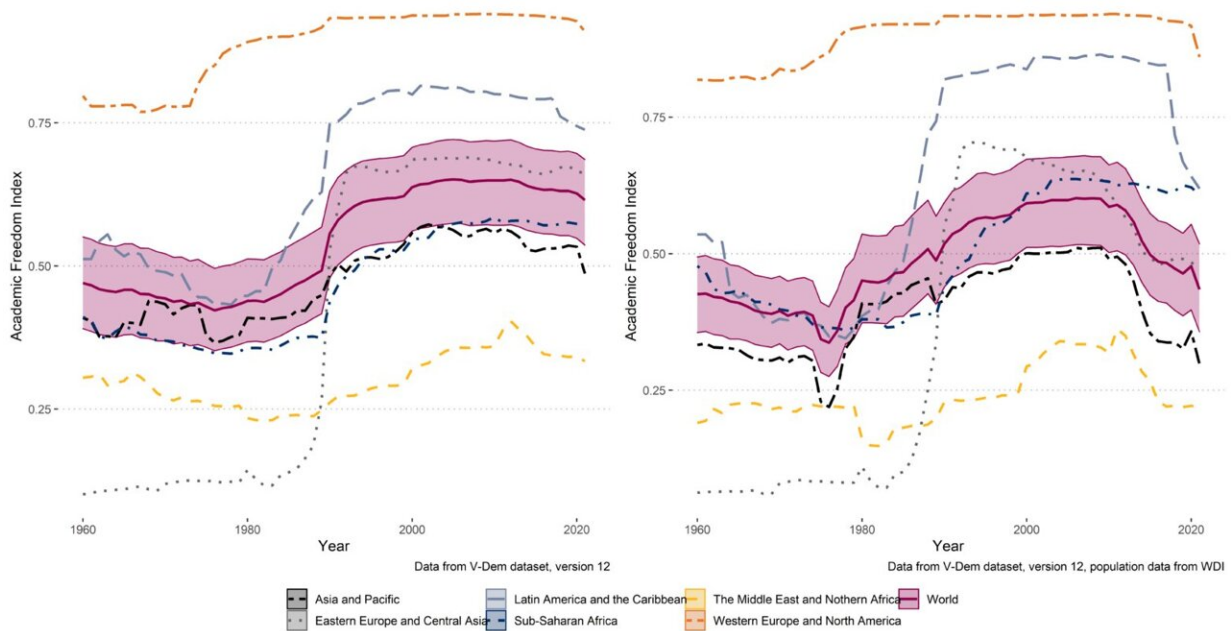


# Academic freedom on the decline

March 3 2022



Academic Freedom Index, global and regional averages, 1960-2021 (right-hand side: population-weighted). Credit: FAU;V-Dem

Academic freedom is a universal human right. Yet, the 2022-release of the Academic Freedom Index (AFI) reveals that almost two out of five people worldwide live in countries where academic freedom has declined substantially during the past ten years. Countries with substantial declines in academic freedom include for example Brazil, Cameroon, India, Russia, Thailand, and the USA.

The AFI is the result of an international collaboration involving more than 2050 country experts worldwide, coordinated by researchers at the University of Gothenburg's V-Dem Institute and the Institute of Political Science. The German Volkswagen Foundation is funding the project for a total of five years.

## **Two out of five people worldwide affected**

This year's AFI Update shows that academic freedom has decreased substantially compared to 2011 in nineteen countries and territories, and improved only in two. The declines affect 37% of the world's population, thus nearly two in five people worldwide.

Brazil, Hong Kong, India, and Turkey saw the greatest declines in academic freedom between 2011 and 2021. Notably, the deteriorations now also affect countries with a comparatively high level of academic freedom. For example, scholars and universities in Mexico, Poland, the USA, and the UK experience increasing limitations of academic freedom. Germany, on the other hand, received the highest AFI score in this year's assessment.

Dr. Georg Schütte, Secretary General of the Volkswagen Foundation, stresses that "academic freedom is a highly valued public good to which the Foundation is explicitly committed. It is a prerequisite for good science. We support the Index because it makes an important contribution to generating more knowledge about academic freedom, its mechanisms and effect worldwide."

## **International data collection for five indicators**

The AFI provides data on academic freedom worldwide for the period from 1900 to 2021. The index rests on assessments by more than 2,050

country experts from around the world (academics who usually live in the country that they assess). These experts' assessments are aggregated using a [statistical model](#) developed by the international V-Dem project team for its larger democracy dataset.

The AFI itself is composed of five indicators, namely the freedom to research and teach; the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination; the institutional autonomy of universities; campus integrity; and the [freedom](#) of academic and cultural expression.

## Open access and visualization

The detailed data that make up the AFI 1900-2021 are available [open access](#) to facilitate further studies. Easy to use visualization tools are available for anyone interested, and can be consulted by university administrations, research funders and policy makers.

**More information:** Academic freedom index:  
[opus4.kobv.de/opus4-fau/frontd ... ex/index/docId/18612](https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-fau/frontd...ex/index/docId/18612)

Provided by Friedrich–Alexander University Erlangen–Nurnberg

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