

## Press release

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For immediate release

## Democratic advances, and a long way to go Asia in The EIU's 2018 Democracy Index

Since we began producing [the Democracy Index](#), Asia and Australasia has made more headway in advancing democracy than any other region, and, after a tumultuous two years during which the process of democratisation appeared to be going into reverse, **the region made modest renewed gains in 2018**. Nevertheless, at 5.67, the score remains substantially lower than its historical peak of 5.74, registered in 2015-16. Furthermore, **Asian democracies continued to lag behind North America, Western Europe and Latin America**. Asia also remained the region with the biggest deviation in scores among its countries: top scoring New Zealand (9.26) retained its 4th position in the global ranking (out of 167 countries), while persistent laggard North Korea (1.08), ranked last at 167th. Australia and New Zealand remained the only two “full democracies” in the region.

### Democracy Index 2018, by regime type

	No. of countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	20	12.0	4.5
Flawed democracies	55	32.9	43.2
Hybrid regimes	39	23.4	16.7
Authoritarian regimes	53	31.7	35.6

Note. "World" population refers to the total population of the 167 countries covered by the Index. Since this excludes only micro-states, this is nearly equal to the entire estimated world population.

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

### Key highlights from the report for Asia:

- The improvement in the region's score in 2018 was driven by rising political participation across the region. **The improvement was most significant for Malaysia (currently ranked 52nd) and Afghanistan (143rd)**. Both countries successfully held major elections in 2018. Voter turnout for Malaysia's general election in May was close to 80%, and it delivered a surprise upset for the incumbent. In Afghanistan voter turnout (3m out of 8.8m registered voters cast their ballot) was healthy, considering the extreme threat to security from terrorist groups that oppose the country's democratic institutions.
- A majority of countries saw their ranking improve in 2018. **It was the region's least democratic nations that saw the most significant improvements in rank in 2018. China rose nine places in the global ranking, although it remains classified as an authoritarian regime and its climb in the index mainly reflects the worsening scores of other countries in the index**, particularly in Latin America and Eastern Europe.
- **Sri Lanka fell back more than any other country in the region**. It saw a marked decrease in its score from 6.48 in 2017 to 6.19, driven by a worsening in the *functioning of government* and in *civil liberties*.
- **Little change was felt in Asia's two largest democracies**: India (ranked 41st) and Indonesia (65th). Both are readying themselves for elections in 2019.

- **Among the democracies of East Asia, Japan experienced the largest increase in its score**, thanks to recent efforts to increase women and youth participation in democracy.
- **Hong Kong, by contrast, saw a slight decline in its overall score.** The government banned the Hong Kong National Party, in a clear setback for Hong Kong's already weak democracy. The territory's election commission is now also screening candidates more aggressively and has barred several who support greater autonomy from mainland China from standing for office.
- **There was a small uptick in Singapore's score, but it remains classified for the fifth consecutive year as a "flawed democracy".** Parliamentary elections take place at least every five years and are considered free. Moreover, the ruling party is generally seen by both supporters and critics as effective with regard to the formulation and implementation of policy. Civil liberties remain a cause for concern in the city state, as the government continues to control freedom of speech and the right to assemble.

Although Asia's score in the Democracy Index improved marginally in 2018, and although there were some clear bright spots, such as Malaysia, there were dampeners: including a controversy over electoral irregularities in Pakistan, the jailing of two local journalists belonging to the foreign press corps in Myanmar, and legal attacks made by the government of the Philippines against any form of opposition. All this served as a reminder that there is still a long way to go for democratic values to be entrenched in Asia.

**The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2018 is available free of charge at [www.eiu.com/democracy2018](http://www.eiu.com/democracy2018)**

#### **Notes for editors**

An electronic copy of the report is available to the media on request. The Editor of the report, Fiona Mackie, and other leading Analysts are available for interview. Please contact [eiuh@mhpc.com](mailto:eiuh@mhpc.com).

The Economist Intelligence Unit's *Democracy Index* is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. The index provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide for 165 independent states and two territories (almost the entire population of the world). Countries are placed within one of four types of regimes: "full democracies", "flawed democracies", "hybrid regimes" and "authoritarian regimes."

The overall index of democracy, on a 0 to 10 scale, is based on the ratings for 60 indicators grouped in the five categories. The overall index is the simple average of the five category indexes. A three-point scoring system for the 60 indicators is used. The category indexes are based on the sum of the indicator scores in the category, converted to a 0 to 10 scale. Countries are placed within one of four types of regimes: "full democracies" (scores greater than 8); "flawed democracies"—scores greater than 6 and less than or equal to 8; "hybrid regimes"—scores greater than 4 and less than or equal to 6; "authoritarian regimes"—scores less than or equal to 4.

#### **About The Economist Intelligence Unit**

The Economist Intelligence Unit (The EIU) is the world's leading resource for economic and business research, forecasting and analysis. It provides accurate and impartial intelligence for companies, government agencies, financial institutions and academic organisations around the globe, inspiring business leaders to act with confidence since 1946. The EIU products include its flagship Country Reports service, providing political and economic analysis for 190 countries, and a portfolio of subscription-based data and forecasting services. The company also undertakes bespoke research and analysis projects on individual markets and business sectors. More information is available at [www.eiu.com](http://www.eiu.com)

The EIU is headquartered in London, UK, with offices in more than 40 cities and a network of some 750 country experts and analysts worldwide. It operates independently as the business-to-business

arm of The Economist Group, the leading source of analysis on international business and world affairs.

**Democracy Index 2018**

	Rank	Overall score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties
<b>Full democracies</b>							
Norway	1	9.87	10.00	9.64	10.00	10.00	9.71
Iceland	2	9.58	10.00	9.29	8.89	10.00	9.71
Sweden	3	9.39	9.58	9.64	8.33	10.00	9.41
New Zealand	4	9.26	10.00	9.29	8.89	8.13	10.00
Denmark	5	9.22	10.00	9.29	8.33	9.38	9.12
Canada	6=	9.15	9.58	9.64	7.78	8.75	10.00
Ireland	6=	9.15	9.58	7.86	8.33	10.00	10.00
Finland	8	9.14	10.00	8.93	8.33	8.75	9.71
Australia	9	9.09	10.00	8.93	7.78	8.75	10.00
Switzerland	10	9.03	9.58	9.29	7.78	9.38	9.12
Netherlands	11	8.89	9.58	9.29	8.33	8.13	9.12
Luxembourg	12	8.81	10.00	8.93	6.67	8.75	9.71
Germany	13	8.68	9.58	8.57	8.33	7.50	9.41
United Kingdom	14	8.53	9.58	7.50	8.33	8.13	9.12
Uruguay	15	8.38	10.00	8.57	6.11	7.50	9.71
Austria	16	8.29	9.58	7.86	8.33	6.88	8.82
Mauritius	17	8.22	9.17	8.21	5.56	8.75	9.41
Malta	18	8.21	9.17	8.21	6.11	8.75	8.82
Spain	19	8.08	9.17	7.14	7.78	7.50	8.82
Costa Rica	20	8.07	9.58	7.50	6.67	7.50	9.12
<b>Flawed democracies</b>							
South Korea	21	8.00	9.17	7.86	7.22	7.50	8.24
Japan	22	7.99	8.75	8.21	6.67	7.50	8.82
Chile	23=	7.97	9.58	8.57	4.44	8.13	9.12
Estonia	23=	7.97	9.58	8.21	6.67	6.88	8.53
United States of America	25	7.96	9.17	7.14	7.78	7.50	8.24
Cabo Verde	26	7.88	9.17	7.86	6.67	6.88	8.82
Portugal	27	7.84	9.58	7.50	6.11	6.88	9.12
Botswana	28	7.81	9.17	7.14	6.11	7.50	9.12
France	29	7.80	9.58	7.50	7.78	5.63	8.53
Israel	30	7.79	9.17	7.50	8.89	7.50	5.88
Belgium	31	7.78	9.58	8.93	5.00	6.88	8.53
Taiwan	32	7.73	9.58	8.21	6.11	5.63	9.12
Italy	33	7.71	9.58	6.07	7.78	6.88	8.24
Czech Republic	34	7.69	9.58	6.79	6.67	6.88	8.53
Cyprus	35	7.59	9.17	6.43	6.67	6.88	8.82
Slovenia	36=	7.50	9.58	6.79	6.67	6.25	8.24
Lithuania	36=	7.50	9.58	6.43	6.11	6.25	9.12
Latvia	38	7.38	9.58	6.07	5.56	6.88	8.82
Greece	39	7.29	9.58	5.36	6.11	6.88	8.53
South Africa	40	7.24	7.42	7.50	8.33	5.00	7.94

India	41	7.23	9.17	6.79	7.22	5.63	7.35
Timor-Leste	42	7.19	9.08	6.79	5.56	6.88	7.65
Trinidad and Tobago	43	7.16	9.58	7.14	6.11	5.63	7.35
Slovakia	44	7.10	9.58	6.79	5.56	5.63	7.94
Panama	45	7.05	9.58	6.07	6.67	5.00	7.94
Bulgaria	46	7.03	9.17	6.43	7.22	4.38	7.94
Argentina	47=	7.02	9.17	5.36	6.11	6.25	8.24
Jamaica	47=	7.02	8.75	7.14	4.44	6.25	8.53
Suriname	49	6.98	9.17	6.43	6.67	5.00	7.65
Brazil	50	6.97	9.58	5.36	6.67	5.00	8.24
Colombia	51	6.96	9.17	6.79	5.00	5.63	8.24
Malaysia	52	6.88	7.75	7.86	6.67	6.25	5.88
Philippines	53	6.71	9.17	5.71	7.22	4.38	7.06
Poland	54=	6.67	9.17	6.07	6.11	4.38	7.65
Guyana	54=	6.67	9.17	5.71	6.11	5.00	7.35
Lesotho	56	6.64	9.17	5.00	6.67	5.63	6.76
Ghana	57=	6.63	8.33	5.71	6.67	6.25	6.18
Hungary	57=	6.63	8.75	6.07	5.00	6.25	7.06
Peru	59	6.60	9.17	5.00	5.56	5.63	7.65
Croatia	60	6.57	9.17	6.07	5.56	5.00	7.06
Dominican Republic	61	6.54	9.17	5.36	6.11	5.00	7.06
Mongolia	62	6.50	9.17	5.71	5.56	5.00	7.06
Serbia	63=	6.41	8.25	5.36	6.11	5.00	7.35
Tunisia	63=	6.41	6.42	5.71	7.78	6.25	5.88
Indonesia	65	6.39	6.92	7.14	6.67	5.63	5.59
Singapore	66=	6.38	4.33	7.86	6.11	6.25	7.35
Romania	66=	6.38	9.17	5.71	5.00	4.38	7.65
Ecuador	68	6.27	8.75	5.36	6.11	4.38	6.76
Namibia	69	6.25	5.67	5.36	6.67	5.63	7.94
Paraguay	70	6.24	8.75	5.71	5.00	4.38	7.35
Sri Lanka	71=	6.19	7.83	5.71	5.00	6.25	6.18
Mexico	71=	6.19	8.33	6.07	7.22	3.13	6.18
Hong Kong	73=	6.15	3.08	6.07	5.56	7.50	8.53
Senegal	73=	6.15	7.50	6.07	4.44	6.25	6.47
Papua New Guinea	75	6.03	6.92	6.07	3.89	5.63	7.65
<b>Hybrid regime</b>							
Albania	76	5.98	7.00	4.71	5.56	5.00	7.65
El Salvador	77	5.96	9.17	4.29	5.56	3.75	7.06
Macedonia	78	5.87	6.50	5.36	6.67	3.75	7.06
Moldova	79=	5.85	7.08	4.64	6.11	4.38	7.06
Fiji	79=	5.85	6.58	5.36	6.11	5.63	5.59
Montenegro	81=	5.74	6.08	5.36	6.11	4.38	6.76
Benin	81=	5.74	6.50	5.71	5.00	5.63	5.88
Bolivia	83	5.70	7.50	4.64	5.56	3.75	7.06
Ukraine	84	5.69	6.17	3.21	6.67	6.25	6.18
Honduras	85	5.63	8.50	4.64	4.44	4.38	6.18
Zambia	86	5.61	6.17	4.64	3.89	6.88	6.47
Guatemala	87	5.60	7.92	5.36	3.89	4.38	6.47
Bangladesh	88	5.57	7.83	5.07	5.56	4.38	5.00
Georgia	89	5.50	7.83	3.57	6.11	4.38	5.59
Malawi	90	5.49	6.58	4.29	4.44	6.25	5.88
Tanzania	91=	5.41	7.00	5.00	5.00	5.63	4.41
Mali	91=	5.41	7.42	3.93	3.89	5.63	6.18
Liberia	93	5.35	7.42	2.57	5.56	5.63	5.59

Bhutan	94	5.30	8.75	6.79	2.78	4.38	3.82
Madagascar	95	5.22	6.08	3.57	6.11	5.63	4.71
Uganda	96	5.20	5.25	3.57	4.44	6.88	5.88
Nepal	97	5.18	4.33	5.36	5.00	5.63	5.59
Kenya	98=	5.11	3.50	5.36	6.67	5.63	4.41
Kyrgyz Republic	98=	5.11	6.58	2.93	6.67	4.38	5.00
Morocco	100	4.99	5.25	4.64	5.00	5.63	4.41
Bosnia and Hercegovina	101	4.98	6.50	2.93	5.56	3.75	6.18
Haiti	102	4.91	5.58	2.93	3.89	6.25	5.88
Armenia	103	4.79	5.67	4.64	5.56	2.50	5.59
Burkina Faso	104	4.75	4.42	4.29	4.44	5.63	5.00
Sierra Leone	105	4.66	6.58	1.86	3.33	6.25	5.29
Lebanon	106=	4.63	3.92	2.21	6.67	5.63	4.71
Thailand	106=	4.63	3.00	4.29	5.00	5.00	5.88
Nigeria	108	4.44	6.08	4.64	3.33	3.75	4.41
Palestine	109	4.39	3.83	2.14	7.78	4.38	3.82
Turkey	110	4.37	4.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	2.35
Gambia	111	4.31	4.48	4.29	3.33	5.63	3.82
Pakistan	112	4.17	6.08	5.36	2.22	2.50	4.71
Côte d'Ivoire	113	4.15	4.83	2.86	3.33	5.63	4.12
Iraq	114	4.06	4.75	0.07	6.67	5.00	3.82
<b>Authoritarian</b>							
Jordan	115	3.93	3.58	4.29	3.89	4.38	3.53
Mozambique	116=	3.85	3.58	2.14	5.00	5.00	3.53
Kuwait	116=	3.85	3.17	4.29	3.89	4.38	3.53
Myanmar	118	3.83	3.67	3.93	3.89	5.63	2.06
Mauritania	119	3.82	3.00	3.57	5.00	3.13	4.41
Niger	120	3.76	5.25	1.14	3.33	4.38	4.71
Comoros	121	3.71	4.33	2.21	4.44	3.75	3.82
Nicaragua	122	3.63	2.67	1.86	3.89	5.63	4.12
Angola	123	3.62	1.75	2.86	5.56	5.00	2.94
Gabon	124	3.61	2.58	2.21	4.44	5.00	3.82
Cambodia	125	3.59	1.33	5.00	2.78	5.63	3.24
Algeria	126	3.50	2.58	2.21	3.89	5.00	3.82
Egypt	127	3.36	3.58	3.21	3.33	3.75	2.94
Ethiopia	128=	3.35	0.00	3.57	5.56	5.00	2.65
Rwanda	128=	3.35	1.67	5.00	2.78	4.38	2.94
China	130	3.32	0.00	5.00	3.89	6.25	1.47
Congo (Brazzaville)	131	3.31	3.17	2.50	3.89	3.75	3.24
Cameroon	132	3.28	3.17	2.86	3.33	4.38	2.65
Qatar	133	3.19	0.00	4.29	2.22	5.63	3.82
Zimbabwe	134=	3.16	0.50	2.00	4.44	5.63	3.24
Venezuela	134=	3.16	1.67	1.79	4.44	4.38	3.53
Guinea	136	3.14	3.50	0.43	4.44	4.38	2.94
Belarus	137	3.13	0.92	2.86	3.89	5.63	2.35
Togo	138	3.10	3.17	0.79	3.33	5.00	3.24
Vietnam	139	3.08	0.00	3.21	3.89	5.63	2.65
Oman	140	3.04	0.00	3.93	2.78	4.38	4.12
Swaziland	141	3.03	0.92	2.86	2.22	5.63	3.53
Cuba	142	3.00	1.08	3.57	3.33	4.38	2.65
Afghanistan	143	2.97	2.92	1.14	4.44	2.50	3.82
Kazakhstan	144=	2.94	0.50	2.14	4.44	4.38	3.24
Russia	144=	2.94	2.17	1.79	5.00	2.50	3.24

Djibouti	146	2.87	0.42	1.79	3.89	5.63	2.65
United Arab Emirates	147	2.76	0.00	3.93	2.22	5.00	2.65
Bahrain	148	2.71	0.83	3.21	2.78	4.38	2.35
Azerbaijan	149	2.65	0.50	2.14	3.33	3.75	3.53
Iran	150	2.45	0.00	3.21	4.44	3.13	1.47
Eritrea	151=	2.37	0.00	2.14	1.67	6.88	1.18
Laos	151=	2.37	0.83	2.86	1.67	5.00	1.47
Burundi	153	2.33	0.00	0.43	3.89	5.00	2.35
Libya	154	2.19	1.00	0.36	1.67	5.00	2.94
Sudan	155	2.15	0.00	1.79	2.78	5.00	1.18
Uzbekistan	156	2.01	0.08	1.86	2.22	5.00	0.88
Guinea-Bissau	157	1.98	1.67	0.00	2.78	3.13	2.35
Yemen	158	1.95	0.00	0.00	3.89	5.00	0.88
Saudi Arabia	159=	1.93	0.00	2.86	2.22	3.13	1.47
Tajikistan	159=	1.93	0.08	0.79	1.67	6.25	0.88
Equatorial Guinea	161	1.92	0.00	0.43	3.33	4.38	1.47
Turkmenistan	162	1.72	0.00	0.79	2.22	5.00	0.59
Chad	163	1.61	0.00	0.00	1.67	3.75	2.65
Central African Republic	164	1.52	2.25	0.00	1.11	1.88	2.35
Democratic Republic of Congo	165	1.49	0.50	0.71	2.22	3.13	0.88
Syria	166	1.43	0.00	0.00	2.78	4.38	0.00
North Korea	167	1.08	0.00	2.50	1.67	1.25	0.00

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.