

The West Africa Autocratization Tracker

———— 2020 Report ————

Open Society Initiative for West Africa

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Data and technical assistance provided by
the V-Dem Project, www.v-dem.net

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October 2021

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Welcome

This is the first edition of The West Africa Autocratization Tracker – an annual report on democratic progress and erosion in and across the fifteen member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The report is commissioned by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and draws extensively on data and expertise from the leading global dataset on democracy: the Varieties of Democracy project, commonly known as V-Dem.

The report uses the V-Dem data to provide an overview of the current state of liberal democracy in the sub-region and to identify the most salient changes in democratic institutions and practices since 2010. The first section of the report analyzes trends across the sub-region, with a particular focus on the ways in which democracy has advanced, stalled, or eroded in recent years. The second section describes the state of democracy in each of the fifteen ECOWAS countries, highlighting recent trends in democratization or autocratization in each country and providing a baseline assessment of democracy against which future reports can further monitor progress or regression. The report covers only developments through the end of 2020.



KEY FINDINGS

- » Democratic decline is progressing more rapidly in West Africa than in other parts of the world.
- » From 2010-2020, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Niger, and Sierra Leone experienced significant democratic improvement. (please italicize improvement)
- » Since 2017, Benin and Mali have experienced significant erosion of their democracies. (please italicize erosion)
- » Threats to democracy across the sub-region include diminishing election quality, weakening legislative constraints on chief executives, and a worsening environment for citizen and civil society participation.



ABOUT THE V-DEM DATA

V-Dem provides a multidimensional and disaggregated approach to measuring democracy. It relies on the input of over 3,500 scholars and other country experts from over 180 countries. Its database contains hundreds of indicators of democracy for 202 countries from 1789-2020, with annual updates released each year in March. The project employs theoretical and methodological expertise from its global team to produce data in the most objective and reliable way possible. The V-Dem data are used by many academic experts and international organizations, including the World Bank, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Government Partnership, the European Commission, and USAID.

The V-Dem project identifies five main components of democracy: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian. Following V-Dem's annual [Democracy Report](#), the West Africa Autocratization Tracker uses V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI), which combines the liberal and electoral components of democracy, as its key measure of overall democracy. The report also draws on V-Dem's indices measuring each of the five democracy components, as well as the indicators that comprise each component index. For all V-Dem measures used, higher scores indicate more democratic qualities. For more information about V-Dem, or to freely download and use the data, visit www.v-dem.net.

REGIONAL TRENDS

A Region in Political Flux

- » West Africa remains the *most democratic* region of Africa and it is among the most democratic of regions throughout the Global South.
- » The overall level of liberal democracy in West Africa steadily increased from the early 1990s through the mid 2010s. Since 2017, democratic progress in West Africa has stalled.
- » Democratic decline is occurring more rapidly in West Africa than in other parts of the world

West Africa has experienced considerable political change over the last three decades. Prior to the 1990s, the sub-region was comprised mainly of authoritarian political regimes. By the mid-2010s, it had transformed into one of the *most democratic* regions across the Global South and had become significantly more democratic than the rest of sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 1). In 2020, ECOWAS member countries maintained the highest average score on V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) compared to all other regional economic communities in Africa (Figure 2).

Some of that democratic progress has begun to deteriorate. Among the 15 ECOWAS countries, the average LDI score has declined 5% between 2017 and 2020, moving from 0.45 to 0.40 on a scale of 0 (least democratic) to 1 (most democratic).¹ As seen in Figure 1, this decline in democracy is occurring more rapidly in West Africa than it is in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa or in other regions of the world.

In 2020, the majority of ECOWAS countries (9) were considered Electoral Democracies, meaning that they hold regular elections that are mostly free, fair, and peaceful. One country – Ghana – was classified as a Liberal Democracy based on its somewhat stronger record of protecting rights and freedoms, and predictably enforcing laws. The remaining 5 countries were classified as Electoral Autocracies. These countries hold elections and allow some political competition, but competition is typically rigged in favor of the incumbent.² Figure 3 shows how the map of regime classifications in West Africa has changed from 2010 to 2017 to 2020.

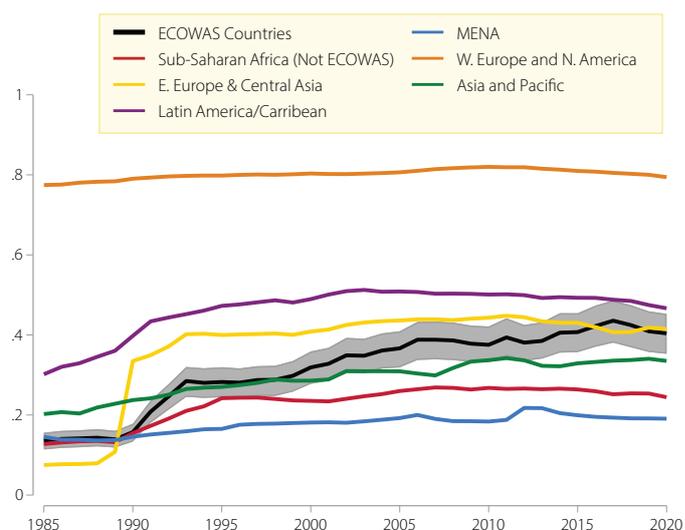


Figure 1: Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) by World Region, 1985-2020

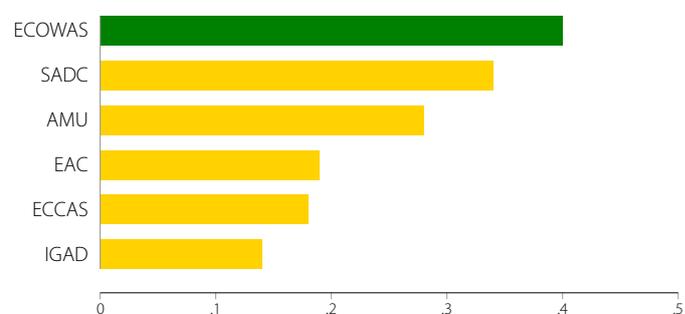


Figure 2: Average LDI Score for Africa's Regional Economic Communities, 2020

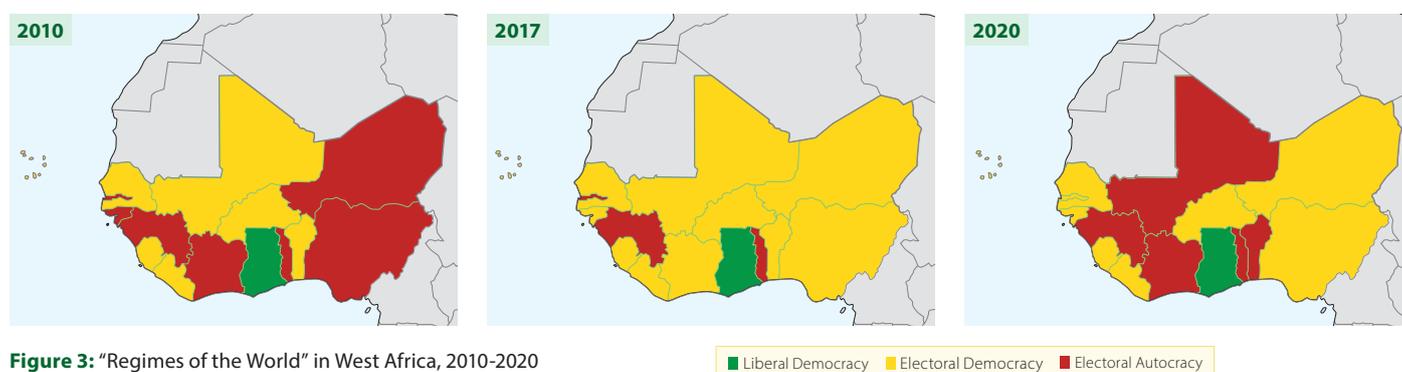


Figure 3: "Regimes of the World" in West Africa, 2010-2020

¹ V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) measures electoral and liberal components of democracy. The electoral component captures the quality of elections, individual political rights, and freedoms of expression and association. The liberal component captures constraints on the executive, individual liberties, and the rule of law.

² These regime classifications are based on the Regimes of the World measure, included in the V-Dem dataset.

REGIONAL TRENDS

Democratizers and Autocratizers

- » Four countries – Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Niger, and Sierra Leone – have seen significant *improvements* in the LDI between 2010 and 2020.
- » Two countries – Benin and Mali – have seen significant *declines* in their LDI scores between 2010 and 2020

Over the past 10 years, West Africa has experienced improbable episodes of *both* democratization and autocratization. In 2014, mass protests by brave citizens in Burkina Faso forced President Blaise Compaoré, who had held power for 27 years, to abandon his efforts to amend the constitution and remain in power. Two years later in 2016, Gambian citizens voted 23-year dictator Yahya Jammeh out of office and a subsequent intervention by ECOWAS troops ensured that the voters' voices were heard. Since 2015, ruling parties in eight ECOWAS countries have left power as a result of their electoral defeats. In two of those cases, the sitting incumbent president was defeated. The days of "presidents for life" are largely in West Africa's past.

Some of the world's most notable recent episodes of autocratization have also taken place in West Africa. In Benin, long considered one of the region's most successful democracies, new laws and constitutional changes enacted since 2018 have undermined political competition. President Patrice Talon has showed a willingness to use legal and coercive force to repress the many politicians and citizens who have mobilized against these undemocratic changes. In Mali, mounting frustration with President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's ineffective response to insurgencies, along with his growing repression of protestors, civil society, and political opponents, propelled a military coup in August 2020. To date, there has been no restoration of civilian rule.

In 2020, troubling signs appeared in other countries as well. In Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Togo, presidents continued to use their powers to manipulate constitutional rules to extend their mandates in office. In Ghana, there has been increasing harassment of the media, including several violent attacks on journalists.

Figures 4 and 5 show the region's democratic advancers (green) and decliners (red) during the 2010-2020 period. Four countries – The Gambia, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone – have experienced significant improvement in their LDI scores. In Benin and Mali, by contrast, LDI scores declined significantly during the same period. The remaining countries, those in yellow, have 2020 LDI scores that are very close to their 2010 scores, though there are potentially troubling signs of decline in Ghana and Togo. Across the 15 ECOWAS countries, the average change in LDI during this period was +0.03 (Figure 4).

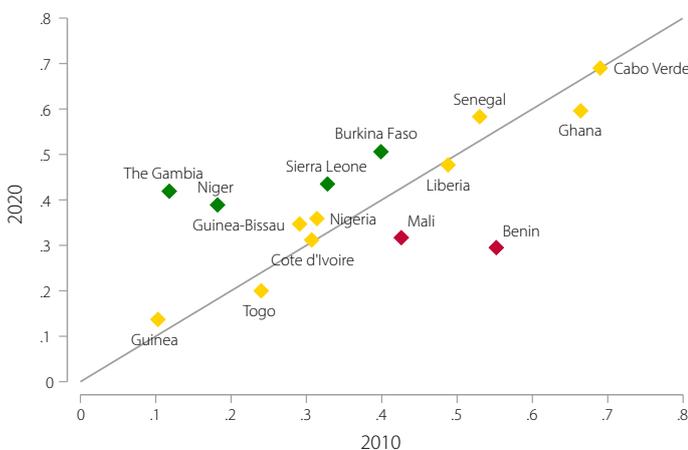


Figure 4: Change in Liberal Democracy Index, 2010-2020

Countries above the diagonal line have LDI scores that have *increased* between 2010 and 2020. Countries below the diagonal line have LDI scores that *declined* between 2010 and 2020

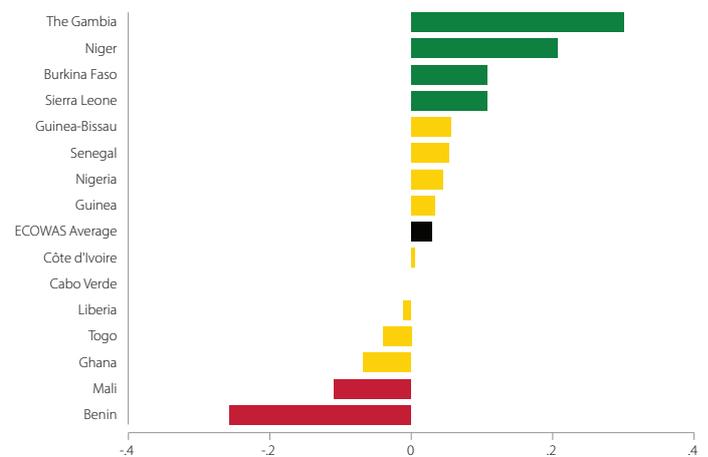


Figure 5: Democratizers and Autocratizers

Change in LDI score for each country, 2010-2020. Red and green bars represent changes greater than 0.1.

REGIONAL TRENDS

Democratic Progress and Warning Signs

- » Election quality has improved across the ECOWAS region since 2010, but problems of election violence, vote buying, and election administration persist in many countries.
- » The sub-region has seen small average improvements in judicial constraints on the executive, but legislative constraints on the executive have become weaker.
- » ECOWAS countries generally perform well on indicators of freedom of expression and association, but measures of civil society participation have declined since 2010.

Which aspects of democracy have been growing stronger and which have been worsening? Figures 6 and 7 show average trends across the ECOWAS region in V-Dem's five components of democracy: Electoral, Liberal, Participatory, Deliberative, and Egalitarian.

IMPROVING ASPECTS OF DEMOCRACY

The Electoral Component Index (blue) has had the most dramatic improvement since the early 1990s. The sub-region has seen considerable improvement in the areas of clean elections, direct popular vote, and the extent to which public officials are elected by the people. These improvements have produced a political environment in which electoral turnovers of power are increasingly common.

The average trends in the Liberal Component Index (yellow) also show improvement, especially from the early 1990s through 2017. Judicial constraints on the executive remain weak, but they improved to some extent between 2010 and 2020.

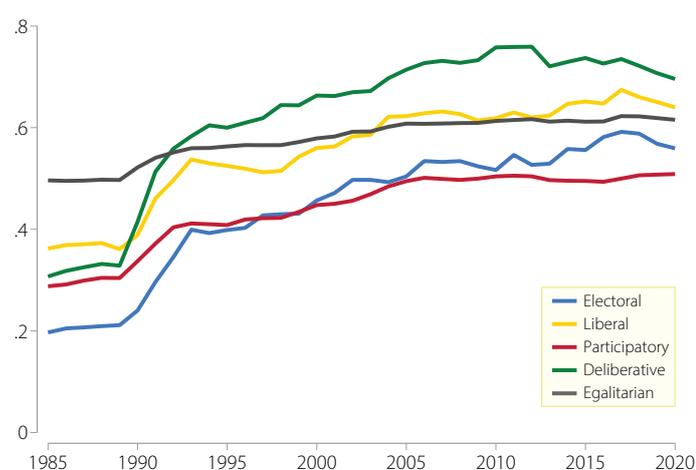


Figure 6: Regional Trends in Democracy Components, 1985-2020

WORSENING ASPECTS OF DEMOCRACY

Recent advances in electoral democracy are currently in jeopardy. Although most countries perform well on measures of freedom of association, the environment for political and civic participation has worsened across the sub-region. Shrinking space for civil society and opposition party activity has undermined the quality of elections and the extent to which individuals have a voice in government.

The ECOWAS region has also seen a decline in the Liberal Component Index since 2017, which reflects weakening legislative constraints on the executive. The Deliberative Component Index, which measures the extent to which decision-making processes involve public debate and concern for the common good, improved considerably from 1990 through 2005 and remained consistently high from 2005 through 2016, but then declined from 2017 through 2020.

The Participatory and Egalitarian Component Indices have remained consistent in recent decades.³ Changes between 2010 and 2020, however, indicate worrying signs for citizen participation in democratic governance, including a worsening environment for civil society participation and a deficit of democracy sub-nationally at municipal and especially regional (*département*) levels.

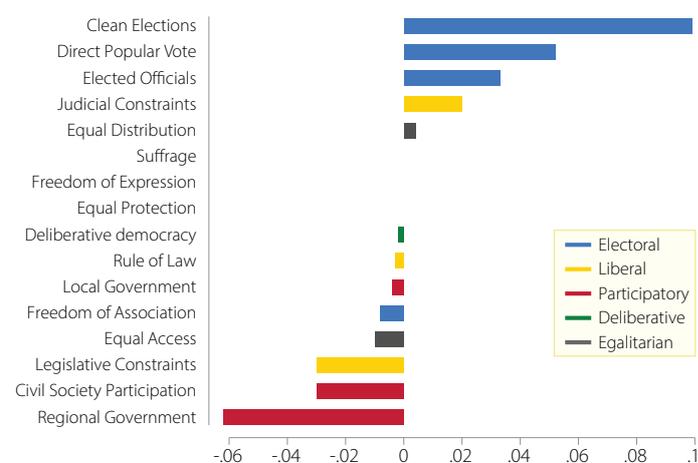


Figure 7: Average Regional Change in V-Dem Mid-Level Indices, 2010-2020

³ The Participatory Component Index includes civil society activity, mechanisms of direct democracy, participation by citizens in all political processes, and representation in subnational (local and regional) governments. The Egalitarian Component Index measures whether all social groups enjoy equal capabilities to participate in the political arena, including equal protection of rights and freedoms, equal distribution of social and political resources, and equal access to political power.



Benin

- » Benin’s LDI score has decreased more than any other country in West Africa, from 0.55 in 2010 to 0.29 in 2020. Benin now has the third lowest LDI score in the sub-region.
- » Autocratization in Benin has involved rapid declines in electoral, liberal, deliberative, and participatory components of democracy.
- » The weakening of judicial and legislative constraints on the executive has been especially detrimental to Benin’s democracy.

Once celebrated for its strong democratic record, Benin has experienced more autocratization in recent years than any other ECOWAS country. Benin’s LDI reached its peak of 0.6 in 2016-2017, then rapidly declined to 0.29 by 2020. Sharp declines can be seen in all democracy components except the egalitarian one (Figure 8).

Benin’s Electoral Component Index experienced an overall increase between 1990 and 2018, during which time Benin held six consecutive presidential and parliamentary elections resulting in four peaceful transfers of executive power. In 2019, after President Patrice Talon twice failed to gain approval from the National Assembly for a host of constitutional changes, the Autonomous National Election Commission (CENA), whose members were all appointed by President Patrice Talon, imposed new registration rules that effectively barred opposition candidates from running in the legislative elections. Once in office, the new Talon-dominated National Assembly approved a new electoral law that gave elected officials veto power over any candidate’s ability to run for office.⁴ These reforms generated a highly unequal playing field for the 2021 presidential elections. Many voters boycotted the 2019 elections, which were also marred by civil unrest, violence, and opposition detention.⁵

The Liberal Component Index has also declined significantly in Benin. While Benin maintains respectable scores on indicators of personal freedoms (Figure 9), Talon’s institutional manipulations have resulted in serious weakening of the legislative and judicial constraints on executive power. With no opposition parties in parliament and continued politicization of the courts and oversight bodies, there are few institutional mechanisms left that can meaningfully constrain the actions of the chief executive.

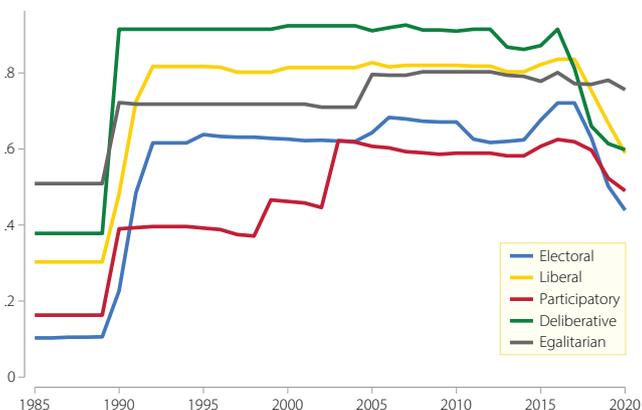
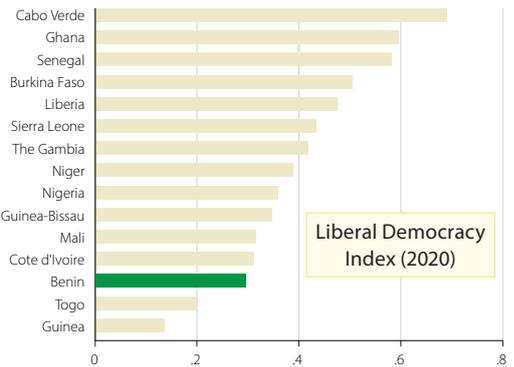


Figure 8: Benin Trends in Democracy Components



Declines in Benin’s participatory and deliberative components (Figure 8) are equally concerning. Although citizens, opposition parties, and civil society have all strongly mobilized to protest the government’s undemocratic reforms, these protests have at times been met with violent repression by state security forces, the arrest and detention of opposition actors, internet shutdowns, and harassment of journalists accused of spreading what the government deemed to be false information.⁶ Although local elections (commune and municipal) went ahead as scheduled in May 2020, individuals affiliated with an opposition party were once again effectively barred from running in all but six communes. Political messaging in Benin, which has long invoked ethnic and regional identities,⁷ has also become less inclusive and more polarized, as fewer groups have meaningful representation in the political arena.

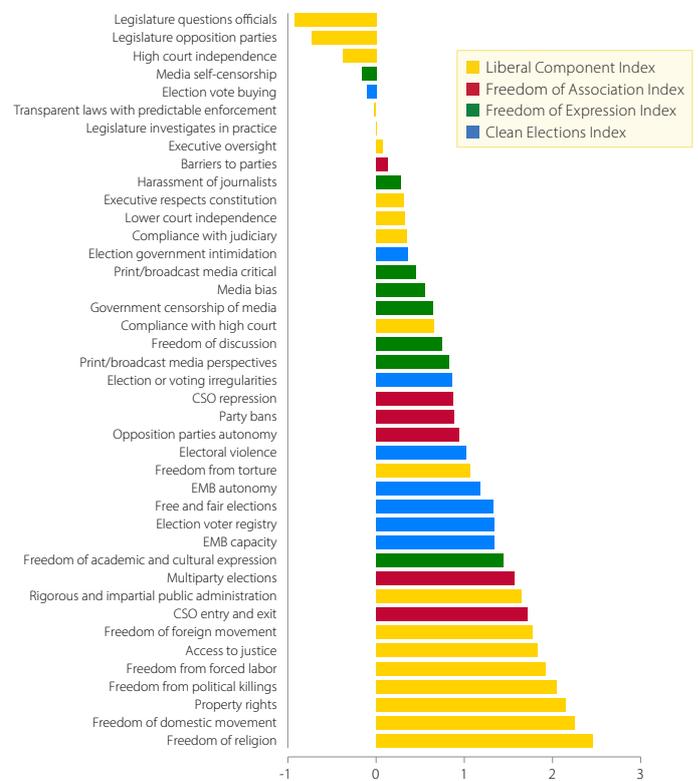
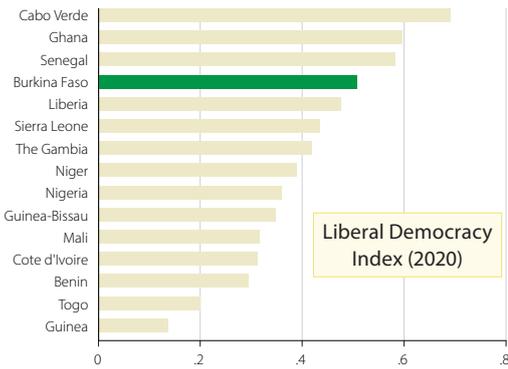


Figure 9: Benin 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy⁸

4 Mark Duerksen, “The Dismantling of Benin’s Democracy,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, April 27, 2021, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/dismantling-benin-democracy/>.
 5 Expédit Ologou (ed.), “Législatives 2019 au Bénin : le piège fatal?,” Cotonou, CiAAF, April 2019, <https://www.ciaaf.org/note-analyse/legislatives-2019-au-benin-le-piege-fatal/>.
 6 Mark Duerksen, “The Testing of Benin’s Democracy,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, May 29, 2019, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-testing-of-benin-democracy/>.
 7 Dominika Koter, “King makers: Local leaders and ethnic politics in Africa,” *World Politics* 65.2 (2013): 187-232.
 8 Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.

Burkina Faso



- » Burkina-Faso is an electoral democracy with the 4th highest 2020 LDI score among the ECOWAS countries.
- » After rapid improvements in democracy following the events of 2014-2015, Burkina Faso's scores on the deliberative, liberal, and electoral components declined from 2017 through 2020.
- » The worsening security context in Burkina Faso has posed challenges to participation in elections in some regions of the country.
- » Burkina Faso performs well on indicators of freedom of expression and association, but its judicial institutions remain weak.

Burkina Faso is an electoral democracy with the fourth highest LDI score among ECOWAS countries. Its LDI score rose rapidly from 2015 through 2017, which was after a brief period of military rule following the mass protests of 2014 that ousted 27-year president Blaise Compaoré from power.⁹ Since then, Burkina Faso's LDI score has declined slightly from 0.58 in 2017 to 0.53 in 2020.

The recent declines in Burkina Faso's democratic environment are evident in both the electoral and liberal components of democracy (Figure 10). Terrorist attacks against civilian populations and the security forces, which have become increasingly deadly, led to the inability of many citizens in localities affected by the terrorist attacks to participate in the November 2020 presidential elections.¹⁰ Voter turnout dropped by nearly 10% from the 2015 elections. Despite these electoral problems, Burkina Faso performs relatively well on measures of election administration (Figure 11) with respectable ratings on the autonomy and capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) and low levels of government intimidation during elections.

For the liberal component, indicators suggest that political killings and harassment of journalists are rare in Burkina Faso, and that laws are generally transparent and predictably enforced (Figure 11). Its scores remain very weak on access to justice and most indicators of judicial institutional strength. Burkina Faso's National Assembly is the site of vibrant political competition: the 2020 legislative elections saw 126 parties compete, 15 of which won seats.

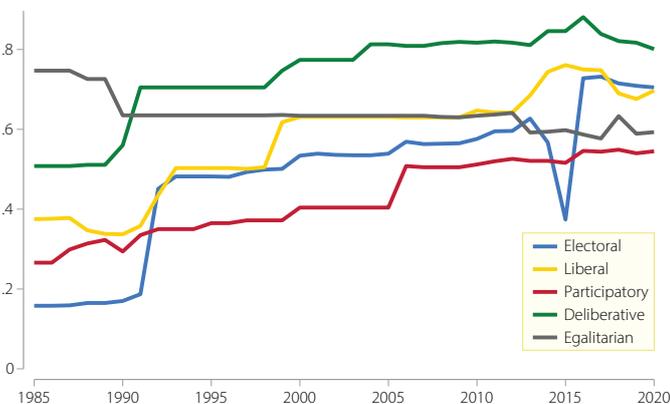


Figure 10: Burkina Faso Trends in Democracy Components

Like other countries in the Sahel, Burkina Faso performs well on the deliberative component, though the quality of deliberation has declined to some extent in recent years. Burkina Faso is weaker on the participatory component, but there has been some improvement since 2006 when Burkina Faso first held elections for municipal councils. Although there are few opportunities for citizens to provide direct input to government, Burkina Faso scores well on most indicators of freedom of expression and freedom of association (Figure 11), especially in having few barriers for political party activity and a wide range of perspectives represented in the media. Moreover, the events of 2014 showed the strength of pro-democracy groups, many of which remain active, even amidst Burkina Faso's worsening security environment.

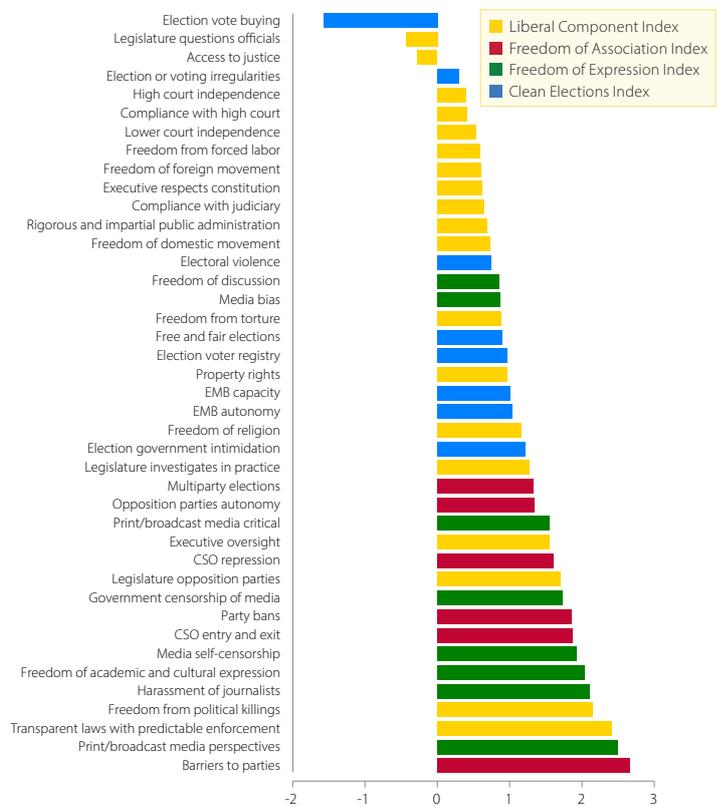


Figure 11: Burkina Faso 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy¹¹

⁹ Arsène Brice Bado, "La démocratie au Burkina-Faso aux prises avec les systèmes traditionnels de gouvernance," *Etudes*, no. 4, April 2015, pp. 19-30.

¹⁰ Cf. Décision n° 2020-011/CC/EPF portant proclamation des résultats définitifs de l'élection du Président du Faso du 22 novembre 2020, https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.gov.bf/fileadmin/user_upload/decision_n_2020-011_cc_epf_portant_proclamation_des_resultats_definitifs_de_l_election_du_president_du_faso.pdf.

¹¹ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.



Cabo Verde

- » In 2020, Cabo Verde’s LDI score was 0.69, the highest of ECOWAS countries. Cabo Verde consistently maintained a high LDI score since the mid-1990s.
- » Cabo Verde scores well on most indicators of liberal democracy including freedom of association for political parties and civil society organizations.
- » Compared to other countries in West Africa, Cabo Verde has strong judicial and legislative constraints on the executive.
- » Cabo Verde receives lower ratings on electoral and participatory components of democracy, reflecting persistent administrative issues and low levels of citizen participation in elections.

Cabo Verde is one of the most democratic countries in West Africa. Since 1992, its LDI score has remained above 0.6 – the highest and most consistent of ECOWAS countries. Cabo Verde has a strong record of competitive elections that have resulted in three alternations of power between the two main parties, the Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde (PAICV) and the Movimento para a Democracia (MPD), as well regular protection of key rights and freedoms. Cabo Verde’s performance on the Liberal Component Index is especially strong and consistent for the region (Figure 12). Unlike most other ECOWAS countries, both judicial and legislative institutions exert meaningful constraints on executive power. Cabo Verde has also consistently scored above the regional average on the deliberative component, with especially high scores on measures of concern for the common good. These scores, however, have declined to some extent since 2012.

Cabo Verde performs especially well on indicators of freedom of association (Figure 13). Political parties and civil society organizations enjoy considerable freedom to operate throughout the country. Cabo Verde’s indicators of press freedom are less strong. Cabo Verde’s legal system guarantees the freedom of the press, but some de facto constraints significantly reduce the independence of the public media. According to reports from Reporters Without Borders, public media officials, including those who manage the main television and radio channels, are appointed directly by the government. Although their content is not controlled, the practice of self-censorship is still widespread.¹²

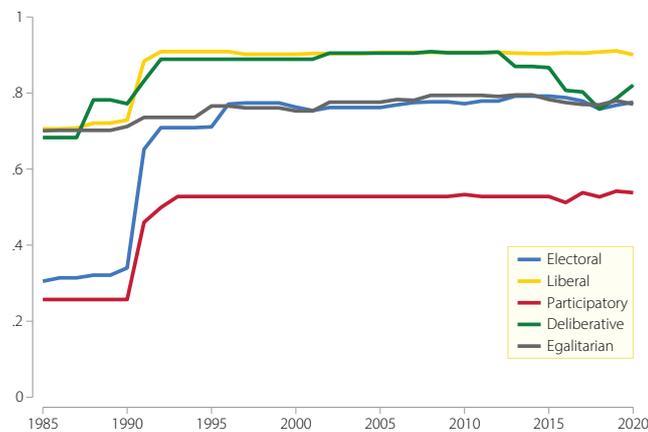


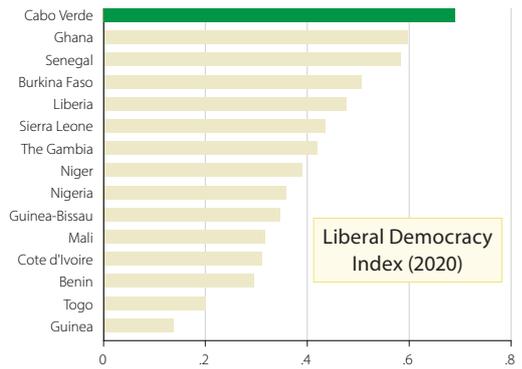
Figure 12: Cabo Verde Trends in Democracy Components

¹² “Cap-Vert,” Reporters without Borders, <https://rsf.org/fr/cap-vert>.

¹³ IFES Election Guide: Cabo Verde, <https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/40/>.

¹⁴ African Union Observer Mission to the Legislative Elections of 20 March 2016 in the Republic of Cabo Verde, March 21, 2016, <https://www.eisa.org/pdf/cap2016au4.pdf>.

¹⁵ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.



Despite Cabo Verde’s strong performance on most liberal dimensions of democracy, its electoral and participatory environments remain challenging at times. In the 2016 presidential elections, only 35% of the eligible population turned out to vote.¹³ In the legislative elections held that same year, the African Union’s observation mission made recommendations for improvements in election administration, including in the transparency of ballot box management. These changes, they noted, would increase voter confidence in elections and to further bolster the capacity of the National Election Commission (CNE),¹⁴ which Figure 13 identifies as a relative weakness in election quality. Additionally, the government delayed the August 2020 municipal elections for three months due to Covid-19. Cabo Verde’s relatively low scores in the participatory component (Figure 12) reflect few opportunities for direct citizen engagement in policymaking.

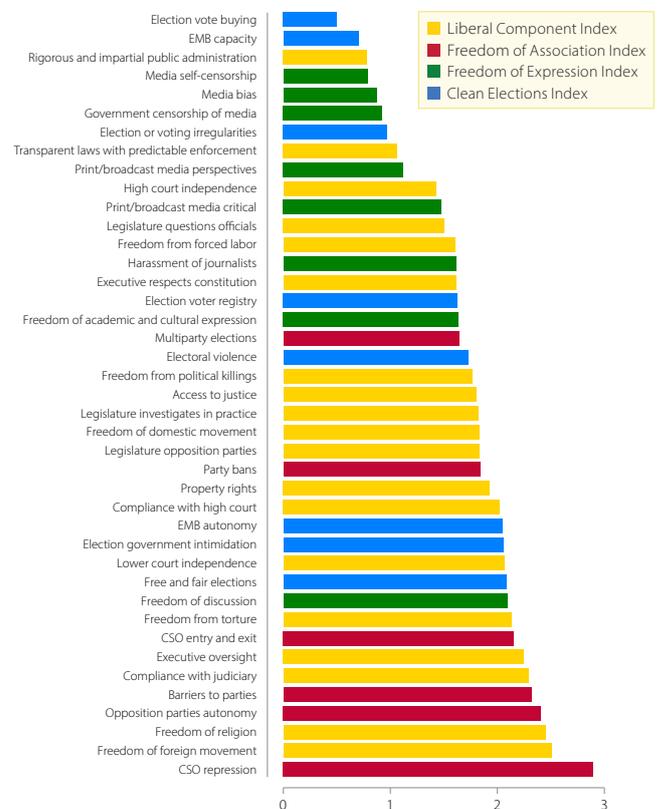
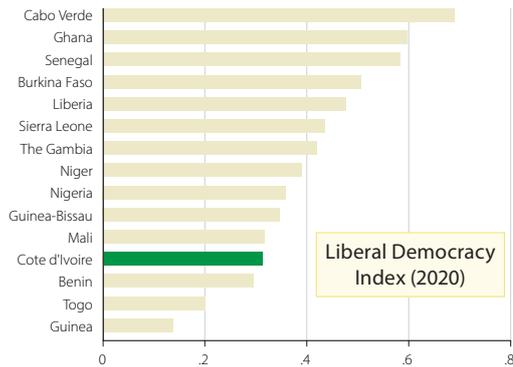


Figure 13: Cabo Verde 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy¹⁵

Côte d'Ivoire



- » Côte d'Ivoire is an electoral autocracy whose LDI is among the lowest of the ECOWAS countries. As of 2020, only Benin, Togo, and Guinea, had lower LDI scores.
- » Côte d'Ivoire's LDI has decreased since 2018
- » Electoral violence, rigged elections, and unchecked presidential power pose the most serious threats to democratic advancement in Côte d'Ivoire.

Although Ivorians have a strong desire for democracy, Côte d'Ivoire remains one of the least democratic countries in the ECOWAS region. Its LDI score of 0.31 places it close to the autocratizing countries of Mali and Benin (Above), and like these countries, its LDI score has been decreasing in recent years. The most precipitous declines have occurred in the liberal and deliberative components (Figure 14), accompanied by significant – but less rapid – declines in the electoral and egalitarian components.

Electoral democracy is particularly weak in Côte d'Ivoire. Political violence has been a recurring problem in each presidential election since 2002, with over 3,000 deaths following the 2010 election and at least 85 deaths in 2020.¹⁶ The 2020 elections were also marred by incumbent president Alassane Ouattara's last-minute decision to run for a third term, which he argued was constitutional because term limits were "reset" with the adoption of a new constitution in 2016. This controversial decision led some opposition parties to boycott the election, resulting in Ouattara's victory with 95% of the vote. Additionally, the composition of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) had been contested by opposition political parties who had called for a boycott of the presidential election of October 2020.

The events surrounding the 2020 elections highlight additional weaknesses in liberal democracy, namely that there are few effective checks and balances on the chief executive. Looking at the indicators comprising the LDI (Figure 15), Côte d'Ivoire's on scores legislative

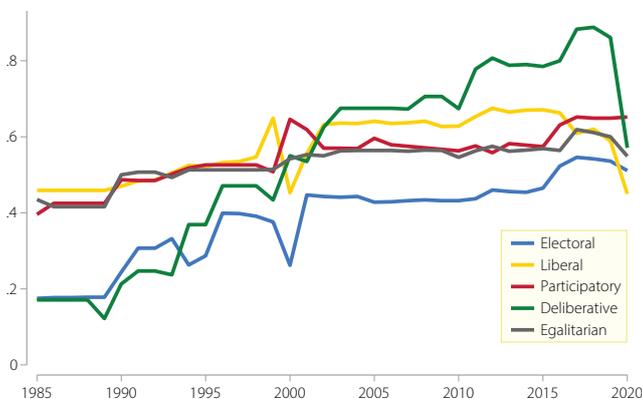


Figure 14: Côte d'Ivoire Trends in Democracy Components

¹⁶ Nadia Chahed, 2020, Côte d'Ivoire: 85 morts et 484 blessés dans les violences électorales, <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/c%3C%B4te-divoire-85-morts-et-484-bless%C3%A9s-dans-les-violences-%C3%A9lectorales-/2040840>

¹⁷ CIVICUS, 2020, Dégradation de l'espace civique avant les élections dans les pays francophones de l'Afrique de l'Ouest: Études de cas : Bénin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinée, Niger et Togo, https://www.civicus.org/documents/reports-and-publications/eena-reports/west-africa-report-2020_fr.pdf

¹⁸ "Benin and Côte d'Ivoire to Withdraw Individual Access to African Court," International Justice Resource Center, May 6, 2020, <https://ijrcenter.org/2020/05/06/benin-and-cote-divoire-to-withdraw-individual-access-to-african-court/>.

¹⁹ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.

investigations, opposition in the legislature, executive oversight, and high court independence are all quite low.

Côte d'Ivoire's scores on indicators of freedom of association and freedom of expression are somewhat stronger, but issues in these areas persist. Provisions in the Penal Code of 2019 that criminalize spontaneous demonstrations have also been used to suppress peaceful demonstrations by political parties. Violations of civic space are also common, particularly in the restriction of the freedom of expression of political party activists, journalists, and cyber activists close to opposition parties.¹⁷ The ability of citizens and civil society organizations to directly appeal to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights was recently undermined by the Ivorian authorities.¹⁸ The declines in deliberative and liberal indices (Figure 14) is easily understood in the face of these obstacles.

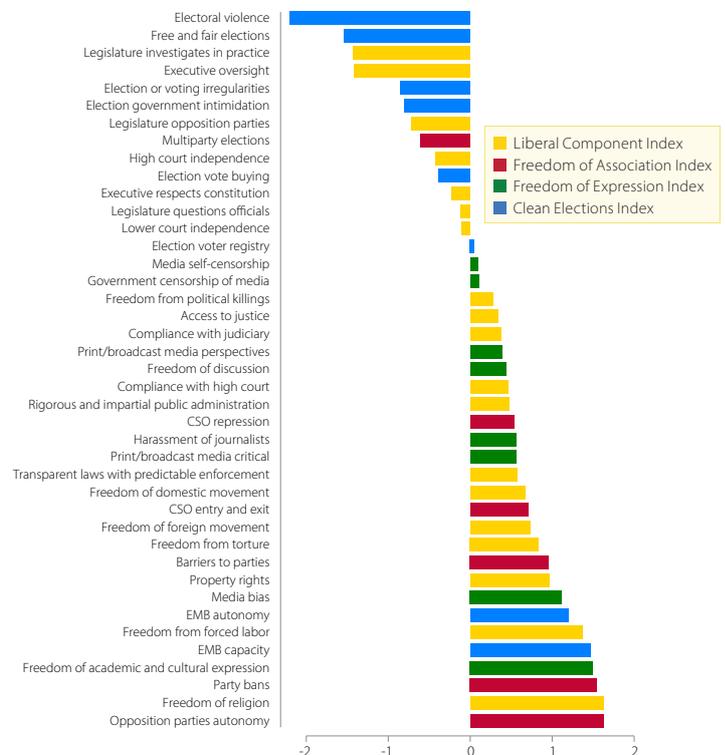
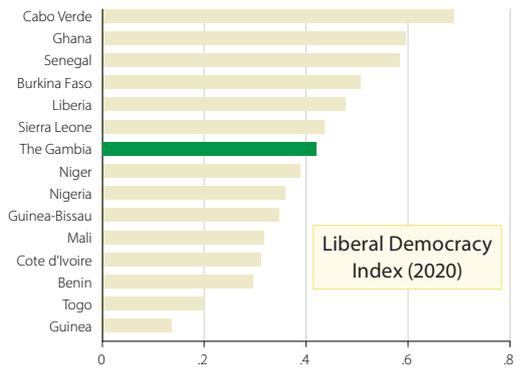


Figure 15: Côte d'Ivoire 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy¹⁹

The Gambia

- » The Gambia’s 2020 LDI score is slightly above average for ECOWAS countries. It increased substantially in 2016, but began to decline in 2019.
- » The Gambia’s scores on the Electoral and Participatory Component Indices have, in recent years, become considerably weaker than its scores on the Liberal, Deliberative, and Egalitarian Component Indices.
- » Of particular concern are The Gambia’s low scores on measures of electoral democracy, including free and fair elections, vote buying, electoral violence, election or voting irregularities, and election government intimidation.



Before the 2016 general elections, The Gambia was considered an electoral autocracy with considerable government repression of its population and few opportunities for the opposition to gain power. Much changed in 2016 and 2017 when Adama Barrow defeated incumbent president Yahya Jammeh and a timely ECOWAS intervention forced Jammeh to leave office. The new government has, to a much greater extent than the previous one, embraced democratic institutions, norms, and values. This embrace of democracy is reflected in the increase in The Gambia’s LDI score from 0.11 in 2016 to 0.44 in 2018. Scores on the Liberal and Deliberative Component Indices increased most dramatically (Figure 16) during this period, as the new government embarked on reforms that aimed to strengthen the rule of law, promote transitional justice, and transform the security sector. Although many reform challenges remain, thanks to these programs, The Gambia’s scores on access to justice and judicial strength (Figure 17) are among the strongest in West Africa.

The Gambia’s scores on the liberal, egalitarian and deliberative components have remained strong and consistent (Figure 16). In addition to its strong judicial institutions, The Gambia scores well in the protection of individual freedoms such as property rights and domestic movement. It is making progress on indicators of freedom of expression: the state no longer holds a monopoly on broadcast news and private news outlets are proliferating.²¹ Still, The Gambia’s ratings on media bias, the range of perspectives represented in the media, and media self-censorship remain below average for ECOWAS countries. Overall, however, The Gambia’s positive trends point to the benefits of alternation of power and of the leadership’s strengthened commitment to democracy.

Since 2018, there has been a downward trend in the electoral and participatory components (Figure 16). The indicators in Figure 17 show The Gambia’s weaknesses in election quality, especially in the areas of free and fair elections, election vote buying, electoral violence, election or voting irregularities and election government intimidation. Recent declines in the participatory component reflect The Gambia’s decreasing consultation with civil society organizations, who have expressed concerns about some provisions in the draft constitution that was released in 2019.²⁰

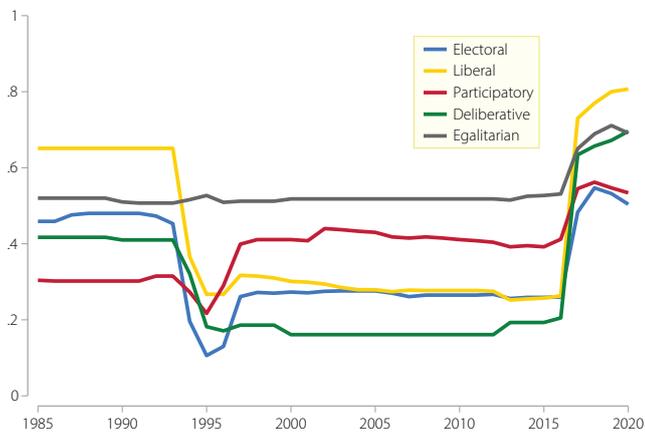


Figure 16: The Gambia Trends in Democracy Components

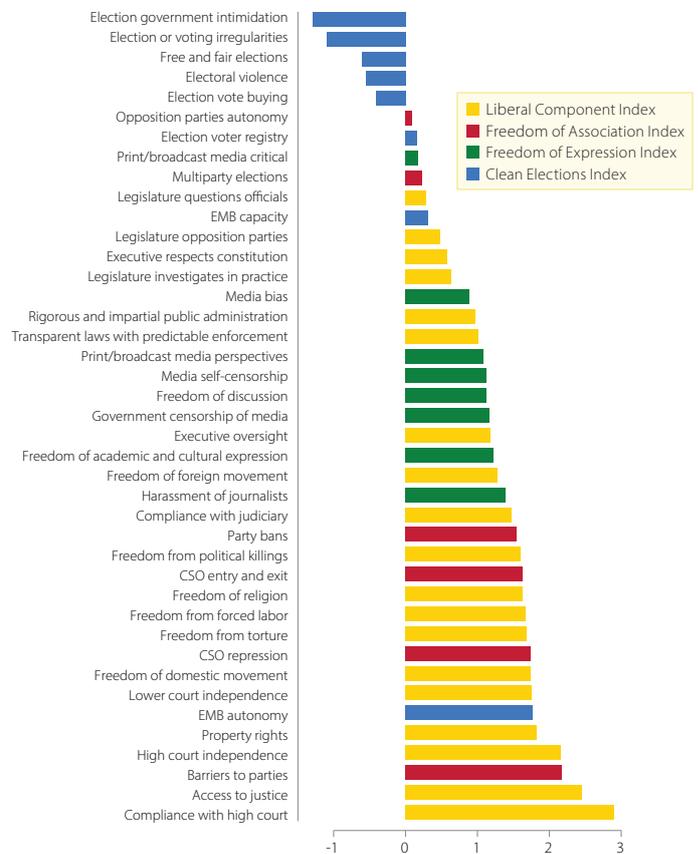


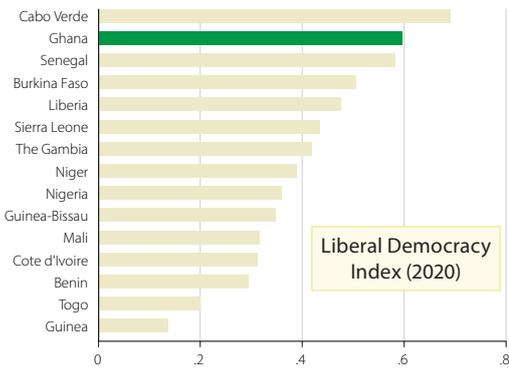
Figure 17: The Gambia 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy²²

²⁰ “Freedom in the World 2020: The Gambia,” Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/gambia/freedom-world/2020>.

²¹ “Gambia,” Reporters without Borders, <https://rsf.org/en/gambia>.

²² Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.

Ghana



- » Ghana's LDI score peaked at 0.66 in 2010 and 2011 but has been slowly declining since then.
- » Ghana scores especially well on the liberal and deliberative components of democracy.
- » Ghana's scores on the participatory component are low for the region and have been in a slow decline since the 1992 regime transition.
- » The quality of elections in Ghana is above average for the region but issues of vote buying and electoral violence persist.

Since its transition to multi-party democracy in 1992, Ghana has been at the forefront of democratization across the region. Based on its regionally strong record of multipartyism, free and fair elections, transparent laws, and respect for individual freedoms, Ghana is the only country in West Africa that is classified as a liberal democracy. Despite this achievement, Ghana's LDI score has been decreasing since 2011 from a high of 0.66 to a score of 0.60 in 2020. This decline has been driven by persistent weaknesses in measures of subnational democracy and election quality, as well as increasing harassment of journalists.

Ghana's electoral record is unmatched in the region. Since 1992, Ghana has held eight consecutive national elections on schedule every four years, resulting in three inter-party transfers of power between the two major political parties – the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Ghana's scores well above average for the region in measures of (lack of) barriers to political parties and the quality of its election voter registry (Figure 19). Electoral problems persist, however, in parties' electioneering tactics, threats of electoral violence, and electoral intimidation by security forces.²³ In the days prior to the December 2020 election, there were at least 60 reported election-related incidents, five deaths, and claims of intimidation by Ghanaian security forces.²⁴

The decomposition of the index into five key components in Figure 18 indicates that Ghana has performed well on both the liberal and deliberative components. In terms of the liberal component, Ghana scores relatively well on indicators of access to justice and transparent laws with predictable enforcement (Figure 19). Recent declines in the deliberative

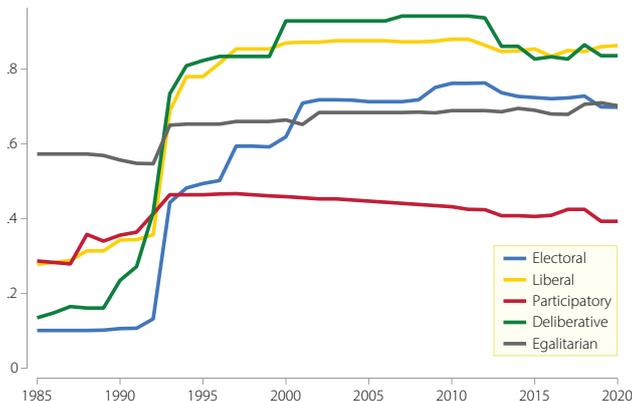


Figure 18: Ghana Trends in Democracy Components

component, which reflect region-wide trends, suggest that the quality of public debate and concern for the public good may be decreasing.

Ghana's scores on the electoral and egalitarian components have remained consistently in the 0.6 and 0.7 range – lower than its scores on the liberal and deliberative components, but above average for the region. Its scores on the participatory component are much lower and have declined slowly but steadily from 0.46 in 1993 to 0.39 in 2020. The low level of participatory democracy is attributed in large part to Ghana's low level of democracy at the regional and local levels, as the president maintains the power to appoint key officials at these levels.

Freedom of expression and association are generally well protected in Ghana as civil society organizations and established political parties can operate freely. There is increasing concern, however, about media freedoms. In late 2019, investigative journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale was shot dead in the street after exposing corrupt acts by key officials in the Ghana Football Association.

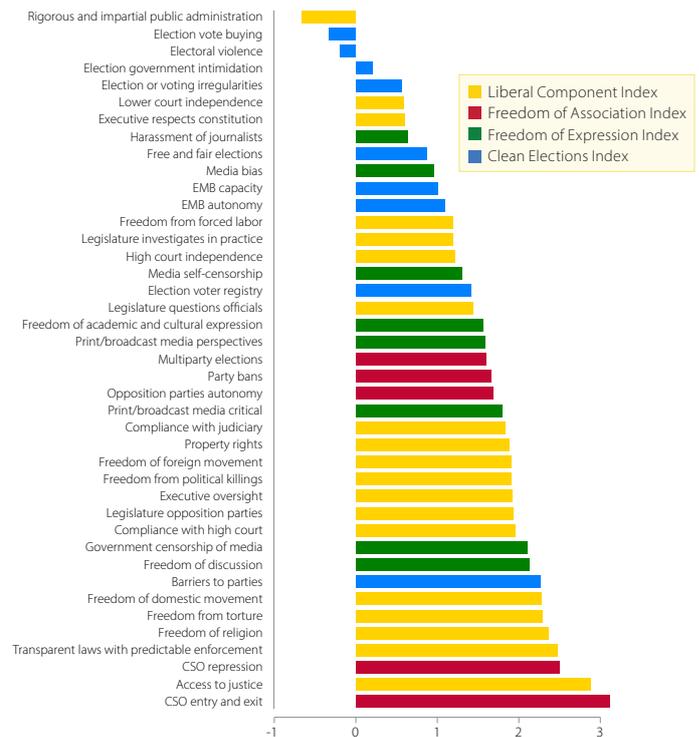


Figure 19: Ghana 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy²⁵

²³ "Ghana Presidential and Parliamentary Elections 2020: Building Confidence and Generating Trust Amid COVID-19 Pandemic," West African Network for Peacebuilding, June 2020.

²⁴ 5 people killed in Ghana election violence," DW, December 9, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/5-people-killed-in-ghana-election-violence/a-55883334>

²⁵ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.

Guinea

- » Guinea is an electoral autocracy with the lowest 2020 LDI score in West Africa.
- » Guinea is particularly weak in the liberal and electoral components of democracy, both of which experienced considerable decline between 2015 and 2020.
- » Guinea’s scores on participatory and egalitarian components of democracy are somewhat higher, but electoral tensions and social divisions threaten democratic participation and equality.

With an LDI score of 0.18 for 2020, Guinea was the least democratic country in West Africa. Guinea’s LDI score increased to some extent between 2010 and 2014, as the country began holding competitive elections after a two-year period of military rule from 2008-2010. Beginning in 2014, however, Guinea’s LDI score began to decline, as the government’s response to the 2013-2014 Ebola crisis led to serious tensions surrounding the country’s preparation for the 2015 elections. Seven opposition parties called on President Alpha Condé to postpone the elections to ensure that proper voter registries and processes were in place. Condé refused to postpone the elections and opposition parties vehemently challenged the election results.

The electoral component of democracy in Guinea declined further between 2019 and 2020 (see Figure 20) as President Condé exploited presidential powers to force a change in constitution that extended presidential terms from five to six years and effectively allowed him to run for a third term, despite constitutional provisions limiting a president to two terms. Condé’s candidacy in the 2020 elections was rejected by the opposition as well as by many citizens who took to the streets to protest the constitutional change. This tense electoral context led to violence and serious violations of individual freedoms perpetrated by state security forces. Dozens of people died and security personnel were widely alleged to have used excessive force against citizens.²⁶ As such, Guinea scores very low on indicators of electoral quality and individual freedoms (Figure 21), including measures of election violence, government intimidation, and freedom from political killings.

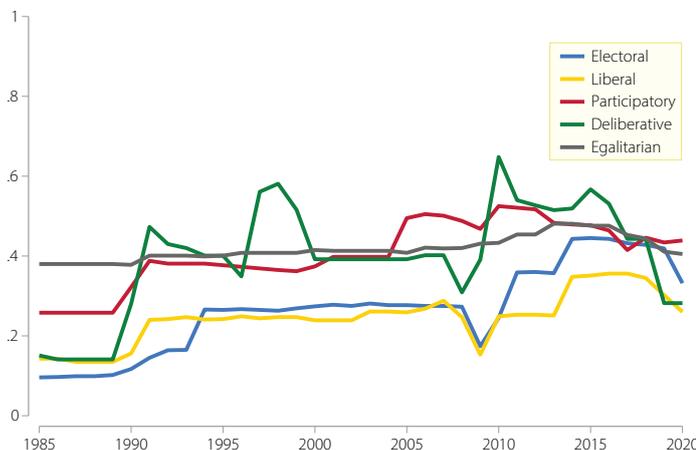
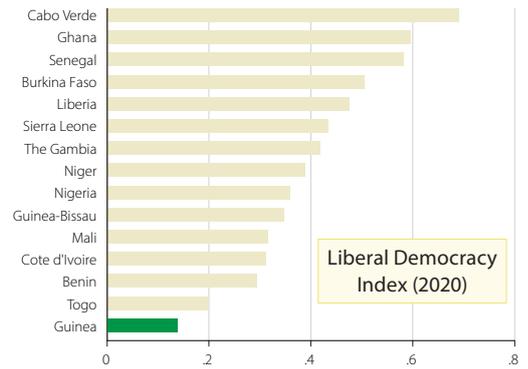


Figure 20: Guinea Trends in Democracy Components

²⁶ “Guinea: Events of 2020,” *Human Rights Watch* 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/fr/world-report/2021/country-chapters/377472>.

²⁷ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.



The events of 2020 occurred in a context in which the deliberative and liberal components of democracy had also been declining for some time (Figure 20). The two main political parties, the Rally of the People of Guinea (RPG), led by Alpha Condé, and the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), led by Cellou Dalli Diallo, have sometimes used identity-based mobilization. These electoral strategies have contributed to deepening socio-political divisions.

Despite serious tensions surrounding elections and social divisions, Guinea scores somewhat higher on measures of participatory and egalitarian democracy (Figure 20). Outside of elections, freedom of expression and association are generally protected (Figure 21).

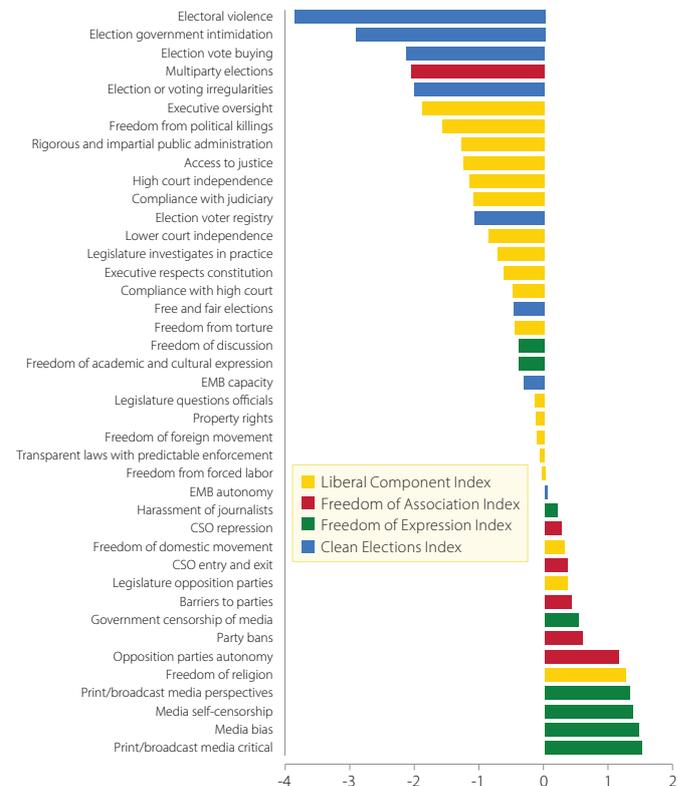
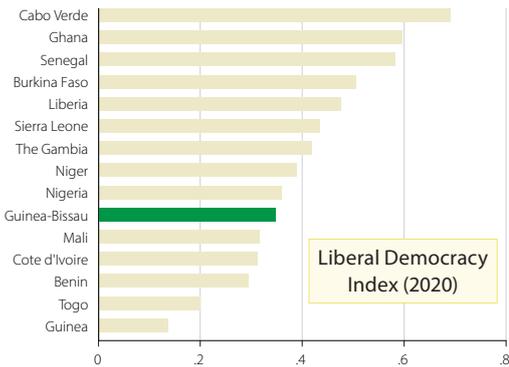


Figure 21: Guinea 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy²⁷

Guinea-Bissau



- » Guinea-Bissau is an electoral democracy with an LDI score of 0.34, which is below the West African average. Its LDI score has improved consistently since the resolution of a military coup in 2012 and the subsequent restoration of electoral civilian rule in 2014.
- » Guinea-Bissau has seen recent gains in electoral and liberal components of democracy, including its first electoral transfer of power in 2020.
- » Although Guinea-Bissau scores well on a number of measures of individual freedoms, institutional constraints on the executive remain weak.

Once the site of frequent military coups and electoral dominance by the ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (PAIGC), Guinea-Bissau has maintained its status as an electoral democracy since the reintroduction of multiparty elections in 2014. Its LDI score of 0.34 is nonetheless the lowest of electoral democracies in the region. Its democratic qualities remain highly tenuous and it has struggled to build functioning administrative, judicial, and legislative institutions (Figure 23).

Among the five democracy components, Guinea-Bissau scores highest on the liberal and electoral components (Figure 22). It does especially well in the areas of the autonomy and capacity of its electoral management body and in individual freedoms (Figure 23), suggesting that there has been significant progress in the management of the electoral process. The 2019 elections and their aftermath, however, exposed underlying weaknesses in these areas as incumbent president José Mário Vaz repeatedly used his powers to dislodge key opponents from their leadership positions in parliament.²⁸ After finishing fourth in the first round of voting, Vaz stepped aside, allowing the two top finishers -- Domingos Simoes Pereira and Umaro Sissoco Embaló – to compete in the runoff election. Embaló finished with 53.6 percent of votes and was inaugurated in February 2020, but Pereira challenged the results and it was not until months later that Pereira and his PAIGC party formally conceded. In 2020, the PAIGC inaugurated the Speaker of the National People’s Assembly, Cipriano Cassamá as a rival president and Embaló appointed Nuno Gomes Nabiam as prime minister but the former prime minister, Aristides Gomes, refused to resign.

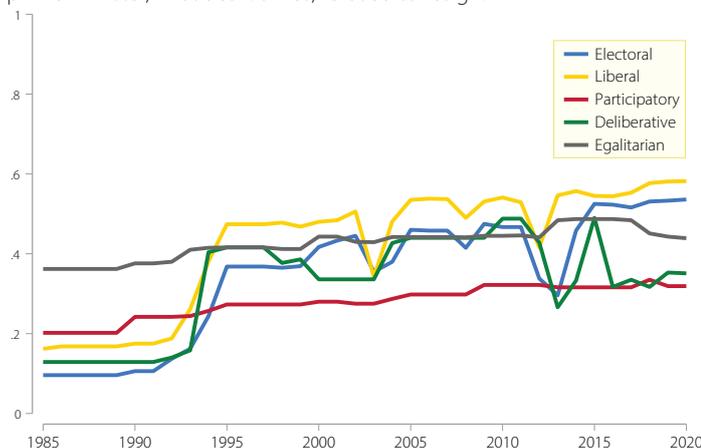


Figure 22: Guinea-Bissau Trends in Democracy Components

Additionally, as seen in Figure 22, the deliberative and participatory components of democracy remain very weak in Guinea-Bissau. The deliberative component has been weakened by increasing tensions within, and defections from, the PAIGC. It is important to note, however, that such divisions are not overtly ethnic or religious in nature.²⁹ Weaknesses in the participatory component reflect an absence of democracy at the local and regional levels, as well as few opportunities for citizens to participate directly in government. With the exception of the deliberative component, the components have not fluctuated much since 2015.

Guinea-Bissau performs well on a number of indicators of freedom of expression and association, especially in having few barriers to political party formation and a low levels of media bias. Its weak scores on government censorship of media and harassment of journalists, however, warn that freedom of expression is not yet well institutionalized.

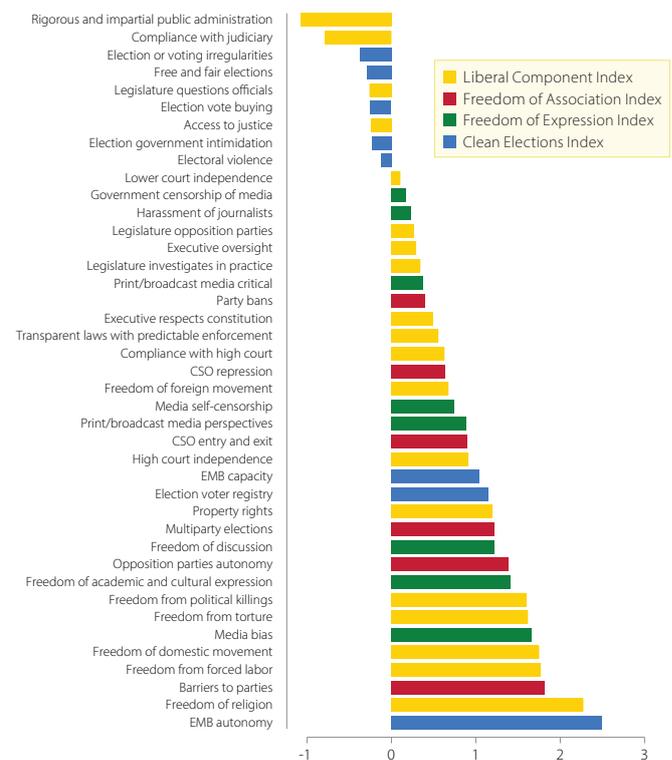


Figure 23: Guinea-Bissau 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy³⁰

²⁸ “Freedom in the World 2020: Guinea-Bissau,” Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/guinea-bissau/freedom-world/2020>.

²⁹ “Ethnicity in Guinea-Bissau,” Ethnic Power Relations Atlas, <https://growup.ethz.ch/atlas/pdf/Guinea-Bissau.pdf>

³⁰ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.



Liberia

- » Liberia is an electoral democracy with a 2020 LDI score that is among the five highest in West Africa. Its LDI score reached a peak of 0.5 in 2005 and has declined slightly since then to 0.43.
- » Liberia has not experienced significant democratic decline in recent years. However, its participatory component remains low and the liberal and deliberative components have declined since 2017.
- » Liberia is weakest on indicators of electoral quality. Its scores on indicators of freedom of expression and freedom of association are comparatively strong.

Liberia transitioned from electoral autocracy to electoral democracy in 2005, following national elections that were held for the first time since 1997. The 2005 elections were held in accordance with the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2003, which effectively ended Liberia’s second civil war. Since 2005, Liberia has maintained its status as an electoral democracy with national elections held every six years. The 2017 elections marked the first inter-party transfer of power in the current democratic era.

The deliberative and liberal components of democracy are strongest in Liberia (Figure 24). Liberia scores especially well on the protection of basic rights and freedoms such as freedom of movement, media freedom, and freedom of association for NGOs and political parties (Figure 25). It also scores well in the area of high court independence. In 2020, however, there were worrying signs of media freedom as journalists who reported on government response to the COVID-19 pandemic faced questioning and even physical attack from Liberian authorities.³¹

The scores on electoral and egalitarian components in Liberia are less strong, but have remained consistent since 2005. The change of power in the 2017 elections indicates that incumbents have not seriously manipulated elections in their favor, though weaknesses in electoral institutions (Figure 25, blue bars) indicate the potential for electoral problems in the future. In recent elections, there have been instances of

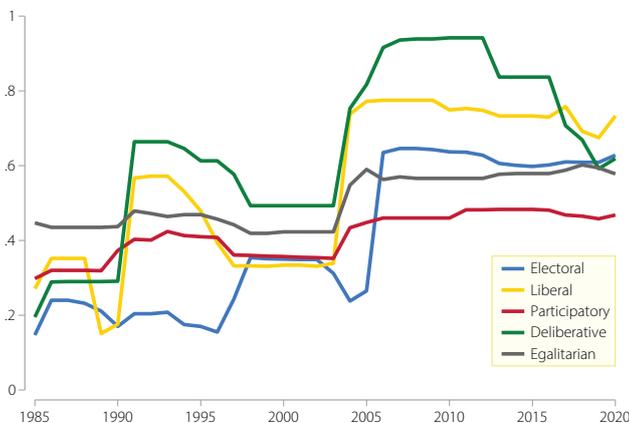


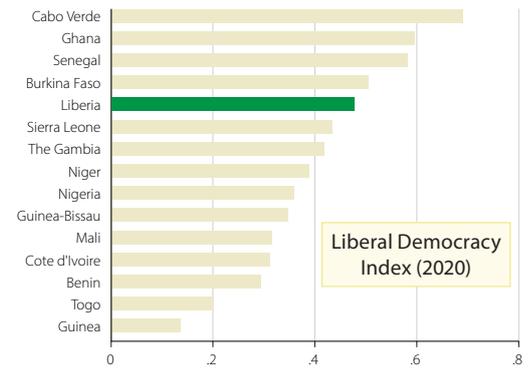
Figure 24: Liberia Trends in Democracy Components

³¹ “Journalists in Liberia attacked, harassed for reporting on COVID-19,” Committee to Protect Journalists, April 15, 2020, <https://cpj.org/2020/04/journalists-in-liberia-attacked-harassed-for-repor/>.

³² “Freedom in the World 2021: Liberia,” Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/liberia/freedom-world/2021>

³³ Luke Semnara, “Ending Monrovia’s Hegemony: The Need to Decentralize Liberia,” Columbia Political Review, March 23, 2021, <http://www.cpreview.org/blog/2021/3/ending-monrovia-s-hegemony-the-need-to-decentralize-liberia>.

³⁴ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.



voters having multiple registration cards, attacks on opposition party members, seizures of ballot boxes as well as the kidnapping and assault of a candidate.³²

Although Liberia scores well in the areas of freedom of association and expression, its participatory component of democracy remains weak (Figure 24) as Liberia provides few opportunities for direct citizen participation in government and does not hold elections for any sub-national government positions. This system has garnered significant criticism for concentrating power in the presidency, which reserves the right to appoint and direct all officials in Liberia’s fifteen counties.³³

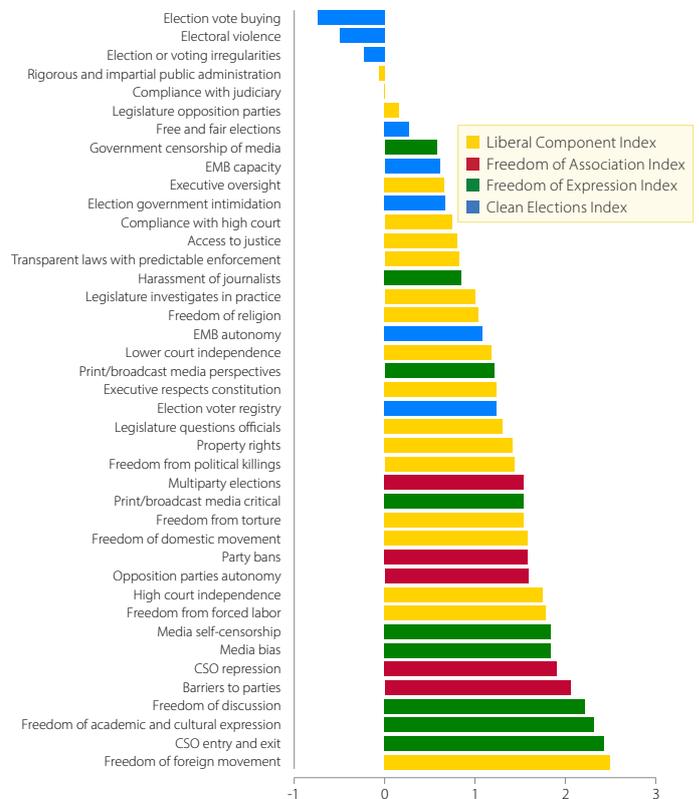
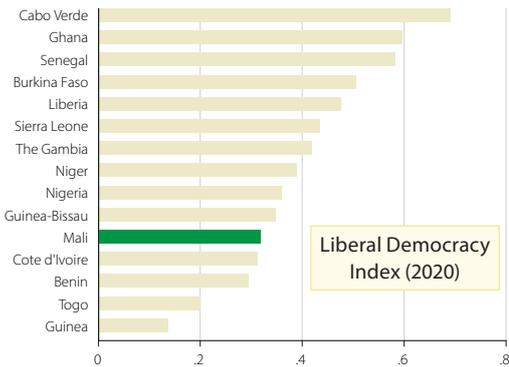


Figure 25: Liberia 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy³⁴

Mali



- » Once a model of democracy in the sub-region, Mali’s LDI score has declined from 0.46 in 1993 to 0.32 in 2020.
- » Electoral and liberal components of democracy have declined considerably as political actors repeatedly fail to respect the constitution and violate individual freedoms.
- » Violence is widespread in Mali’s political space, including violent seizures of power by the military, election violence by armed groups, and violent repression of journalists and protestors by state security forces.

From 1992 through 2012, Mali was considered a model of electoral democracy in West Africa. It experienced peaceful electoral transfers of power in 1992 and 2002. Politics became more turbulent in 2012, when the rebellion led by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) campaigned for control of northern Mali. Dissatisfied with the government’s response, members of the Malian military violently seized power from President Amadou Toumani Touré in 2012 and suspended the constitution just one month before scheduled presidential elections. Civilian rule was restored later in 2012 and elections were held in 2013. A similar set of events unfolded in 2020 when dissatisfaction with the government led to mass protests and another successful military coup, which forced the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and the dissolution of his government.

Coups are not the only form of violence surrounding elections. In the 2018 elections, violence by armed groups prevented voting from taking place at 644 polling stations throughout the country, mostly in the center and north.³⁵ Mali’s scores on the electoral component of democracy are perpetually low (Figure 26) and have declined steadily since the mid-2000s. With the exception of the autonomy of Mali’s Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), Mali’s scores on indicators of election quality are very weak, especially in the areas of election violence, election voter registry, irregularities, and free and fair elections (Figure 27).

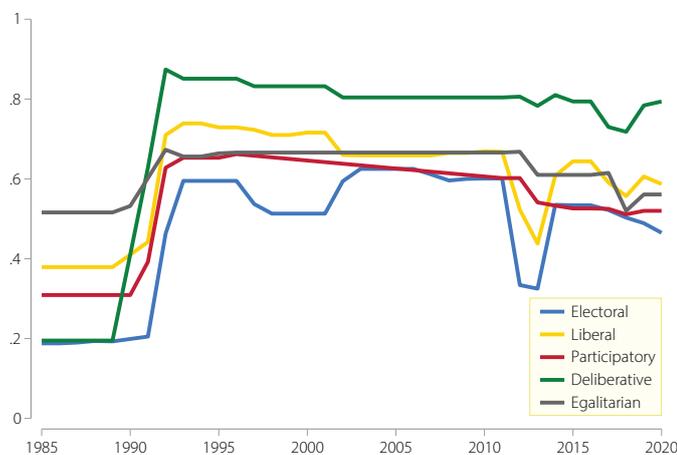


Figure 26: Mali Trends in Democracy Components

Mali has also seen declining scores in the liberal and participatory components. Malian security forces are widely alleged to have used repressive tactics against citizens and civil society groups.³⁶ In July 2020, for example, Malian security forces responded violently to opposition protests, resulting in the death of 14 citizens.³⁷ Journalists have also been targeted, especially in the run-up to the 2018 elections. Although there are few barriers to formation of political parties and civil society organizations in Mali (Figure 27), its scores on indicators of media censorship and civil society repression remain weak.

The liberal component of democracy is also afflicted by few meaningful constraints on executive power. Mali’s legislative and administrative institutions remain particularly weak (Figure 27). The inability of these institutions to effectively manage social and political conflict is evident in Mali’s declining scores in egalitarian democracy and in the prevalence of violence throughout the political sphere. Despite these problems, Mali’s scores on the deliberative component remain surprisingly strong.

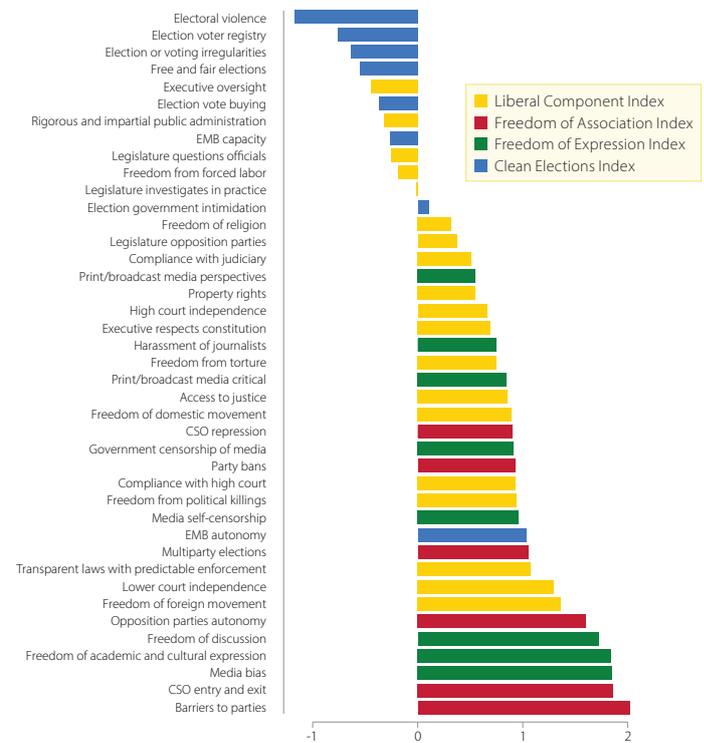


Figure 27: Mali 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy³⁸

35 “Low turnout for Mali election as violence mars polls,” France24, July 30, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20180730-low-turnout-mali-election-violence-presidential-keita-cisse-mopti>.
 36 Civicus Monitor, Mali, <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/?country=86>.
 37 “Mali: Security forces use excessive force at protests,” Human Rights Watch, August 12, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/12/mali-security-forces-use-excessive-force-protests#>.
 38 Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.



Niger

- » Niger’s LDI score has fluctuated considerably in recent decades but, as of 2020, Niger has an LDI score of 0.39, the median among the 15 ECOWAS Countries.
- » Overall, Niger has seen more improvement in its democracy over the past 10 years than other countries in the region, including major advances in the electoral and liberal components of democracy. It also scores well on measures of free expression.
- » Since 2015, however, Niger has seen its scores on these components slip, especially in indicators of election quality and judicial independence.

Niger’s political history is marked by a number of coups d’états, the most recent of which occurred in 2010. Since 2010, however, Niger has maintained its status as an electoral democracy. Its LDI score rose to 0.52 in 2013 and has since declined to 0.39, representing the median score for all 15 ECOWAS countries. Niger’s democratic progress over the past 10 years is particularly important given the worsening security threats faced in multiple regions of the country.

Niger’s most impressive democratic advancements since 2010 are in the electoral and liberal components (Figure 28 National elections in 2016 and 2020/2021 were free of major episodes of political violence or military intervention. Niger’s Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) maintains considerable autonomy, but its capacity to manage government intimidation and voting irregularities remains weak (Figure 29).

In terms of the liberal component, Niger scores especially well on indicators of legislative constraints on the executive and transparent laws with predictable enforcement. These trends are evident in public opinion as the most recent Afrobarometer poll finds that a majority of citizens show confidence in institutions like the police, courts and parliamentarians by 80%, 68% and 55% respectively.³⁹ Moreover, unlike many of his counterparts in the region, outgoing President Mahamadou Issoufou did not seek to amend the constitution or run for a third term, signifying strengthening respect for the constitution and the country’s electoral laws.

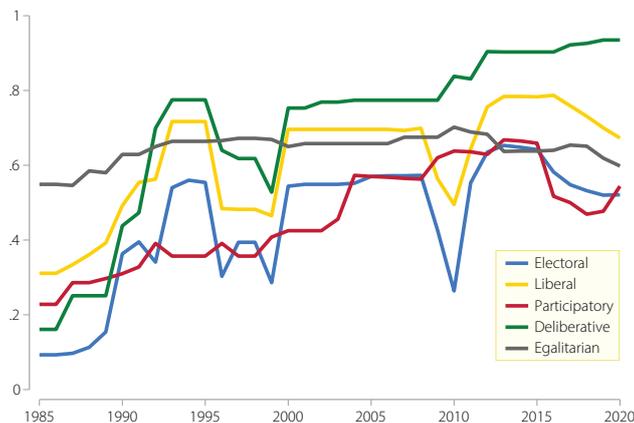
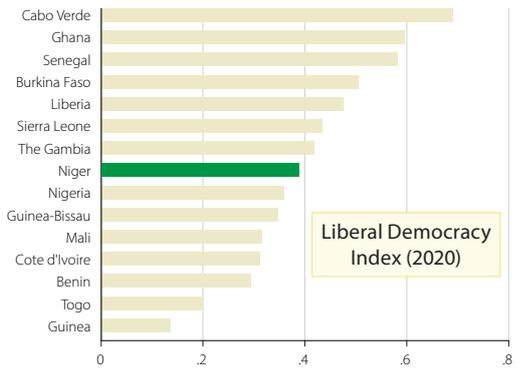


Figure 28: Niger Trends in Democracy Components

³⁹ Afrobarometer Bulletin, 2021

⁴⁰ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.



Niger’s record on freedom of expression and freedom of association is mixed. Niger scores very well on freedom of academic and cultural expression and has a diversity of perspectives represented in the media (Figure 29). However, the media is sometimes prone to censorship. Political parties and civil society organizations can generally form freely, but they do face some barriers to participation in political and civic spaces. Nonetheless, Niger has maintained strong performance on the deliberative component of democracy, suggesting that political polarization has not undermined the quality of public debate and concern for the common good.

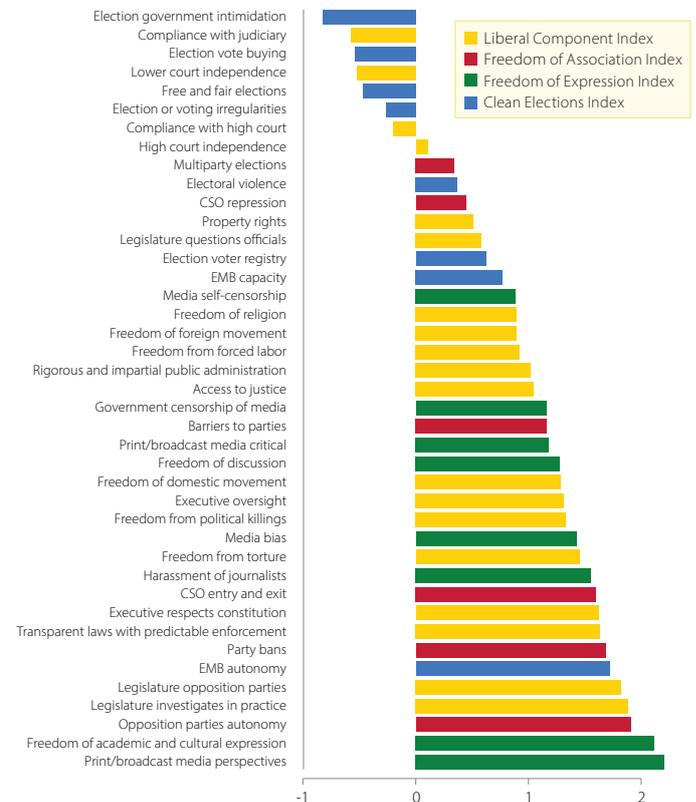
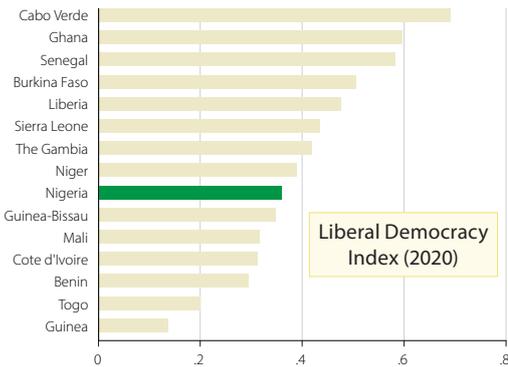


Figure 29: Niger 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy⁴⁰

Nigeria



- » Nigeria’s 2020 LDI score is slightly below average for ECOWAS countries. There has been almost no change in its LDI score since 2010.
- » Since 2015, Nigeria has seen considerable decline in its scores on the electoral, liberal, and deliberative components of democracy. Low ratings on electoral democracy reflect frequent vote buying, election violence, voting irregularities, and low capacity of its election management body.
- » Nigeria scores well on media freedoms and there are no significant barriers to freedom of discussion and organization of political parties.

Nigeria is an electoral democracy whose LDI score is close to the regional average for ECOWAS states. Nigeria’s LDI score has improved consistently since 1999, when Nigeria transitioned from military to civilian democratic rule. At the heart of these improvements is Nigeria’s record of holding elections every four years, resulting in one alternation of power in 2015 between the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC). Since 2015, however, the quality of elections as reflected in the Electoral Component Index has declined (Figure 30). The high incidence of electoral violence and vote buying (Figure 31) has dampened voter turnout: only 43.7% of the voters turned out to vote in 2015 and 49.8% in 2019. Off-cycle elections have fared worse as was witnessed in sub-national governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states, with about a quarter of eligible voters turning out to vote.

The deliberative, liberal, and participatory components are above average for the region. Nigeria scores especially well in areas such as freedom of discussion and association, with no significant barriers on media and political party activities. Nigeria’s performance on the Liberal Component Index improved after the 2015 elections—a sign that the country has been getting used to and comfortable with some facets of liberal democracy⁴¹—but has since declined. In addition to the electoral challenges described above, political killings, violent repression of social movements such as End SARS, and widespread impunity for public officials illustrate serious challenges for the advancement of liberal democracy in Nigeria.

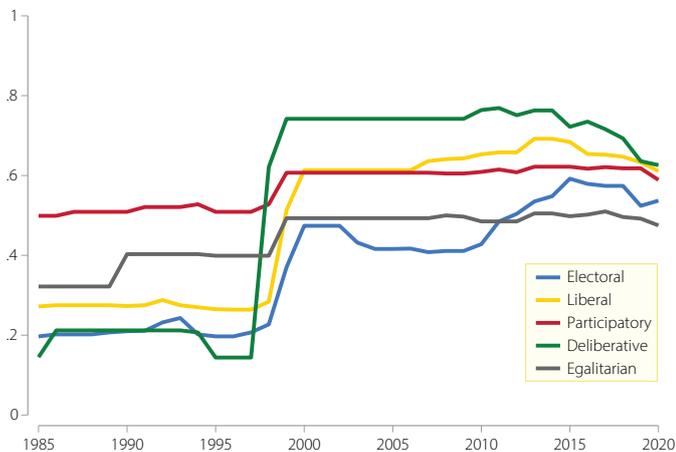


Figure 30: Nigeria Trends in Democracy Components

41 Afolabi O.S & Michael Bongani Reinders M.B (2020). ‘Political Leadership and Democratic Governance in Anglophone Africa’ In Thuynsma H.A (2020). *Brittle Democracies: Comparing Politics in Anglophone Africa*. pp. 156-178 Pretoria: ESI Press

42 Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.

Since 2011, Nigeria’s Egalitarian Component Index has scored the lowest of all democracy components, reflecting the highly unequal conditions under which individuals and social groups are empowered in the political and civic spheres. The protection of rights and freedoms as well as access to justice, for example, are increasingly under attack in areas affected by insecurity. Key areas to watch (see Figure 31) include the executive’s lack of respect for the constitution and compliance with court rulings, weak capacity and autonomy of the electoral management body, and lack of rigorous and impartial public administration.

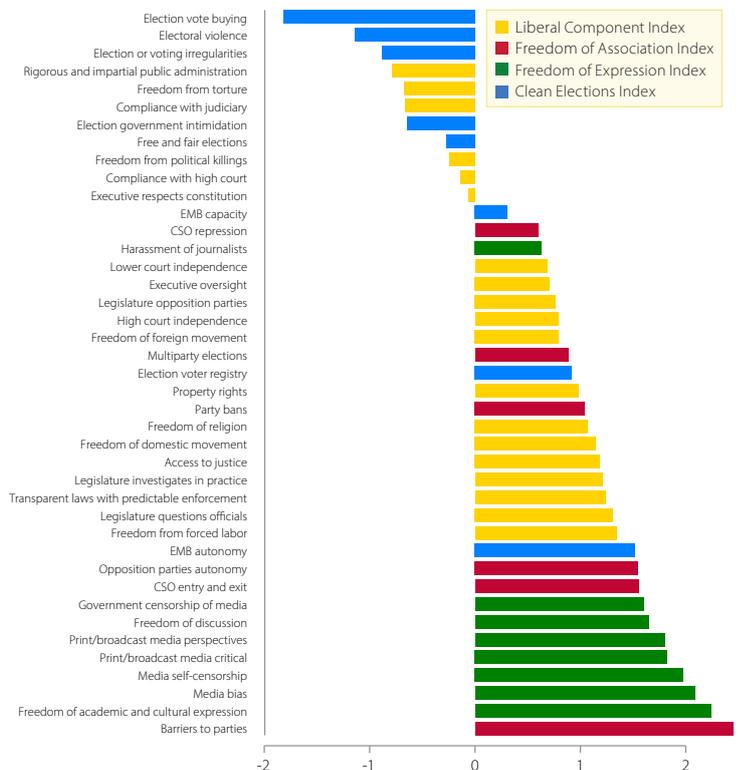


Figure 31: Nigeria 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy⁴²

Senegal

- » Senegal has the third highest LDI score among ECOWAS countries. It is the only country in the region whose LDI score has improved consistently since independence.
- » Senegal generally performs well across the electoral, liberal, deliberative, and egalitarian components of democracy, but scores on the liberal and deliberative components have declined since 2012.
- » Senegal has a robust participatory environment for political parties, civil society, and the media. In recent, years government actions have threatened this environment

Senegal's 2020 LDI score is 0.58, the third highest among ECOWAS countries. Its LDI score has improved consistently since it became a republic in 1958. Once characterized as a "democracy without alternation," the electoral component of democracy experienced significant progress when the first peaceful electoral transfer of power occurred in 2000, and again in 2012 when voters rejected President Abdoulaye Wade's attempts to circumvent term limits and run for a third term. As seen in Figure 32, the electoral component of democracy has increased steadily over time. Additionally, Senegal's score on the indicator of free and fair elections (Figure 33) is considerably stronger than most other countries in the region. Still, vote-buying and election violence pose serious obstacles to Senegal's election quality. In advance of the 2019 elections two people were killed and many injured when a campaign rally turned violent.

Senegal generally performs well in the liberal and deliberative components of democracy with its strong commitments to political dialogue and human rights (Figure 32). Since 2012, however, Senegal's scores on these components have declined, particularly in the areas of legislative and judicial constraints on the executive, freedom of association, and the government's consultation with a range of civic, social, and political groups. There is concern that President Macky Sall may be using judicial and law enforcement institutions to undermine the opposition, a development that is particularly detrimental to Senegal's democracy. In 2019, the government also targeted and detained a number of pro-democracy civil society organizations.⁴³

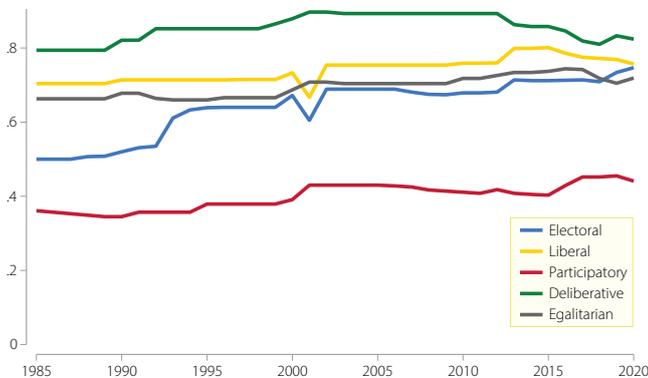


Figure 32: Senegal Trends in Democracy Components

43 "Senegal: Election must be held in a climate free from violence and intimidation," Amnesty International, February 21, 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/senegal-election-must-be-held-in-a-climate-free-from-violence/>.

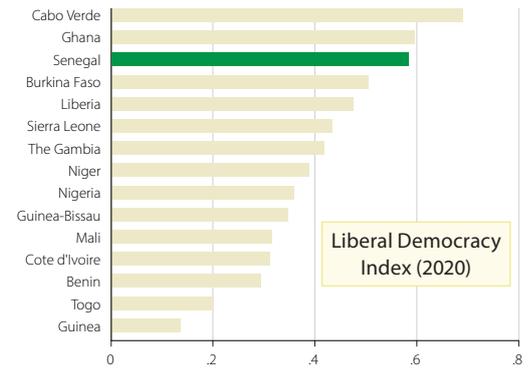
44 Composed of RFM, l'Observateur and TFM. The GFM is led by Mr. Birane Ndour, son of Youssou Ndour who is a minister and close associate of the President.

45 Origines SA is an audio-visual production company composed of 2STV, RACINES TV, and Origines FM. This group is led by El Hadji Ndiaye, whose links to the government earned him an appointment to the Société de Télédiffusion du Sénégal (TDS-SA), of which he is also the Managing Director.

46 This group include <https://lequotidien.sn>. It is led by journalist Madiambal Diagne, known for his support of the incumbent government.

47 D-Media is led by Bougane Gueye.

48 Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.



Senegal's scores on the participatory component are weaker. Although civil society participation is strong, there are few opportunities for citizens to elect regional and local leaders, or to vote directly in referenda.

Although Senegal generally scores well on indicators of freedom of expression (Figure 33), the media's role in democratic construction remains contentious. Since the second alternation of power in 2012, some private press owners have become both powerful economic entrepreneurs and political actors. For example, the heads of *Groupe futurs medias*,⁴⁴ *Origines SA*,⁴⁵ and *Avenir*⁴⁶ communication, have built editorial lines for the private press clearly favorable to the government in power, while opposition leaders often have their own press groups such as Bougane Gueye's *groupe de presse D-Media*⁴⁷. These trends highlight the use of the media for political propaganda, rather than for objective political reporting.

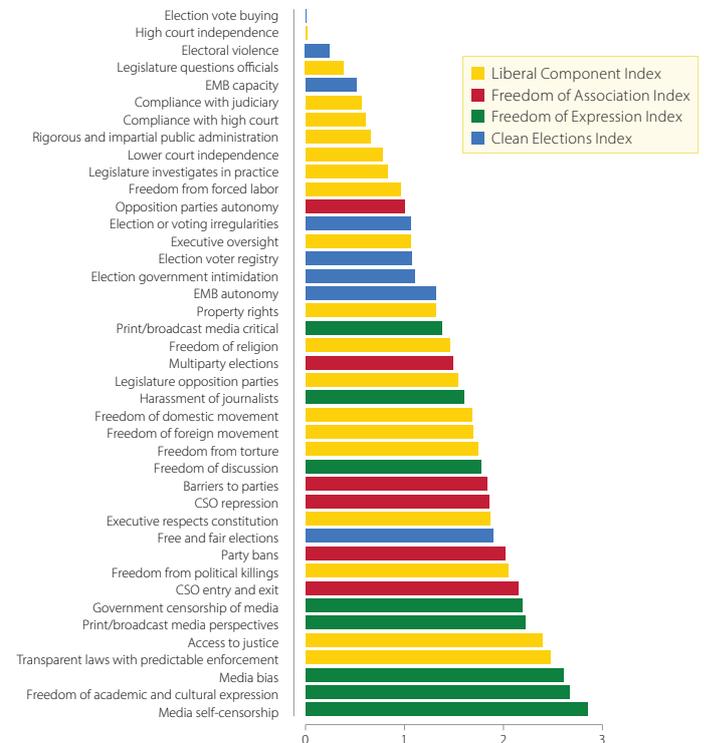
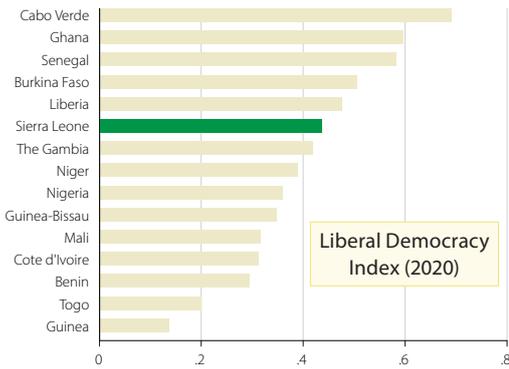


Figure 33: Senegal 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy⁴⁸

Sierra Leone



- » Sierra Leone is an electoral democracy with a 2020 LDI score that is above average for ECOWAS countries. Unlike many other countries in the region, its LDI score has improved since 2016.
- » Sierra Leone has seen the most improvement in the liberal, deliberative, and egalitarian components of democracy. Its levels of participatory democracy are consistently high.
- » Sierra Leone is weakest in the electoral component of democracy. Its scores on vote buying, electoral violence, and the capacity of its electoral management body are particularly low.

Since the end of its civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone has consistently maintained its status as an electoral democracy. Sierra Leone has held four national elections since 2002, two of which have led to alternations of power between the two main parties, the All People's Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP).

Sierra Leone generally scores well on the participatory and deliberative components of democracy (Figure 34) and on indicators of freedom of expression and association (Figure 35). Sierra Leone regularly holds elections not only for president and parliament, but also for local councils, thus giving citizens the opportunity to participate in the selection of local leaders. However, government censorship of the media still exists as authorities regularly employ the country's libel laws to target journalists through the body of the Independent Media Commission. For instance, in 2019, a newspaper editor was detained on defamation charges after investigating corruption allegations against the chief minister.⁴⁹ These intimidation tactics appear to have detrimental impacts on the media, as seen in Sierra Leone's weak performance on indicators of media self-censorship and diversity of perspectives in the media.

Although Sierra Leone's elections have led to turnovers of power in 2007 and 2018, the quality of their elections has not seen any meaningful improvement since the early 2000s (Figure 34). Sierra Leone's scores on vote

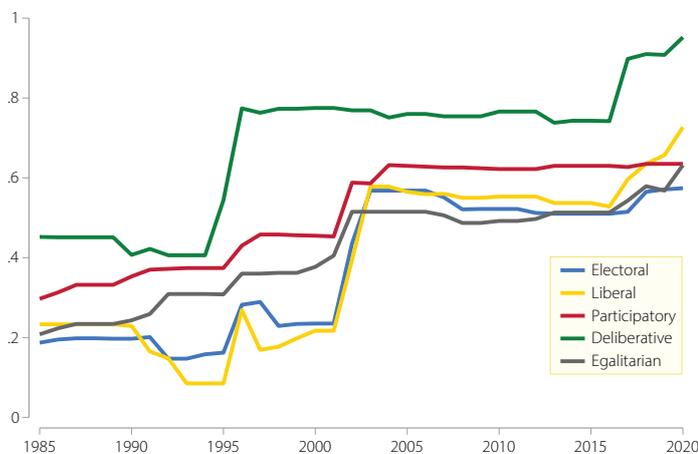


Figure 34: Sierra Leone Trends in Democracy Components

buying, election violence, and the capacity of its electoral management body remain quite low. Opposition parties have faced police violence and restrictions on assembly. In the most recent elections in 2018, which were ultimately deemed free and fair, there were allegations of violence and voters' intimidation during the campaign period.⁵⁰ Restrictive electoral laws also bar people with dual citizenship from contesting.

Liberal aspects of democracy have seen improvement since 2016, but checks on executive power remain weak as Sierra Leone's scores on indicators of the executive's respect for the constitution, judicial independence, and legislative oversight remain relatively low (Figure 35). In May 2020, a high court decision removed 10 opposition members from parliament, handing over nine of the seats to the President's party and giving it a majority.⁵¹

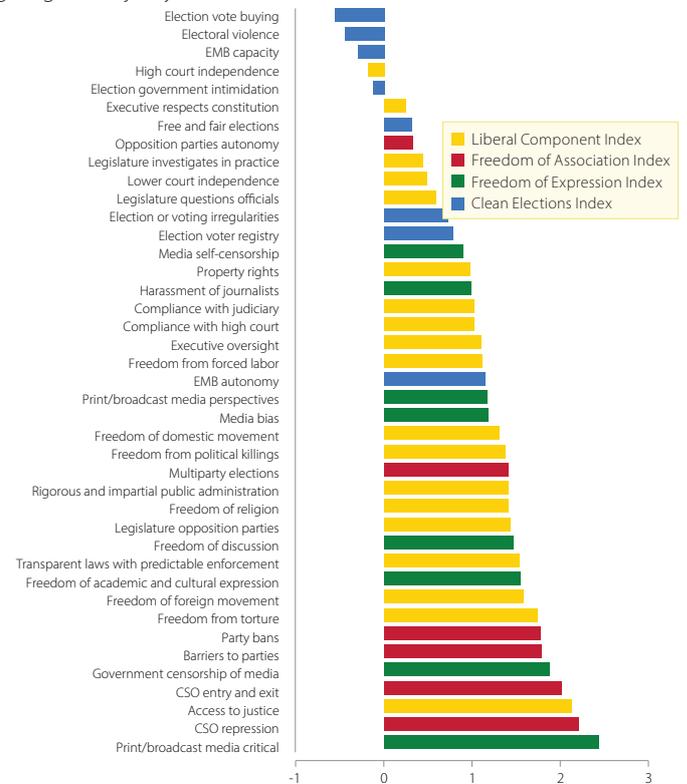


Figure 35: Sierra Leone 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy⁵²

⁴⁹ "Sierra Leone journalist detained over alleged £1.5 million bribery scandal is released," The Sierra Leone Telegraph, November 12, 2019, <https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/sierra-leone-journalist-detained-over-alleged-1-5-million-bribery-scandal-is-released/comment-page-1>

⁵⁰ "Sierra Leone General Election Observer Group Declares Vote 'Credible and Transparent,'" The Commonwealth, March 8, 2018, <https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/sierra-leone-election-observer-group-declares-vote-credible-and-transparent>.

⁵¹ Freedom in the World 2020: Sierra Leone," Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sierra-leone/freedom-world/2020>

⁵² Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.

Togo

- » In 2020, Togo had the second lowest LDI score among ECOWAS countries. Its LDI score declined from 0.26 in 2016 to 0.20 in 2020.
- » Judicial constraints on the executive remain very weak in Togo and legislative constraints on the executive have been weakening in recent years.
- » Despite having a strong voter registry system, Togo scores low on most indicators of election quality, especially voting irregularities and election government intimidation.

Togo is one of the least democratic countries in West Africa. Its 2020 LDI score of 0.2 is the second lowest in the ECOWAS region. Its LDI score improved to some extent after the death of President Eyadema Gnassingbé in 2005. From 2016 to 2020, however, Togo's scores on both the electoral and liberal components declined (Figure 36). This decline has been driven by weakening legislative constraints on the executive, the government's manipulation of the 2020 election results, and their increasingly repressive tactics against citizens and opponents.

Togo's scores reflect weak institutional constraints on the executive (Figure 37). The president has significant power over judicial appointees, thus undermining the courts' independence.⁵³ Legislative constraints have weakened considerably since 2018, when President Faure Gnassingbé's party, the Union for the Republic (UNIR), won 59 of the 91 seats in an election that was boycotted by 14 opposition parties.⁵⁴ The National Assembly subsequently voted to change the law on term limits, effectively allowing President Gnassingbé to run for a fourth presidential term.

These weakening constraints on executive power have diminished the quality of elections. As seen in Figure 37, Togo's scores on indicators of election irregularities and government intimidation are especially low. Those boycotting the 2018 legislative elections complained of opposition arrests and the independence of Togo's national electoral

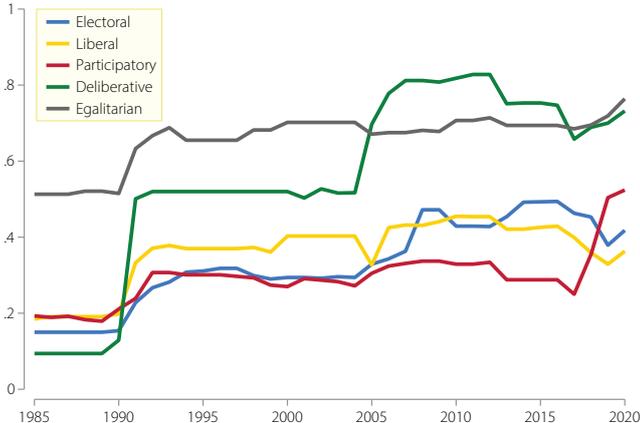
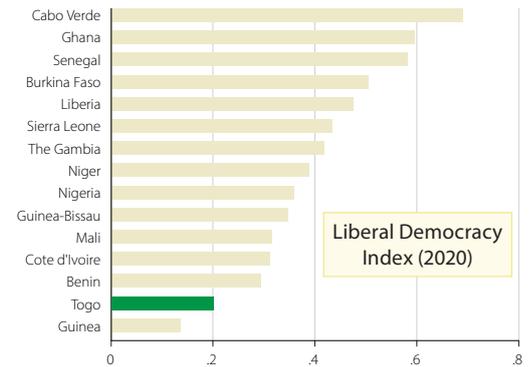


Figure 36: Togo Trends in Democracy Components



commission. These issues resurfaced in the 2020 presidential elections when the government limited election observers, cut access to web-based messaging services, and sent the military to surround the home of leading opposition candidate Agbéyomé Kodjo.

Although Togo maintains relatively high scores on measures of freedom of expression, over half of Togolese citizens perceive problems in press freedom.⁵⁵ Civil society organizations, which mobilized strongly in opposition to the 2019 constitutional change and the 2020 election results, have been denied protest permits from the Ministry of Territorial Administration and are now more limited by restrictions on large gatherings related to COVID-19.⁵⁶

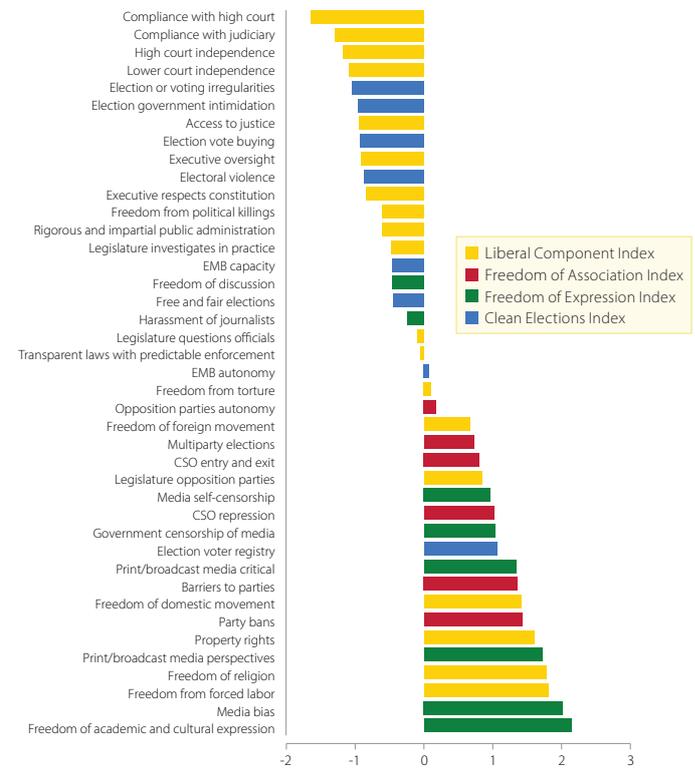


Figure 37: Togo 2020 Scores on Indicators of Liberal Democracy⁵⁷

⁵³ Alix Boucher, "Five Issues to Watch in Togo's Presidential Election," Africa Center for Strategic Studies, February 14, 2020, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/five-issues-to-watch-togo-presidential-election/>.

⁵⁴ Tyson Roberts, "Why did 14 opposition parties just boycott Togo's legislative election?" Washington Post Monkey Cage Blog, January 7, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/07/why-did-14-opposition-parties-just-boycott-togos-legislative-election/>.

⁵⁵ Hervé Akinocho et Koffi Amessou Adaba, "La liberté d'expression et la liberté de presse: Ingrédients clés de la démocratie togolaise," Document de Politique No. 76 d'Afrobarometer, September 2021

⁵⁶ "Freedom in the World 2021: Togo," Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/togo/freedom-world/2021>.

⁵⁷ Higher scores always indicate more democratic qualities. CSO = civil society organization, EMB = electoral management body.

The Tracker Team



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OSIWA's MISSION + VISION

MISSION

OSIWA's mission is to help build open societies in West Africa, where citizens enjoy the benefits of inclusive policies, good governance, vibrant democracies, transparency, accountability, equity and respect for the rule of law & fundamental human rights.

VISION

OSIWA envisions a freer, safer, more integrated, democratic and equitable West Africa. This will be achieved by:

- » Promoting inclusive governance processes, citizen participation in decision making and local governance and decentralization processes.
- » Working with civil society, governments, community leaders and activists to promote equal and sustainable economic growth in West Africa.
- » Promoting equal access to fair and independent justice and ensuring protection and enforcement of human rights of vulnerable groups.

