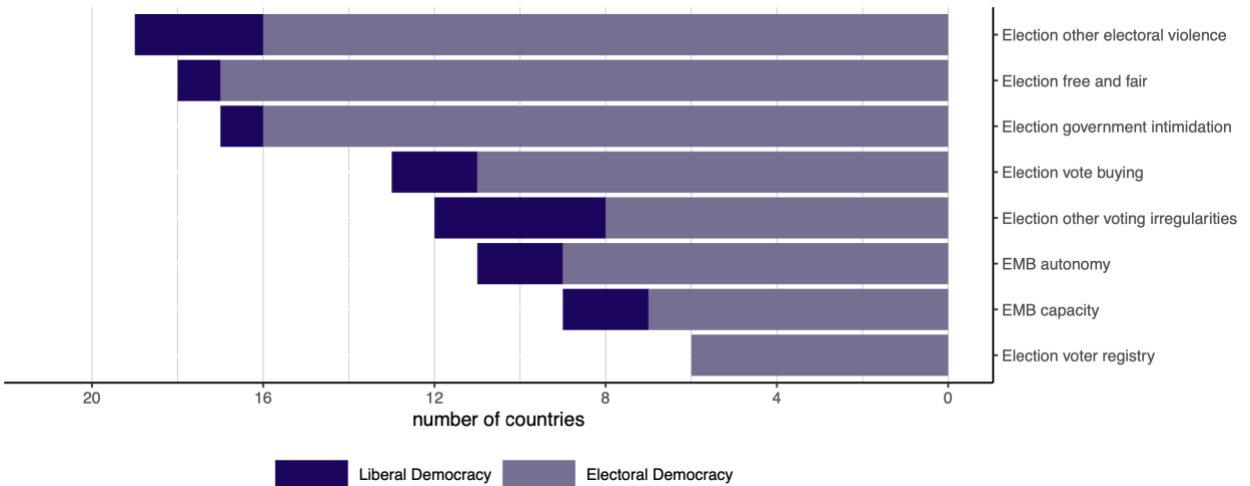


Figure 5 plots the number of countries that are classified as democracies in 2023 that decline statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index, distinguishing between liberal and electoral democracies. An indicator is declining statistically significantly if its 2023 values is smaller than its maximum value between 2000 and 2022, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

<sup>2</sup> The Clean Elections Index is the second worst affected component of democracy as of 2023 – deteriorating in 23 countries and improving in twelve. This core institution of democracy used to be relatively unaffected during earlier years of the “third wave of autocratization”. For more details about global trends for democracy and autocracy see Nord., M. et al. 2024. [Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot](#), V-Dem Institute.

### Spotlight on Election Management Body (EMB) autonomy

The role of EMB autonomy in democratization has been examined as a *sign* indicating future positive developments, as a *condition* of democracy's success, and as factor that pro-democracy actor can *strengthen* to facilitate success. Preserving and strengthening EMB autonomy sends a particularly strong signal that those in power are committed to the integrity of the electoral process, even if this can lead to them losing power. Such commitment indicates that factors important to democracy's success are present. Conversely, undermining EMB autonomy signals willingness to subvert the electoral process. Especially so if those in power are pushing it to the lowest levels. Such signals merit alertness on the part of pro-democracy actors and their partners.

Such signals not only inform, but affect the electoral process, by aiding political actors and citizens in committing to the democratic electoral rules of the game. Knowing that others are committed as well helps to focus their efforts into the boundaries set by the rules. Autonomous EMBs play a central

role in establishing the credibility of the electoral process, and commitment to respect the results in turn. In settings where the electoral process and its outcomes are contested, they can also play a lead role in resolving such contests in ways that uphold the democratic rules of the game.

Ongoing research at V-Dem suggests that in democratization, EMB autonomy needs to accompany EMB capacity for them to contribute to its success. Democratizing countries often find themselves needing to strengthen their capacity to administer democratic elections. Building up such capacity is important, but unless it is accompanied by EMB autonomy, even the most competently executed elections cannot guarantee that the electoral process will contribute to democracy's success. Thus, strengthening EMB autonomy offers an important avenue to pro-democracy actors and their partners of facilitating success.

See also:

Lundstedt, M. and A.B. Edgell, (2003) [Institutions of electoral integrity and clientelism: The role of electoral management bodies](#). V-Dem Working Paper 108.

Notably, the EMB autonomy separates democracies from autocracies the most clearly: it is the most attacked aspect of the Clean Elections in countries that are now classified as autocracies, while in democracies, a substantially smaller proportion of countries are affected. Among other things, it means that EMBs are a bedrock of electoral integrity.

## 4| ELECTIONS IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES

This century saw 82 episodes of autocratization in 72 different countries, as identified using the ERT methodology (see Box). Figure 6 summarizes which

specific aspects of election integrity were undermined during autocratization processes.

In half of all autocratizing countries ( $N=41$ ), **free and fair election**-indicator of the Clean Elections Index registered substantial and statistically significant decline. The second worst affected aspect of democracy was the **EMB autonomy**, deteriorating substantially and significantly in 39 of autocratizing countries (48% of all declines). In 36 autocratizing countries (44%), **governments** were increasingly **intimidating**, repressing, and harassing the opposition. Finally, **election-related violence** and **voting irregularities** increased substantially in 26 and 23 autocratizing countries, respectively.

FIGURE 6. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS DECLINING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 2000–2023

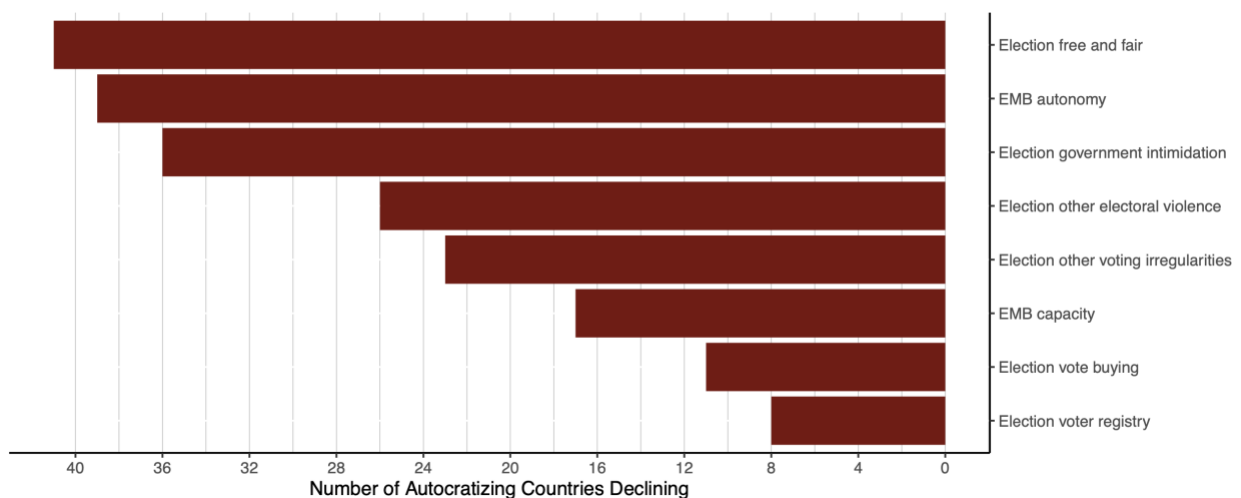


Figure 6 plots the number of autocratizing countries declining statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index. An indicator is declining statistically significantly if its value at the end of autocratization episode is smaller than its value before the autocratization episode, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.



**FIGURE 7. MEAN CHANGES IN THE CLEAN ELECTIONS INDEX, 2013-2023**

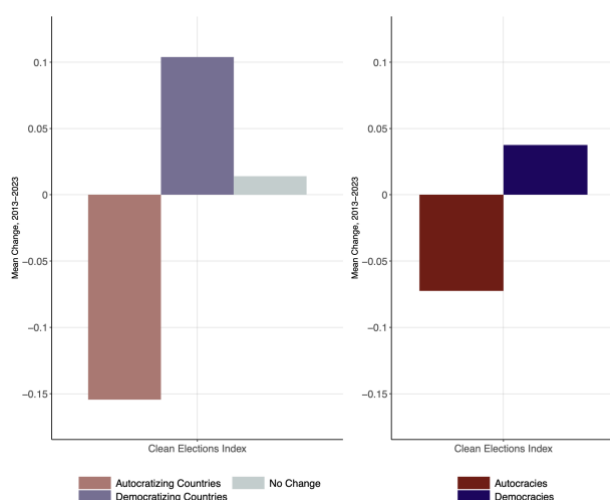


Figure 7 shows mean changes in levels of the Clean Elections Index between 2013 and 2023. Countries are divided into autocratizing, democratizing, and the ones that experience no statistically significant change (left panel), and autocracies and democracies (right panel).

## ASSAULTS ON ELECTORAL INTEGRITY AND AUTOCRATIZATION REINFORCE EACH OTHER

Looking at the mean changes in the Clean Elections Index during the last decade, Figure 7 (left panel) demonstrates that autocratizing countries witnessed the most dramatic declines on the Clean Elections Index (above 0.15 on the 0-1 scale). This stands in contrast to 0.7 percentage point decline for countries that are now classified as autocracies (right panel), suggesting that decline in the quality of elections also affects democracies that are in decline.

The opposite also holds true. Levels of the Clean Elections Index increased the most in democratizing countries (0.1 on the 0-1 scale), while countries that are classified as democracies in 2023 registered only 0.4 percentage point increase. In “stable” countries, the extent of average change was positive but negligible.

These two opposite trends indicate that attacks on elections are part and parcel of autocratization process, and that protecting and promoting the integrity of elections is critical for revitalizing democracy. Calls for protecting election integrity in the face of ongoing “third wave of autocratization”<sup>3</sup> are thus increasingly urgent.

### Episodes of Democratization and Autocratization

The ERT methodology was developed and fine-tuned over several years by a large team at the V-Dem Institute. It has now been vetted by extensive peer review in the scientific community and published in a high-ranking journal.

While sparing the reader technical details, the ERT method works by first identifying small annual changes (>0.01 on the 0-1 scale) in a country’s level of electoral democracy (measured by the V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index). If they accumulate within several years to a substantial magnitude (>0.1), it is an episode of either autocratization (decrease) or democratization. Smaller cumulative changes represent fluctuations of lesser consequence that could result from uncertainty in the underlying measures.

The data on episodes is available in the [Episodes of Regime Transformation \(ERT\) Dataset](#).

See also:

Maerz, S. F. et al. (2023). [Episodes of regime transformation](#). *Journal of Peace Research*.

## 5 | ELECTIONS IN DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES

There were 80 episodes of democratization in 59 different countries between 2000 and 2024, as identified using the new ERT methodology. Figure 8 reveals details about which specific aspects of election integrity were improving during democratization processes.

The most notable finding is that the **EMB autonomy** has improved in almost half ( $N=35$ ) of all democratization episodes, suggesting that ensuring that EMBs have the independence and resources necessary for impartial decision making and action is of the utmost importance for democratic processes.

**Free and fair election**-indicator is the second most improving in democratizing countries, registering increase in 29 democratizing countries (26%). Unsurprisingly, establishing a level playing field for all stakeholders is an important condition for ensuring democracy.

Other notable improvements in democratizing countries include **declines in election voting irregularities** (26 countries, or 33%) and **in election government intimidation** (25 countries, or 31%).

<sup>3</sup> Lührmann, A., and S. Lindberg. 2019. [A Third Wave of Autocratization is Here](#). *Democratization* 26(7).

**FIGURE 8. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS IMPROVING IN DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 2000–2023**

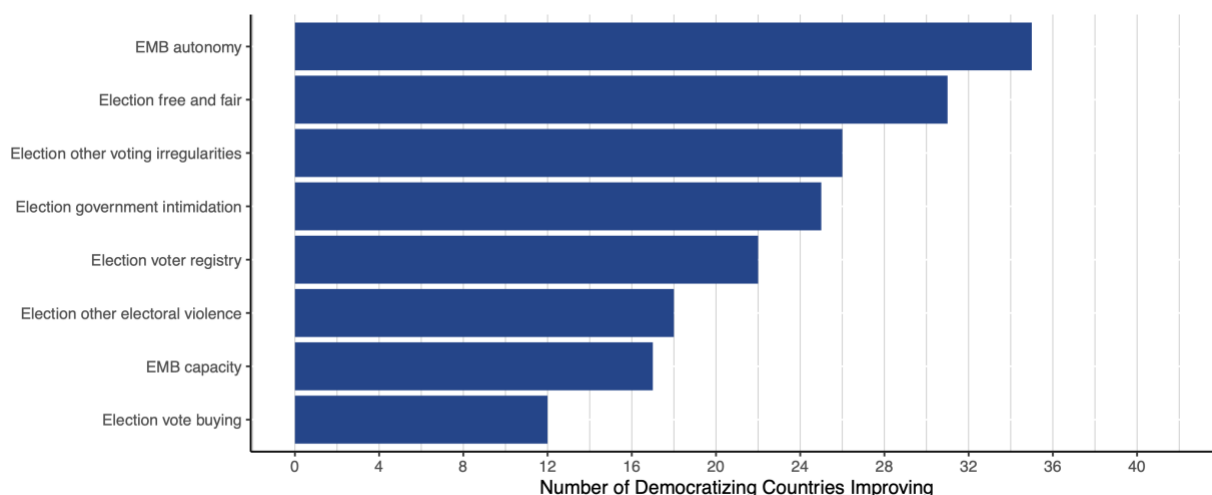


Figure 8 plots the number of democratizing countries improving statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index. An indicator is improving statistically significantly if its value at the end of democratization episode is larger than its value before the democratization episode, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

### EMB AUTONOMY AND FREE- AND FAIRNESS OF ELECTIONS ARE CRITICAL FOR RE-DEMOCRATIZATION

Figure 9 displays patterns for the Clean Elections Index focusing only on those countries where the process of autocratization was successfully halted and reversed to re-democratization (U-Turns). U-Turns can be thought of as cases of “reversed autocratization”, or democratic turnaround.<sup>4</sup> They could be of particular interest for understanding what aspects of elections play fundamental role in contexts where autocratization has taken hold.

There were 36 episodes of U-Turns in 31 different countries between 2000 and 2023. Figure 9 reveals

that strengthening of the **EMB autonomy** and clear and substantial improvements in **free- and fairness of elections** took place in 14 U-Turn episodes each (45% of all cases). This suggests that these two aspects of election integrity are the most important ones for turning autocratization around.

Considerable **reduction in voting irregularities** and **decreases in government intimidation** and harassment of the opposition during elections were registered in nine U-Turn episodes each. Finally, **election-related violence** declined in seven countries where autocratization processes were halted and reversed.

**FIGURE 9. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS IMPROVING DURING RE-DEMOCRATIZATION, 2000-2023**

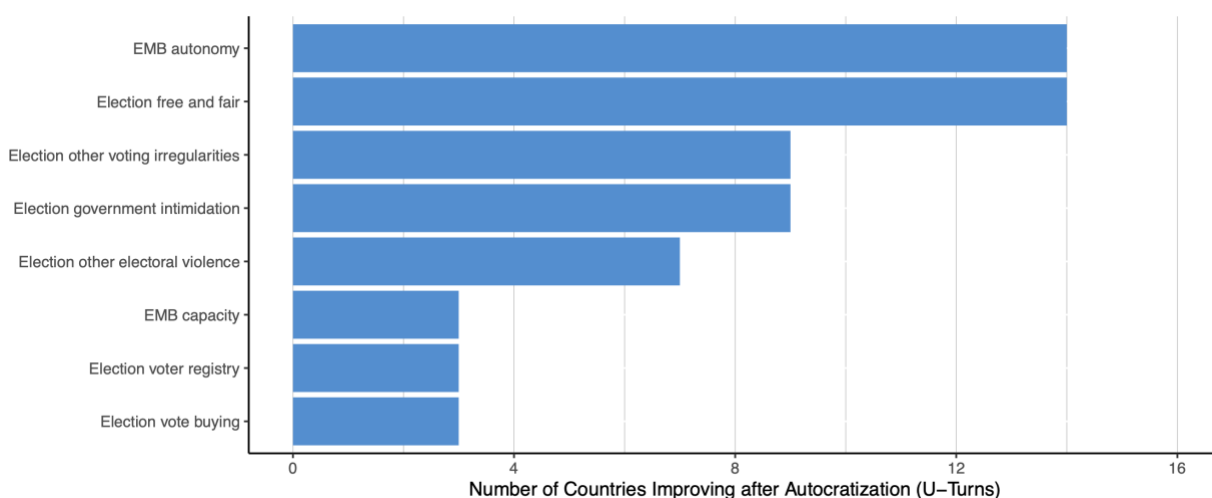


Figure 9 plots the number of countries improving statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index after process of autocratization has been halted and turned around (U-Turns). An indicator is improving statistically significantly if its value at the end of the democratization episode is larger than its value at the end of the autocratization episode, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

<sup>4</sup> Nord, M. et al. 2023. [When Autocratization is Reversed](#). V-Dem Institute: V-Dem Working Paper 147.

**FIGURE 10. COUNTRIES HOLDING ELECTIONS IN 2024**

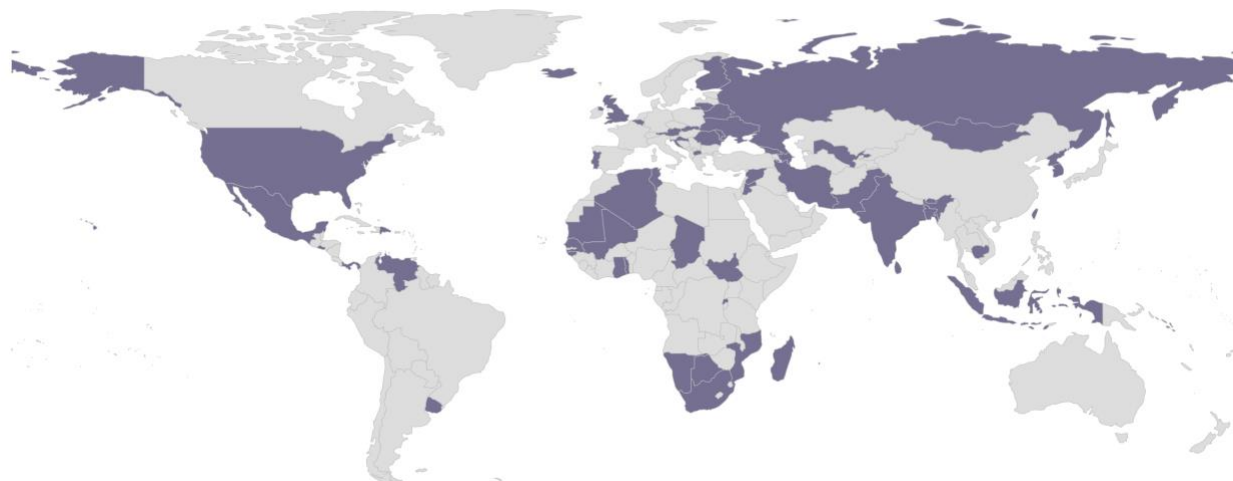


Figure 10 shows countries that hold or already held elections in 2024. Only direct national elections in countries for which V-Dem data is available are shown.

## 6| ELECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD IN 2024

Citizens in over 60 countries go to the polls in 2024. Countries holding elections make up nearly half of the world's population, and the list includes cases that attract global public attention, such as India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, and USA (Figure 10). Should all planned elections take place by the end of the year, 2024 will likely be the new record year in terms of voters heading to the polls (Figure 11).

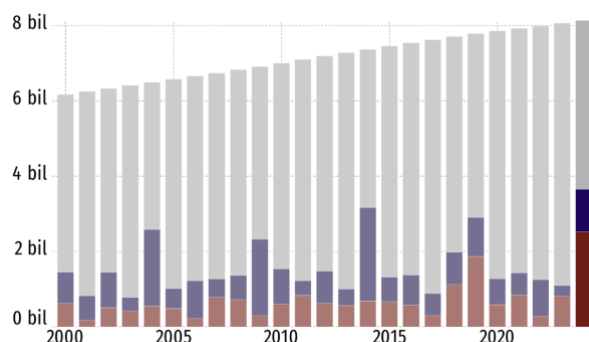
Figure 12 shows that half of over 60 countries ( $N=31$ ) holding national elections this year are experiencing a decline on democracy, posing a risk to election integrity. The EMB autonomy is being undermined in

23 of the countries holding elections in 2024. Only 5% of all countries holding elections in 2024 are improving.

The number of countries witnessing a decline in free and fair elections has more than doubled in the last four years, with 35 countries deteriorating. Moreover, governments in 24 countries are increasingly encroaching upon the autonomy of Election Management Bodies.<sup>5</sup> The erosion of election quality is particularly alarming as elections are critical events that can either reinforce or counteract an autocratization trend.

The fact that a majority of elections during the “super election year” of 2024 take place in such contested spaces makes this year likely to be pivotal for the future of democracy in the world.

**FIGURE 11. POPULATION IN COUNTRIES WITH AT LEAST ONE NATIONAL ELECTION, 2000-2024**



2024 includes elections that already took place, are scheduled, or expected to take place. Countries are grouped by the Regimes of the World index into autocracies (red) and democracies (blue). Population estimates come from the UN World Population Prospects 2022.

## 7| DISCUSSION

Globally, more voters than ever in history will head to the polls in over 60 countries worldwide. Many of those countries have a low score on the Clean Elections Index. More than half are experiencing a decline on democracy, posing a risk to election integrity. In a historic election year, many elections will be less free and fair than the winners want us to believe.

The electoral integrity is now threatened worldwide. The free- and fairness of elections is clearly and substantially worsening in 45 countries across the world, the EMB autonomy is weakening in 42

<sup>5</sup> See Nord., M. et al. 2024. [Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot](#), V-Dem Institute.

**FIGURE 12. ELECTIONS IN 2024**

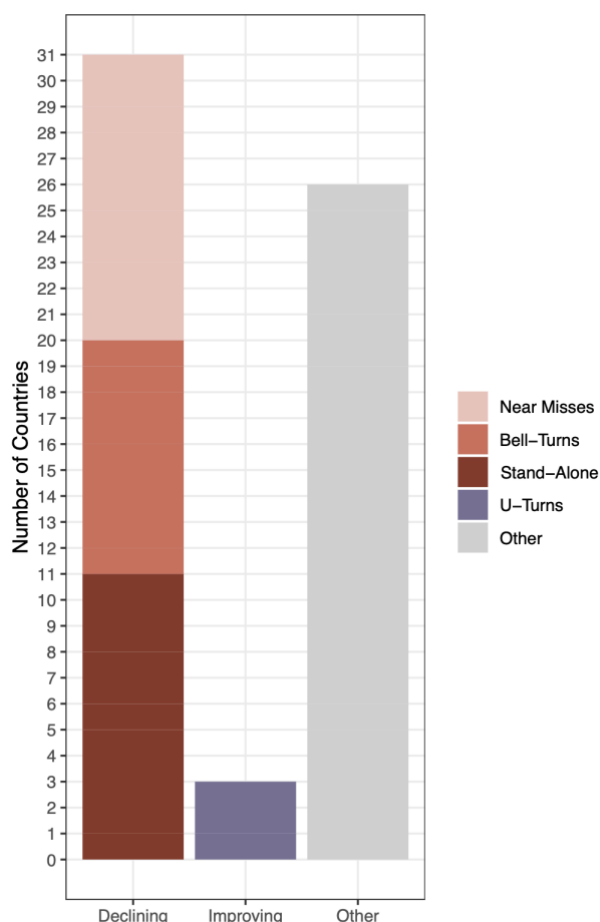


Figure 12 shows the number of countries holding elections in 2024 for which V-Dem data is available. Countries are grouped into declining, improving, and other regimes.<sup>6</sup>

countries, while electoral violence and intimidation, repression, or harassment by the government are increasing in 40 countries each.

These attacks relate less to how elections are organized on the election day and more to the deteriorating democratic environment in general.

Both autocracies and democracies are affected by this global trend. In democracies, attacks on electoral integrity include free- and fairness of elections, government intimidation of the opposition, and electoral violence. In autocracies, the EMB autonomy and free- and fairness of elections are most often under attack.

The EMB autonomy separates democracies from autocracies the most clearly. It is the aspect of elections that is attacked most often and to the greatest degree in autocracies. 74% of all declines in this component correspond to autocracies. Among other things, it means that EMBs are a bedrock of electoral integrity, and that attacks on the EMB autonomy often lead to or occur after a democratic breakdown.

Similarly, the EMB autonomy also seems to separate most clearly autocratizing countries from democratizing ones. It is the second most attacked aspect of elections during the process of autocratization, and the first most improving aspect during the process of democratization. The autonomy of EMBs is important for the institution's ability to resist incumbent manipulation and deter electoral fraud.

Calls to protect electoral integrity are ever increasing. Efforts to strengthening electoral integrity should focus on protecting the EMB autonomy, ensuring that it has the independence and resources necessary for impartial decision making and action. Second, efforts should include establishing a level playing field for all stakeholders, ranging from the opposition to voters. Third, it is important to focus on the democratic environment in which elections occur, most importantly incumbents' intimidation, repression, and harassment of the opposition.

<sup>6</sup> "Stand-alone" refers to cases of autocratization / democratization where the process if autocratization / democratization follows independently, after a period of relative stability. "Bell-Turns" are episodes of change where autocratization follows shortly after, and is connected to, a period of democratization. "U-Turns" are episodes of change where democratization follows shortly after, and is connected to, a period of autocratization. "Near misses" are cases where declines / improvements in democracy levels are close enough to substantial levels (yet below it), meaning that these changes may potentially translate into manifest episodes of autocratization / democratization in the coming years. See: Nord., M. et al. 2024. [Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot](#), V-Dem Institute.



## 8| APPENDIX

### FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT ASPECTS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS, BY REGIME TYPE

FIGURE A1. SELECTED ASPECTS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS, BY REGIME TYPE, 2000-2023

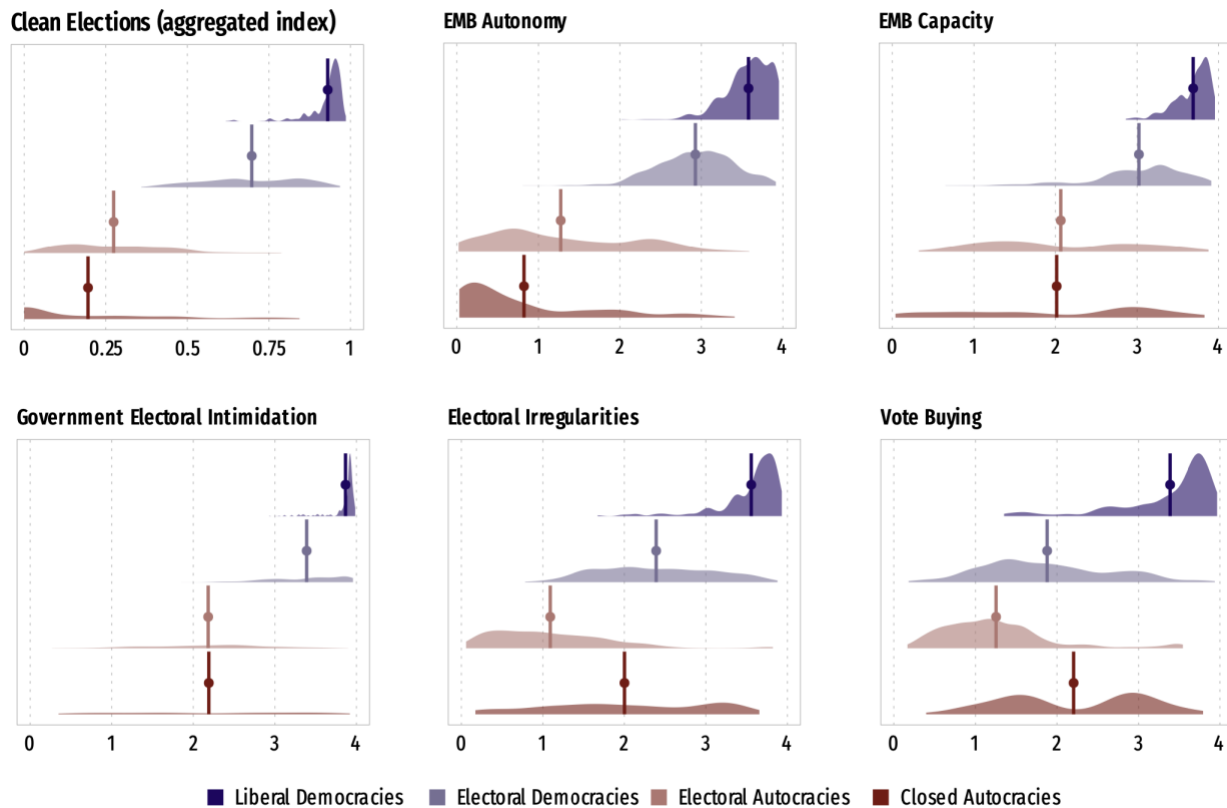


Figure A1 shows selected aspects of Clean Elections (index and indicators) over the four regime types in 2000-2023. The shaded shapes show estimates of how common different values were in a given regime category. Range corresponds to observed lowest and highest values. Vertical bars and circles show averages.

Figure A1 details trends on selected aspects of Clean Elections for 2000-2023. On the **Clean Elections Index**, most liberal democracies occupied the upper quarter of the scale, and electoral democracies the top half. In contrast, autocracies of both types were quite similar. And the difference between average electoral democracies and electoral autocracies reached nearly half of the scale. Though most autocracies were on the lower end, a few reached into the upper half, even close to the level of electoral democracies.

The **EMB autonomy** separates democracies from autocracies the most clearly. In substantive terms, in an average democracy, the EMB had autonomy to act impartially almost all the time, whereas in an average autocracy, the EMB lacked autonomy in consequential matters. Among other things, it means that EMBs are a bedrock of electoral integrity.

On the **EMB capacity**, however, even average autocracies were in the middle of the scale, and a sizeable portion of them were in the upper half. While the EMB autonomy and the EMB capacity often go together, it is not always the case. There are

autocracies enjoying high levels of capacity without consequential autonomy, and democracies with autonomous EMBs that nevertheless lag in capacity. The reasons for the latter relate to state capacity and resources needed to maintain it, particularly in settings where insurgencies may disrupt it.

On the state of **government electoral intimidation**, average autocracies were in the middle of the scale. That is, there may have been serious deficiencies compromising the organization of the election in autocracies, but it could also be a product of human errors and co-incidence or other factors outside the control of the EMB. On the other hand, in an average electoral democracy, any deficits in capacity were neither serious nor widespread.

**Electoral irregularities** and **vote buying** reveal a V-shaped relationship, in which electoral autocracies represent the nadir, and a large minority of closed autocracies bested most electoral democracies. This suggests that some countries subvert the electoral process through different means, without resorting to electoral irregularities and vote buying.

## FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT ASPECTS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS DURING AUTOCRATIZATION

FIGURE A2. SELECTED ASPECTS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS ACROSS AUTOCRATIZATION EPISODES, 2000-2023

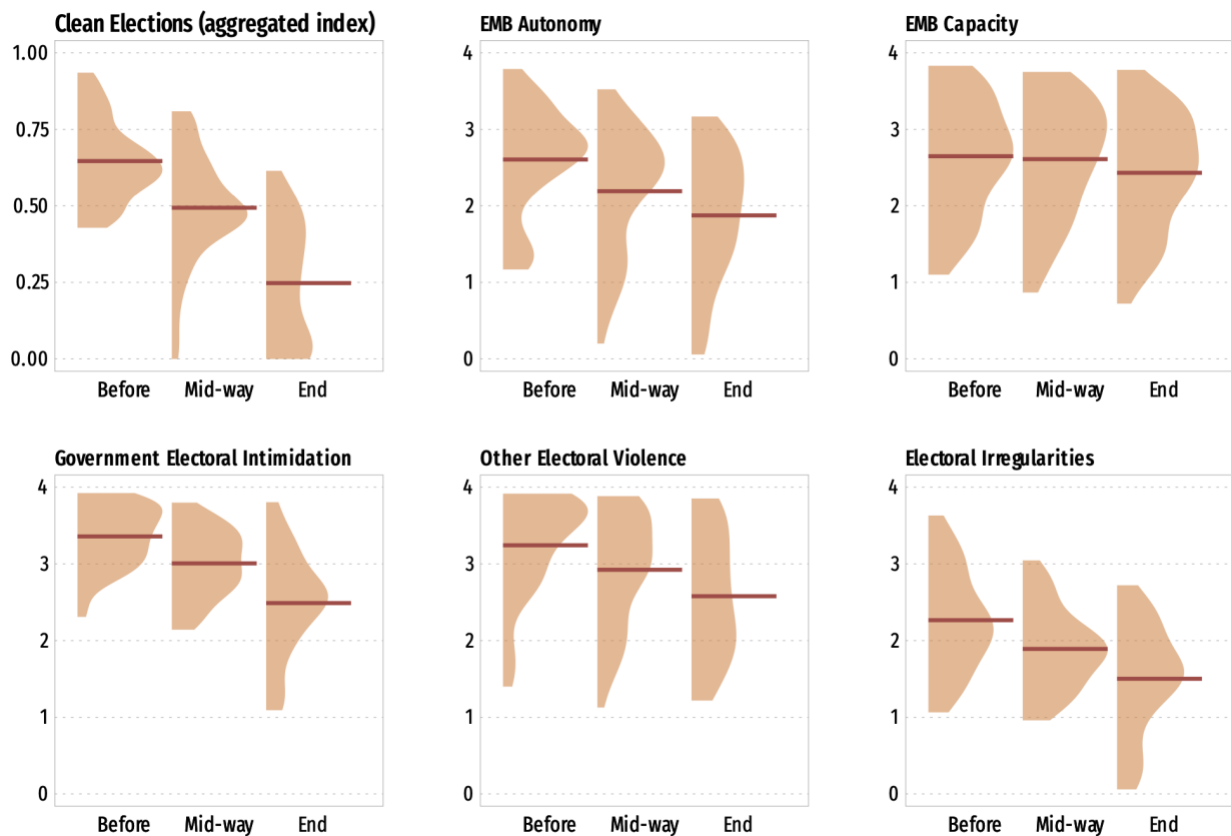


Figure A2 shows selected aspects of Clean Elections in 42 episodes of autocratization that started in a democracy and ended in an autocracy in 2000-2023. Shapes in orange show estimates of how common different values were at different stages of the episodes. Bars in red show the average values.

There were 42 autocratization episodes that started in a democracy and ended in an autocracy in 2000-2023. Figure A2 shows how selected aspects of elections transformed during the process of autocratization. It highlights that in autocratization episodes that resulted in autocracies it was not just the average levels that changed, but the range and dispersion of the values.

The **Clean Election Index** dropped on average over a third of the scale and moved from a mostly upper-half distribution to a mostly lower-half ones. In short, subverting the electoral process is a core element of autocratization.

Of the two EMB indicators, the **EMB autonomy** showed a drop in the average level, but also in the range, yet in stark contrast, the **EMB capacity** did not follow suit. In these episodes, high levels of EMB capacity did not prevent autocratization to initiate and end democracy.

**Electoral intimidation by the government** increased somewhat. So did **electoral violence** by actors unaffiliated with the government. **Electoral irregularities** experienced drops similar to electoral intimidation but started already almost a quarter of the scale lower on average.

FIGURE A3. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS DECLINING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 2023

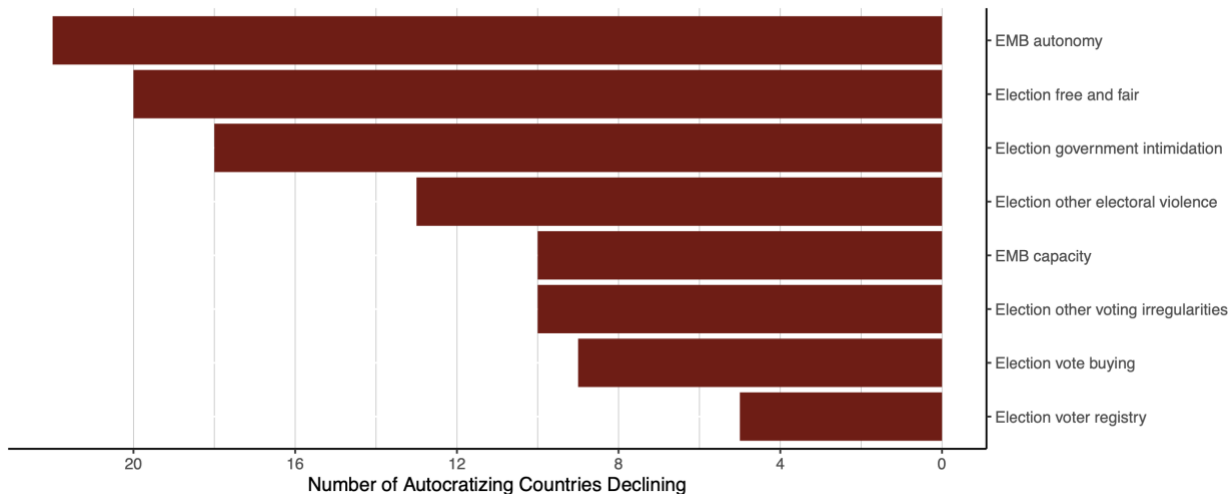


Figure A3 plots the number of currently autocratizing countries declining statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index. An indicator is declining statistically significantly if its 2023 value is smaller than its value before the autocratization episode, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

Figure A3 reveals further details about process of autocratization focusing on 42 ongoing episodes of autocratization only (as of 2023).

It shows that the **EMB autonomy** is the aspect of the Clean Elections that autocrats attack most often and to the greatest degree during the process of autocratization. It worsened in more than a half ( $N=22$ ) of currently autocratizing countries.

It is followed by **free- and fairness of elections** and election-related **government intimidation and harassment** of the opposition, with 20 and 18 autocratizing countries registering substantial declines, respectively.

**FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT ASPECTS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS DURING DEMOCRATIZATION**

Figure A4 reveals further details about democratization processes focusing on 18 currently ongoing episodes of democratization only. It shows that **election voter registry** is the aspect of the Clean Elections Index most likely to improve when a process of democratization takes hold. It significantly improving in eight out of 18 democratizing countries. The extent to which elections are **free and fair** is significantly improving in seven democratizing countries, while **EMB autonomy** and **reduction in voting irregularities** take place in six countries each.

FIGURE A4. INDICATORS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS IMPROVING IN DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 2023

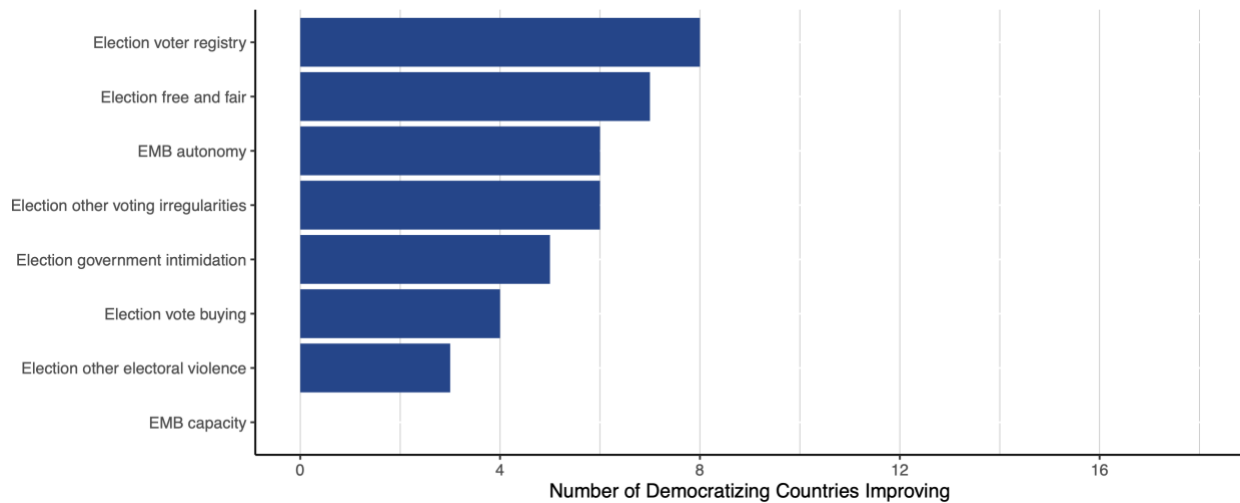


Figure A4 plots the number of currently democratizing countries improving statistically significantly on the indicators of the Clean Elections Index. An indicator is improving statistically significantly if its 2023 value is larger than its value before the democratization episode, and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

FIGURE A5. SELECTED ASPECTS OF CLEAN ELECTIONS ACROSS DEMOCRATIZATION EPISODES, 2000-2023

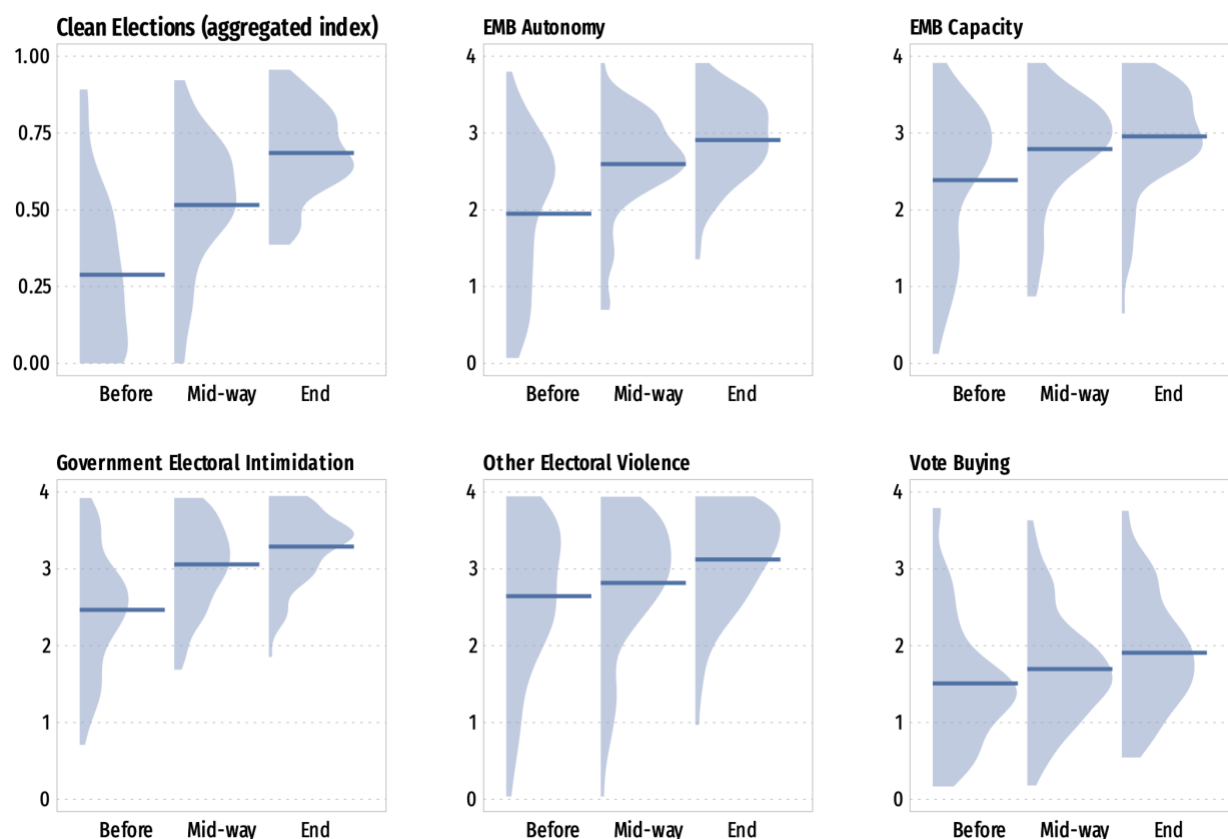


Figure A5 shows selected aspects of Clean Elections in 74 episodes of democratization in 2000-2023. Shapes in light blue show estimates of how common different values were at different stages of the episodes. Bars in dark blue show the average values.

There were 74 democratization episodes during this century. Figure A5 shows how selected aspects of elections transformed during the process of democratization. It highlights that both the average levels and the ranges of Clean Elections and its constitutive attributes changed in the process.

This is most starkly shown by the **Clean Elections Index**. Not only has the average improved by nearly half of the whole scale, but also the lowest levels were near the mid-way average by the end of the episode.

On the **EMB autonomy**, the average was already at the middle at the start of the episode, thanks to a sizeable minority of the episodes starting at good levels. The average has further improved by about a quarter of the scale. Changes in the **EMB capacity**

followed the same pattern, but the starting values were even better and the concentration into the upper end of the scale was less pronounced.

Changes in **electoral intimidation by the government** and **other electoral violence** were even less pronounced, yet again with most episodes starting under relatively good conditions. Despite this, a small minority of the democratization episodes succeeded even though it started under relatively bad conditions.

**Vote buying** stands in contrast with these developments. Neither its average, nor its range and distribution changed notably. In this light, efforts to curb it do not seem necessary, and it may be also more costly to change than other aspects of the electoral process.



# NATIONAL ELECTIONS ACROSS THE WORLD

FIGURE A6. NATIONAL ELECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD'S REGIONS, 2000-2024

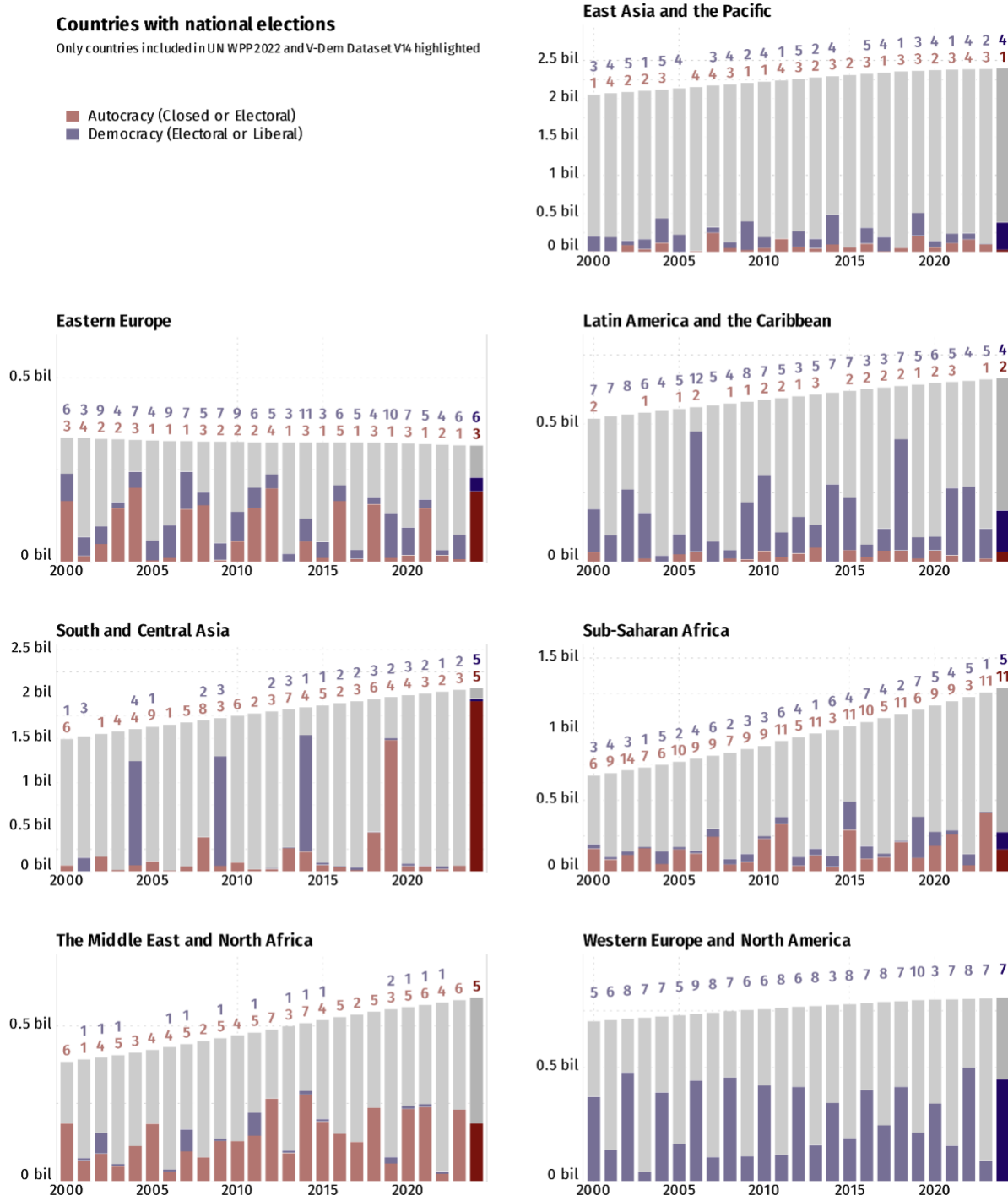


Figure A6 shows a quarter of a century of national elections around the world's regions, 2000-2024. 2024 includes elections that already took place, are scheduled, or expected to take place in 2024. Countries are grouped by the Regimes of the World index. Population estimates (2000-2021) and median projections (2022-2024) come from the UN World Population Prospects 2022.

# Global Standards, Local Knowledge

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## V-Dem Regional Centers

The Regional Centers aim to further enhance regional research and the involvement of regional scholars in the V-Dem Project



**Balkans**



**Central Asia**



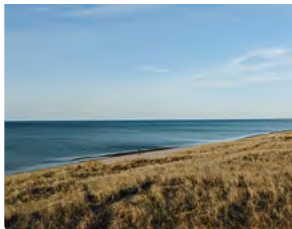
**East Asia**



**Eastern Europe  
& Russia**



**Latin America**



**North America**



**Southern Africa**



**Southern Europe**



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