

PLS 140
Introduction to
Comparative Politics

Week 5, Lecture 2:
Democratic backsliding

Recap

- Democracy, its principles and institutions
- Democracy's historical success and its causes

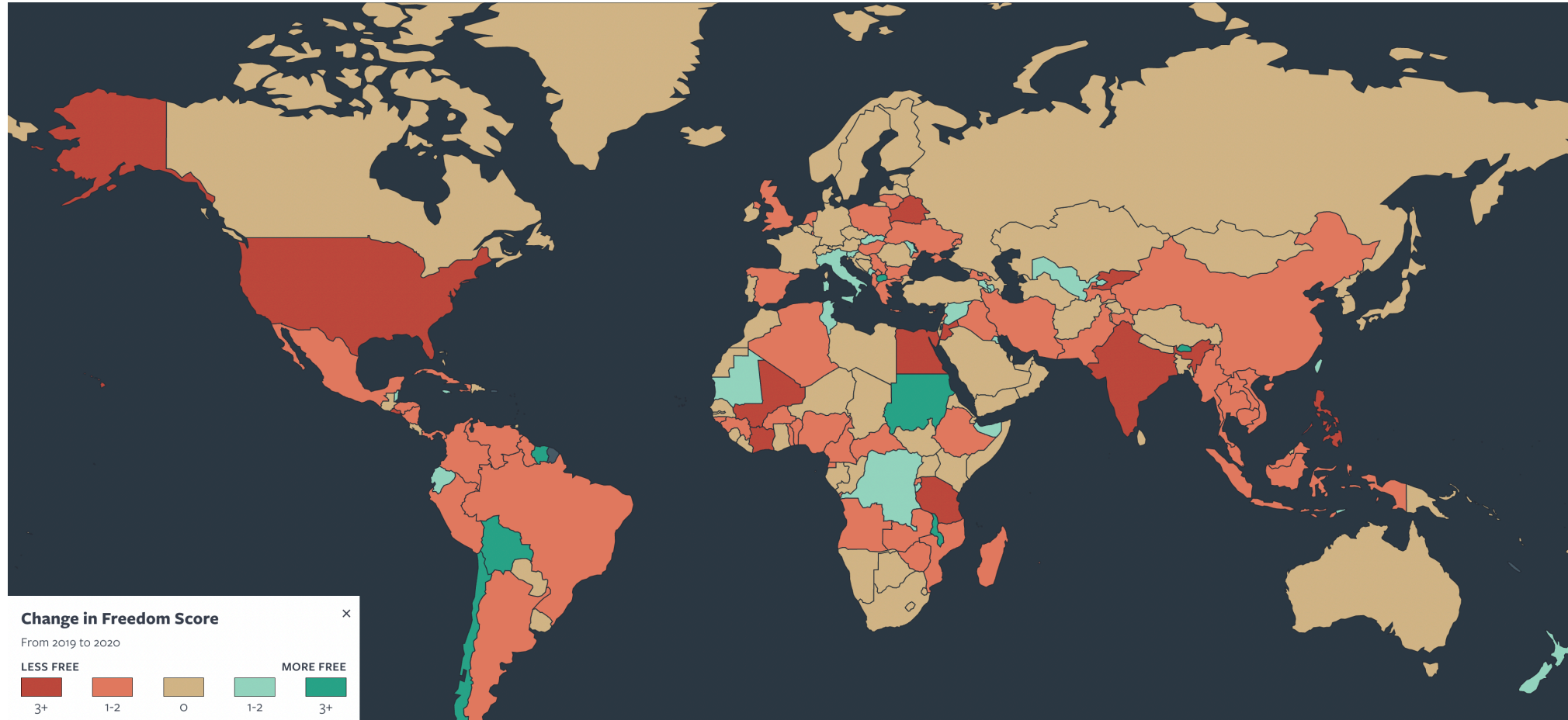
Plan for today

- Democratic backsliding in the wake of the rise of populism
—across the world and in Brazil and the United States

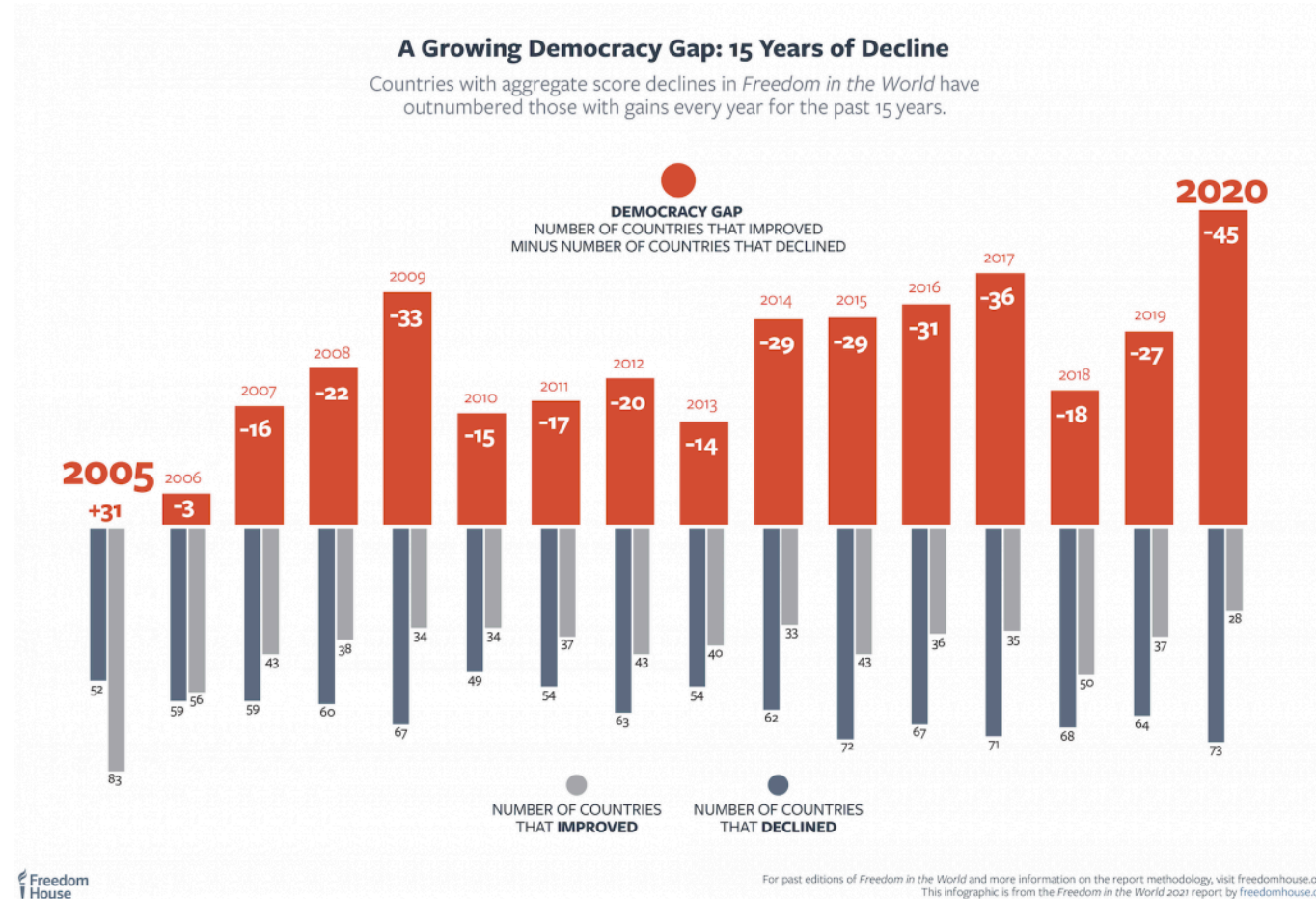
Democratic backsliding (erosion)

- (Gradual) decline in the quality of democracy

Democratic backsliding



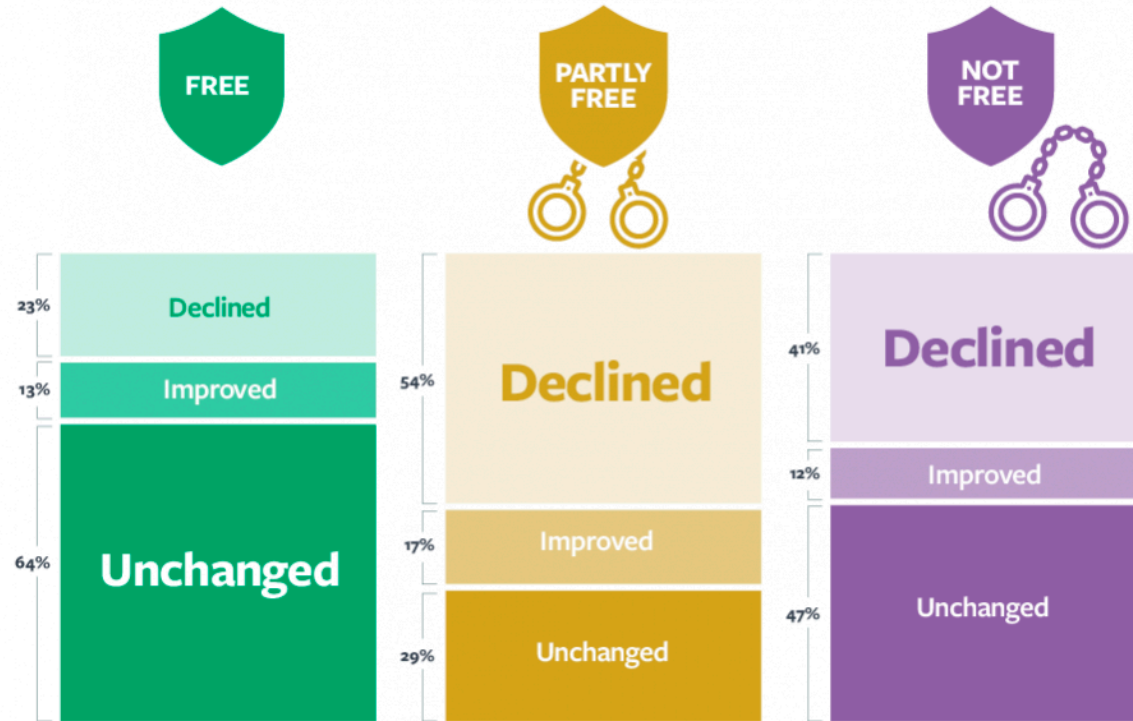
Democratic backsliding



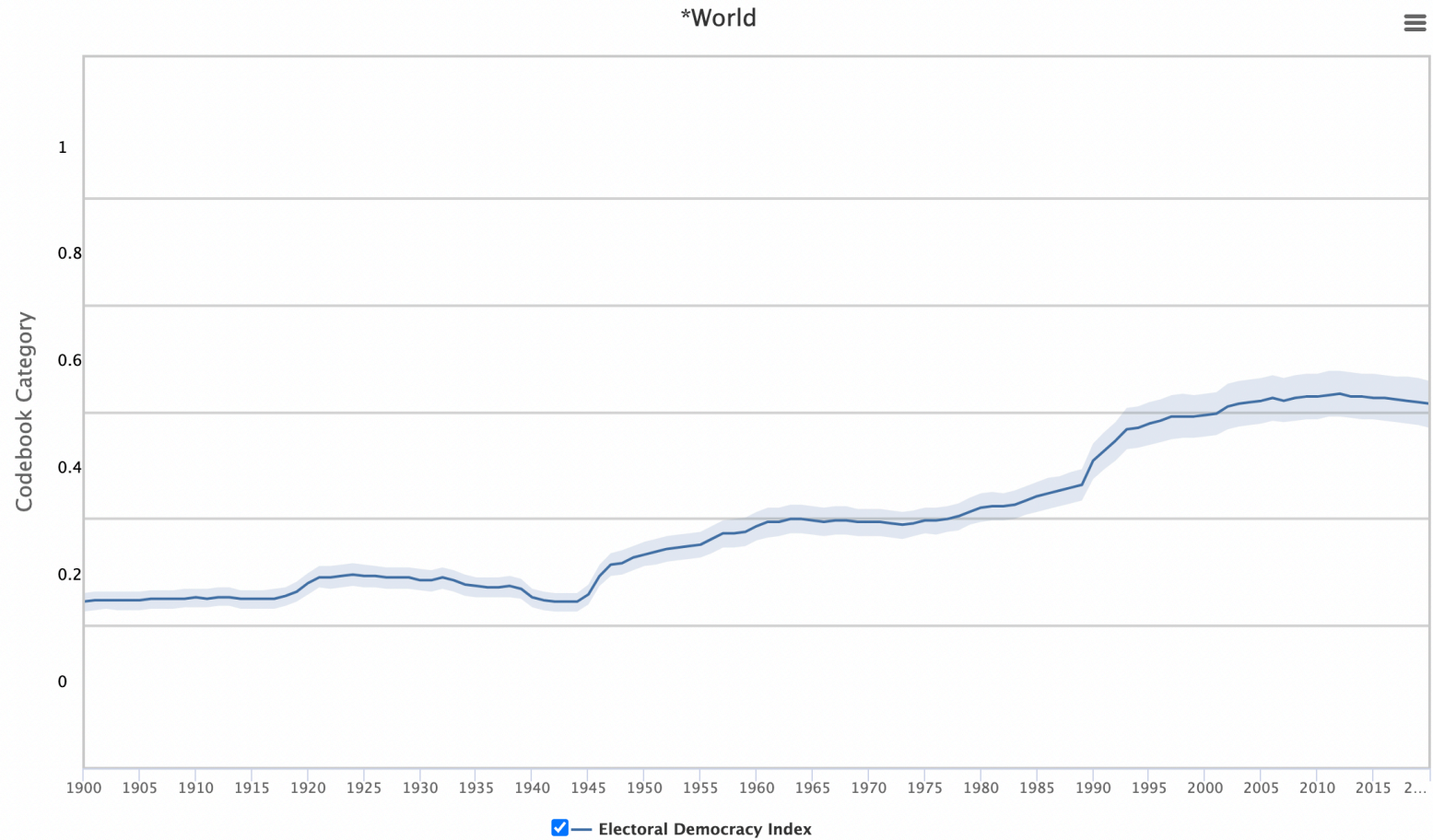
Democratic backsliding

The Resilience of Democracy

Democracies and dictatorships alike have been affected by a global decline in freedom over the past 15 years. But in 2020 most Free countries resisted further declines, while many Partly Free and Not Free countries could not.



Democratic backsliding






Backsliding in Brazil and the United States

Forbes

BREAKING | Nov 22, 2021, 02:19pm EST | 9,169 views


U.S. Named A 'Backsliding Democracy' For The First Time On European Think Tank's Annual List

 **Carlie Porterfield** Forbes Staff
Business
I cover breaking news.

 Listen to article 3 minutes 

Updated Nov 22, 2021, 02:45pm EST

TOPLINE The United States has been described as a [democracy in decline](#) for the first time in an annual list by a Stockholm-based think tank after a year marked by disputed election results and the passage of restrictive voting laws.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

 MENU Current Issue Archive Books & Reviews Anthologies

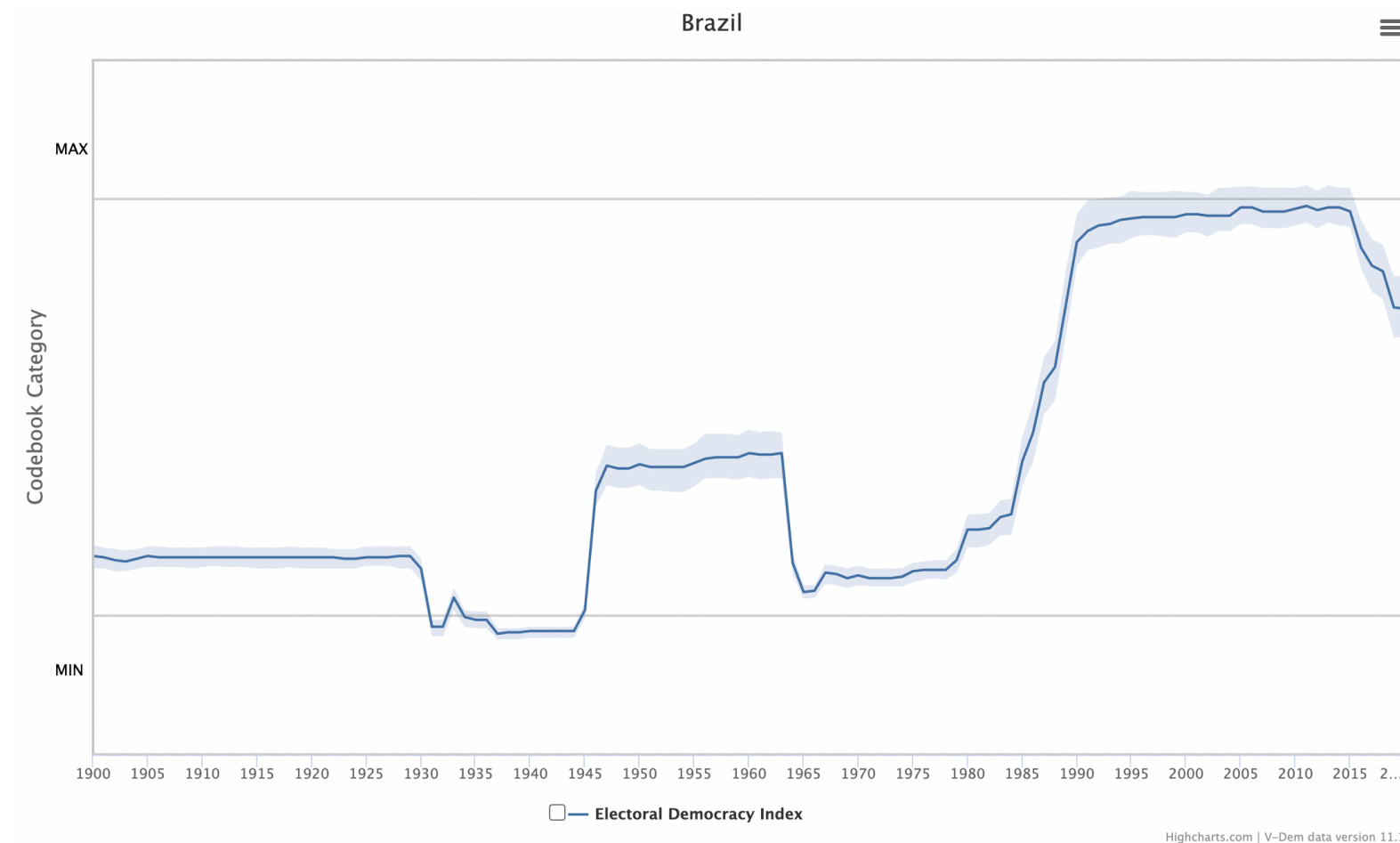
Democracy Is Dying in Brazil

To Stop Bolsonaro, the Opposition Must Unite

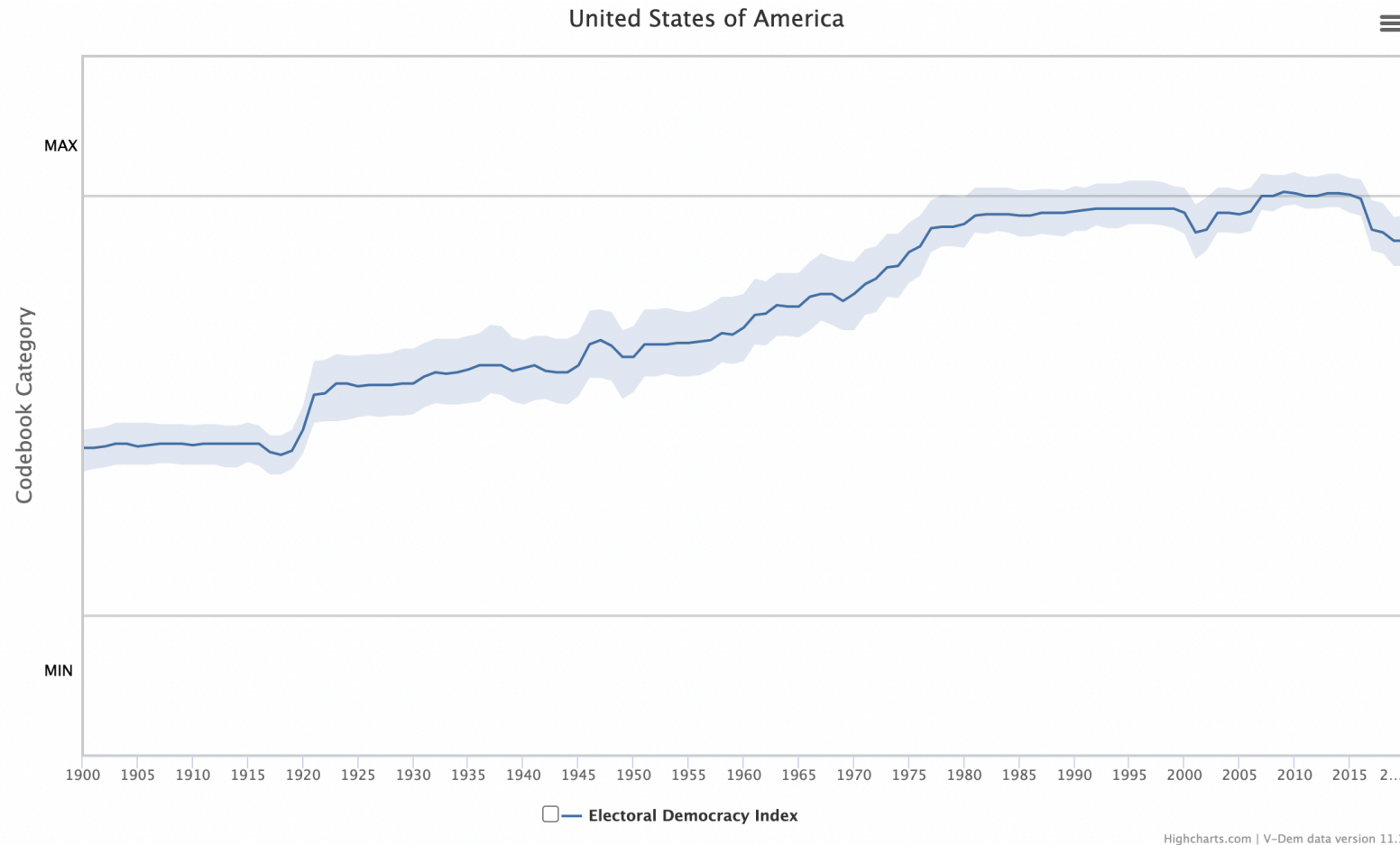
By [Oliver Stuenkel](#) November 1, 2021



Democratic backsliding in Brazil



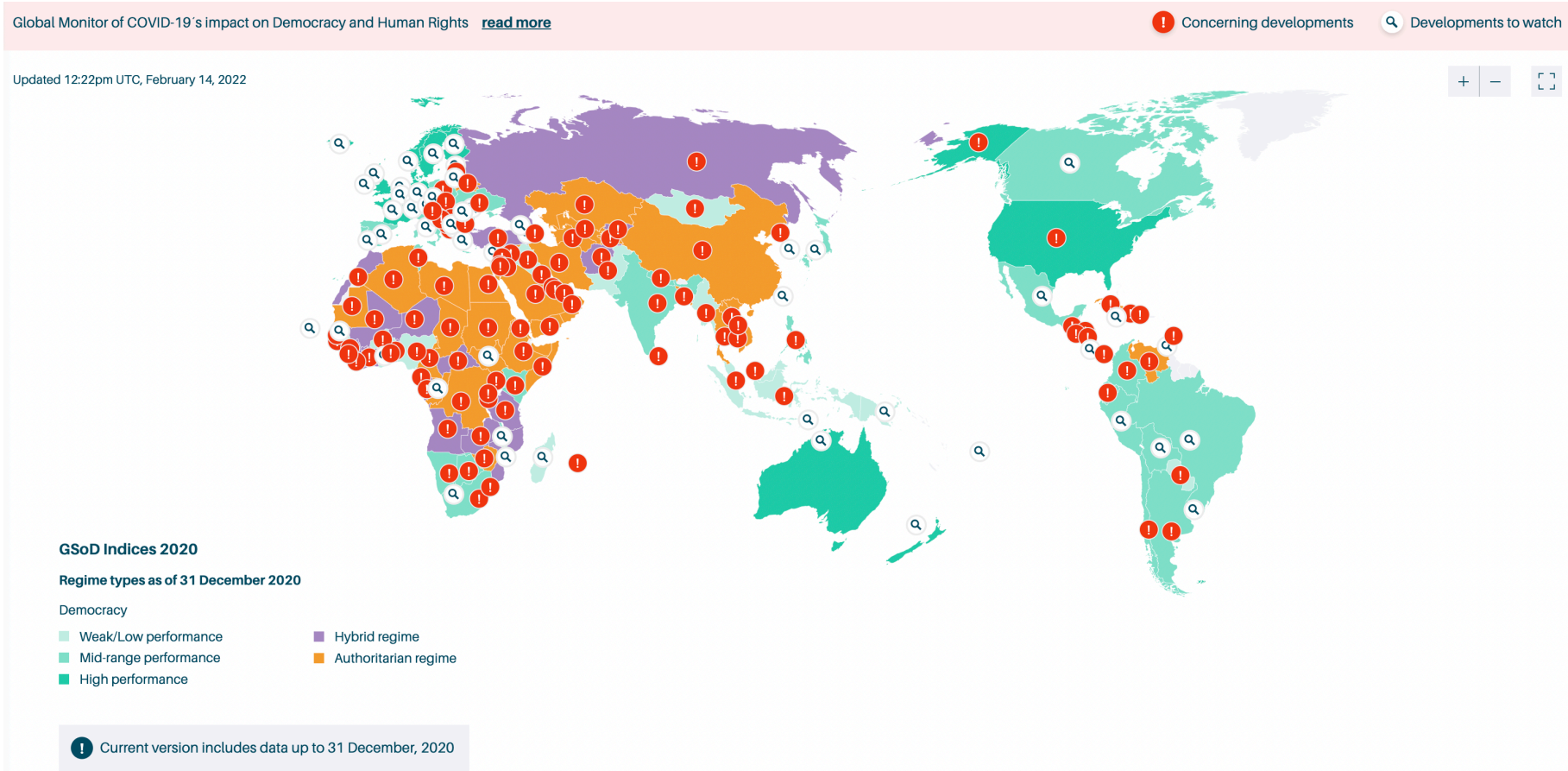
Democratic backsliding in the United States



Causes of democratic backsliding

- Covid-19
- Dissatisfaction with democracy
- Inequality
- Civic decline
- Polarization
- Populism

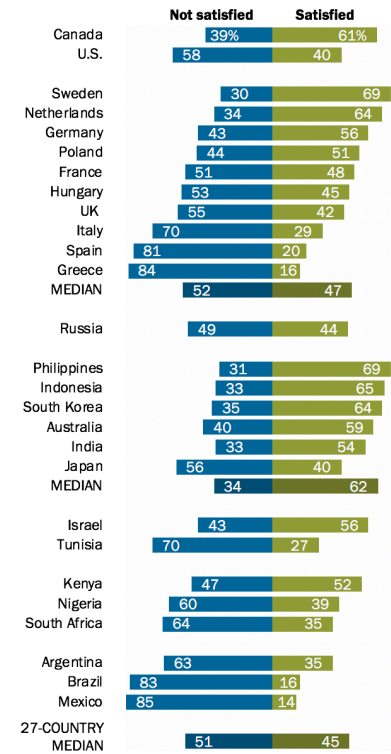
Covid-19



Dissatisfaction with democracy

Divided views on the state of democracy

% who say they are ___ with the way democracy is working in their country



Note: Don't know responses not shown.
Source: Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey, Q4.

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Dissatisfaction with democracy 'at record high'

By Sean Coughlan

BBC News family and education correspondent

29 January 2020 | Comments



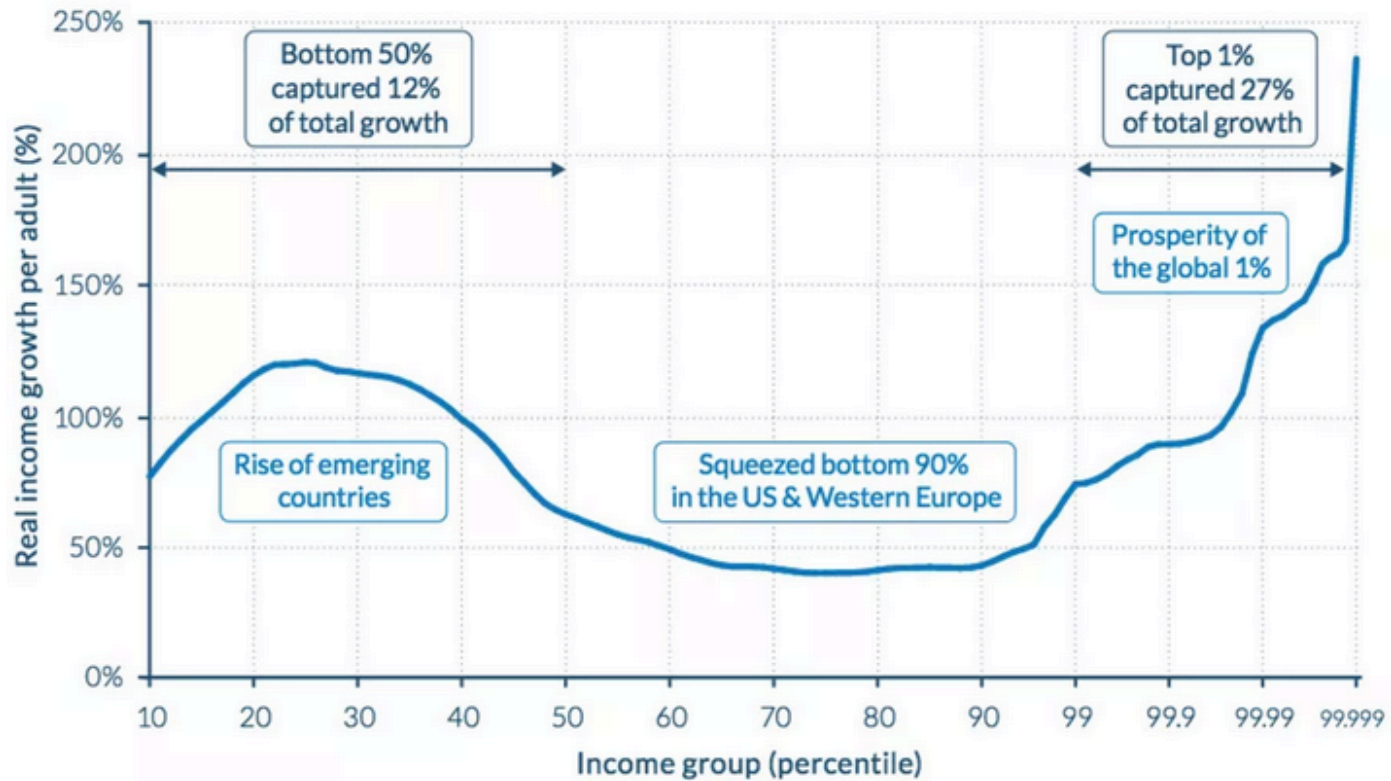
GETTY IMAGES

The survey warns democracy in many countries is in a "state of malaise"

Inequality

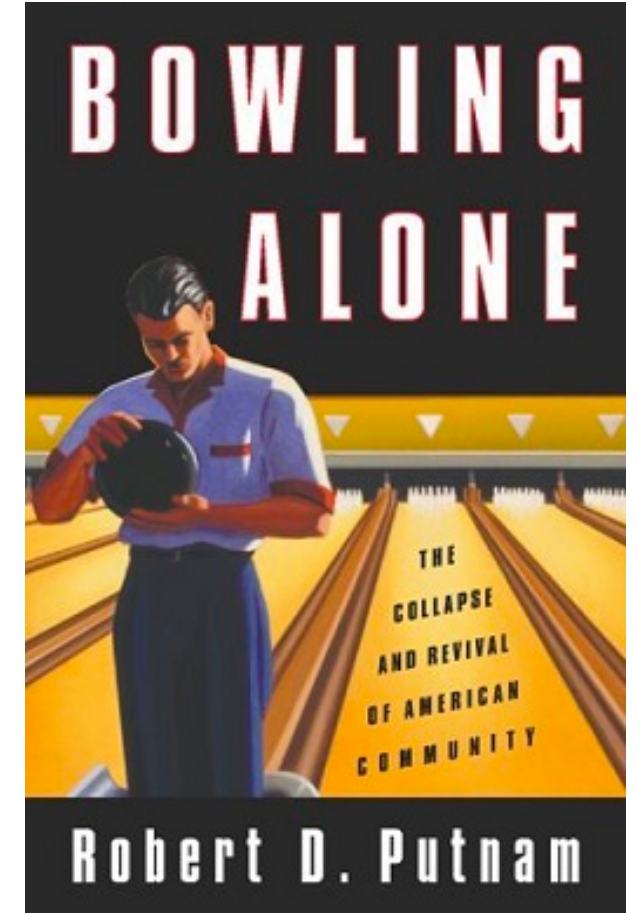
Figure 2.1.4

Total income growth by percentile across all world regions, 1980–2016

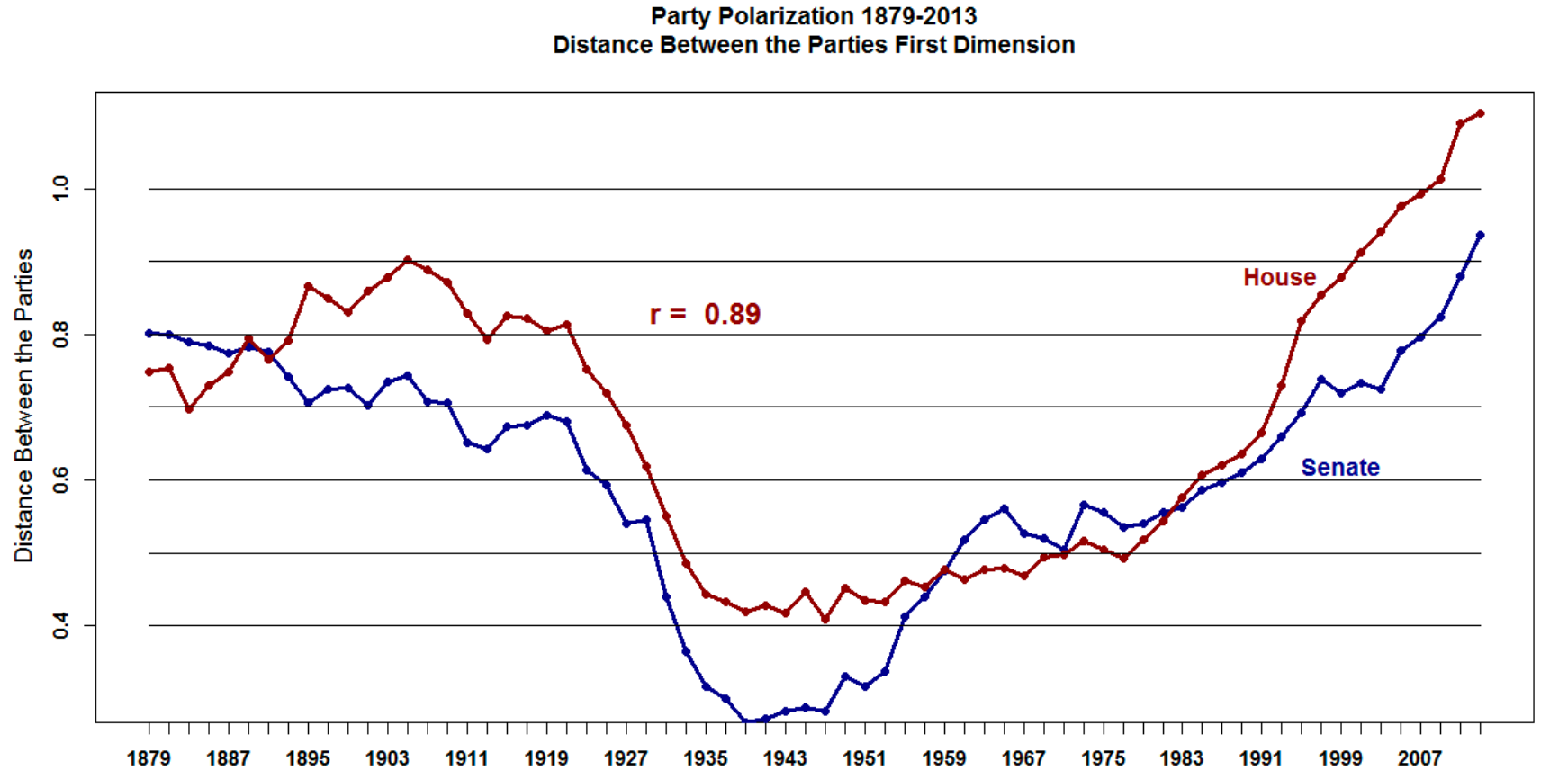


Source: WID.world (2017). See wir2018.wid.world for more details.

Civic decline



Polarization



Polarized America / voteview.com

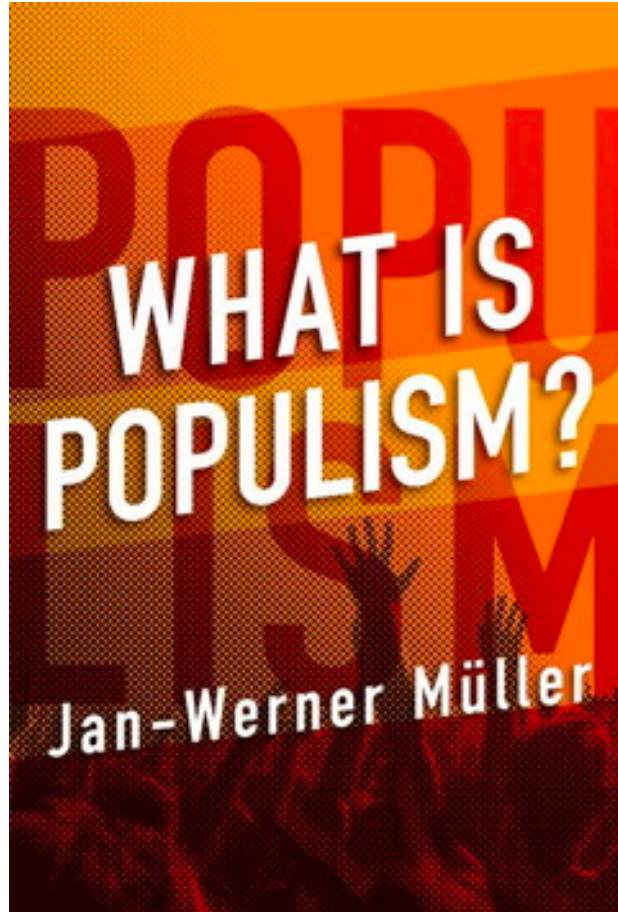
Populism



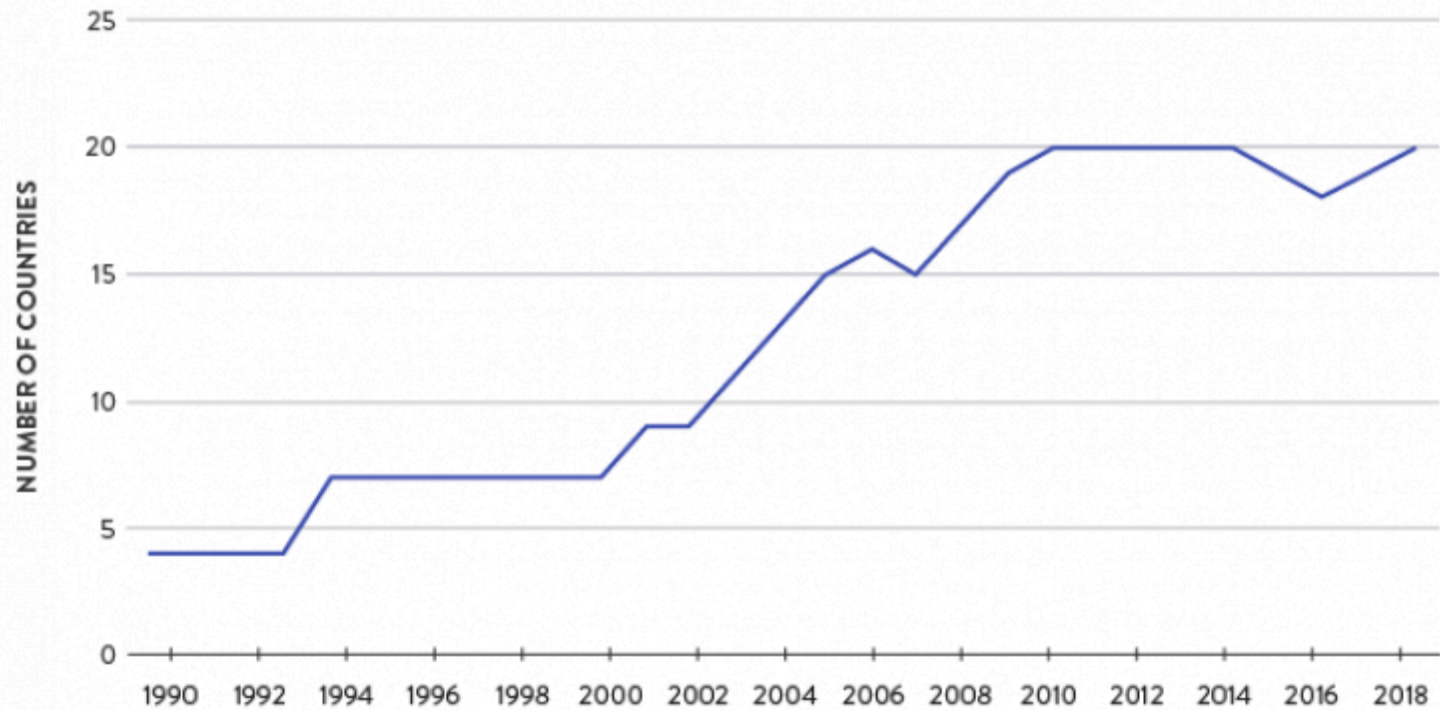
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loISHWFhfug>

Populism

- Populist rhetoric:
 - Criticism of elites
 - Antipluralism
 - Identitarianism
- Populist governance:
 - State capture
 - Corruption
 - 'Mass clientelism'



Populism



Source: Authors' calculations

Populism in Brazil

- Jair Bolsonaro's victory in 2018 elections
- Erosion of democratic institutions:
 - (Re-)militarization of government
 - Systematic use of misinformation
 - Alteration of political norms
 - Weakening of political and judicial bodies



Populism in the United States

- Donald Trump's election victory in 2016
- Disregard for democratic norms
- Erosion of democratic quality



Populism and democratic backsliding

- Populism —> democratic backsliding
- Democratic backsliding —> populism
- ? —> populism + democratic backsliding
- Populism —> ? <— democratic backsliding

Takeaways

- Recent (third) wave of democratic backsliding following impressive spread of democracy in the preceding two centuries
- Attractiveness of populism as apparent panacea to political and socioeconomic ills