

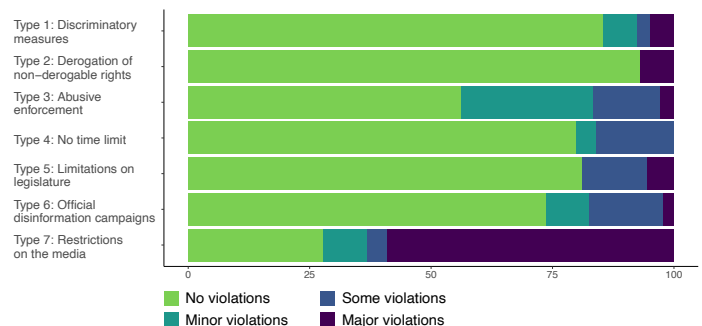
# Pandemic Backsliding: Democracy and Disinformation Seven Months into the Covid-19 Pandemic

- The V-Dem Institute has released an update tracking the effects of Covid-19 related measures on democratic standards in 144 countries since March 2020.
- The time trend is somewhat encouraging: The situation has improved over the last three months for almost a quarter of the countries that engaged in some violations of democratic standards at the beginning of the pandemic.
- Nevertheless, in the third quarter of 2020, some or major violations of democratic standards persist in 65 countries, most of which were already autocratic before the pandemic.
- The Pandemic Backsliding Index identifies the risk that a government is using the pandemic to erode already weak democratic institutions. Nine countries exhibit particularly worrying trends, with the potential for pandemic backsliding.
- Official government disinformation on Covid-19 has been reported in 25 countries, with four governments denying ongoing outbreaks of Covid-19 altogether.

Government responses to Covid-19 vary in the degree to which they respect democratic standards in emergency measures. For the fourth data update of the Pandemic Backsliding project,<sup>2</sup> we continue to introduce improvements in data quality and our approach to measuring violations of democratic standards during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup> The data can be accessed from an [online dashboard](#).<sup>4</sup>

Based on the [International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#)<sup>5</sup> and [practice-based theories](#),<sup>6</sup> we have classified seven types of violations of democratic standards as either illiberal practices that violate human rights (discriminatory measures, derogation of non-derogable rights or abusive enforcement) or authoritarian practices that sabotage accountability by limiting access to information and by silencing the citizen's voice (no time limit on measure, limitations on the legislature, official disinformation campaigns). In addition, a seventh type of violation – restrictions on the media – acts as both an illiberal and authoritarian practice because it simultaneously violates human rights and undermines accountability.<sup>7</sup> As Figure 1 shows, this intersecting type is by far the most frequently observed violation in our data from March to September 2020.

**FIGURE 1. SHARE OF COUNTRIES WITH VIOLATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC STANDARDS (MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2020).**



The Pandemic Democratic Violations Index (PanDem) captures the extent and severity with which these violations have occurred since March 2020.<sup>8</sup> The new PanDem Index describes governments that violate human rights as well as those that undermine accountability by limiting legislatures, information access, and silencing the citizen's voice. The latter include relevant high-profile examples of government disinformation like [Trump in the US](#) and [Bolsonaro in Brazil](#).<sup>9</sup> We have

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Paul Bederke, Ana Flavia Good God, Natalia Natsika, Shreeya Pillai, Abdalradi Aljila, Tiago Fernandes, Staffan I. Lindberg, Hans Tung, Matthew Wilson and Nina Ilchenko as well as the V-Dem Country Coordinators and Regional Managers for their invaluable support and input. This research was financially supported by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> The Pandemic Backsliding Project bases its coding primarily on data collected by a team of trained research assistants. The sources are listed at <http://www.github.com/vdem/institute/pandem> and mainly include official government sources, scholarly databases, trusted inter-governmental, state or independent organizations, and trusted media outlets. In general, one coder was assigned to one country, but for some observations two coders provided input and the principal investigators reconciled the information in cases of disagreement. Country experts, regional experts, or the authors of this brief have reviewed the main data entries. Our data includes all independent countries with more than 2 million inhabitants, excluding Libya, Palestine/West Bank, Syria, and Yemen.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview on the changes between versions 3 and 4 of the data, see page 6 in our codebook available here: <https://github.com/vdem/institute/pandem/tree/master/codebook>. This includes the numbering of the types of violations.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/PanDem/>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/ccpr.pdf>

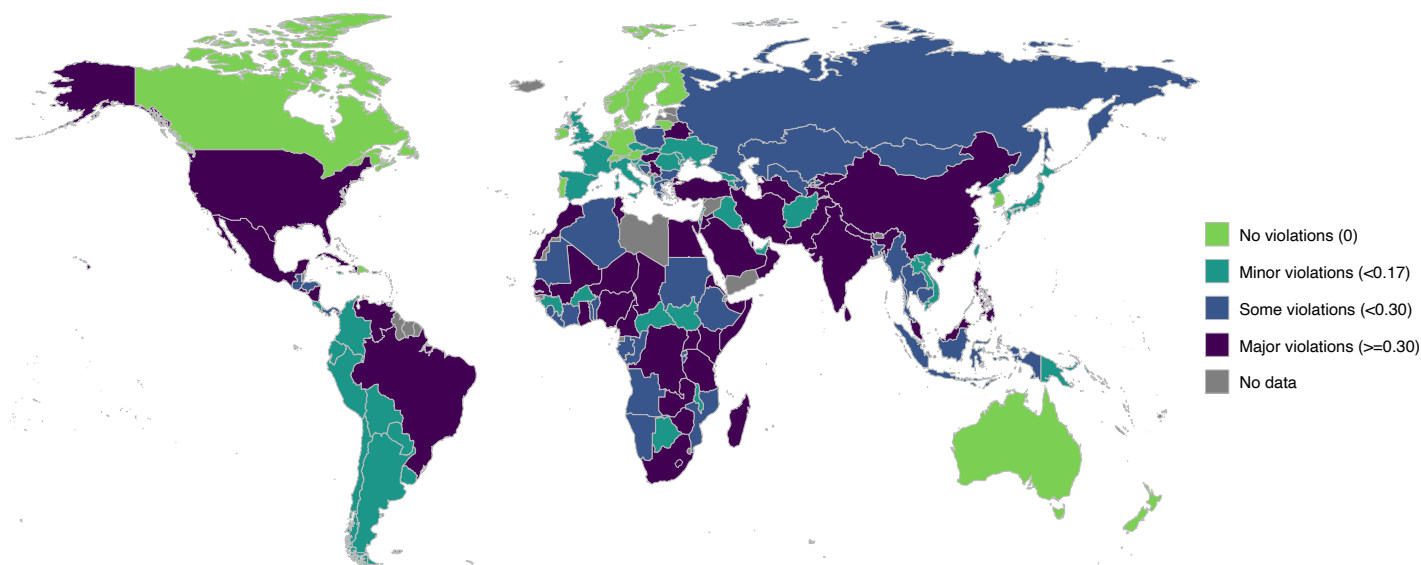
<sup>6</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/94/3/515/4992409>.

<sup>7</sup> For further information on the conceptual ideas see Maerz et al. (2020).

<sup>8</sup> We now include official disinformation campaigns in this main index because this practice violates access to information and silences the citizen's voice.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/14/trump-coronavirus-alerts-disinformation-timeline>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52106321>.

**FIGURE 2. PANDEMIC DEMOCRATIC VIOLATIONS INDEX (MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2020).**



*Note: Lower scores indicate fewer recorded violations of democratic standards in emergency measures. This map reflects the worst violations between March and September.*

detailed several key insights on this particular type of violation below. Figure 2 shows how countries scored on the PanDem Index between March and September 2020.<sup>10</sup>

The new data now provide a time series in two panels for each round of the data collected: the first round covers the time period from 11 March 2020<sup>11</sup> to the end of June, and the second round covers the third quarter of 2020 from July to September. In addition, to provide a general overview of the situation throughout the pandemic (so far), we also provide scores for the full period from March to September.<sup>12</sup>

## Pandemic Democratic Violations from March to September 2020

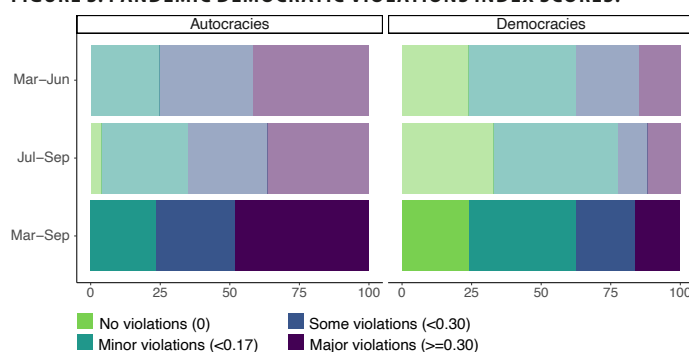
Some good news first: around 63% of all democracies and 42% of the countries coded have committed no or only minor violations of democratic standards in their responses to Covid-19. We did not record any violations (bright green) in 16 countries, all of which are democracies, such as Lithuania and Portugal. In another 44 countries (dark green), we noted only minor violations, such as a few isolated instances of limited access to information.

However, in 84 other countries (58%) we noted worrying developments. The 36 countries marked in dark blue exhibit some violations. The majority of them (22) were already autocratic at the end of 2019, but 14 were democracies. Of particular concern are 48 countries (dark purple), out of which 37 are autocracies and 11 are democracies. These countries engaged in major violations, scoring more than 30% of the possible points on the PanDem Index.

The time trend is also somewhat encouraging. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of violations between the two quarters of 2020 for which we

collected data (March-June and July-September). While in the second quarter we recorded at least some violations in 83 countries, that number has since declined to 65 for the third quarter.

**FIGURE 3. PANDEMIC DEMOCRATIC VIOLATIONS INDEX SCORES.**



Nineteen countries (23%) that engaged in some or major democratic violations during the first three months of the pandemic showed no or only minor violations in the third quarter of 2020.<sup>13</sup> In most countries, violations of democratic standards observed between July and September began already in the March to June period. Of the 19 countries that improved, 10 were considered to be democracies and 9 autocracies in 2019. The improvements were mainly due to reductions in or the removal of limitations on the media, fewer incidents of abusive enforcement, and lifting of measures that were instated without a defined time limit.

Several countries have removed restrictions on the media, including Namibia, Poland, and Tunisia. In Ghana, Iran, and Kazakhstan, we observed a decrease in violent enforcement of Covid-19 measures. Bosnia and

<sup>10</sup> For each of the seven types, countries scored between 0 (no violation) and 3 (severe violation) points. We then added the scores and rescaled the index to a 0 to 1 range. For more details see our codebook: <https://github.com/vdeminstitute/pandem/tree/master/codebook>.

<sup>11</sup> The date when the WHO announced Covid-19 a pandemic: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic>.

<sup>12</sup> The values for each panel represent the maximum observed violations during the time period.

<sup>13</sup> The time trend compares violations that took place in the second quarter (March-June) and the third quarter (July-September). Democratic violations were coded as occurring in both periods if we found no evidence that the situation had improved or worsened.

Herzegovina, Hungary, Mauritania, Panama, and the Gambia have all eased emergency measures that did not have an official time limit. In Panama, the government lifted its complete lockdown on 1 June, but replaced it with a gender-based curfew that discriminated against [women](#) and [transgender people](#) that lasted until 14 September.<sup>14</sup> Hungary lifted its state of emergency on 18 June, but new legislation also empowers the government to reintroduce the restrictions under a state of public health emergency without provisions for an explicit time limit.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the Covid-19 related situation of Roma in [Bulgaria](#) has improved.

Nevertheless, in the third quarter of 2020, we also noted major violations of democratic standards in 36 countries. Most of these countries (78%) were fully autocratic before the pandemic, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have deported migrant workers.<sup>16</sup> In several countries, media freedom was also severely limited before the pandemic, such as in Belarus, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, and Oman. In Venezuela, migrants arriving from neighboring countries are required to quarantine in overcrowded containment centers without access to basic necessities and sometimes forced to take dubious medication against Covid-19.<sup>17</sup> The government of Turkmenistan – which has reported zero Covid-19 infections, drawing accusations of denying an “apparent Covid-19 outbreak” – has ordered its citizens to wear face masks because of a high concentration of dust in the air.<sup>18</sup>

The top violators also include eight democracies and these are Brazil, El Salvador, India, Mexico, Nepal, Senegal, South Africa and Sri Lanka. Democratic violations in these countries included media restrictions in Nepal and Senegal and verbal attacks on journalists by President Bolsonaro in Brazil, including stating that reporters are more likely than others to die from Covid-19 because they are not athletic.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, the PanDem index has either improved or stayed the same, except for Jordan, where the authorities used social distancing measures as a pretext to detain protestors in July and August.<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that several governments introduced new violations of democratic freedoms in July to September that did not shift their overall index scores. For example,

in Azerbaijan, new quarantine measures removed exemptions for journalists on freedom of movement.<sup>21</sup> Although the state of emergency in Papua New Guinea ended on 15 June, new emergency legislation, the National Pandemic Act, extends most of the emergency measures without a declared end date.<sup>22</sup> New amendments to the Administrative Code in Tajikistan make disseminating “false” information on Covid-19 punishable by a large fine or detention.<sup>23</sup> As in Russia and Uzbekistan, these [vaguely formulated](#) measures are not limited to the duration of the pandemic.<sup>24</sup>

## Pandemic Backsliding from March to September

The [Pandemic Backsliding Index \(PanBack\)](#) captures the average risk of the erosion of democracy in a country during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>25</sup> The PanBack Index gives greater weight to violations occurring in countries classified as electoral autocracies or electoral democracies, a “grey zone” known to have the highest probability of adverse regime change.<sup>26</sup>

Table 1 provides a list of cases that score particularly highly ( $\geq 0.3$ ) on the PanBack Index between March and September. While we found no new violations of democratic standards in these countries since July, a high risk of pandemic backsliding continues because of ongoing problematic policies. These include discrimination against Muslim burial practices in Sri Lanka, media restrictions in [Mexico](#) and [India](#), and police brutality in South Africa, [the Philippines](#), and [Uganda](#).<sup>27</sup> In Mexico, protests erupted after the police beat a person to death for not wearing a mask.<sup>28</sup> Deaths due to police brutality also occurred in [India](#) where two people died after being tortured by the police for violating lockdown measures.<sup>29</sup> Malaysian authorities have placed hundreds of migrants in detention, including children, arguing that this was necessary to curb the spread of the virus.<sup>30</sup> After a [Bangladeshi](#) worker was arrested for speaking out about discrimination against migrants in a documentary, the authorities issued a statement that any foreigner can be deported for speaking out.<sup>31</sup>

14 [https://www.yomeinformopma.org/static/dash/docs/decretos/Resolucion\\_No.\\_360.pdf](https://www.yomeinformopma.org/static/dash/docs/decretos/Resolucion_No._360.pdf)  
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/13/panama-new-trans-discrimination-cases-under-covid-19-measures>

15 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/17/hungary-democracy-still-under-threat-orban-state-public-health-emergency-decree/>

16 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/aug/04/we-drink-from-the-toilet-migrants-tell-of-hellish-saudi-detention-centres>  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/qatar-migrant-workers-illegally-expelled-during-covid19-pandemic/>

17 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/19/world/americas/coronavirus-venezuela.html>

18 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/27/turkmenistan-denies-apparent-covid-19-outbreak>

19 <https://rsf.org/en/news/nepalese-journalists-threatened-attacked-and-censored-over-covid-19-coverage>  
[https://github.com/vdemoinstitute/pandem/blob/master/by\\_country/Senegal.md](https://github.com/vdemoinstitute/pandem/blob/master/by_country/Senegal.md)  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-politics/brazils-bolsonaro-says-journalist-wimps-more-likely-to-die-of-covid-19-idUSKBN25K2G3>

20 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/27/jordan-arrests-forced-dispersal-teacher-protests>

21 <https://koronavirusinfo.az/az/post/355>

22 <https://reliefweb.int/report/papua-new-guinea/png-and-next-pandemic>

23 <https://cpj.org/2020/06/tajikistan-parliament-approves-amendments-imposing-fines-detentions-for-false-news-amid-covid-19-pandemic/>

24 [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/c/457567\\_0.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/c/457567_0.pdf)  
<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0122152020ENGLISH.PDF>

25 <https://www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/PanDem/>

26 For example, see Schedler (2006). The PanBack Index captures the greater vulnerability of these grey zone countries by multiplying an average of the PanDem Index from March to June and July to September by a non-monotonic function of V-Dem’s Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) in 2019.

27 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53295551>  
<https://www.dw.com/es/m%C3%A9xico-ni-la-pandemia-ha-logrado-disminuir-las-agresiones-contra-la-prensa/a-53437599>  
<https://www.dw.com/en/can-indian-media-report-freely-about-the-covid-19-crisis/a-53728264>  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-un-rights-idUSKCN2291X9>  
<https://www.businessinsider.com/philippines-police-arrested-people-for-breaching-lockdown-2020-7?r=US&IR=T>  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53450850>

28 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/05/mexican-arrested-for-not-wearing-face-mask-later-found-dead>

29 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/30/deaths-custody-india-highlight-police-torture>

30 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52515000>

31 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/17/malaysia-saidnt-persecute-outspoken-migrant-worker>

**TABLE 1. COUNTRIES WITH A HIGH RISK OF PANDEMIC BACKSLIDING (MARCH-SEPTEMBER 2020).**

Country	PanBack	LDI (2019) <sup>32</sup>	PanDem	Regime (2019) <sup>33</sup>
Sri Lanka	0.57	0.47	0.6	Electoral Democracy
India	0.56	0.36	0.6	Electoral Democracy
El Salvador	0.49	0.44	0.55	Electoral Democracy
Malaysia	0.35	0.33	0.4	Electoral Autocracy
Mexico	0.35	0.49	0.4	Electoral Democracy
South Africa	0.34	0.58	0.35	Electoral Democracy
Philippines	0.33	0.29	0.4	Electoral Autocracy
Serbia	0.32	0.25	0.5	Electoral Autocracy
Uganda	0.31	0.22	0.5	Electoral Autocracy

Note: Lower scores indicate fewer recorded violations of democratic standards by emergency measures for the PanDem and PanBack Indices. PanDem reports the worst violations in the March-June and the July-September periods and PanBack the average. The Liberal Democracy Index ranges from 0 (least democratic) to 1 (most democratic).

## Official Disinformation Campaigns on Covid-19

In this section, we highlight the findings on government disinformation from the PanDem dataset for 25 countries where the most severe violations have occurred from March to September.<sup>34</sup> From these cases, three categories<sup>35</sup> can be discerned based on the nature of the governments' disinformation (Table 2).

Four governments – which we call denialists – conspicuously deny that outbreaks of Covid-19 have occurred within their country's borders. [Turkmenistan's](#) government did not distribute any information on the pandemic through its heavily regulated media until late March, and it still claims that there has not been a single case of Covid-19 in the country.<sup>36</sup> In [Nicaragua](#), [Tanzania](#), and [Burundi](#), governments initially reported cases, but then later claimed that there was little to no active spread of the virus despite evidence to the contrary.<sup>37</sup> [Nicaraguan president Ortega](#) insisted in April that there were only a few imported cases of Covid-19, yet in May the country organized nighttime “express burials” for suspected Covid-19 victims with only a few relatives permitted.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, officials in the [Burundian government](#)<sup>39</sup> and [Tanzanian](#)

[president Magulufi](#)<sup>40</sup> have claimed that religious devotion has spared their countries. As one might expect, the countries in this group have also adopted limited or no emergency measures and sometimes discouraged residents from taking voluntary steps to contain the virus.<sup>41</sup>

**TABLE 2. CATEGORIES OF OFFICIAL DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS.**

<b>Denialists</b>	Deny Covid-19 outbreaks in the country	Burundi, Nicaragua, Tanzania, Turkmenistan
<b>Anti-scientists</b>	Support unsubstantiated treatments and question a wide array of facts on Covid-19	Belarus, Brazil, Mexico, United States, Serbia
<b>Curists</b>	Support unsubstantiated treatments for Covid-19	Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, DRC, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Turkey, Venezuela

Officials in five other countries – which we call anti-scientists – have downplayed the dangers of Covid-19 while questioning accepted scientific evidence and recommendations by the WHO or other health authorities. [US President Donald Trump](#) has stated that “99%” of the Covid-19 cases are “totally harmless”<sup>42</sup>, [Brazilian President Bolsonaro](#) similarly argued that “90% of people infected will not feel any symptoms”<sup>43</sup>, [Mexican President López Obrador](#) claimed it was not even equivalent to a regular flu<sup>44</sup>, and [Belarusian President Lukashenko](#) officially announced that “nobody will die of coronavirus in our country”.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, in [Serbia](#), the government engaged in anti-science rhetoric during the early stages of the pandemic, for example the Ministry of Health claimed that it is less dangerous than a seasonal flu and a member of the crisis committee claimed that women were “especially resistant”. However, shortly thereafter the Serbian government stopped downplaying the dangers and imposed significant emergency measures. Anti-scientists also discourage social distancing and flout general WHO recommendations on how to mitigate the spread. Examples of this include [Trump's](#) political rallies,<sup>46</sup> [Lukashenko's](#) annual military parade,<sup>47</sup> and [López Obrador](#) and [Bolsonaro](#) repeatedly showcasing themselves in crowds, hugging and shaking hands with people.<sup>48</sup> This group also proposes unsubstantiated remedies for Covid-19, such as [Bolsonaro](#) and [Trump](#) championing the

32 See Coppedge et al. (2020) and Lüthmann et al. (2020).

33 See Regimes of the World (Lüthmann et al. 2018).

34 Countries who have scored 2 or 3 on the Government Disinformation variable in the PanDem dataset.

35 These categories are neither mutually exclusive nor collectively exhaustive.

36 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/world/asia/coronavirus-denial-post-soviet.html>

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/whats-the-impact-of-turkmenistans-covid-delusion/>.

37 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/16/daniel-ortega-reappears-nicaragua-coronavirus-sign-from-god>.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52966016>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/18/burundi-to-go-to-polls-amid-fears-authorities-playing-down-covid-19>.

38 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/19/nicaragua-coronavirus-express-burials-death-toll>.

39 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/18/burundi-to-go-to-polls-amid-fears-authorities-playing-down-covid-19>.

40 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52966016>.

41 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/10/nicaragua-reckless-covid-19-response>

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/whats-the-impact-of-turkmenistans-covid-delusion/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/27/tanzanian-president-accused-of-covering-up-covid-19-outbreak>.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/14/burundi-expels-who-coronavirus-team-as-election-approaches>.

42 <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/08/trumps-lies-about-coronavirus/608647/>.

43 <https://misinfocentre.hks.harvard.edu/article/using-misinformation-as-a-political-weapon-covid-19-and-bolsonaro-in-brazil/>.

44 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/26/mexico-mexicans-need-accurate-covid-19-information>.

45 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-belarus/nobody-will-die-from-coronavirus-in-belarus-says-president-idUSKCN21V1PK>.

46 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/sep/14/trumps-first-indoor-rally-since-june-defies-covid-laws-attacks-biden>.

47 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/09/thousands-turn-out-for-ve-day-parade-in-belarus-despite-covid-19-concerns>.

48 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/15/bolsonaro-amlo-coronavirus-warnings>.

use of hydroxychloroquine,<sup>49</sup> [López Obrador](#) claiming that lucky charms protect him against the virus,<sup>50</sup> [Lukashenko](#) suggesting vodka, saunas, and a positive attitude as protective measures,<sup>51</sup> and President Vučić of Serbia stating that alcohol could prevent the disease.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, sixteen countries – which we call curists – have disseminated disinformation on unfounded preventatives, treatments, or cures for Covid-19, while not necessarily questioning accepted facts about the virus or health authorities' recommendations. In Madagascar, [President Rajoelina](#) claims that a herbal tonic named Covid Organics has remedial and curative effects on Covid-19.<sup>53</sup> As a result, Covid Organics has been distributed widely to the Malagasy population and exported to several other countries including Comoros, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Niger, and Tanzania.<sup>54</sup> Other governments continue to advertise hydroxychloroquine as a cure for Covid-19 – such as [Cameroon](#), [Senegal](#), [Morocco](#) – even after the WHO suspended trials in June 2020.<sup>55</sup> [President Maduro of Venezuela](#) has declared both hydroxychloroquine and a herbal tea to be effective remedies for Covid-19,<sup>56</sup> but has also accused the Colombian government of intentionally infecting migrants returning to Venezuela.<sup>57</sup>

## Disinformation in Low and Middle Income Countries

Severe cases of government disinformation about Covid-19 are relatively evenly distributed between low, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries. The US is the only recorded case amongst high income countries.<sup>58</sup> There is no direct pattern between the type of disinformation and income groups, where both the curists and the denialists are found in all three of the low, lower-middle and upper-middle income groups, while anti-scientists are found in the two higher income groups.

However, the capacity to access or be exposed to correct information about Covid-19 can be comparatively limited in low and lower-middle income countries, depending on levels of [Internet connectivity](#) and

[literacy rates](#).<sup>59</sup> Equally, the degree of media freedom in the country can affect citizens' opportunities to independently fact-check the government. It is therefore worrisome that for 22 out of 25 countries with government disinformation about Covid-19, our PanDem data also record media violations. Government disinformation is likely to be even more menacing when combined with obstacles to accessing information and restrictions on media reporting about Covid-19.

## Pandemic Backsliding: Still a Risk

In this brief, we have highlighted trends in democratic violations by emergency measures during Covid-19, with a focus on disinformation campaigns. Although we found some positive developments, illiberal and authoritarian practices are ongoing in many countries. Although the number of countries engaged in some violations of democratic norms has decreased from 83 to 64 during the period studied, democratic freedoms were still undermined in 44% of the 144 countries we coded. In most cases, such violations were part of ongoing problematic policies that started in the March-June period.

Challenges to democracy persist amidst fears of a “second wave” of Covid-19 and the new emergency measures that will likely follow. In some cases – like Hungary and Israel – governments have already passed new legislation that could potentially violate democratic standards in the future. For example, the Knesset in [Israel](#) passed the “Major Corona Law” on 21 July, giving the government extended powers during a state of emergency.<sup>60</sup> In [Hungary](#), the government has added new measures to the Criminal Code that could be used to jail journalists for up to 5 years, which would apply if a state of emergency were declared in the future.<sup>61</sup> The Pandemic Backsliding project will continue to monitor these developments in the upcoming months.

49 <https://misinformationreview.hks.harvard.edu/article/using-misinformation-as-a-political-weapon-covid-19-and-bolsonaro-in-brazil/>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/19/trump-hydroxychloroquine-covid-19-white-house>

50 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/opinion/mexico-coronavirus-amlo.html>

51 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-belarus/nobody-will-die-from-coronavirus-in-belarus-says-president-idUSKCN21V1PK>

52 <https://globalvoices.org/2020/04/22/six-false-statements-by-serbian-government-officials-on-covid-19/>

53 <https://time.com/5840148/coronavirus-cure-covid-organic-madagascar/>

54 <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20200512-exclusive-madagascar-s-president-defends-controversial-homegrown-covid-19-cure>  
<https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200520-madagascar-exports-herbal-controversial-coronavirus-cocktail-to-caribbean>

55 <http://www.crtv.cm/2020/08/covid-19-cameroon-continues-use-of-hydroxychloroquine/>  
<https://africa.cgtn.com/2020/07/03/senegal-covid-19-cases-surpass-7000-mark/>  
<https://www.en24news.com/2020/09/khalid-ait-taleb-tells-all-about-chloroquine-vaccines-and-respirators.html>  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-hydroxychloroquine-and-covid-19>

56 <https://www.efe.com/efe/america/politica/bolsonaro-y-maduro-dos-lideres-enfrentados-unidos-por-la-cloroquina/20000035-4253123>  
<https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/coronavirus-and-fake-news-5-ales-from-latin-america/>

57 <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/maduro-armas-biologicas-retorno-migrantes.html>

58 Based on official World Bank classifications:

<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>

Low income countries: Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, DRC, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Togo.

Lower-middle income countries: Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Senegal, Tanzania

Upper-middle income countries: Belarus, Brazil, Gabon, Mexico, Serbia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Venezuela

High income countries: United States

59 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS>

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>

60 <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/News/PressReleases/Pages/press23720s.aspx>

61 <https://www.alkotmanybirosag.hu/kozlemeny/nem-alaportveny-ellenes-a-remhirterjesztessel-kapcsolatos-uj-kulonleges-jogrendben-alkalmazando-buntetojogi-szabalyozas>  
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## ABOUT V-DEM INSTITUTE

V-Dem is a new approach to conceptualization and measurement of democracy. The headquarters – the V-Dem Institute – is based at the University of Gothenburg with 19 staff, and a project team across the world with 5 Principal Investigators, 19 Project Managers, 33 Regional Managers, 134 Country Coordinators, Research Assistants, and 3,200+ Country Experts. V-Dem is one of the world's largest data collection projects on democracy.



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