World Justice Project

Rule of Law Index 2025





About the World Justice Project

- Independent, multidisciplinary organization formed in 2009
- Headquartered in Washington, DC, with an office in Mexico City
- Mission: create knowledge, build awareness, and stimulate action to advance the rule of law worldwide

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Conceptual Framework of the WJP Rule of Law Index

The conceptual framework of the WJP Rule of Law Index is comprised of eight factors further disaggregated into 44 sub-factors. These factors and sub-factors are presented as follows:



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ABOUT THE INDEX

Measurement Approach

Two sources of output-oriented primary data comprised of experience and perception-based questions:

- **A General Population Poll (GPP):**
  Probability sample – historically 1,000 respondents per country (smaller in some countries based on population)
- **Qualified Respondents' Questionnaires (QRQs):**
  Completed by in-country experts in civil and commercial law; criminal and constitutional law; labor law; and public health.

Supplemented by data from Third Party Sources (TPS)



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CREATING KNOWLEDGE

WJP Rule of Law Index

- Measures experiences and perceptions of the rule of law in 143 countries and jurisdictions
- **215,000+** household surveys and **4,100+** expert questionnaires
- Over 550 perception and experience based questions
- Period of data collection: February through June 2025
- Released annually



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ABOUT THE INDEX

Strengths and Limitations

STRENGTHS

- Complementary, output-oriented data sources reflect conditions experienced by users of the justice system, accounting for different perspectives on the rule of law
- Data undergoes robust statistical testing to determine the significance of changes in scores over time

LIMITATIONS

- Data sheds light on rule of law dimensions that appear comparatively strong or weak but are not specific enough to establish causation
- Scores for some countries may be sensitive to the specific points in time when the data collection occurred

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Building awareness

Who Uses Our Data

Governments and Bilateral Aid Agencies

Governments of India, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Mexico, Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan, United States



Multilateral Organizations

European Union; International Monetary Fund; OECD; Open Government Partnership; World Bank; United Nations

Civil Society and Media

CNN; The Economist; International Justice Mission; Mo Ibrahim Foundation; Transparency International;
The New York Times; U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Business

Analyse Africa; Ernst & Young; Google; KPMG; Microsoft; Moody's; UBS

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2025 RULE OF LAW INDEX

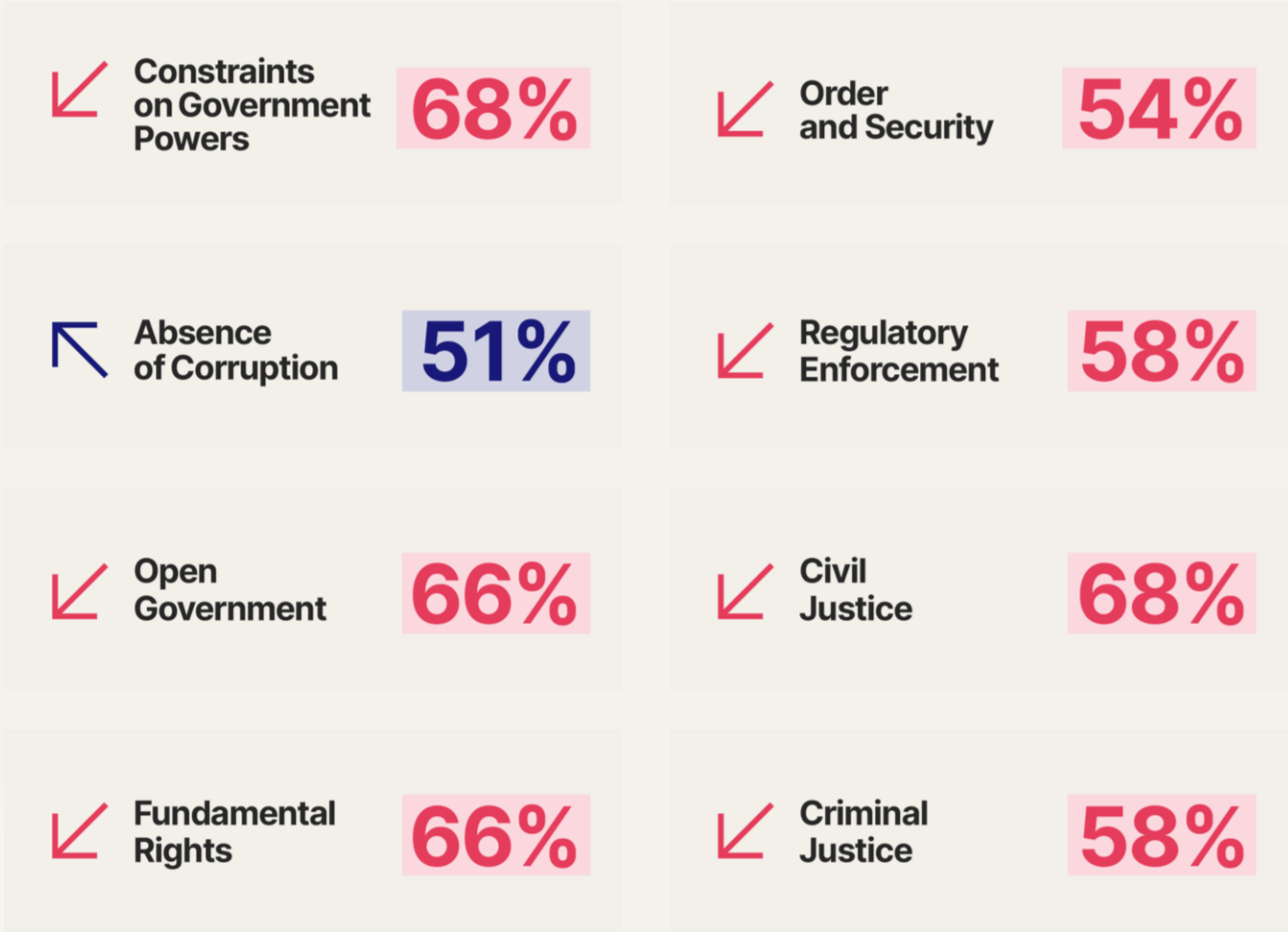
Global Findings

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Broad Declines in 7 of 8 Rule of Law Factors

Percentage of Countries that:

Improved Declined



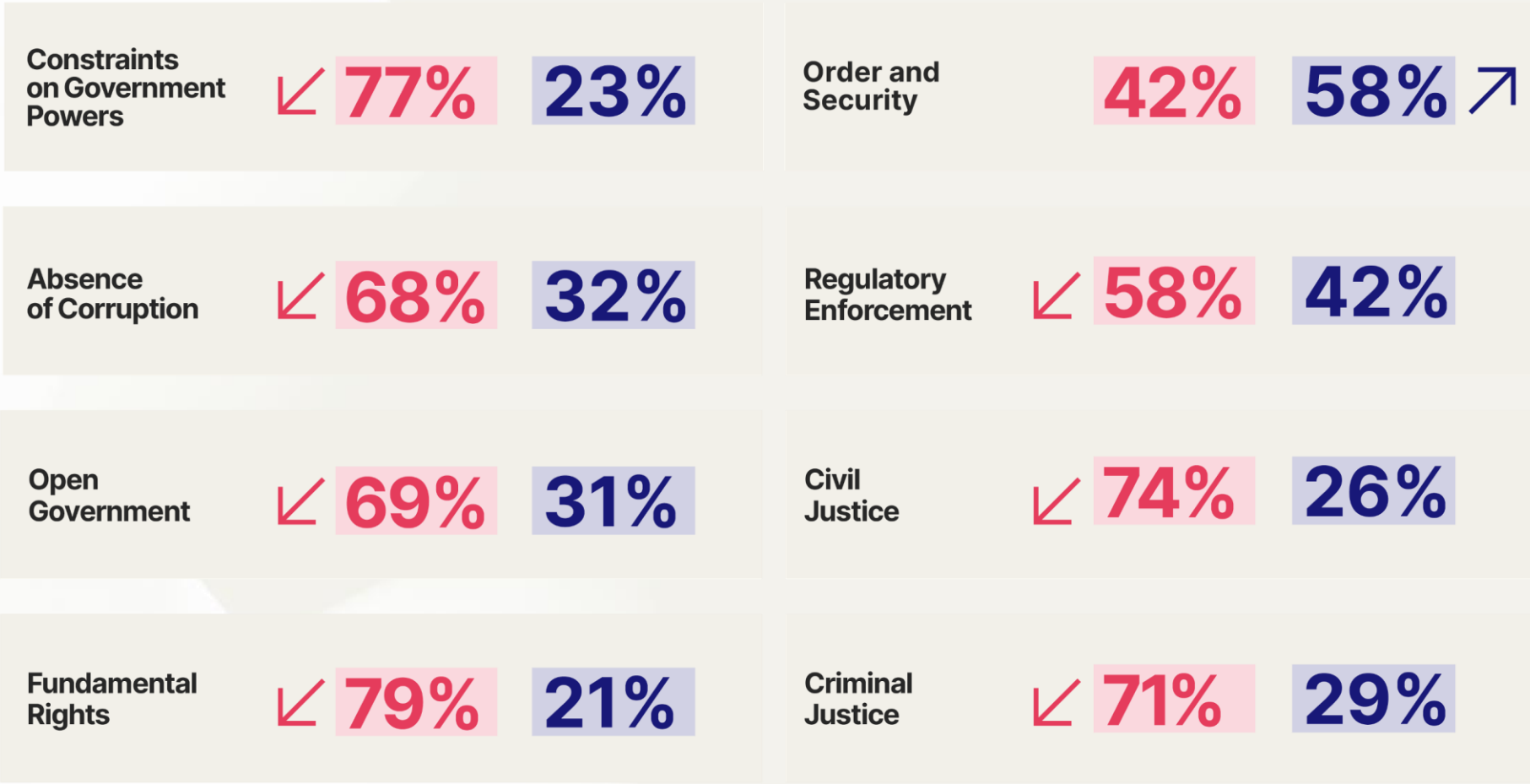
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THE GLOBAL RULE OF LAW RECESSION 2015 – 2025

Declines in 7 of 8 Rule of Law Factors

Percentage of Countries that:

Declined Improved



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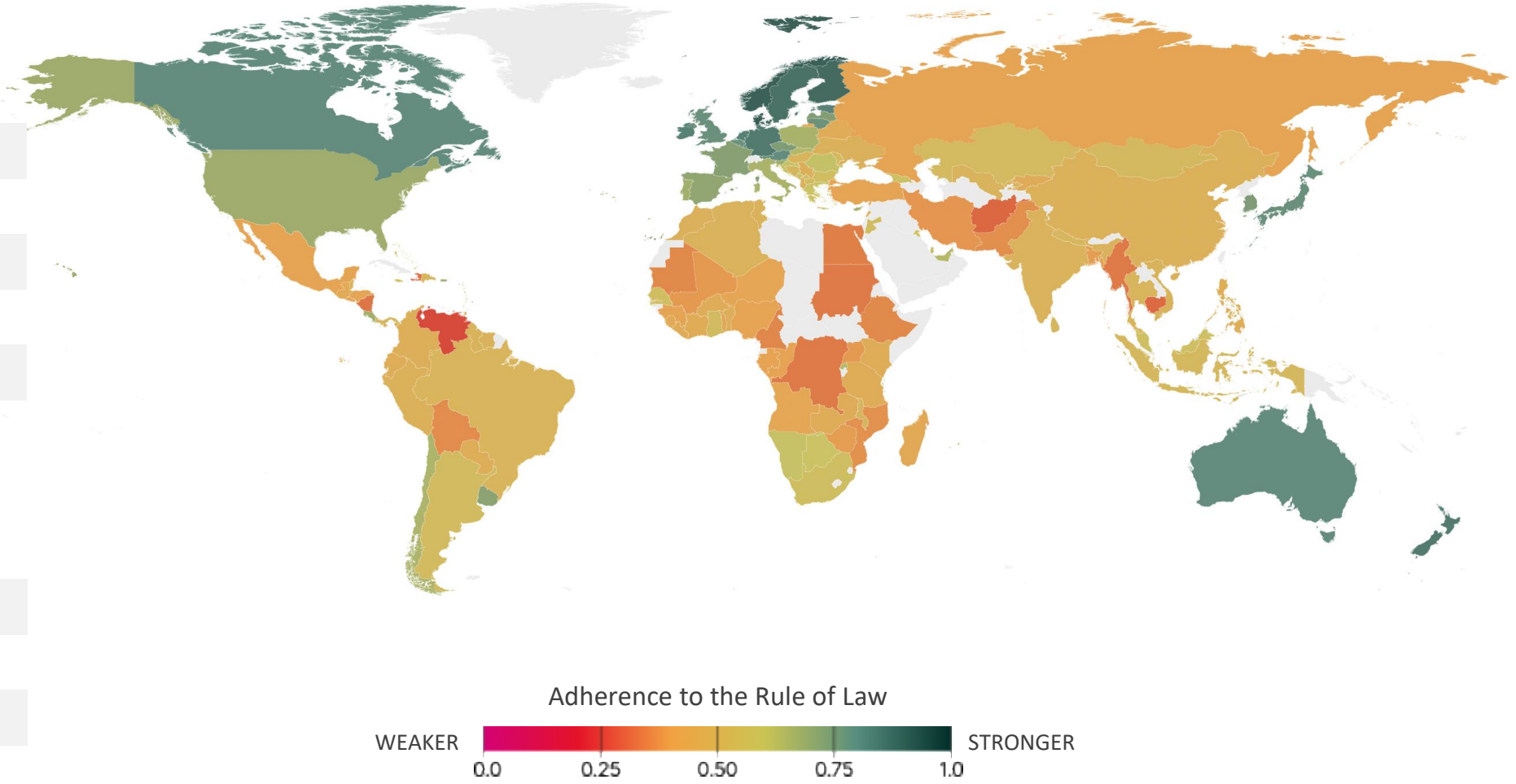
2025 WJP Rule of Law Index Overall Scores

Top 5 Performers

Global Rank	Overall Score	Country/ Jurisdiction
1	0.90	Denmark
2	0.89	Norway
3	0.87	Finland
4	0.85	Sweden
5	0.83	New Zealand

Bottom 5 Performers

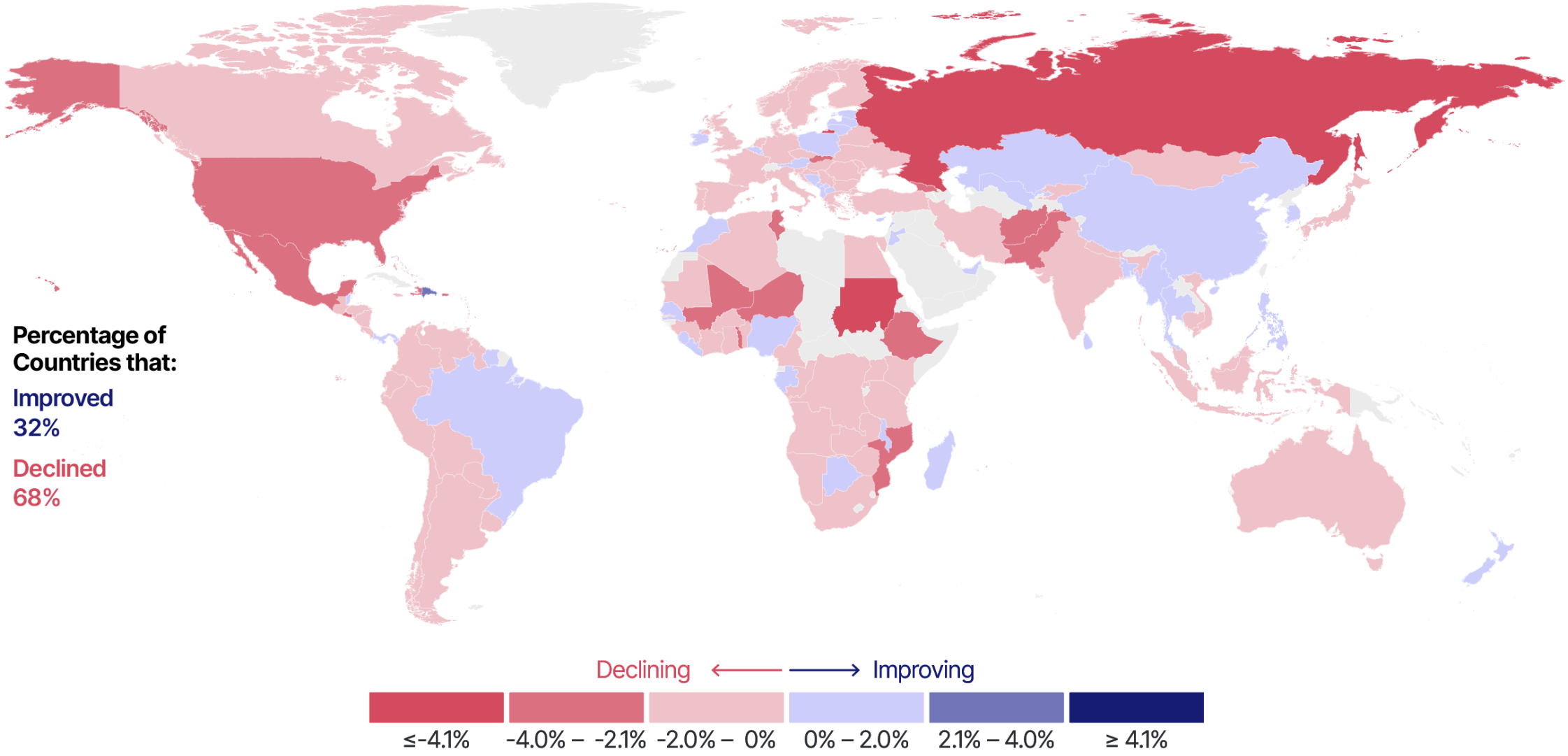
Global Rank	Overall Score	Country/ Jurisdiction
139	0.33	Nicaragua
140	0.32	Haiti
141	0.31	Cambodia
142	0.31	Afghanistan
143	0.26	Venezuela, RB



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GLOBAL RULE OF LAW TRENDS

Percentage Change in Overall Scores (2024–2025)

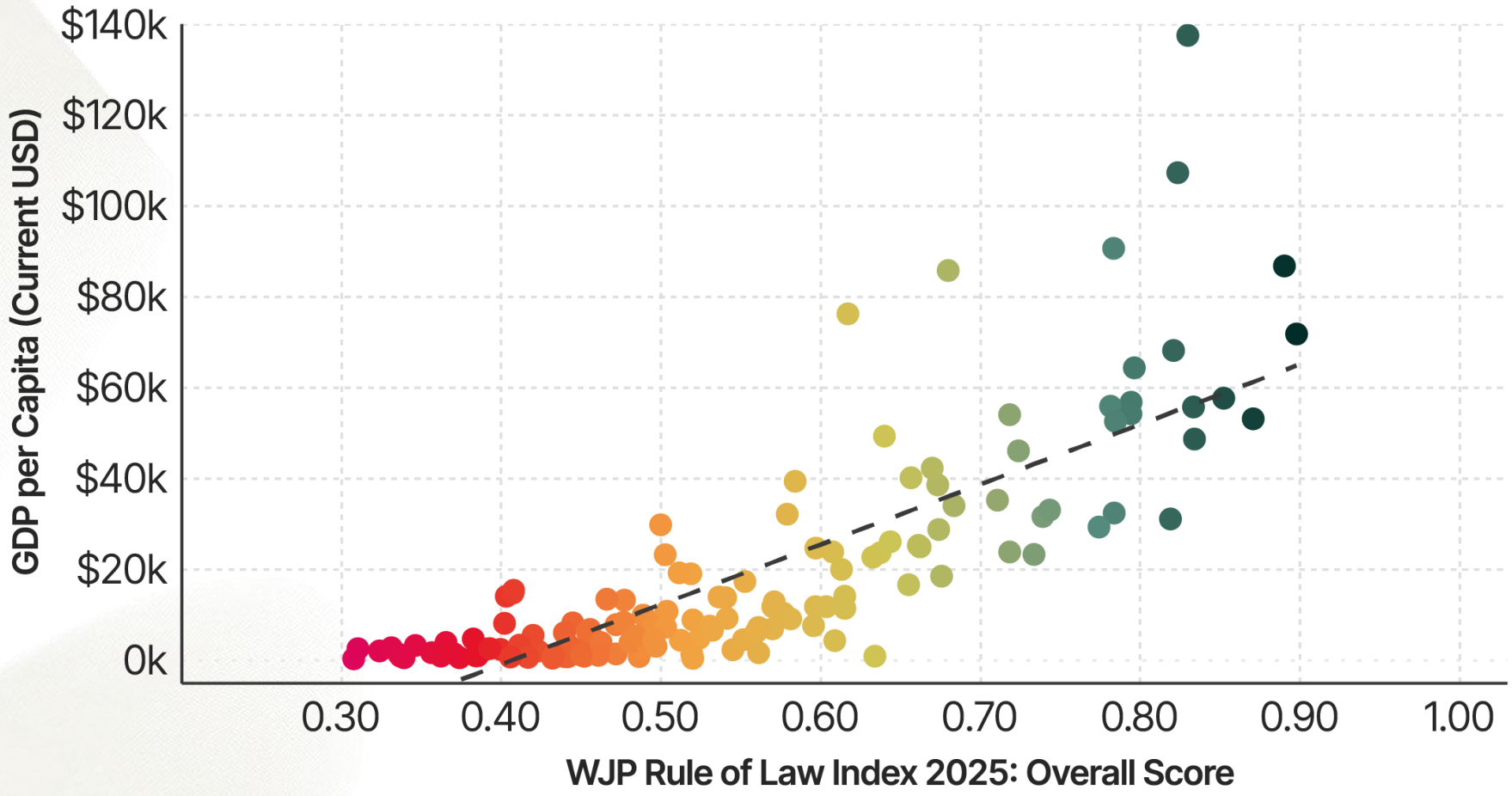


* Annual percentage change in overall score is rounded to one decimal place. Countries with annual percentage changes in overall scores that round to 0.0% have been graphed according to their unrounded scores in order to show changes.

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BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE RULE OF LAW

Where rule of law is stronger, so is the economy



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BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE RULE OF LAW

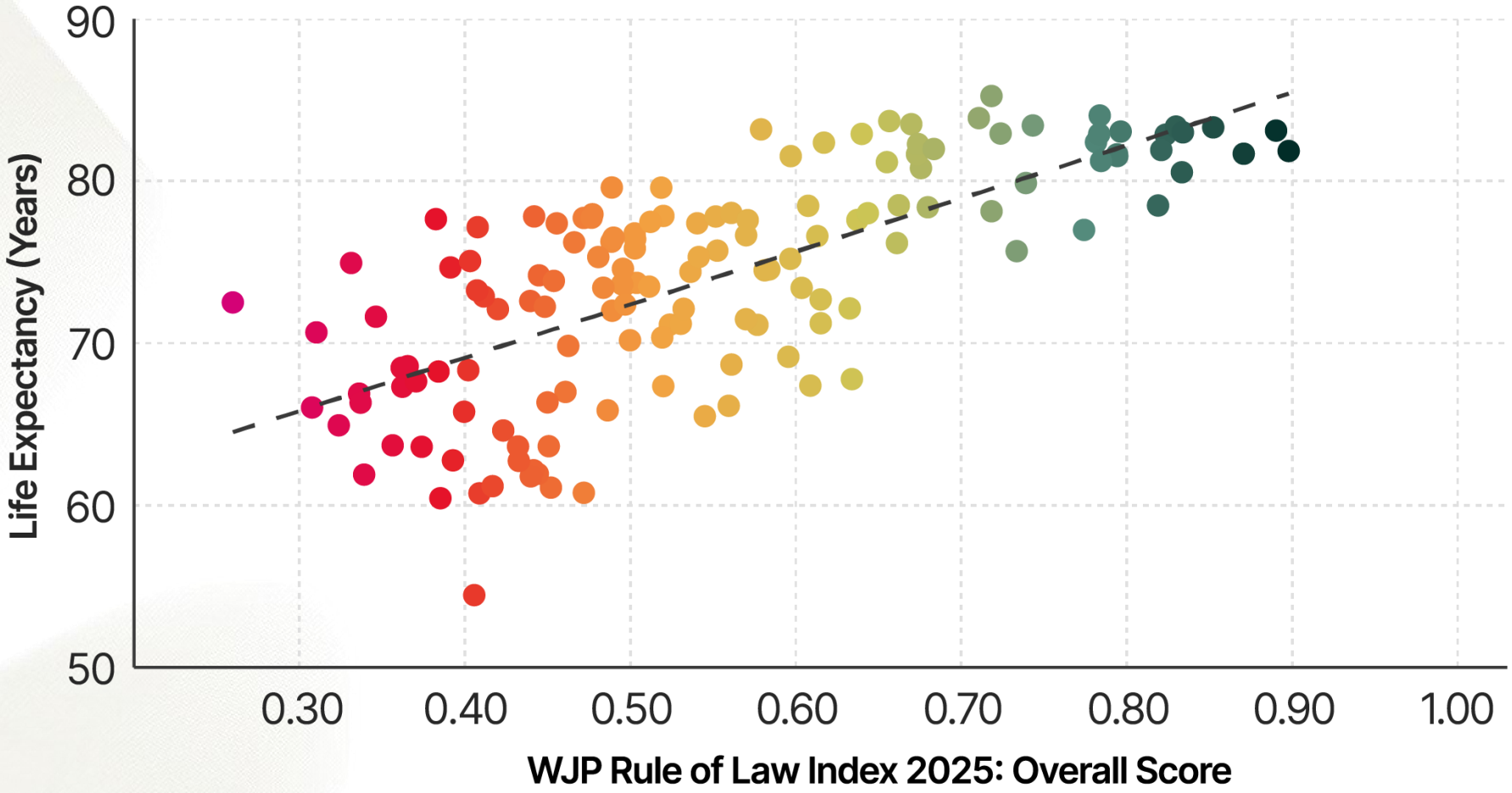
More peaceful countries enjoy greater rule of law



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BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE RULE OF LAW

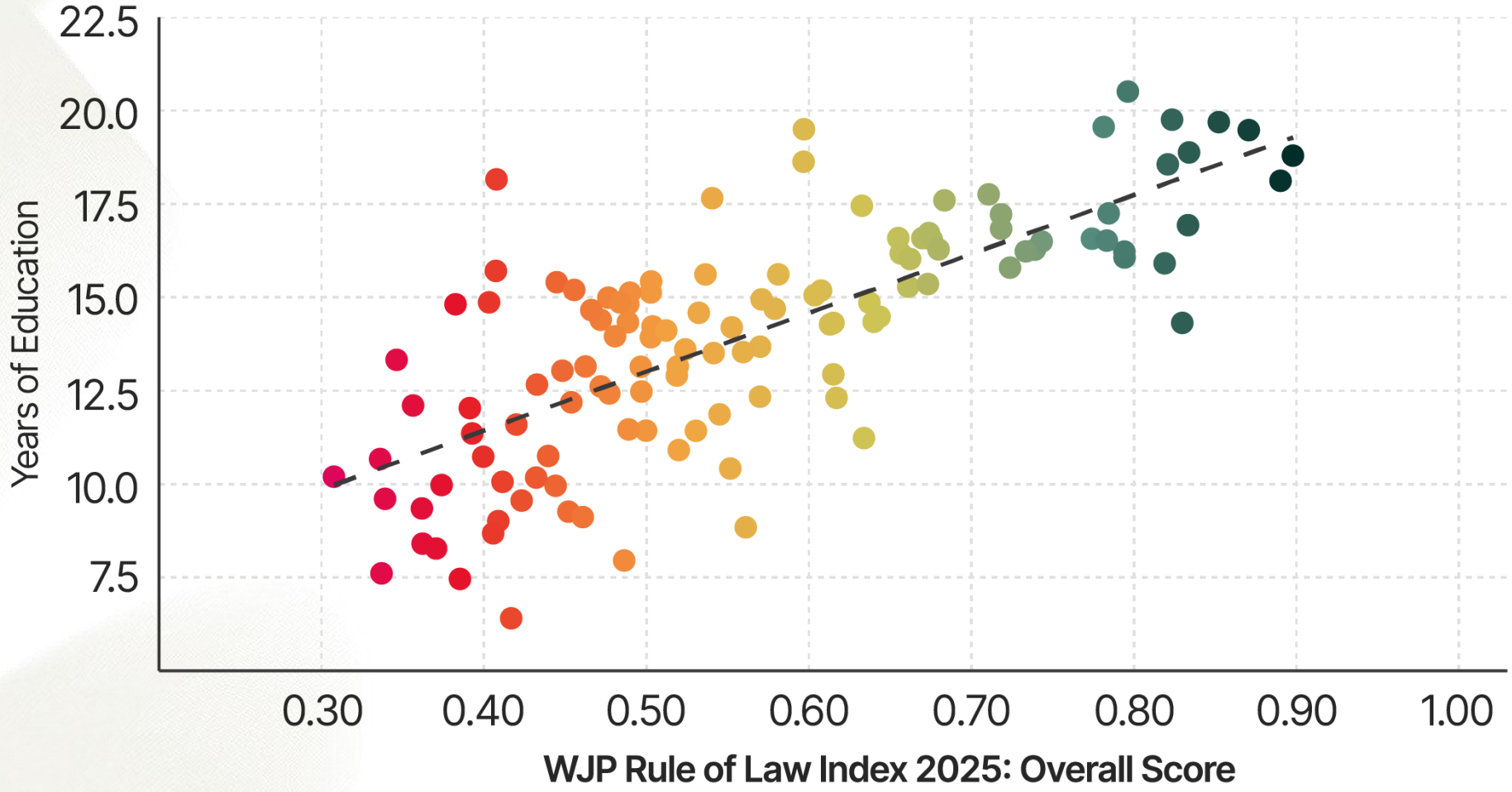
People live longer in countries with higher rule of law



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BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE RULE OF LAW

People are more educated where rule of law prevails

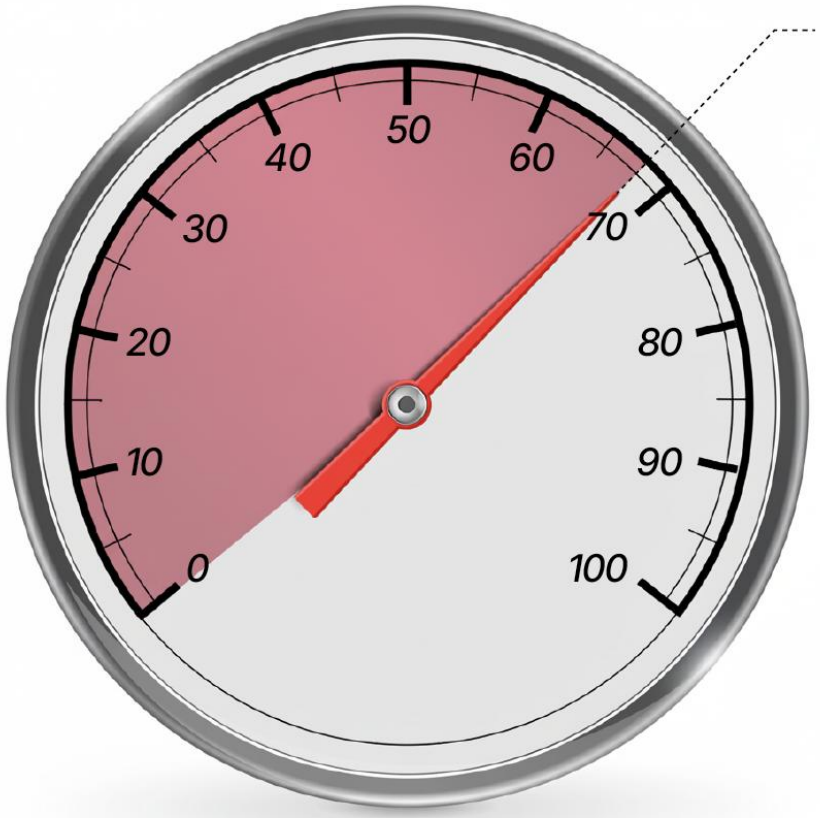


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Policy Insights

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The global rule of law recession is accelerating.

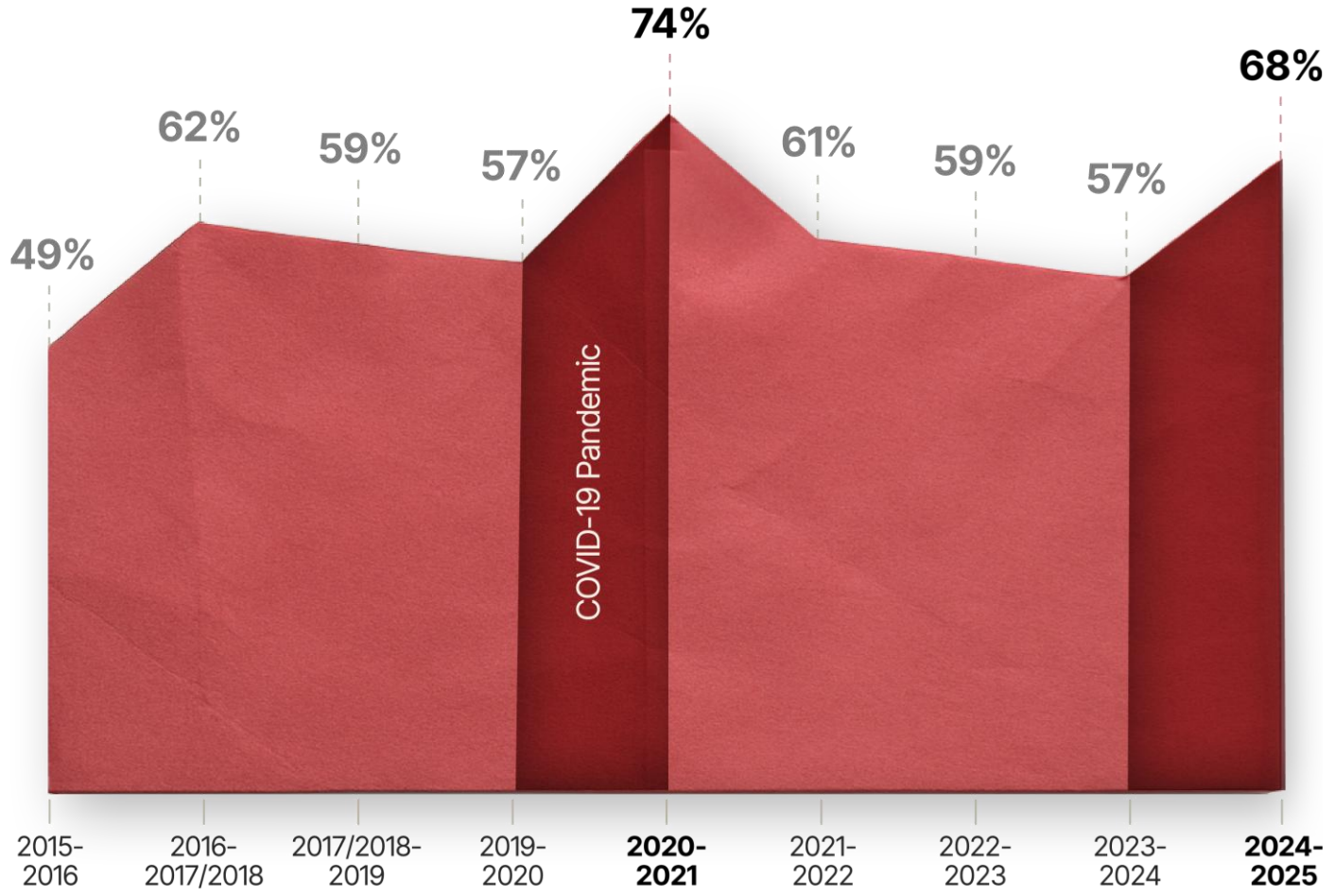


68%
of countries
declined in 2025

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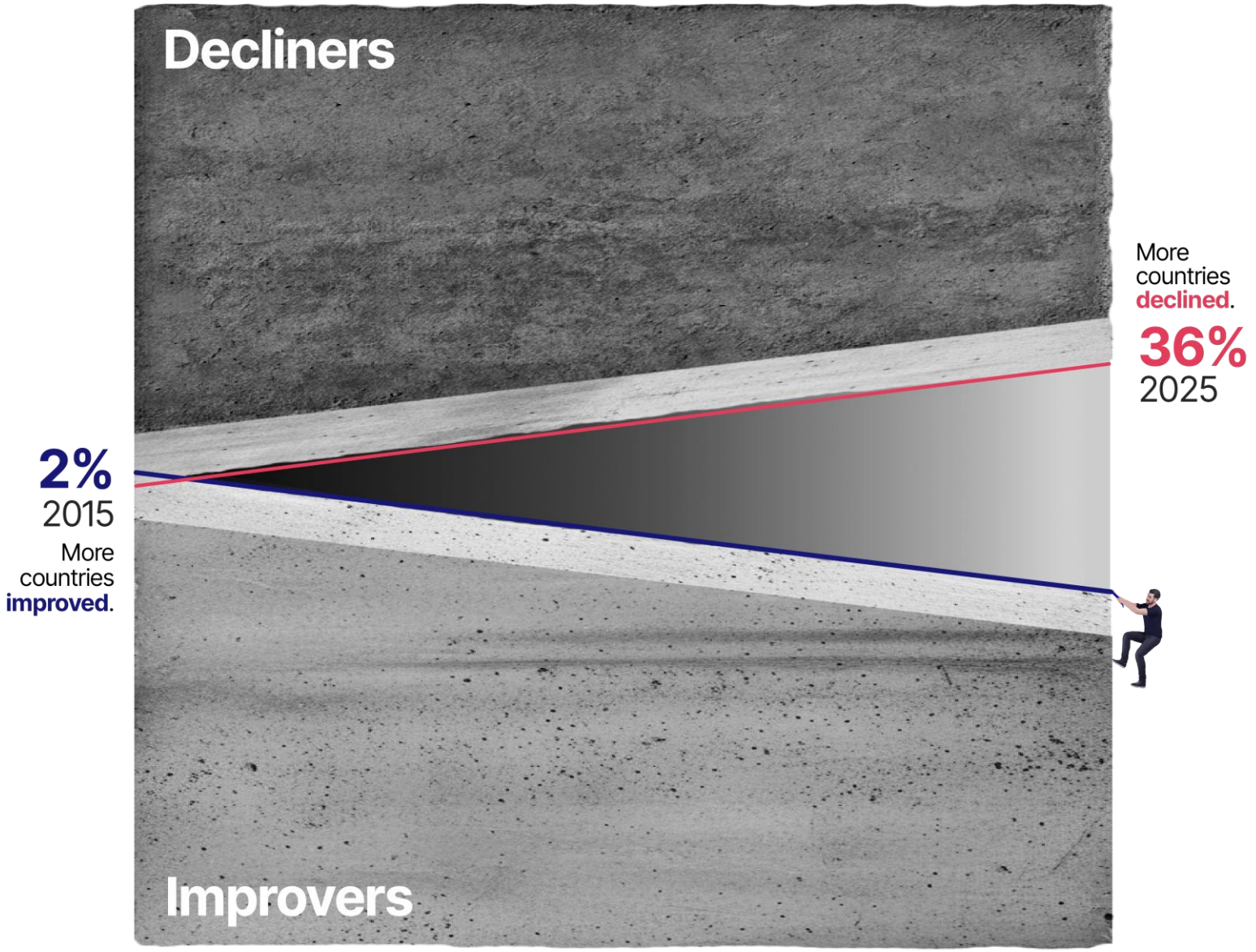
Post-pandemic rule of law improvements have reversed

Percentage of countries that declined from 2015 to 2025



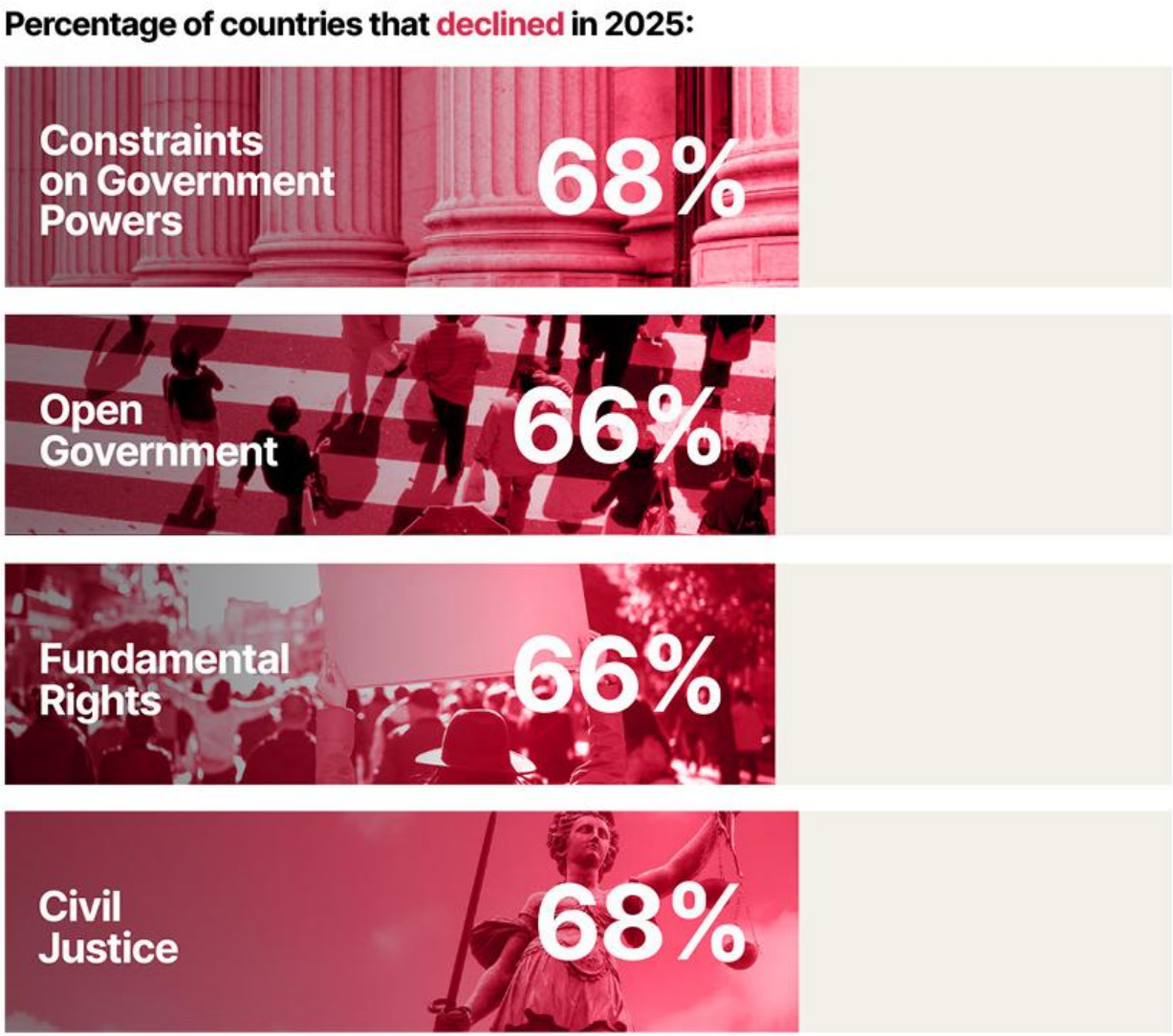
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The gap between the number of improvers and decliners is growing again.



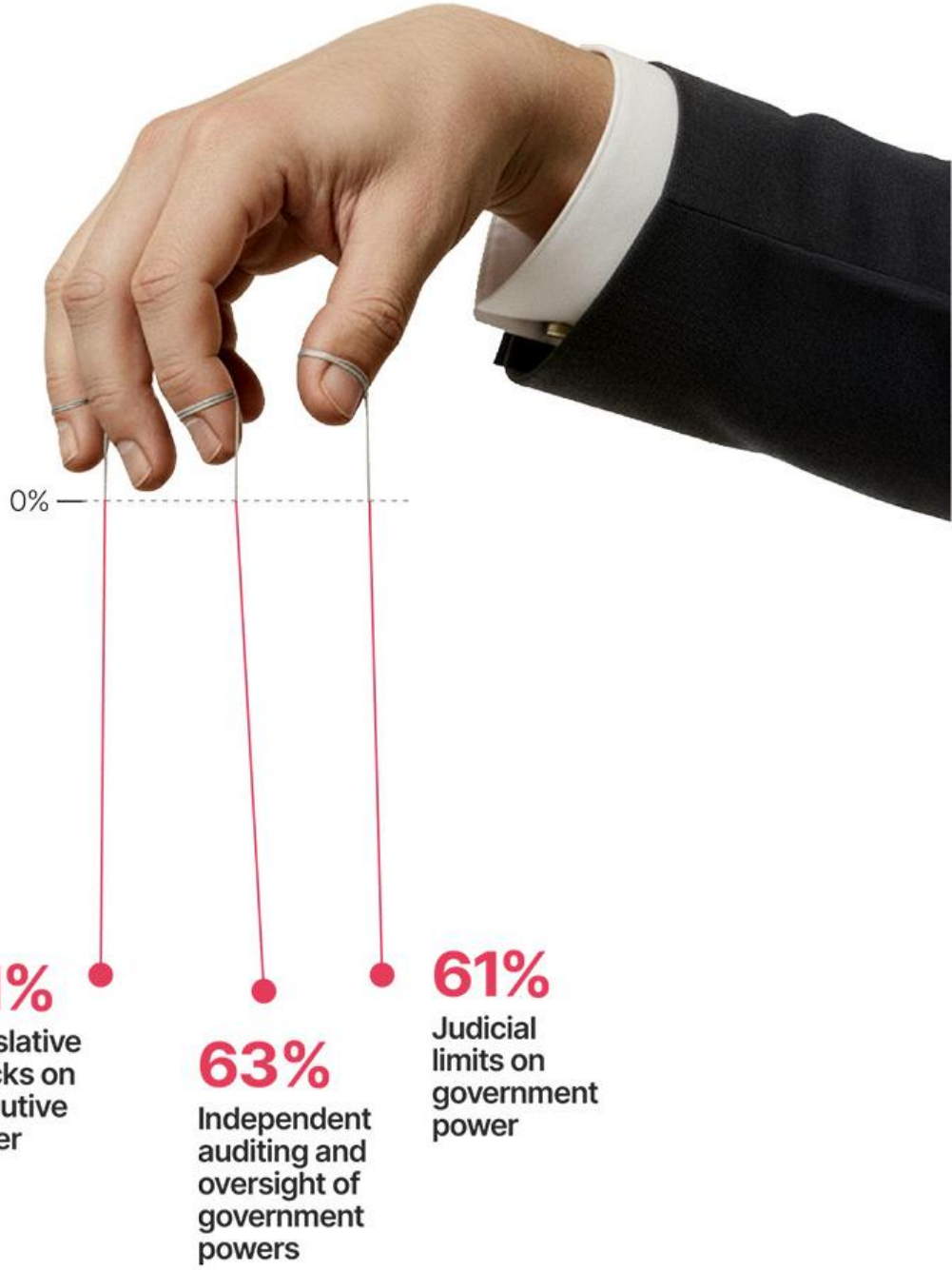
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Factors Influencing the Rule of Law Recession.



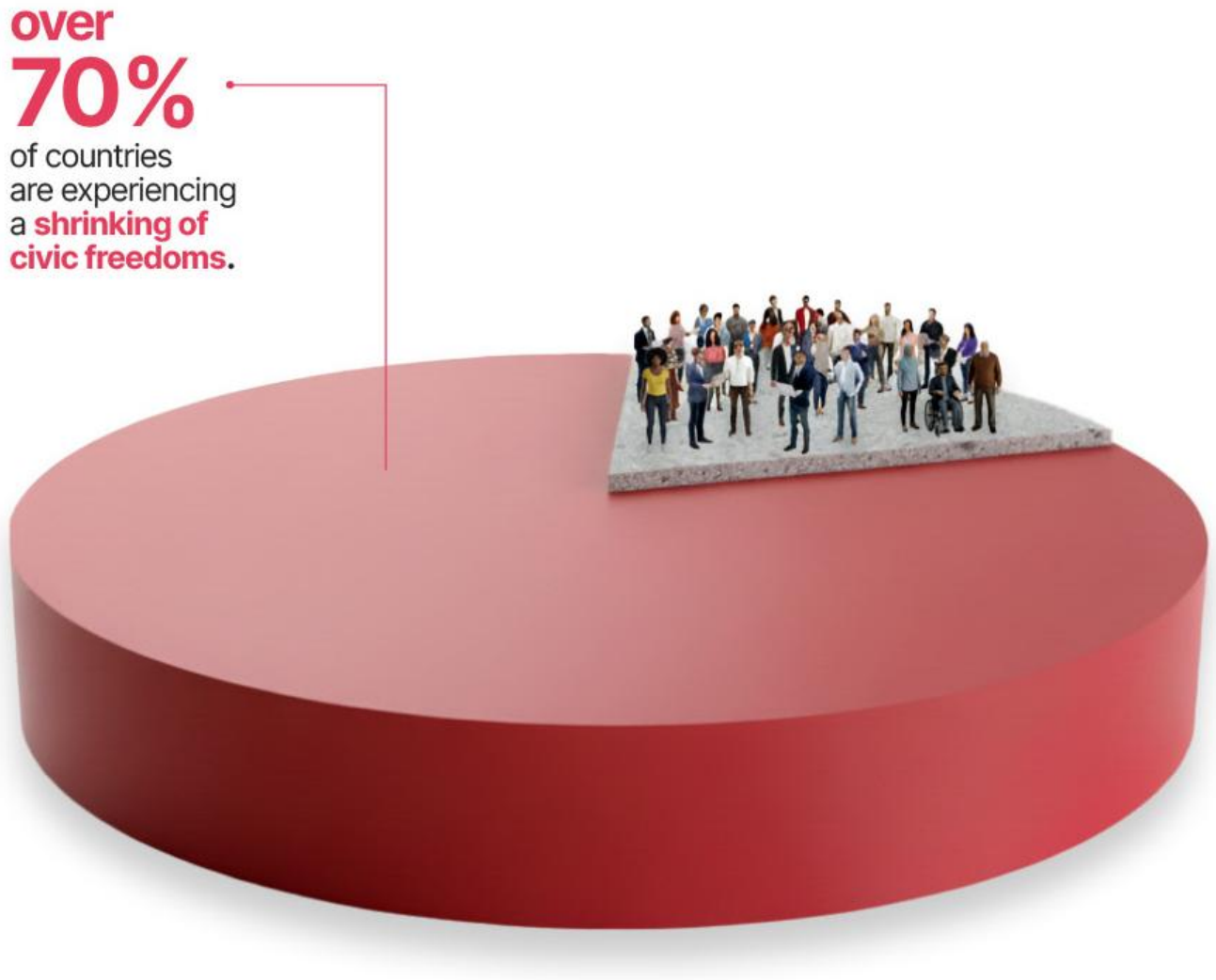
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A rise in authoritarianism is driving the rule of law recession.



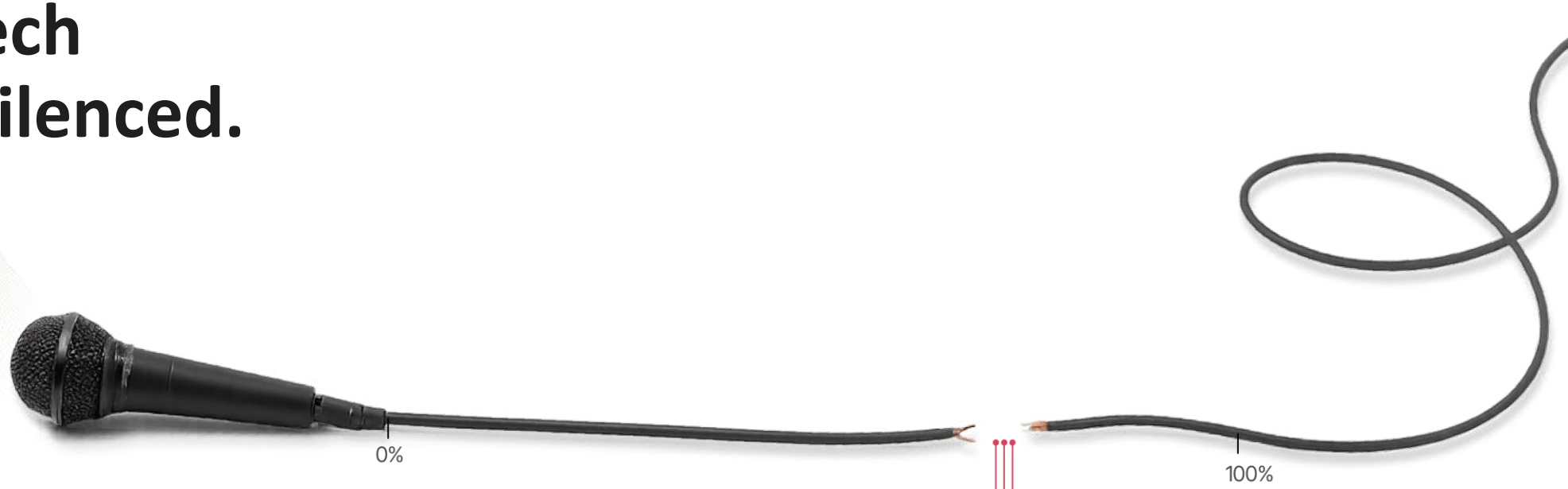
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Civic space is shrinking.



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Free speech is being silenced.



Percentage of countries that declined **in 2025:**

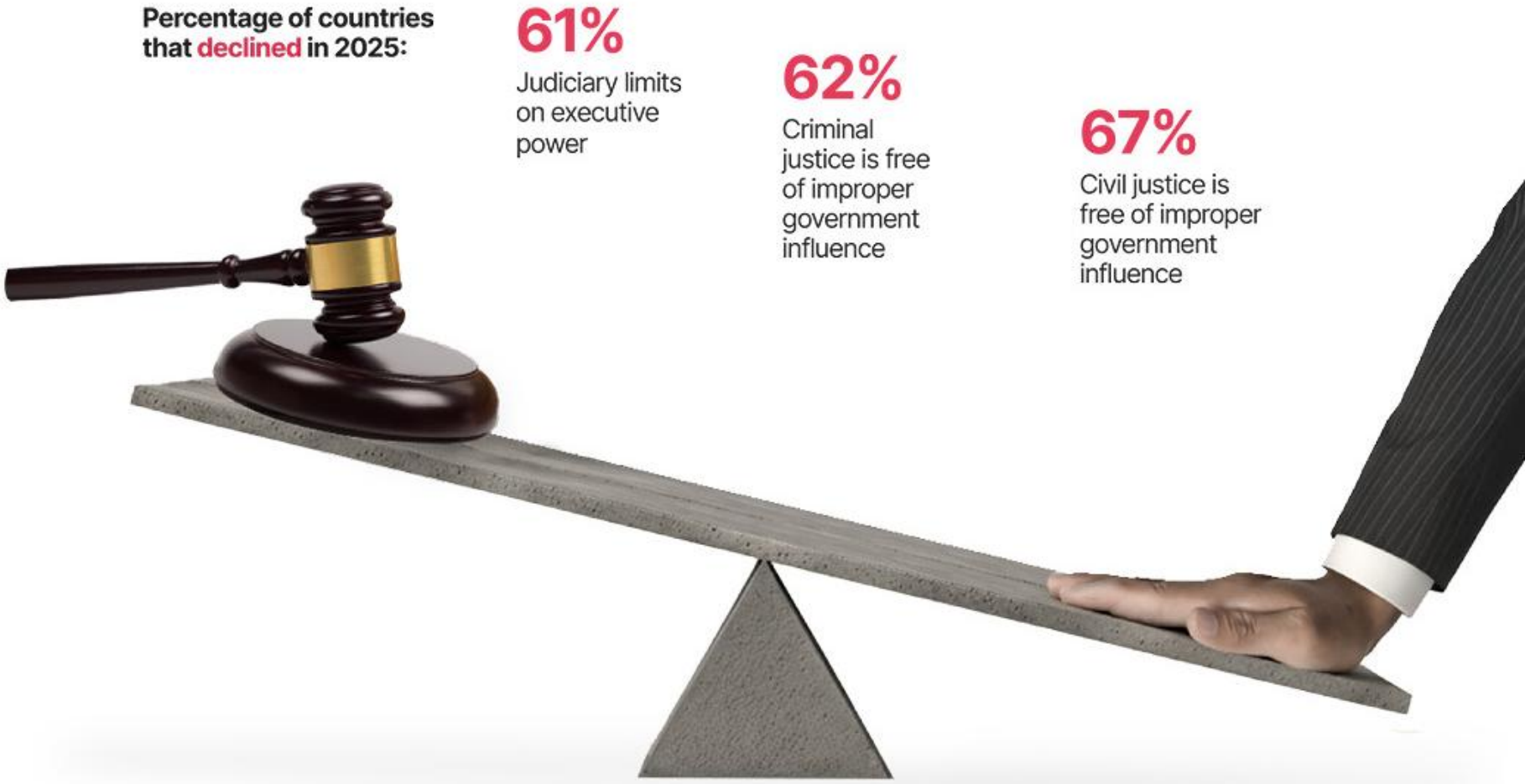
73%
Freedom of opinion and expression

72%
Freedom of assembly and association

71%
Civic participation

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Judicial independence is under threat.



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Building resilient rule of law institutions takes time, but they can be dismantled quickly.



0.52%
Average rate of **improvement**

-1.07%
Average rate of **decline**

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2025 RULE OF LAW INDEX

United States Rule of Law Trends

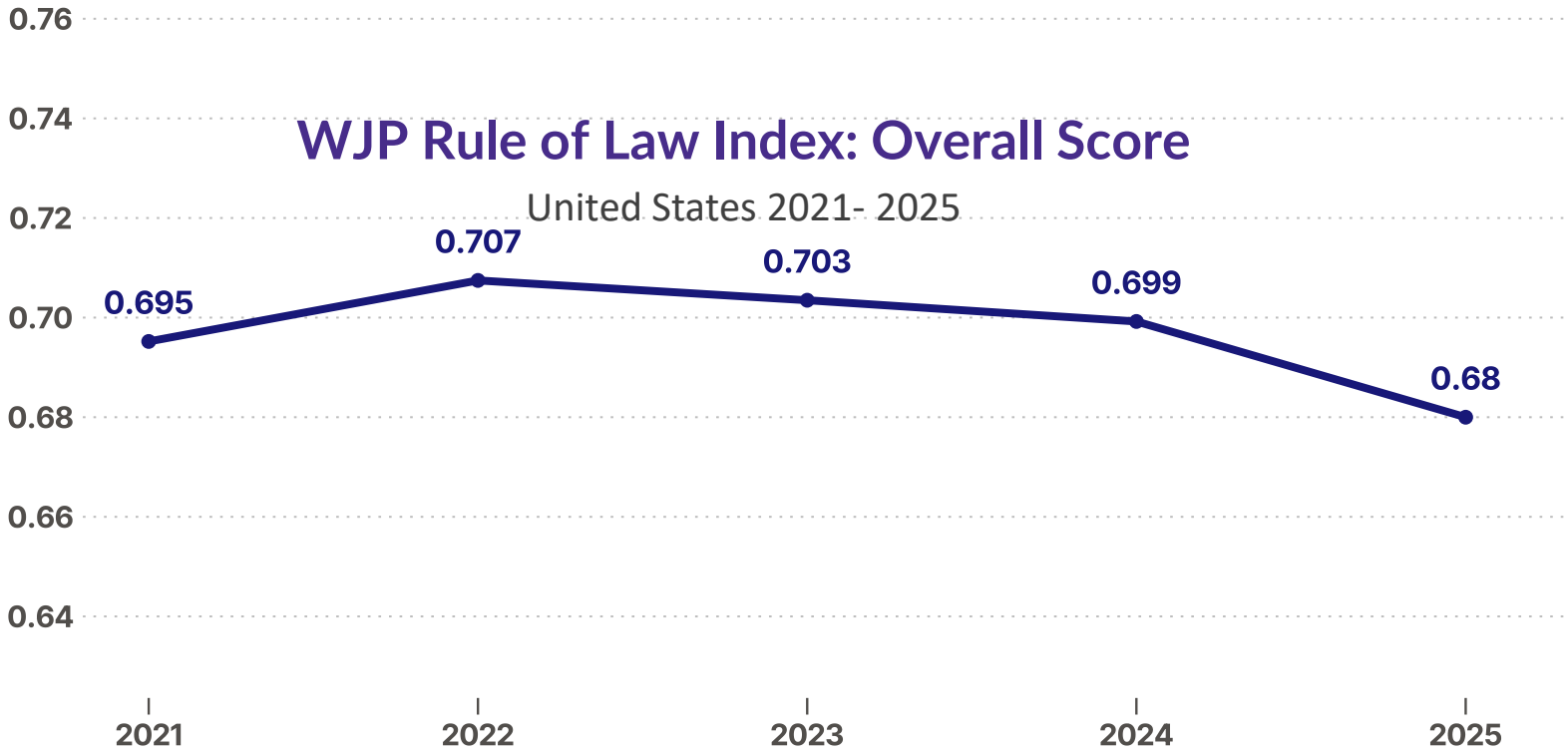
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RULE OF LAW TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES

Overall Score

United States

OVERALL SCORE	0.68
GLOBAL RANK	RANK CHANGE
27/143	-1 ▼
REGION RANK	ANNUAL SCORE CHANGE
20/31	-2.8% ▼
INCOME RANK	
27/51	



Arrows signify year-to-year change.
Scores and changes in score are rounded to two decimal places.

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RULE OF LAW TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES

Factor 7 Civil Justice

United States 2024 - 2025

FACTOR 7 SCORE **0.62**

ANNUAL SCORE CHANGE **-2.1% ▼**

GLOBAL RANK **37/143**

RANK CHANGE **-4▼**

REGION RANK **22/31**

INCOME RANK **32/51**

7.6 Effectively enforced

+ 0.7% →

2024: **0.64** 2025: **0.65**

7.7 Alternative dispute resolution

-0.5% →

2024: **0.79** 2025: **0.79**

7.3 Free of corruption

-1.1% ↓

2024: **0.83** 2025: **0.82**

7.1 Access and afford civil justice

-2.0% ↓

2024: **0.48** 2025: **0.47**

7.2 Free of discrimination

-3.2% ↓

2024: **0.40** 2025: **0.39**

7.4 Free of improper government i...

-3.9 % ↓

2024: **0.68** 2025: **0.65**

7.5 No unreasonable delay

-5.9 % ↓

2024: **0.58** 2025: **0.55**

Change: Declined No change Improved

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RULE OF LAW TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES

Factor 8 Criminal Justice

United States 2024 - 2025

FACTOR 8 SCORE	ANNUAL SCORE CHANGE	GLOBAL RANK	RANK CHANGE	REGION RANK	INCOME RANK
0.58	-2.7% ▼	37/143	-6 ▼	24/31	35/51

8.5 Free of corruption
+1.5% ↑
2024: **0.75** 2025: **0.76**

8.1 Investigation system is effec...
-0.3% →
2024: **0.65** 2025: **0.65**

8.7 Due process and rights of the...
-2.6% ↓
2024: **0.62** 2025: **0.60**

8.4 Criminal system is impartial
-3.2% ↓
2024: **0.37** 2025: **0.36**

8.2 Adjudication is timely and ef...
-3.4% ↓
2024: **0.63** 2025: **0.61**

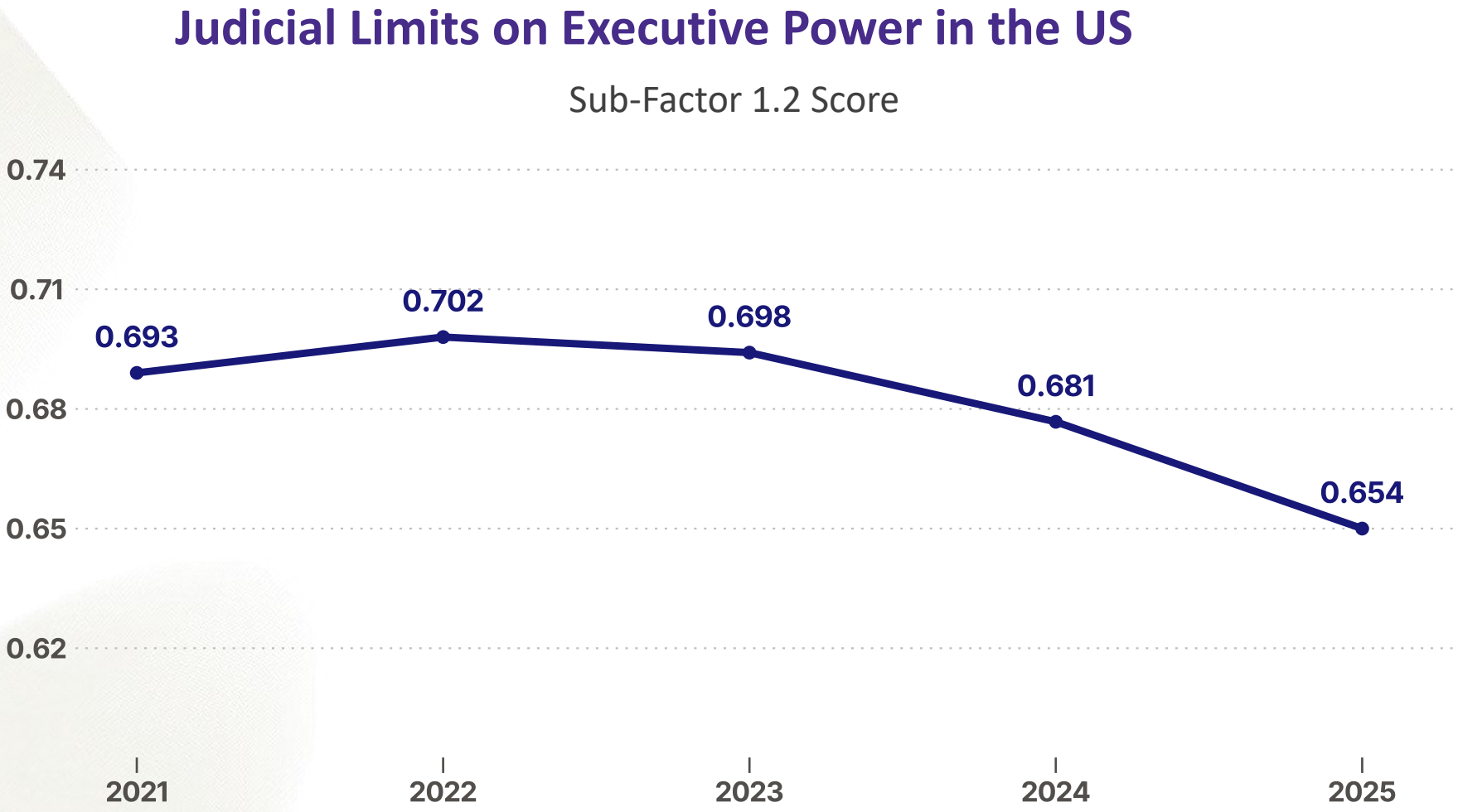
8.6 Free of improper government i...
-5.3% ↓
2024: **0.61** 2025: **0.58**

8.3 Correctional system is effect...
-8.1% ↓
2024: **0.50** 2025: **0.46**

Change: Declined | No change | Improved

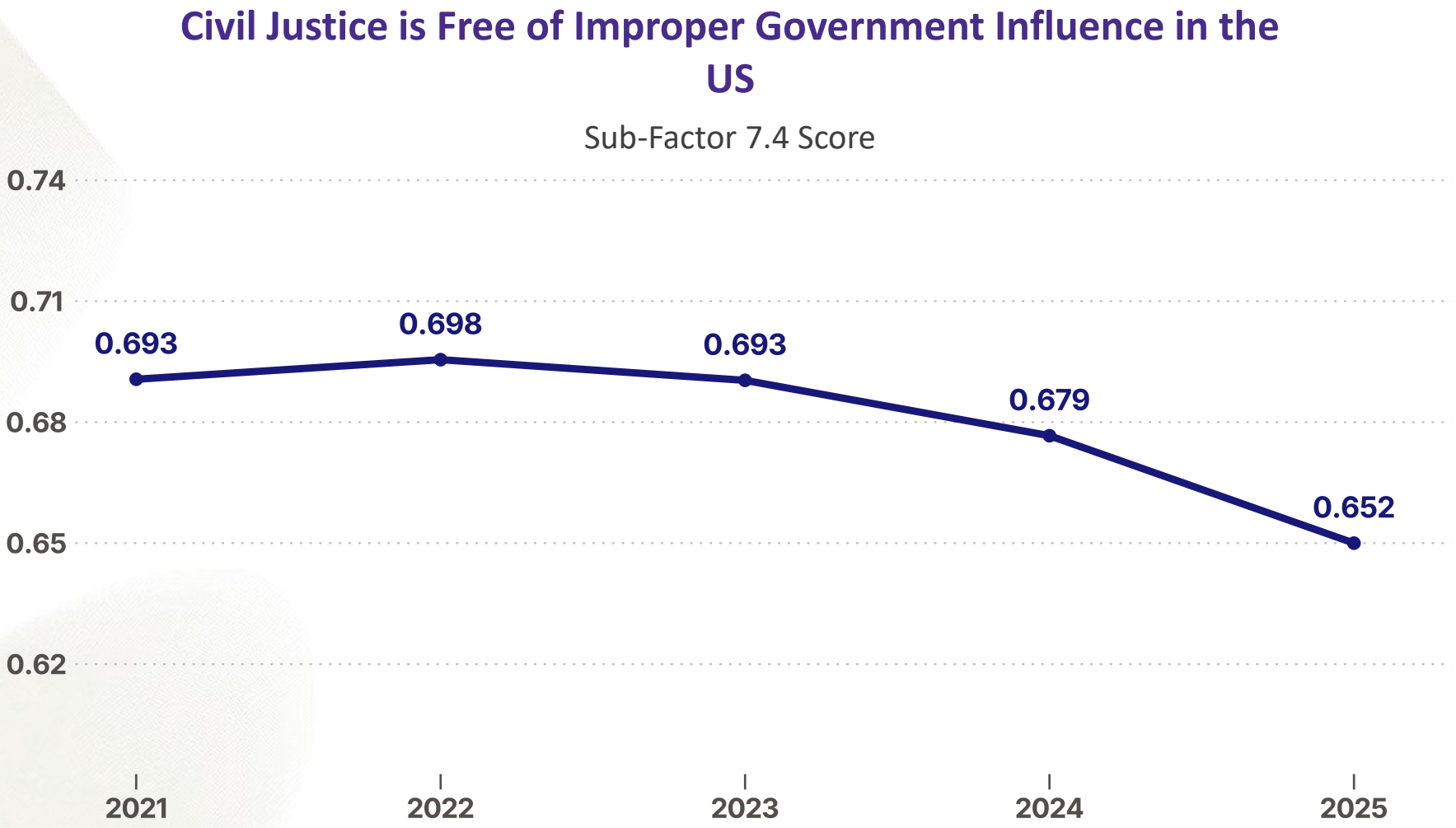
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Judicial Independence



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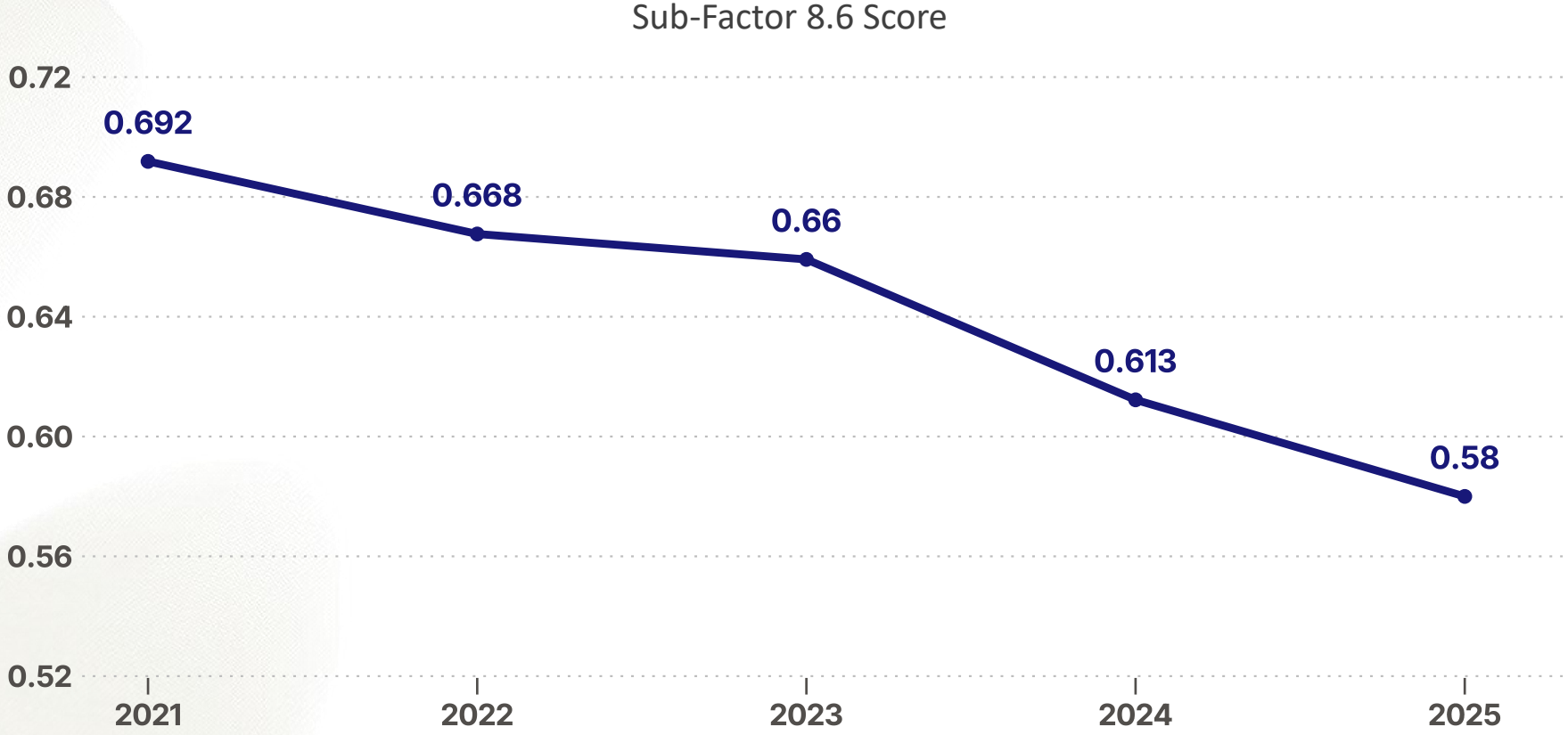
Judicial Independence



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Judicial Independence

Criminal Justice is Free of Improper Government Influence in the US



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A New WJP Initiative

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Uphold Justice

Promoting Independent, Accountable, and Open Judiciaries



Judicial independence is eroding globally

Percentage of countries that declined in 2025:

62%

Criminal justice free of improper government influence has declined

67%

Civil justice free of improper government influence has declined

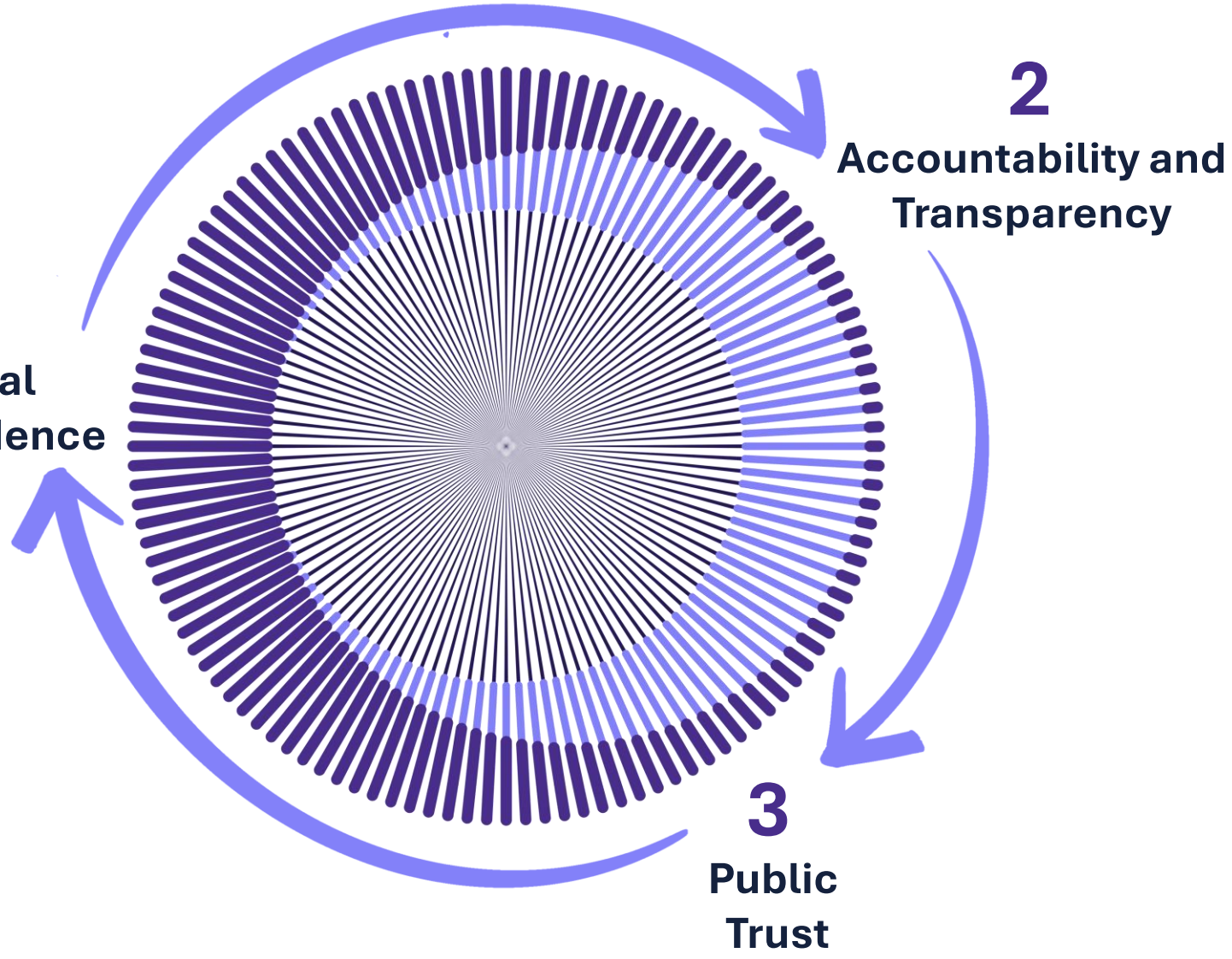
61%

Judiciary limits on executive power have declined



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Our Approach: Three Interconnected Pillars



A virtuous cycle:
independence **strengthens** accountability;
accountability **builds trust**;
trust **reinforces** the legitimacy and resilience of judicial independence.

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From Measurement to Action

An integrated evidence architecture to diagnose vulnerability and strengthen judicial resilience.

The program moves from framework → monitoring → action: comparable diagnostics, timely signals, and engagement that supports reform design.



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Building a Global Indicator Base to Make Erosion Visible

A scalable measurement system combining WJP's existing infrastructure with new evidence on judicial independence.

1. Develop the conceptual framework

Define judicial independence and openness in measurable terms.

Evidence base: literature, international standards, WJP surveys, expert input, and consultations with judges and lawyers.

2. Build on WJP infrastructure

Leverage the WJP Rule of Law Index, global expert networks, population surveys, and expert surveys.

Add dedicated modules for lawyers and judges.

3. Pilot and validate

Start in five pilot countries to test indicator validity, data availability, survey instruments, and cross-country comparability.

4. Scale and engage

Refine the methodology, scale gradually, and use indicators as an entry point for dialogue with judicial systems.

Measurement-to-engagement pipeline



From measurement to action: comparable indicators make erosion visible and create a common evidence base for institutional dialogue and reform.

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Conceptual Framework

Framework organized around three components:

Legal Safeguards

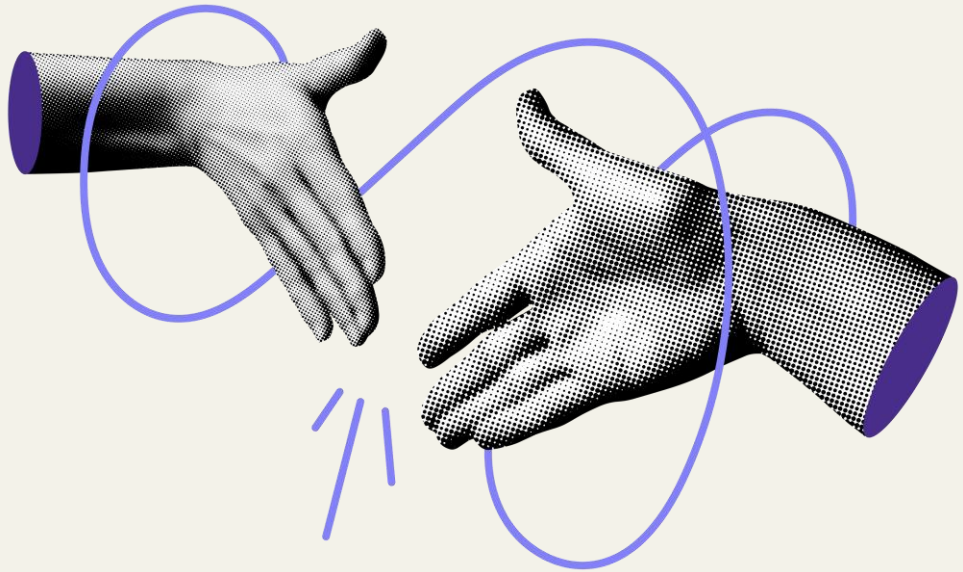
What protections are in place to preserve judicial independence and openness?

Capture & Threats

What pressures can weaken or circumvent those safeguards?

Outputs

What do we observe when safeguards and pressures interact in practice?



Measurement package

- **Legal + institutional coding**
- **Expert / lawyer / judge surveys**
- **Early Warning System**
- **Pilot validation in countries**

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Justice Sentinel: Early Warning System

Forms of Pressure and Risk Indicators

1 **Delegitimation**
Portraying courts as corrupt, partisan, or anti-democratic.

2 **Anti-Factual Narratives**
Distorting rulings, procedures, or factual bases.

3 **Defiance & Noncompliance**
Orders ignored, circumvented, or obstructed.

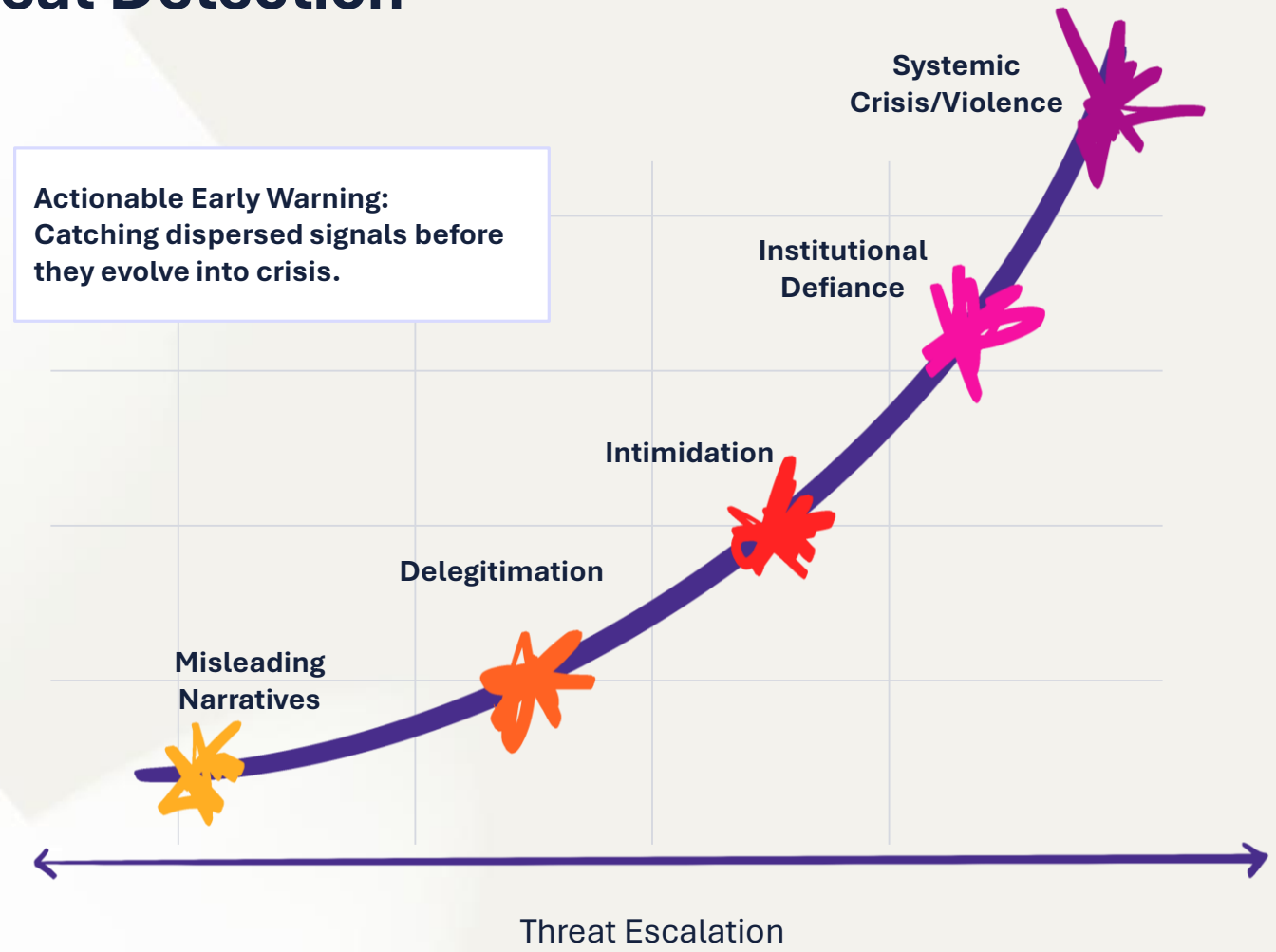
4 **Court-Curbing**
Jurisdiction stripping, budgetary retaliation, or restructuring.

5 **Intimidation and Violence**
Personalized targeting, intimidation, and violence.

6 **Politicization and capture risks**
Capture risks via partisan, ideological, or private interference.

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Shifting from Reactive Response to Proactive Threat Detection



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National Overview

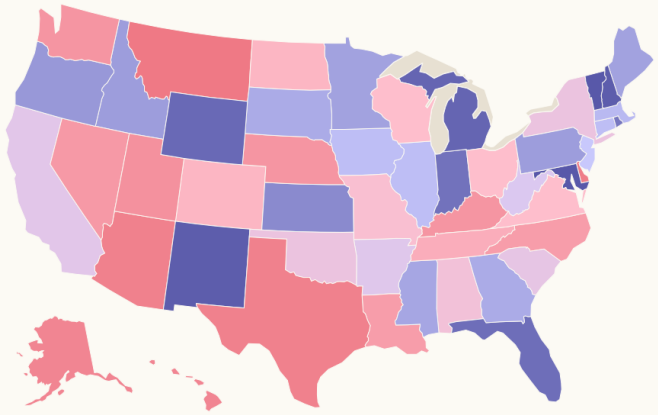
A single per-state *Judicial Independence Signal* for all 50 states and D.C. — net of strengthening vs. threat coverage. Deliberately a *signal*, not an index: an index would require a rigorous framework of its own, so this stays a media-derived tracker read *alongside* the WJP Rule of Law Index, not as a rival to it.

Q2 2026 ▾ Export

JURISDICTIONS MONITORED	DETERIORATING TREND	LOWEST SIGNAL	ARTICLES PROCESSED	SHARPEST DECLINE
51	30	MT -0.38	22.7k	WI -0.15
50 states + DC · 4 regions	▼ signal falling QoQ	threat-dominated	last 90 days	▼ QoQ

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE SIGNAL — STATE VIEW

choropleth · click a state for its profile



Threat — Strengthening

Federal-court incidents attributed to the state where the court sits

RANKED SIGNAL

Signal | Movement | Coverage

	STATE		SIGNAL	Δ QOQ	TOP THREATENED CATEGORY	CONF.
1	Montana West		-0.38	▼0.01	Personalized	LOW
2	Delaware South		-0.37	▲0.09	Anti-Factual	LOW
3	Arizona West		-0.36	▲0.00	Delegitimation	MED
4	Texas South		-0.36	▼0.13	Non-Compliance	HIGH
5	Alaska West		-0.35	▲0.01	Delegitimation	LOW
6	Hawaii West		-0.35	▼0.11	Delegitimation	LOW
7	Utah West		-0.32	▼0.04	Threats	LOW
8	Kentucky South		-0.31	▼0.02	Delegitimation	MED
	Nebraska					

Signal = (strengthening − threat) / total classified events, normalized for coverage volume. All values illustrative. Low-coverage states carry wider uncertainty and are flagged **low** confidence — a thin local-news environment (news deserts) can suppress the threat signal, so absence of signal is not evidence of independence. Incidents involving federal courts are attributed to the state where the court sits; D.C. absorbs Supreme Court and D.C. Circuit coverage.

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DOWNLOAD THE FULL REPORT

https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/downloads/WJPIndex2025.pdf

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