

# Democracy Perception Index 2021

The world's largest annual study on how  
people perceive democracy



**State of  
Democracy**

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**Threats to  
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# Welcome

The Democracy Perception Index (DPI) is the world's largest annual study on how people perceive democracy, conducted by Latana in collaboration with the Alliance of Democracies. The 2021 edition offers an unprecedented comparison of global attitudes towards democracy since the beginning of the COVID crisis. Results are based on nationally representative interviews with over 53,000 respondents from 53 countries conducted between February 24th and April 14th 2021.

The DPI was published ahead of the 2021 Copenhagen Democracy Summit to support the discussion on the global state of democracy.

## Dr. Nico Jaspers

CEO at Latana

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- ▶ **53,194**  
respondents
- ▶ **53**  
countries
- ▶ **Spring 2021**  
February 24th - April 14th, 2021
- ▶ **75%**  
of global population represented

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The Democracy Perception Index (DPI) was released ahead of the Alliance of Democracies Foundation's fourth-annual Copenhagen Democracy Summit, held virtually with leaders and democracy activists from around the world.



“

**This poll shows that democracy is still alive in people's hearts and minds. We now need to come out of the Covid-19 pandemic by delivering more democracy and freedom to people who want to see their countries become more democratic.**

“

**The positive support for an Alliance of Democracies, whether the UK's D10 initiative or President Biden's Summit for Democracy, shows that people want more cooperation to push back against the autocrats. Leaders should take note of these perceptions and act upon them.**

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Chair of the Alliance of Democracies Foundation, former NATO Chief, and Danish Prime Minister



“

**As we're entering a period of profound economic, political and societal changes, democracy is more important than ever. It enables us to have a say in what we want our collective future to look like.**

Dr. Nico Jaspers, CEO Latana

# Executive Summary

The Democracy Perception Index (DPI) aims to understand the global crisis that democracy is facing from the perspective of ordinary people from around the world. It is the largest annual study on people's perception of democracy, representing over 75% of the world's population.

## State of Democracy

The first chapter examines the current state of democracy in the eyes of the public, namely how important people think democracy is and what they think about the level of democracy in their country. The results show that:

- ▶ Governments are not living up to the democratic expectations of their citizens: A vast majority of people - 81% - continue to think that democracy is important, yet only half feel like they have democracy in their country. This gap between the democracy people want and the democracy they feel they have is big and growing - even in democracies.

## Threats to Democracy

The second chapter identifies what people view as the biggest threats to democracy in their country, ranging from free speech limitations to foreign election interference. The results show that:

- ▶ The biggest perceived threat to democracy isn't foreign election interference, Russian influence, or the power of Big Tech - it's economic inequality.
- ▶ Since 2020, more people have become concerned that social media platforms have a negative impact on democracy - particularly in the US and Europe.
- ▶ Since Biden's inauguration, global opinion of the US's impact on democracy worldwide has increased in most parts of the world.
- ▶ However, nearly half (44%) of people around the world are still concerned that the US threatens democracy in their country. Fear of China's influence is 38%, and fear of Russia's influence is lowest at 28%.

## Democracy during COVID

The third chapter provides an unprecedented look into how people assess their government's handling of the COVID crisis, and what this means for democracy. The results show that:

- ▶ People around the world are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with their government's response to the COVID crisis - especially in democracies, where satisfaction has dropped from 70% in the Spring of 2020 to 51% one year later
- ▶ Concern that governments are doing too much to limit freedoms during COVID is also growing around the world, from 45% globally in the Spring of 2020 to 53%.

# State of Democracy

According to Freedom House, 2021 marks the 14th consecutive year that democracy is in decline globally. This first chapter examines how people from around the world think about the current state of democracy in their country.

- P. 7 **Importance of Democracy**
- P. 8 **Democracy Today**
- P. 9 **Perceived Democratic Deficit**
- P. 10 **Desire for More Democracy**
- P. 12 **Government Accountability**

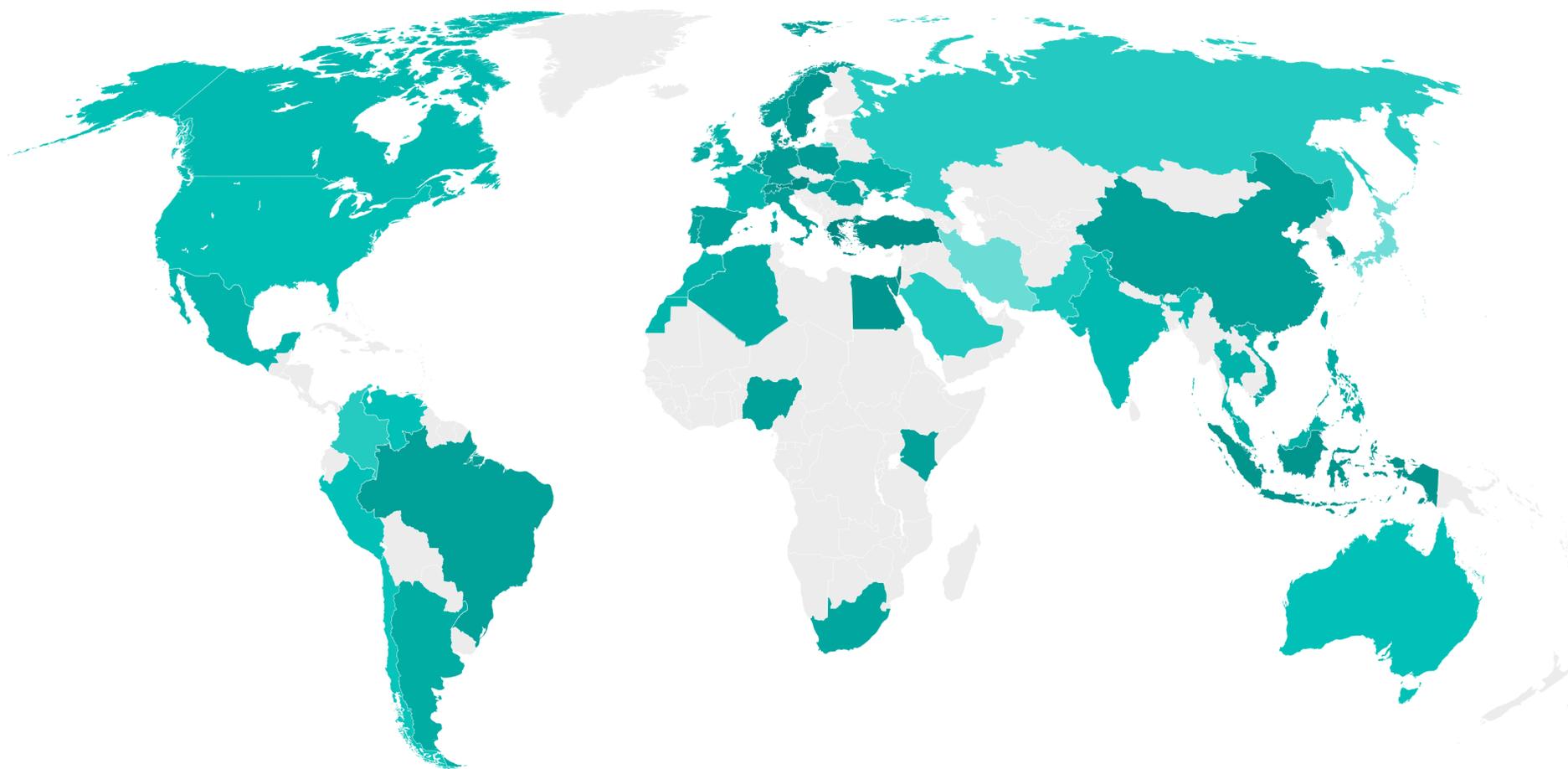


# Importance of Democracy

Despite the global decline of democracy for the past several years, the vast majority of people around the world consistently say that democracy is important to have in their country.

## Democracy is important for people around the world

% say that it is important\* to have democracy in their country



In your opinion, how important is it for your country to be a democracy?  
0 - not at all important; 10 - very important

\*values from 7-10 are categorized as "Important"



### KEY FINDINGS

**“People are not losing faith in democracy. 81% of the global population says that democracy is important to have. This number has remained consistent over the past three years”**

### ► Democracy is Important

Across the 53 countries surveyed in the Democracy Perception Index (DPI) study, an average of 81% say that democracy is important, ranging from 92% in the birthplace of democracy, Greece, to 62% in Japan. This is a majority opinion in all countries.

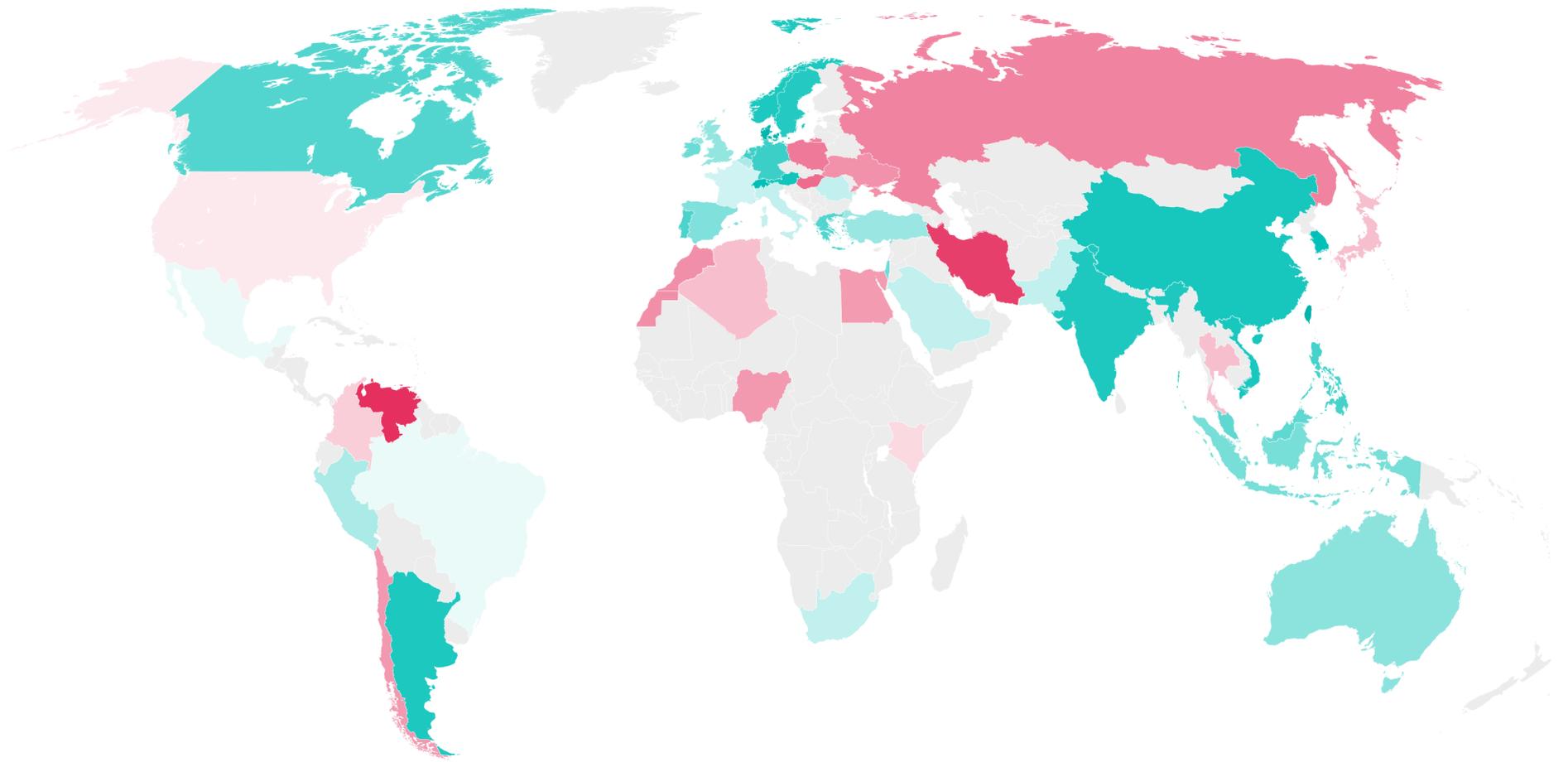


# Democracy Today

When asked how democratic people think their country currently is, only about half the world (53%) says that their country is actually democratic. This is true even in democracies labeled as “free” by Freedom House, where only 58% say that their country is democratic.

## People don't think their countries are very democratic - even in democracies

% say that their country is currently democratic\*



Think about your country today. How democratic do you think it is?  
0 - not at all democratic; 10 - very democratic

\*values from 7-10 are categorized as "Democratic"



### KEY FINDINGS

## ► Only about half the world (53%) says that their country is actually democratic

The countries considered most democratic by their citizens are Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway. Out of all countries labeled as “free” democracies by Freedom House, Poland is considered the least democratic by its people (31%).

Across the 53 countries surveyed, Venezuela, Iran, and Hungary have the smallest share of people who say their country is democratic.

### METHODOLOGY

#### How the DPI categorizes democracies:

In order to compare public opinion results between more democratic countries and less democratic countries, the DPI uses the 2021 categories from Freedom House to create two groups:

**"Free"** - the most democratic countries, labeled as "Free" by Freedom House

**"Less Free"** - less democratic countries and non-democratic countries, labeled as either "Partially Free" or "Not Free" by Freedom House

#### Most democratic



#### Least democratic

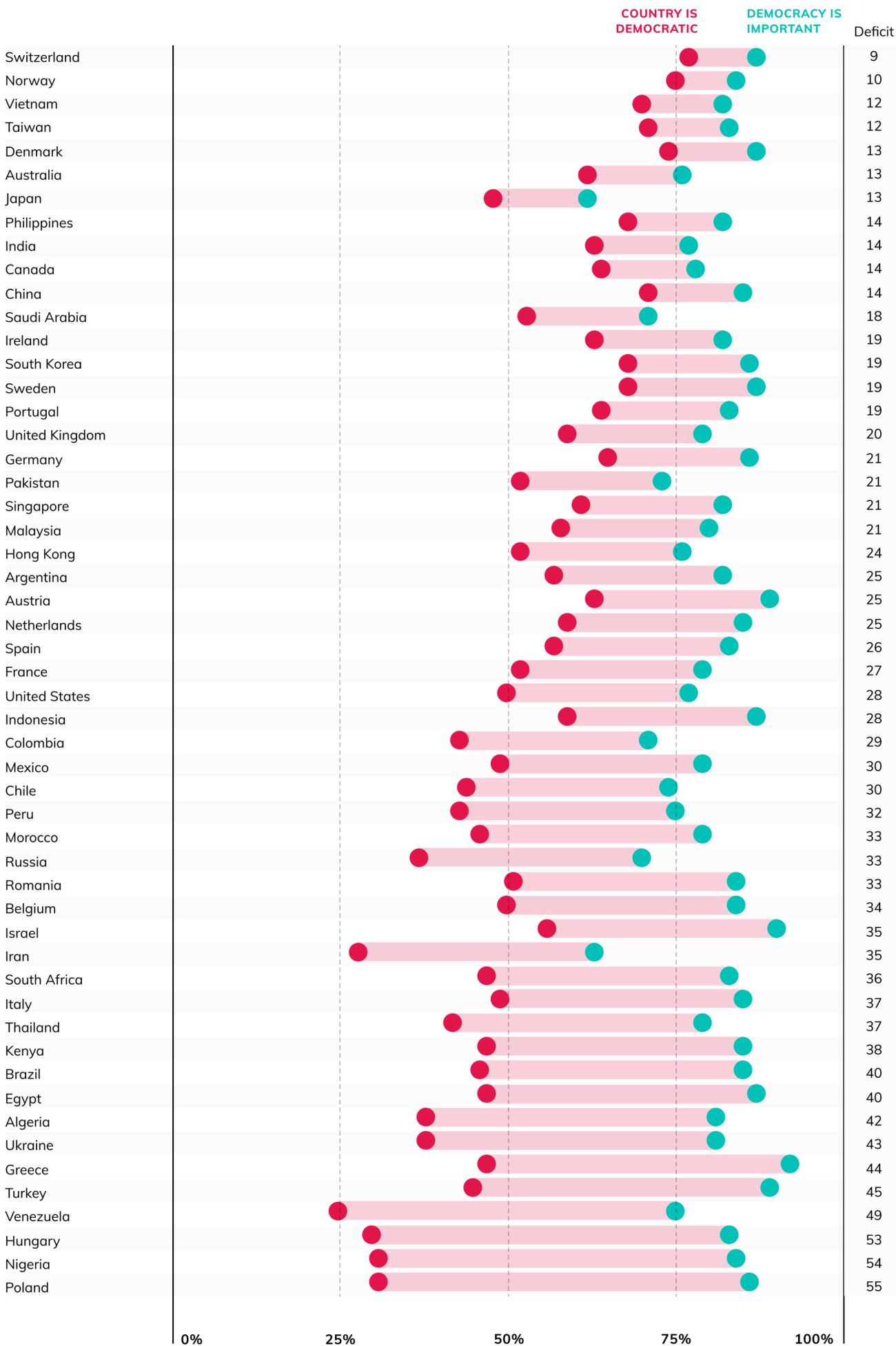


# Perceived Democratic Deficit

To capture public dissatisfaction with the state of democracy, the DPI measures the difference between how important people say democracy is and how democratic they think their country is. This difference is called the Perceived Democratic Deficit. The larger the deficit, the more governments are failing to live up to the democratic expectations of their citizens.

## Governments are not living up to the democratic expectations of their citizens

% say that democracy is important vs. % say that their country is democratic



### Perceived Democratic Deficit

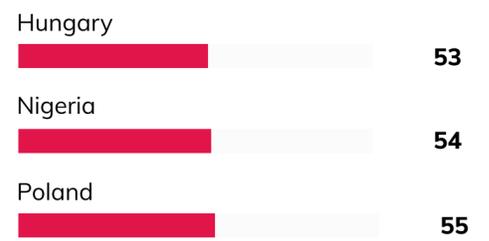
No country is fully living up to the democratic expectations of its citizens - in other words, no country has a Perceived Democratic Deficit of 0.

However, some countries are much closer to fulfilling their citizens' expectations than others.

### Smallest Deficit



### Largest Deficit



### Latin America

stands out as the region in the world with the largest dissatisfaction with the state of democracy, while Asia has the least dissatisfaction.

### TREND 2020 VS 2021

**The Perceived Democratic Deficit has increased slightly in most countries since 2020.**

Across the 53 countries, the average increase is 6 percentage points. However, some countries have experienced much larger and significant increases: Greece, Nigeria, Israel, Iran, Netherlands. No country has seen a meaningful decrease in the Perceived Democratic Deficit.

In your opinion, how important is it for your country to be a democracy?  
0 - not at all important; 10 - very important

Think about your country today. How democratic do you think it is?  
0 - not at all democratic; 10 - very democratic

\*values from 7-10 are categorized as "Important"

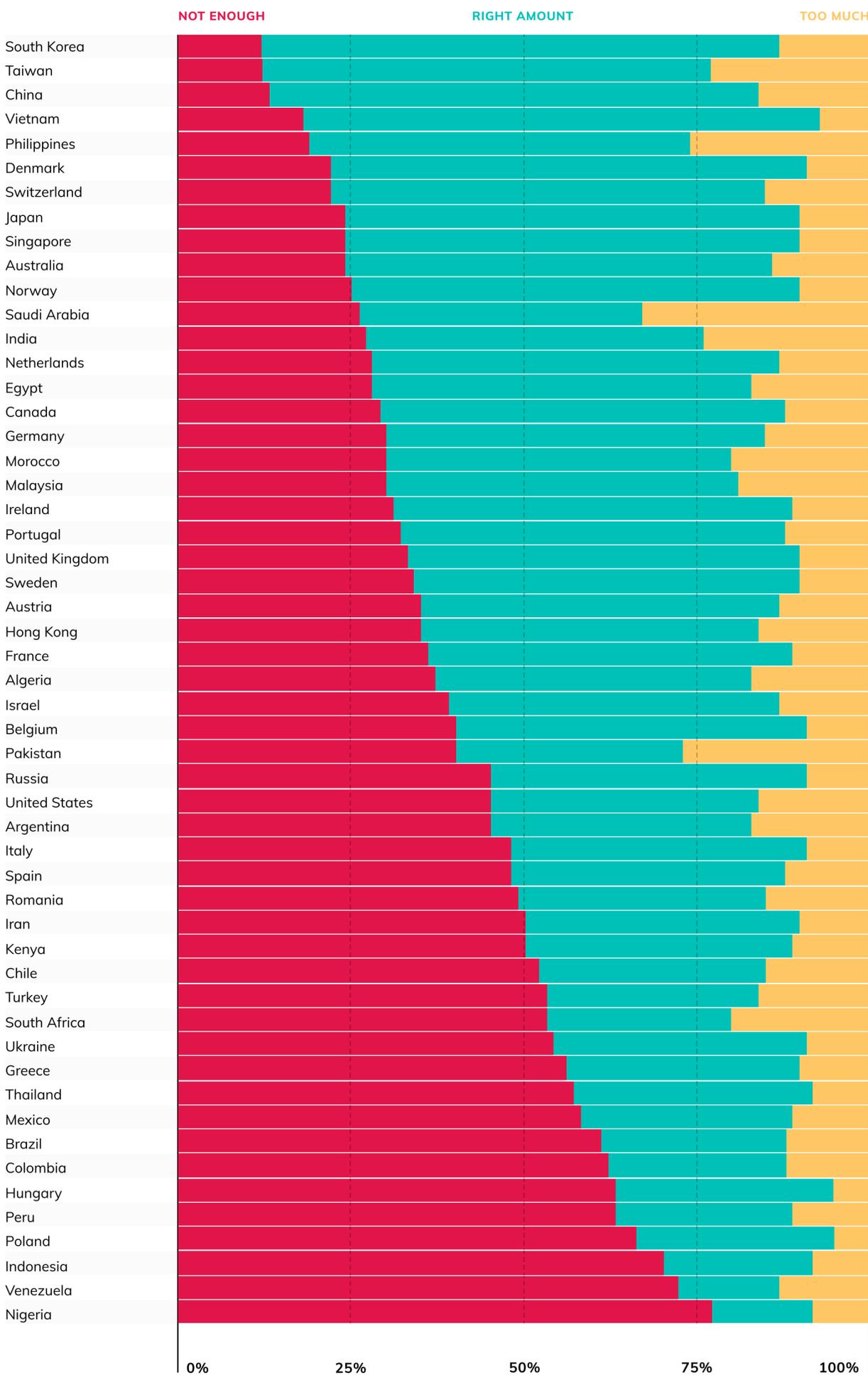
\*values from 7-10 are categorized as "Democratic"

# Desire for More Democracy

Across the 53 countries surveyed, 40% of people say there is “not enough democracy” in their country, while 46% say there is the “right amount” and only 14% say there is “too much”.

## 40% of people say there is “not enough democracy” in their country

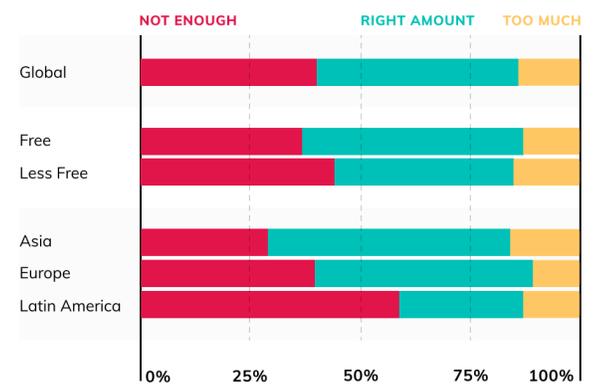
% say there is “Not Enough”, the “Right Amount” or “Too Much” democracy in their country



### Not Enough Democracy

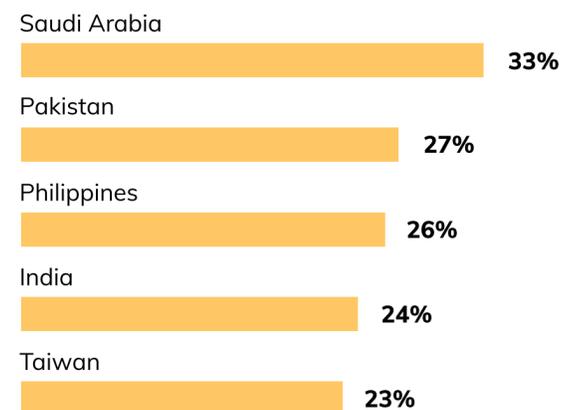
The feeling that there is “not enough democracy” is as high as 37% even in countries considered “free” democracies, led by Poland, Brazil, and Greece.

Overall, this sentiment is highest in Latin America (59%), then Europe (40%), and lowest in Asia (29%).



### Too Much Democracy

The countries with the largest share of people who think there is “too much democracy” are Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the Philippines, India, and Taiwan.



Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

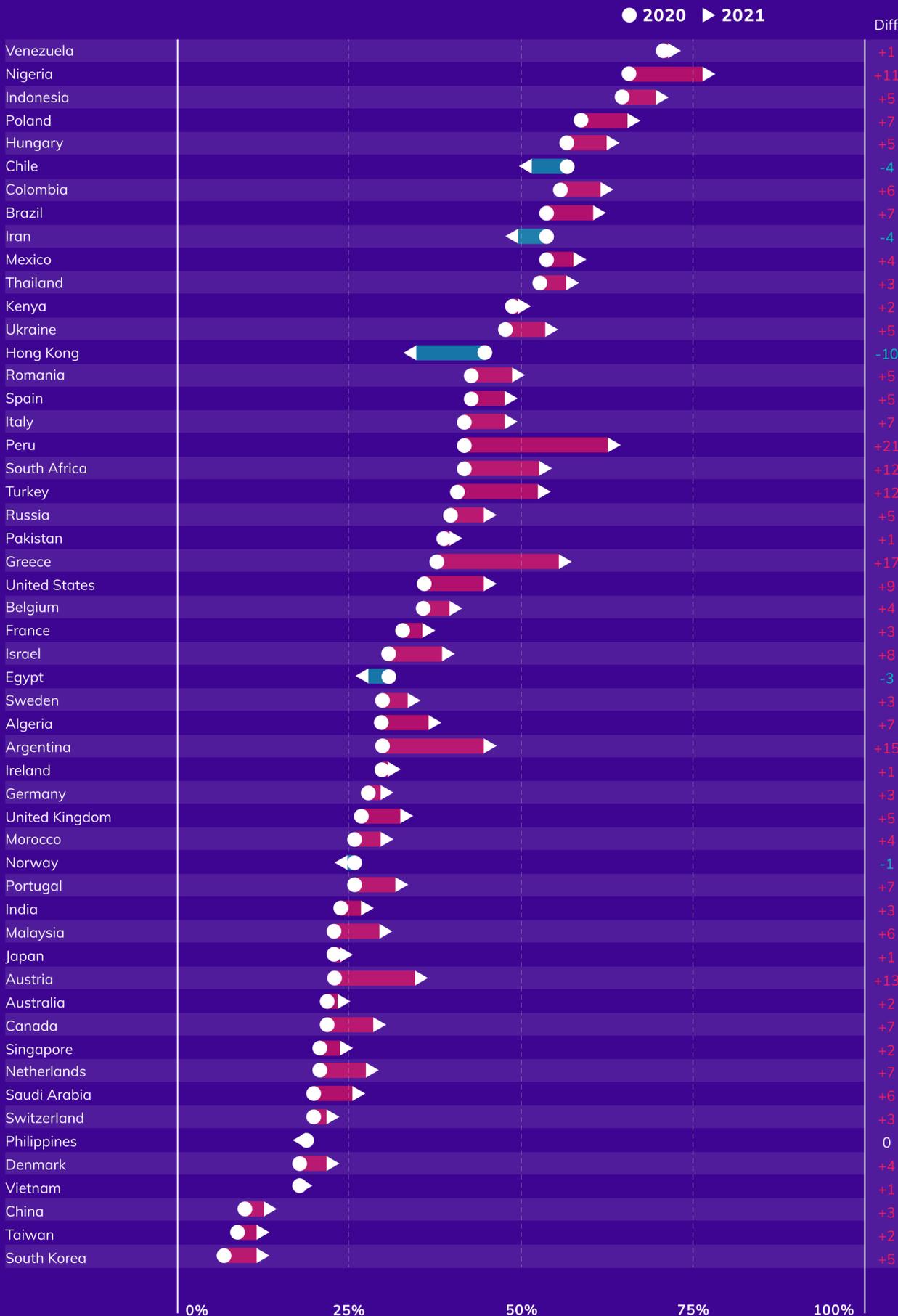
- I think there is not enough democracy in my country
- I think there is the right amount of democracy in my country
- I think there is too much democracy in my country

# Growing Desire for More Democracy since 2020

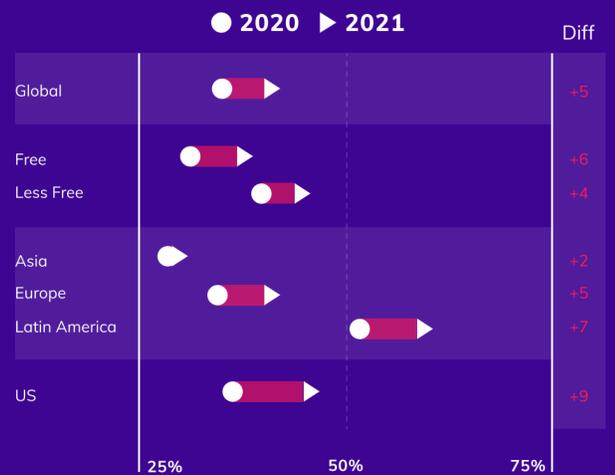
Since the Spring of 2020, the share of people who say “there is not enough democracy in my country” has increased in most countries around the world, both in democracies and non-democracies.

## Desire for more democracy increases since 2020

% say “Not enough democracy”



- ▶ The desire for democracy has increased from 31% to 37% in “free” democracies from the Spring of 2020 to 2021.
- ▶ Out of all countries, the biggest increases are in Peru, Greece, Argentina, Austria, and Turkey (from +21 to +12, respectively)
- ▶ The only country to see a significant decline in the desire for more democracy is Hong Kong (-10).



Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

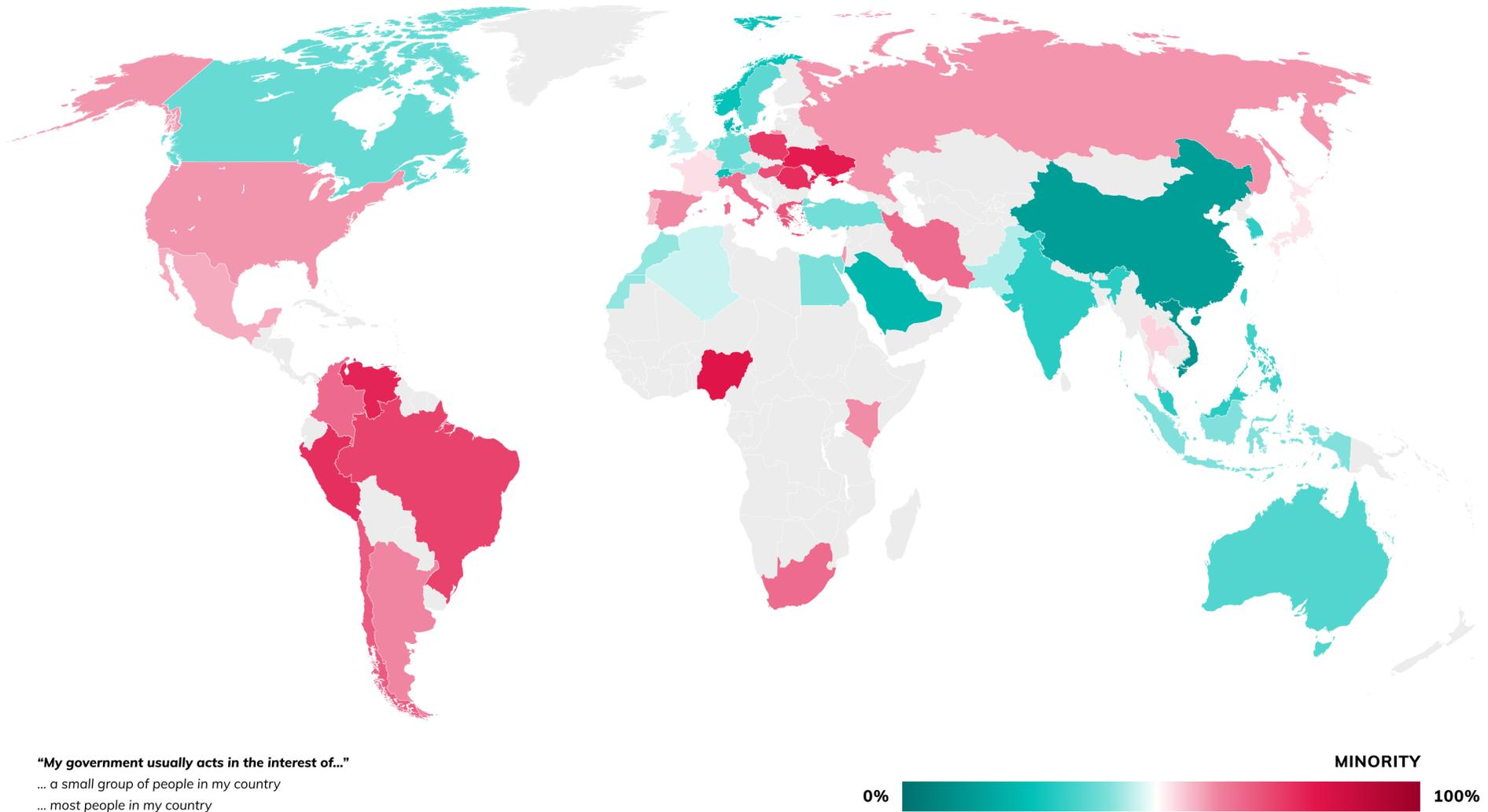
- I think there is not enough democracy in my country
- I think there is the right amount of democracy in my country
- I think there is too much democracy in my country

# Government Accountability

The DPI asks citizens around the world if they think their government usually acts in the interests of most people in their country, or of just a small group of people (a minority). The results show that around half (49%) say that their government only serves a minority.

## Half of the world says their government only serves a minority

% say their government usually acts in the interest of a "small group of people"

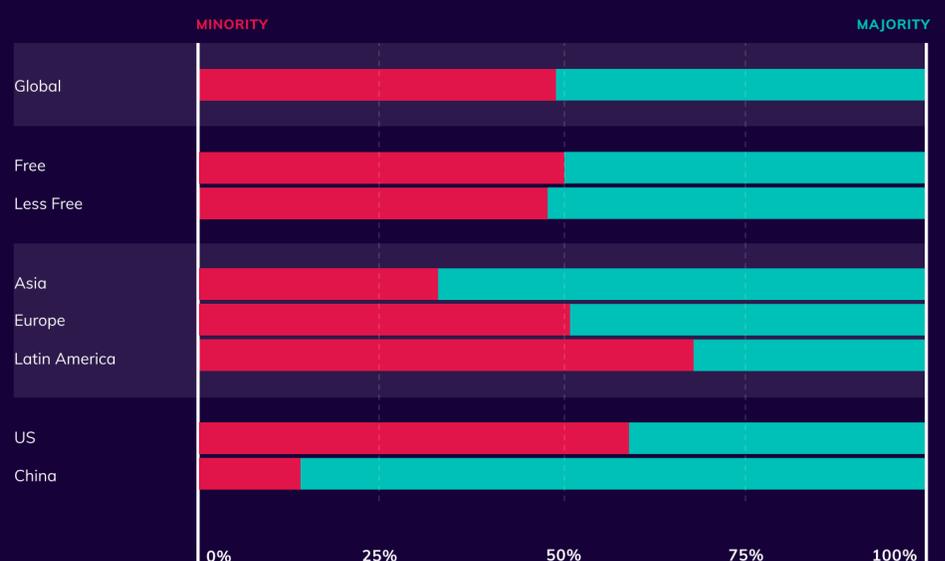


### KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ The study finds that across the 53 countries surveyed, people are divided roughly in half, with 49% saying that their government mainly acts in the interest of a small group of people.
- ▶ This sentiment is just as high in "free" democracies, with 50% saying their government serves the interest of a minority.
- ▶ The countries where the fewest people say their government mainly acts in the interest of a minority are countries classified as "not-free" by Freedom House: Vietnam, China, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, followed by some of the most democratic countries: Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway.

### People in Eastern Europe and Latin America say their government mainly serves a minority

% say their government acts in the interest of...

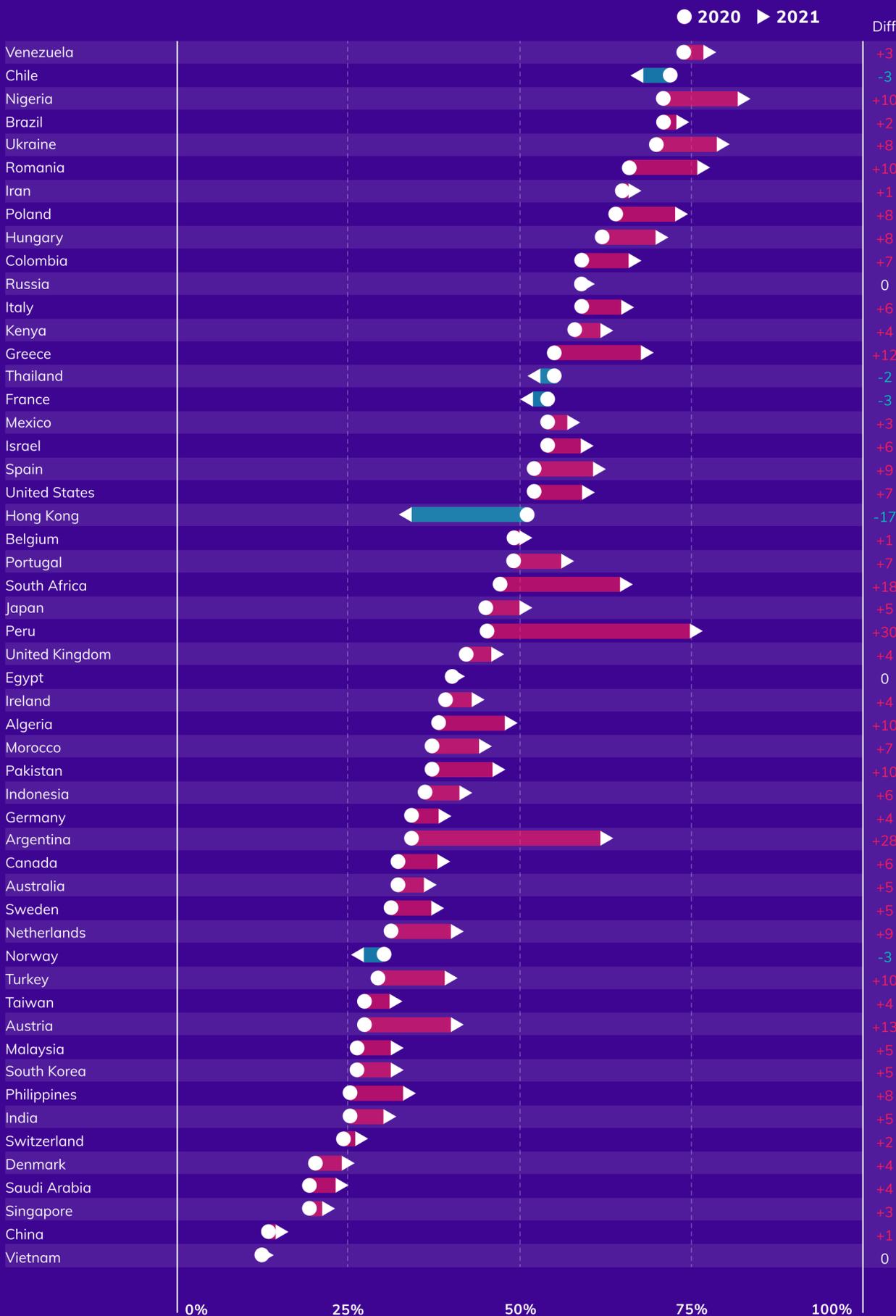


# More and more people believe their government mainly acts in the interest of a minority

Since the earlier stages of the COVID pandemic in the Spring of 2020, the share of people who say their government acts in the interest of a small group of people has grown in almost all countries, from 43% to 49% globally.

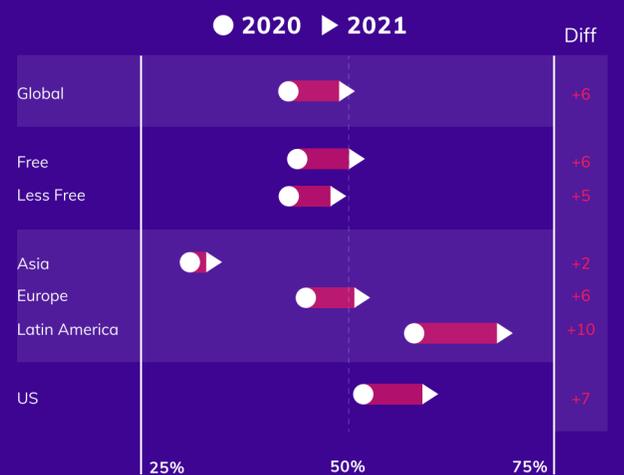
## Perception that governments mainly act in the interest of a minority grows in 2021

% say their government mainly acts in the interest of a small group of people



▶ Latin America sees the biggest growth in the share of people who think that their government only serves the interest of a small group of people (from 58% to 68%).

The only country to buckle the worrying trend is Hong Kong, where this sentiment has dropped 17 percentage points.



"My government usually acts in the interest of..."

... a small group of people in my country

... most people in my country

# State of Democracy in America

2020-2021 has been a turbulent year for democracy in America. While faith in democracy remains high in the US, the feeling that there is not enough democracy and that the government mainly acts in the interest of a small group of people are both growing.

## KEY FINDINGS

### ▶ Americans still have faith in democracy

In both 2020 and 2021, a vast majority of Americans say that it is important to have democracy in their country.



### ▶ However, more Americans say there is “not enough democracy”

This has increased significantly from 36% in 2020 to 45% in 2021.



### ▶ More Americans believe that their government mainly acts in the interest of a minority

Since 2020, more people in the US say that their government mainly acts in the interest of a small group of people, growing from 52% in 2020 to 59% in 2021.



US



# Threats to Democracy

To better understand why democracy is in global decline, this chapter asks people from around the world what they see as the most important threats to democracy in their country. It covers the following topics:

P. 17 **Economic Inequality**

P. 19 **Free Speech**

P. 20 **Big Tech**

P. 21 **Social Media**

P. 25 **Elections**

P. 28 **Global Politics**



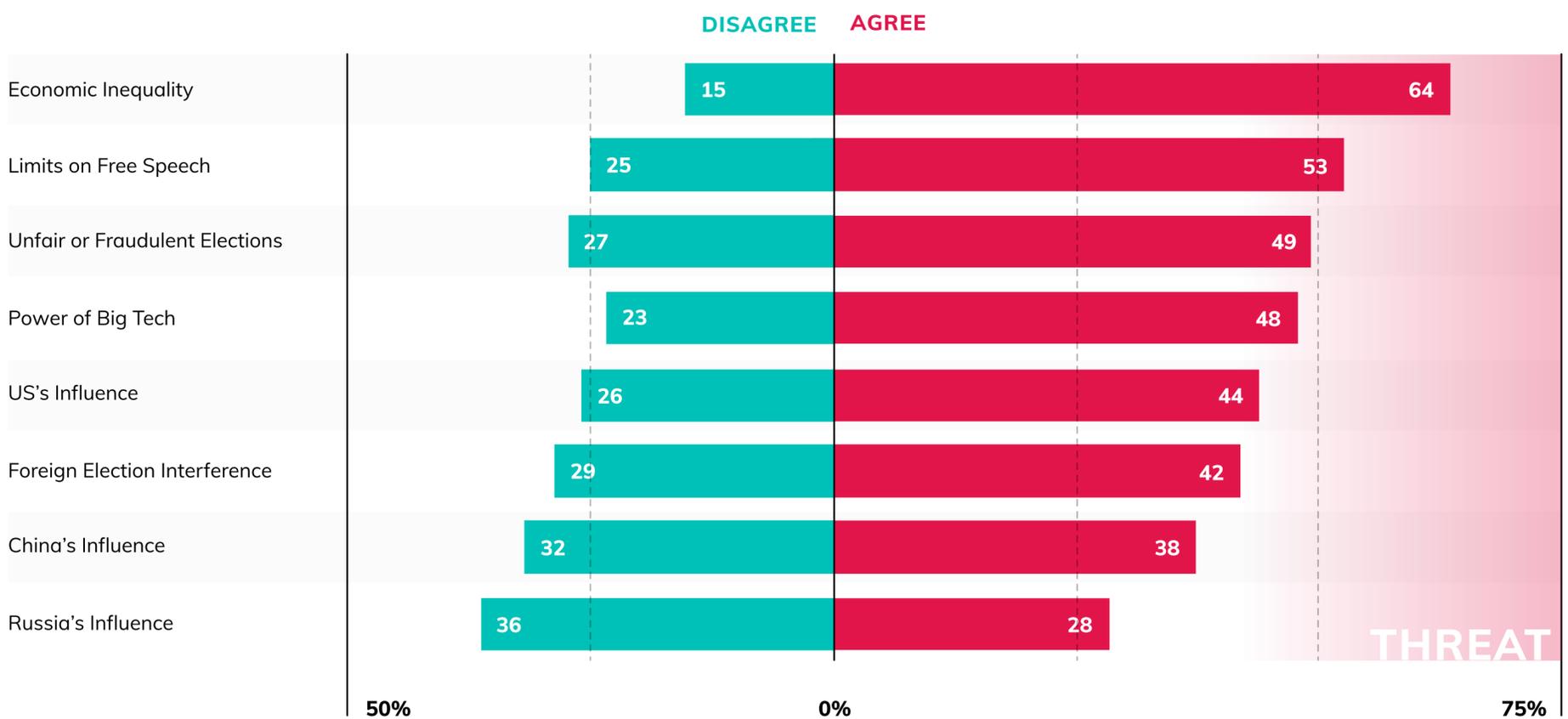
# Threats to Democracy

According to Freedom House, 2021 marked the 14th consecutive year that democracy is in decline globally. This chapter aims to shed a light on the reasons why democracy is under threat according to people from around the world.

The results show that out of all the possible threats listed in the DPI, economic inequality is viewed as the most significant threat: an average of 64% of people across all 53 countries agree that economic inequality threatens democracy in their country.

## Economic Inequality is viewed as the biggest threat to democracy worldwide

% agree\* that \_\_\_\_\_ is a threat to democracy in their country



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

"Democracy in my country is threatened by ..."

"... the influence of China"

"... the influence of Russia"

"... the influence of the United States"

"... economic inequality"

"... the influence of Big Tech companies (Google, Amazon, Apple, Facebook)"

"... limitations on free speech"

"... election interference from foreign powers"

"... unfair elections and/or election fraud"

Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

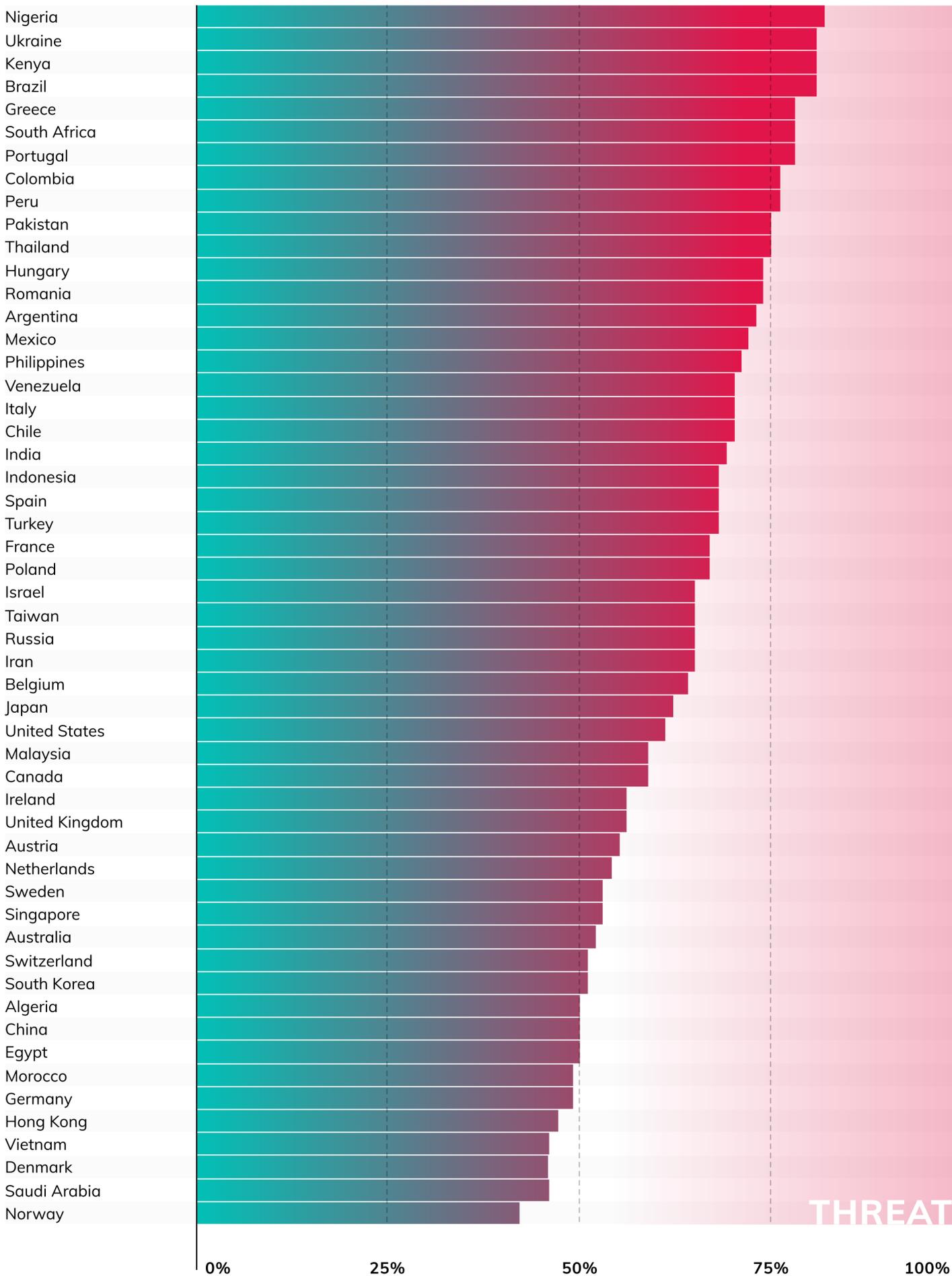
\*Agree includes "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

# Economic Inequality

Out of all the threats listed in the DPI survey, economic inequality is by far the biggest perceived threat to democracy around the world. While there are some major variations by country, around 64% of people in both democracies and non-democracies and in all major regions of the world agree that economic inequality threatens democracy in their country.

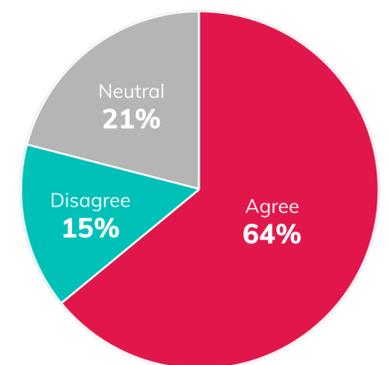
## Majority of people in almost all countries say that economic inequality is a threat to democracy

% agree\* that economic inequality is a threat to democracy in their country

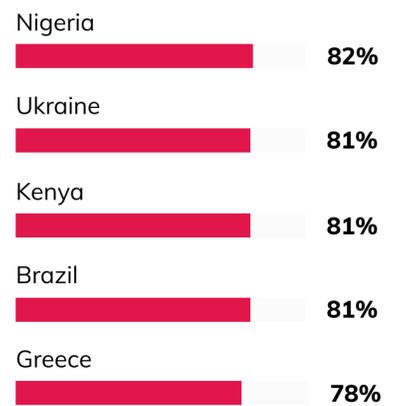


### Economic inequality is a threat to democracy

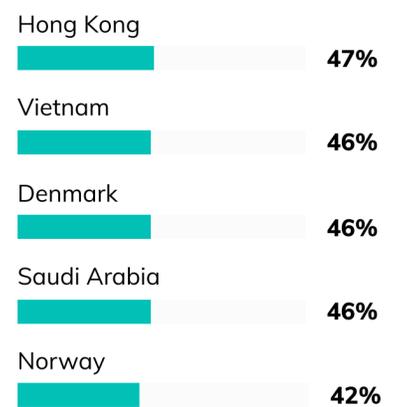
It is a majority opinion in all but seven out of the 53 countries surveyed.



### Highest Threat



### Lowest Threat



"Democracy in my country is threatened by economic inequality"

Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

\*Agree includes "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

# How is economic inequality related to democracy?

The perception of “economic inequality” as a threat to democracy is very strongly correlated with the sense that “government is acting in the interest of a minority of people” (p.12).

## KEY FINDINGS

### ▶ Perceptions of economic and political inequality go hand in hand

The perception of “economic inequality” as a threat to democracy is very strongly correlated with the sense that “government is acting in the interest of a minority of people” (p.12).

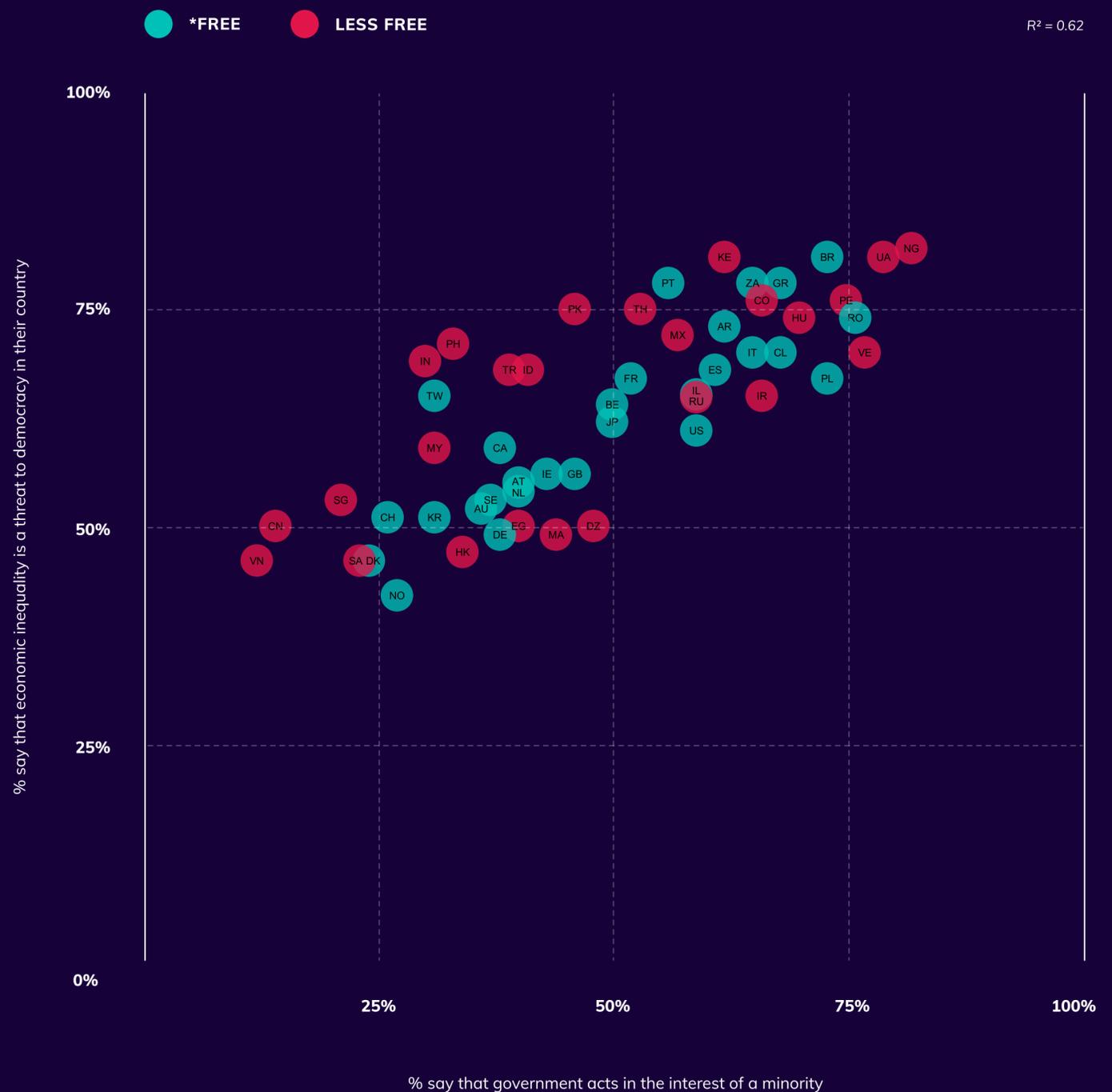
As demonstrated in the graph below, people in more democratic countries are just as worried about these two issues as people in less democratic countries.

The democratic countries most afflicted with both concerns of economic inequality (% say that economic inequality is a threat) and political inequality (% say that my government only acts in the interest of a minority) are the green countries in the top right corner: Brazil, Greece, Romania, and South Africa.

## \*METHODOLOGY

“Free” includes more democratic countries, based on Freedom House’s classification of “Free”

“Less Free” includes less democratic and non-democratic countries, based on Freedom House’s classifications of “Partially Free” and “Not Free”



“Democracy in my country is threatened by economic inequality”  
Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

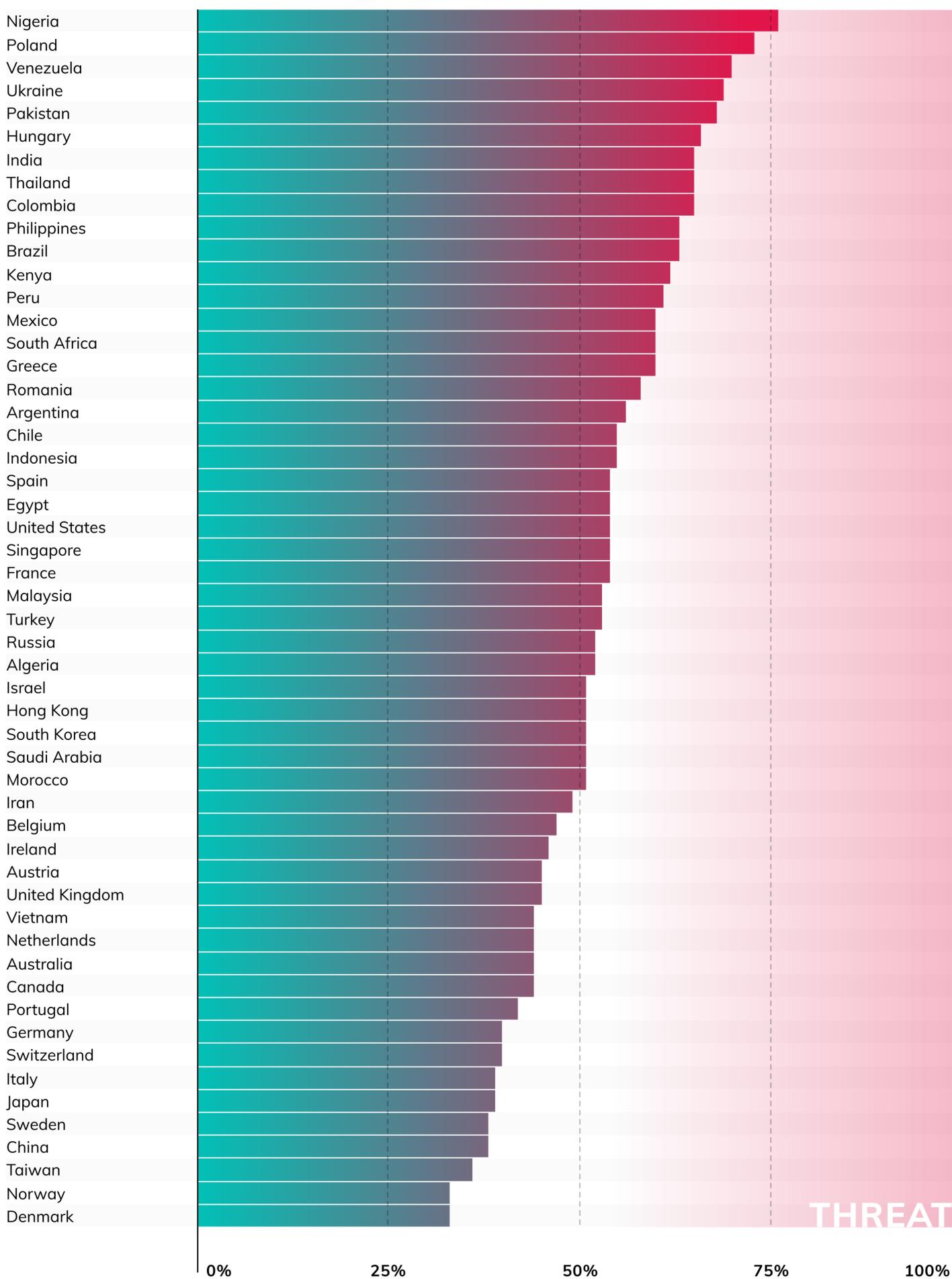
“My government usually acts in the interest of...”  
... a small group of people in my country / ... most people in my country

# Free Speech

After economic inequality, “limits on free speech” is the second most cited threat to democracy. Around half of the people around the world (53%) agree that it threatens democracy in their country.

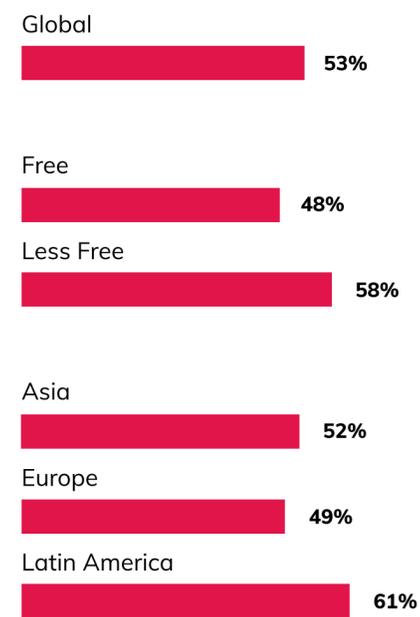
## Violation of free speech is the second most cited threat to democracy

% agree\* that limits to free speech threaten democracy in their country



### A majority of people around the world (53%) are concerned with limits on free speech

While free speech concerns are higher in less democratic countries (58%), they are still remarkably high in more democratic countries (48%).



“Democracy in my country is threatened by limitations on free speech”  
Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

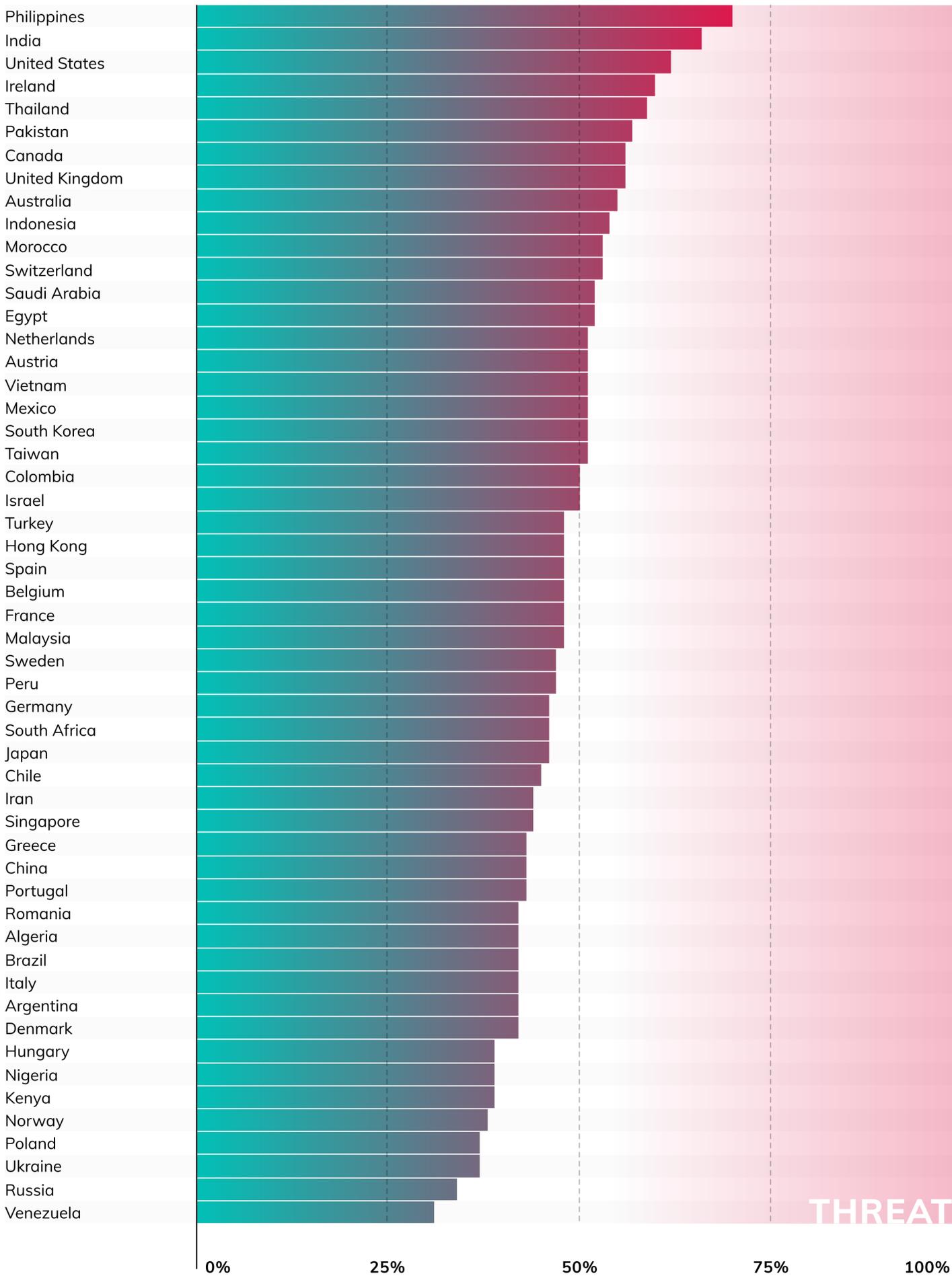
\*Agree includes “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”

# Big Tech

The third most cited threat to democracy is the power of Big Tech companies, with about half (48%) of people globally saying it threatens democracy in their country. Despite some major country variations, ranging from 70% in the Philippines all the way down to 31% in Venezuela, concerns are consistently high across democracies and non-democracies, and across all major regions (Asia, Europe, and Latin America).

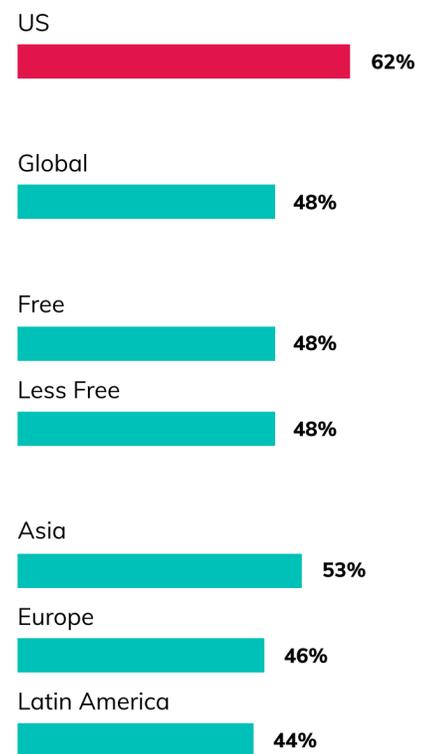
## Half of the world's population fears the influence of Big Tech companies

% agree\* that the power of Big Tech companies threatens democracy in their country



### Fear of Big Tech is higher in the US than in any other democracy

The United States, home of the Big Tech companies, is the "free" democracy with the largest share of people concerned with Big Tech: 62% say that Big Tech threatens democracy, making it the top threat in the US, slightly surpassing the 61% of Americans who are concerned with economic inequality.



"Democracy in my country is threatened by the influence of Big Tech companies (Google, Amazon, Apple, Facebook)"  
Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

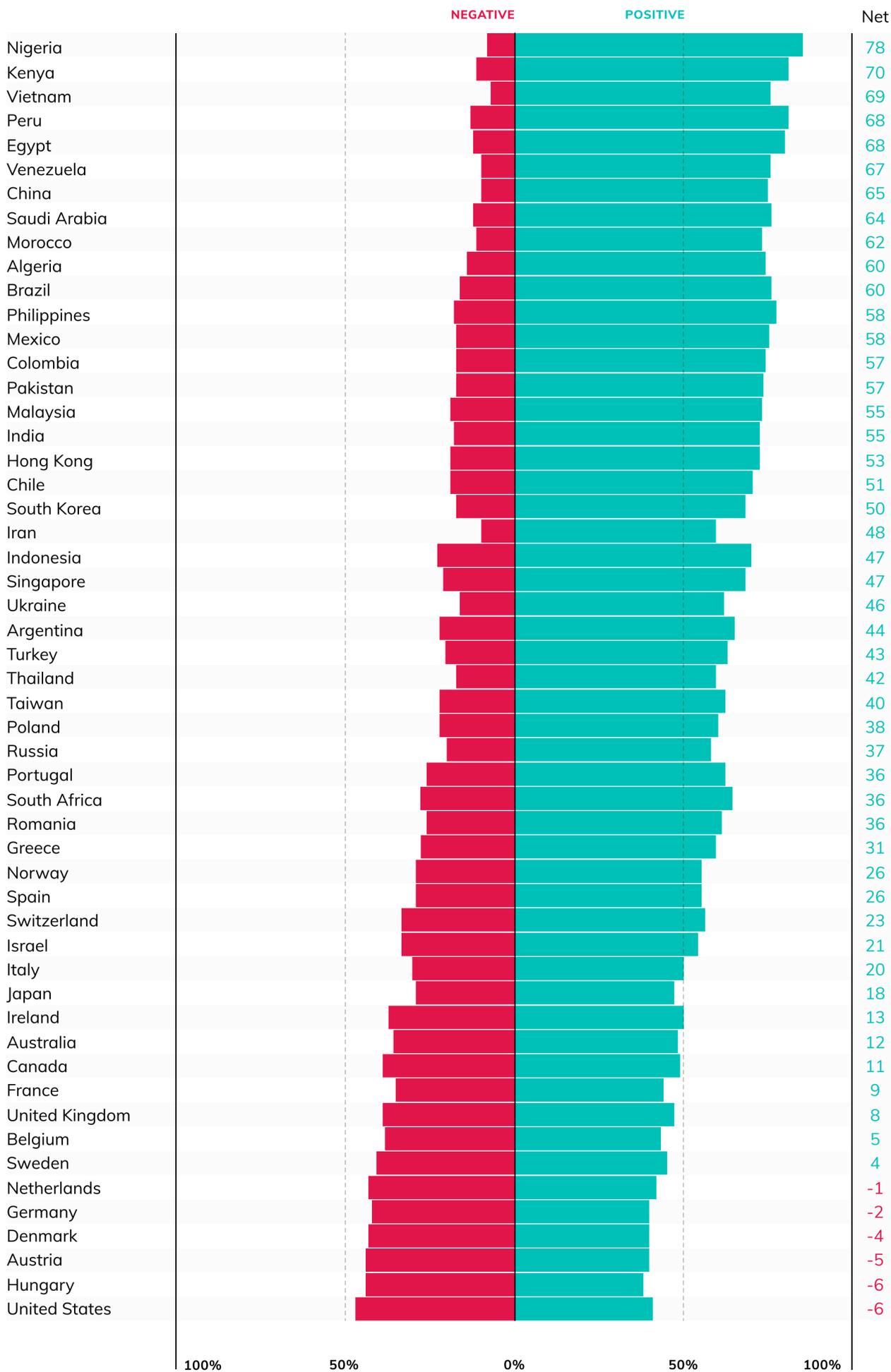
\*Agree includes "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

# Social Media Influence

Most people around the world say that social media platforms have a more positive impact on democracy in their country than negative: 62% positive vs 24% negative. People in Europe and the US, however, are much more critical.

## Most people think social media has a positive effect on democracy - except Americans

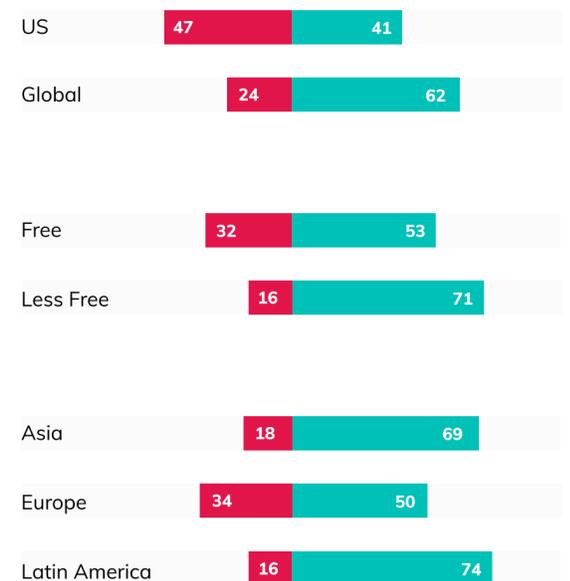
% say social media platforms have a positive / negative impact on democracy in their country



### Americans are the most critical of social media's influence on democracy

The United States stands out as the country with the most negative view of social media platforms' impact on democracy: 47% negative vs. 41% positive.

It is one of the only few countries, joined by Hungary, Austria, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands where people have a net negative opinion of social media platforms.



Overall, do you think that social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) have a positive or negative impact on democracy in your country?  
 Very positive / Somewhat positive / Somewhat negative / Very negative / No impact / Don't know

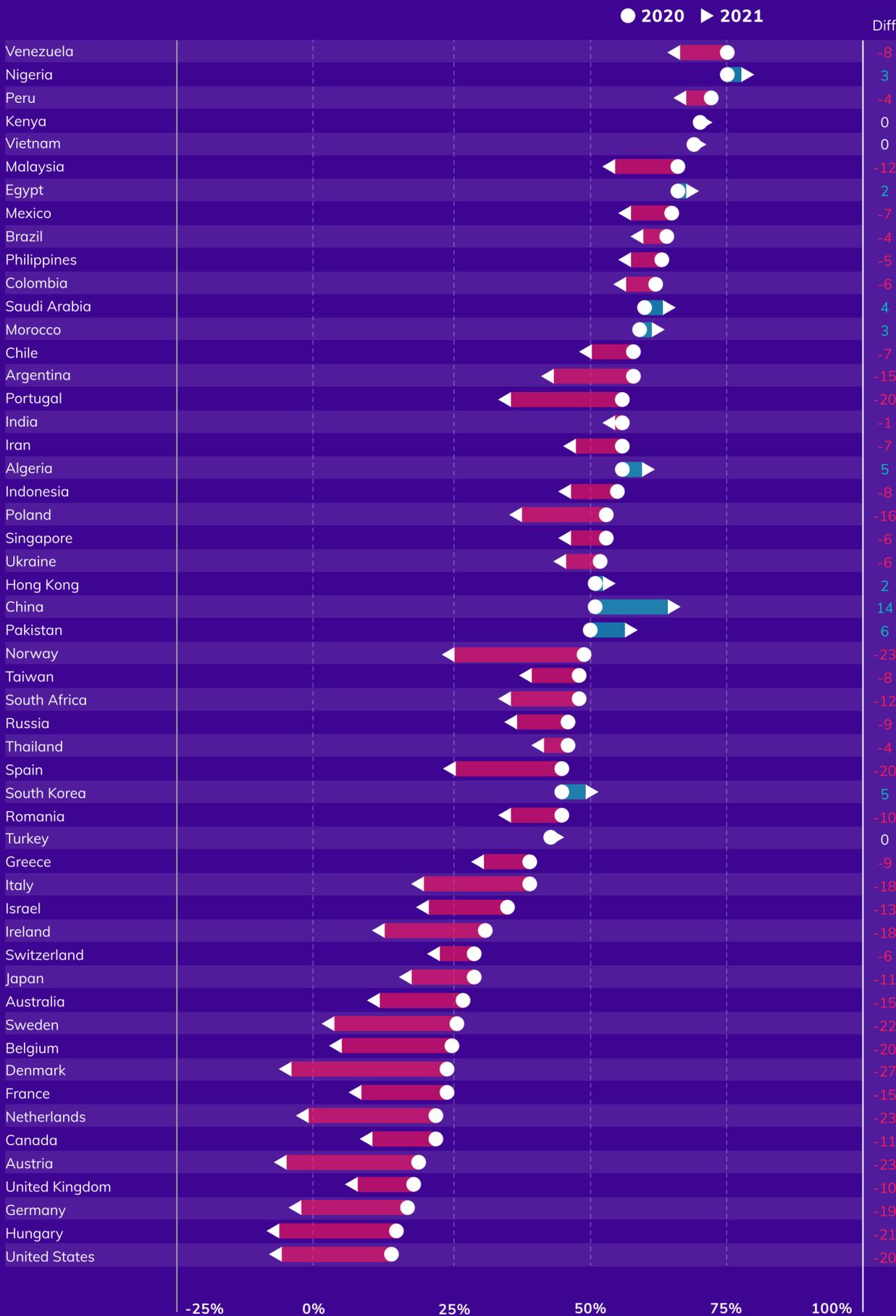
\*Positive includes "Very positive" and "Somewhat positive".

# The world becomes much more critical of social media platforms in 2021

The overall opinion towards social media's influence on democracy has decreased significantly in most countries in 2021. This decrease is driven almost entirely by public opinion in more democratic countries, particularly in Europe (-17) and the US (-20). There has been virtually no overall change in Asian countries (-2).

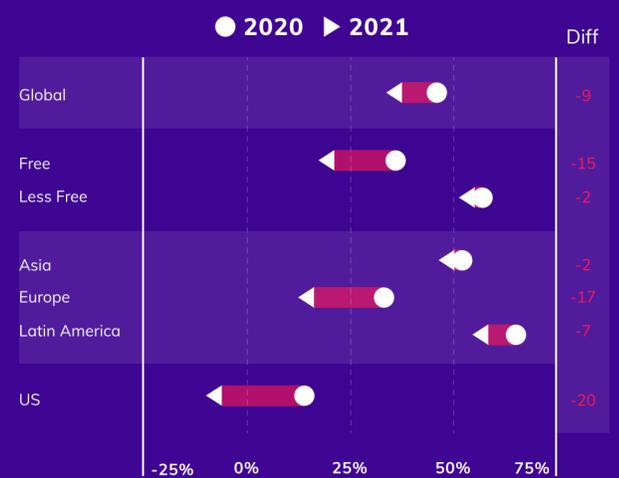
## Opinion of social media's impact on democracy takes a negative turn in 2021

net opinion\* of social media platform's impact on democracy



### Europeans grow more critical of social media platforms

The countries where opinion towards social media has dropped most significantly since 2020 are European democracies, led by Denmark, Austria, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.



Overall, do you think that social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) have a positive or negative impact on democracy in your country?  
 Very positive / Somewhat positive / Somewhat negative / Very negative / No impact / Don't know

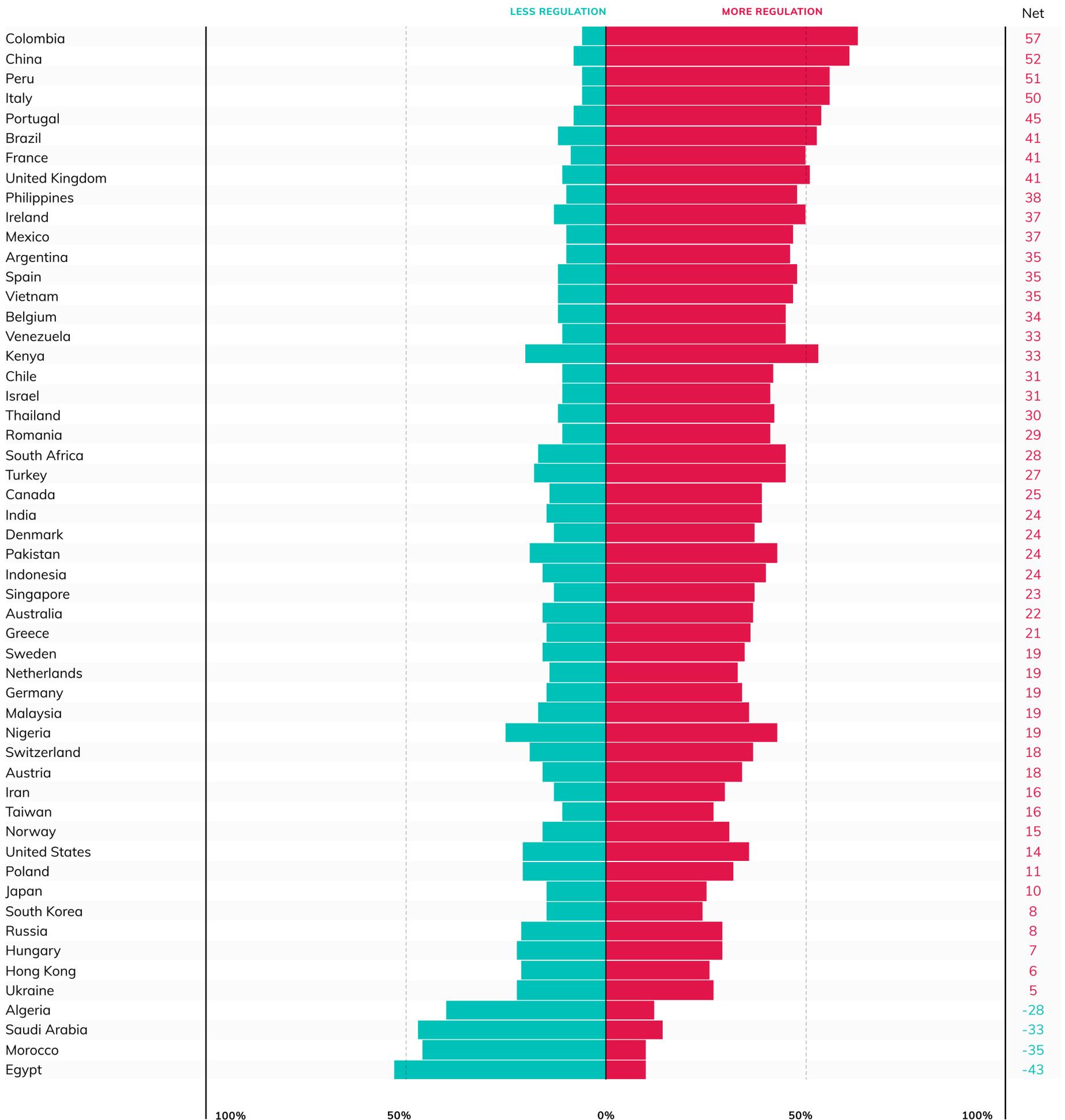
\*Net opinion of each year is calculated as % positive - % negative

# Social Media Regulation

While more people support “more regulation” than “less regulation” on social media content, most countries do not have a majority of people on either side the issue. Globally, 37% want more regulation, 17% want less and the rest don’t take sides. Only a handful of countries, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, have populations that prefer less regulation.

## There is no majority opinion about social media regulation in most countries

% say that there should be more/less regulation on social media content



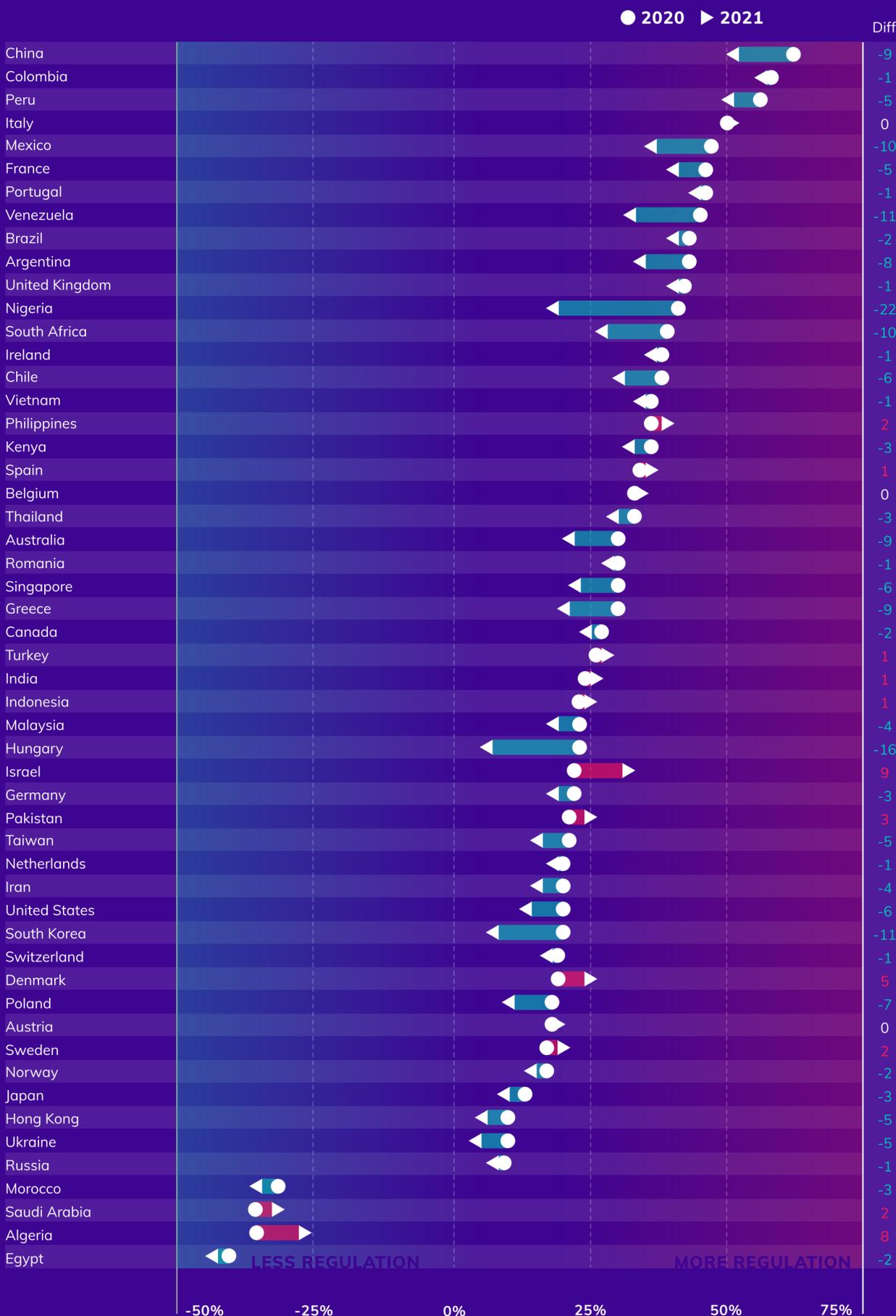
In general, do you think there should be more or less regulation on content that people share on social media platforms?  
 More regulation / Neither more nor less / Less regulation / Don't know

# Despite growing criticism of social media platforms, the desire for more regulation declines in 2020

Even though the perception of social media platforms and their impact on democracy has become much more negative in 2021 in almost all countries (p.22), the support for more regulation on social media content has declined slightly, while support for less regulation has increased. This has reduced the overall relative popularity of “more regulation” in most countries.

## Desire for more regulation on social media drops slightly in 2020

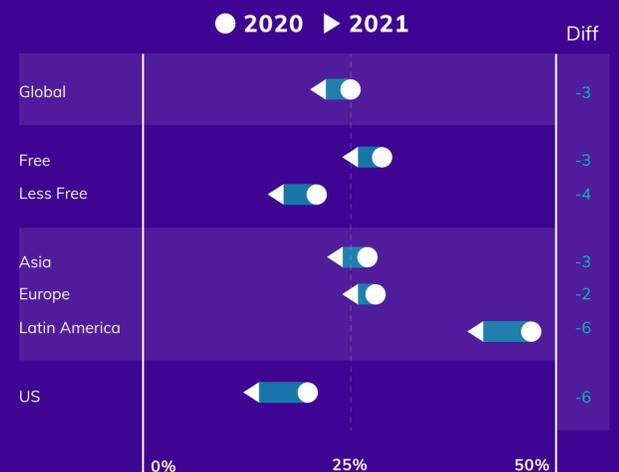
net opinion\* of social media regulation in 2020 and 2021



### “More Regulation” loses it’s relative popularity in most countries

This is in part due to the growing share of people who support **less regulation**. As more people support less regulation, the net opinion towards regulation has dropped.

This is particularly apparent in the US, where the share of people who want **less regulation** has increased from 14% to 21%, thus causing the net opinion towards regulation to drop 6 points.



▶ People worried about free speech (p.19) generally want less regulation on social media than those who aren't worried: 20% vs. 12% globally

▶ People worried about social media's impact on democracy want more regulation than those who aren't worried: 49% vs. 37% globally

In general, do you think there should be more or less regulation on content that people share on social media platforms?  
More regulation / Neither more nor less / Less regulation / Don't know

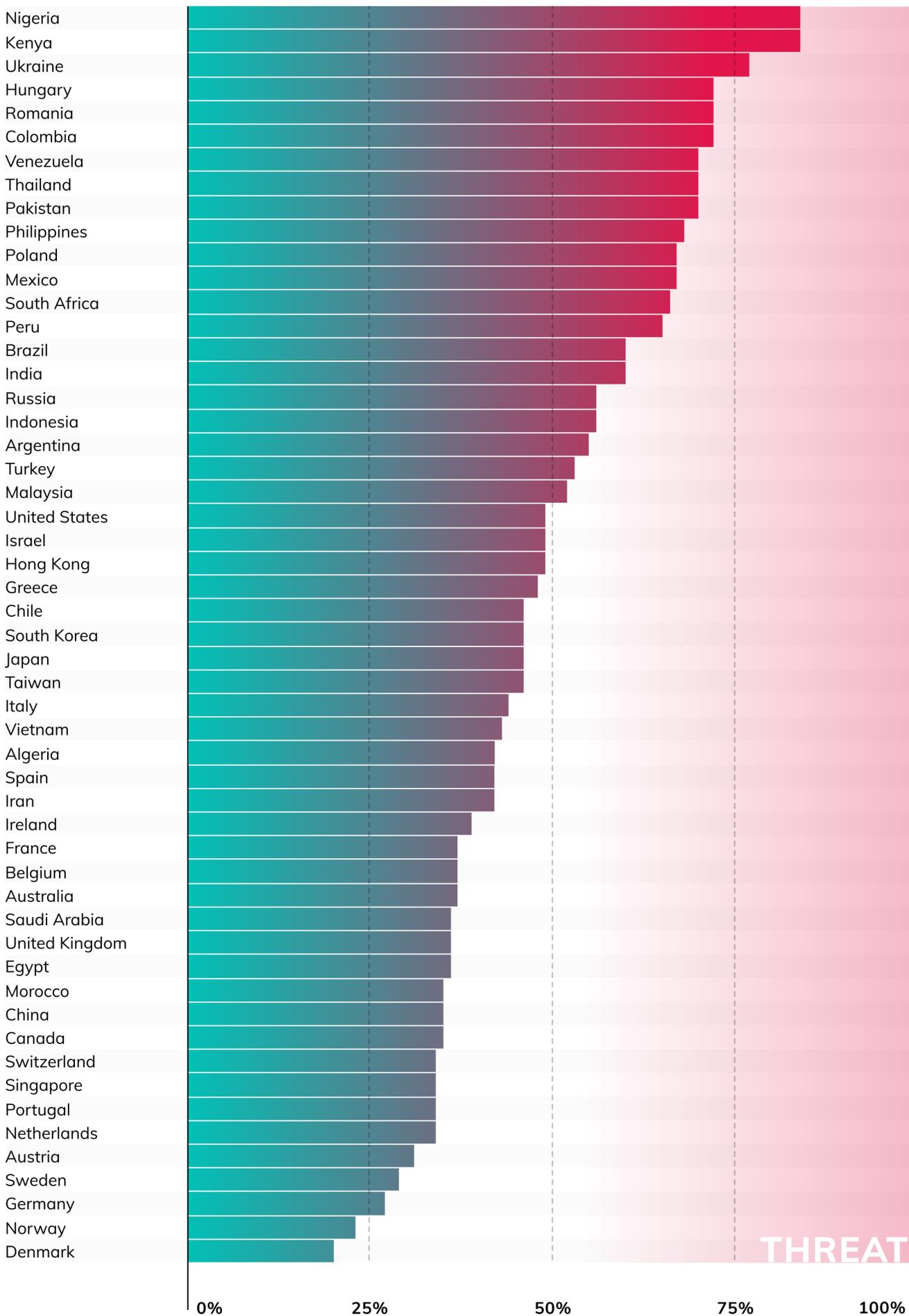
\*Net opinion is calculated for each year as: % more regulation - % less regulation.

# Free and Fair Elections

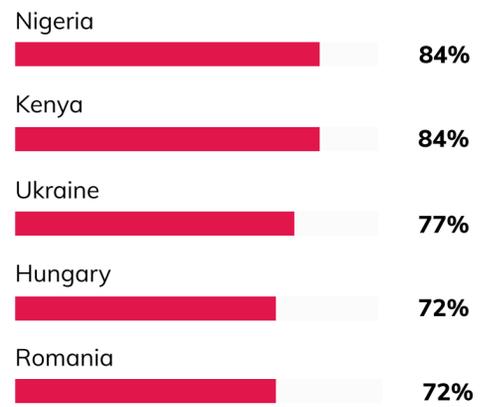
Half of the world (49%) says that “unfair elections and/or election fraud” threatens democracy in their country. While this concern is lower in more democratic countries, it is still as high as 42%.

## Half of the world says unfair elections threaten democracy in their country

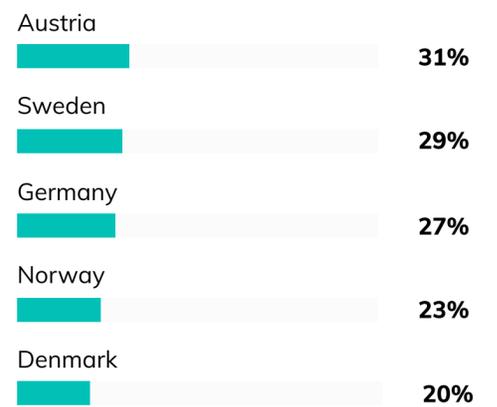
% agree\* that unfair elections and/or election fraud threatens democracy in their country



### Highest Threat



### Lowest Threat



**Around half of Americans say that “unfair elections and / or election fraud” threatens democracy in their country**



**“Democracy in my country is threatened by unfair elections and/or election fraud”**  
Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

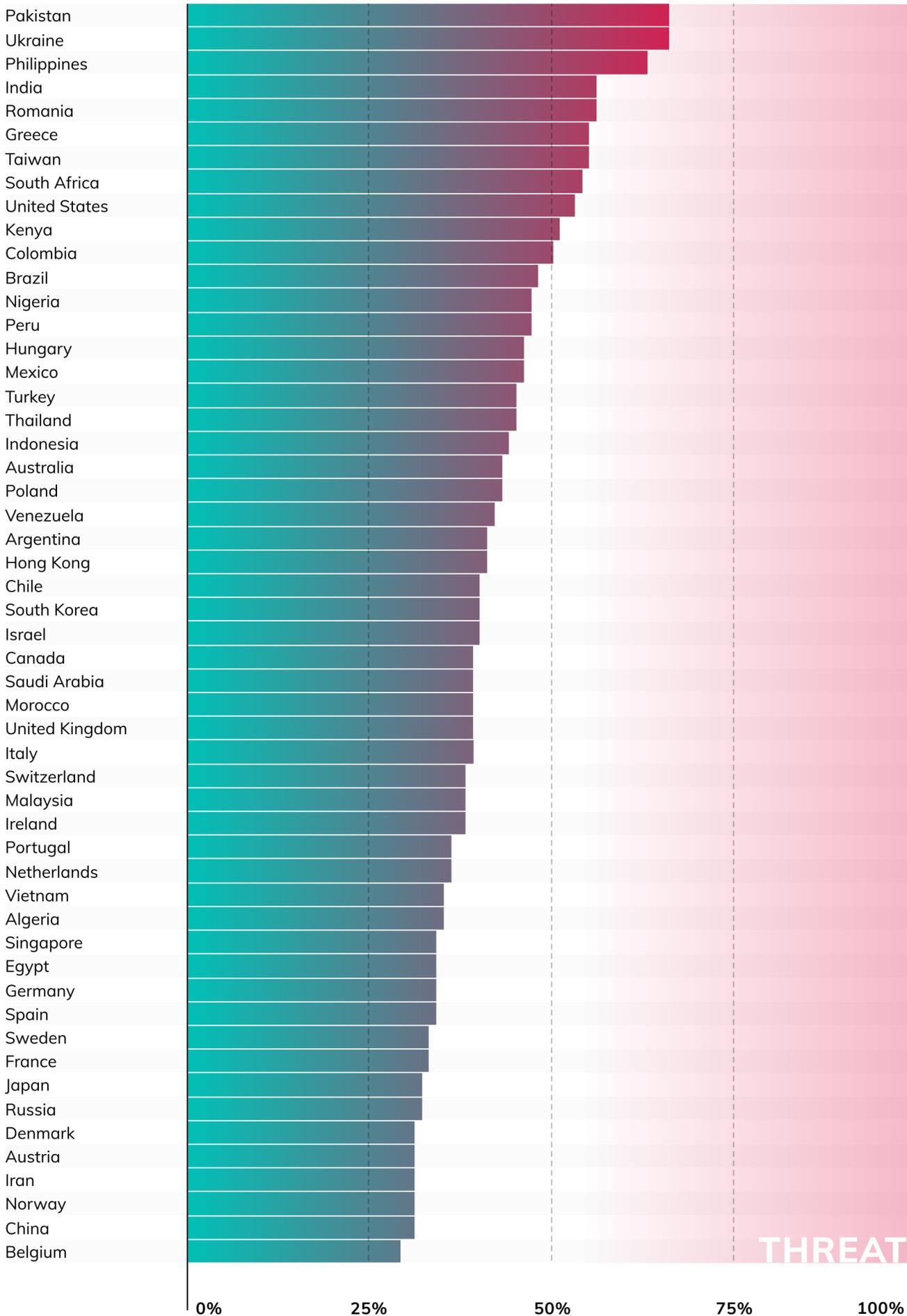
\*Agree includes “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”

# Foreign Election Interference

While concern of foreign election interference isn't as high as other perceived threats, such as economic inequality, limits on free speech, unfair elections, the power of Big Tech, and the US's global influence, it is still remarkably high: around 42% of people around the world say that their democracy is threatened by election interference from foreign powers.

## 42% of people around the world say foreign election interference threatens their democracy

% agree\* that their democracy is threatened by election interference from foreign powers

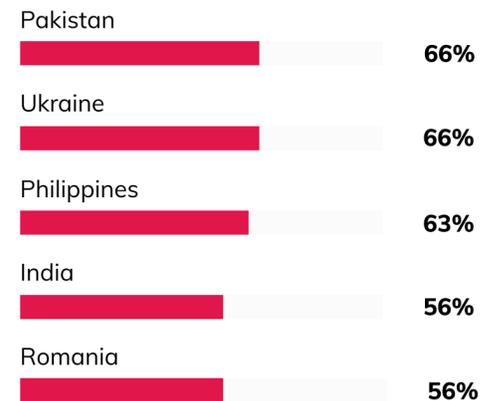


### 40% of people in "free" democracies fear foreign election interference

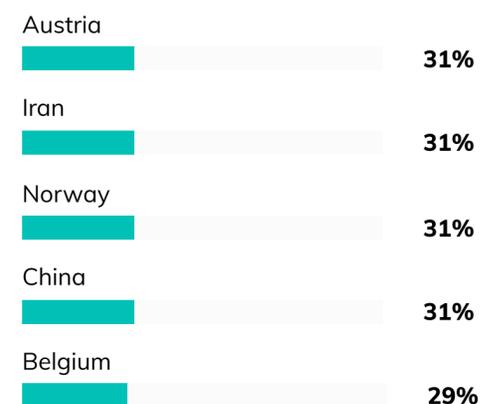
It is particularly high in the US, where a slight majority (53%) say that it threatens democracy



### Highest Threat



### Lowest Threat



"Democracy in my country is threatened by election interference from foreign powers"  
Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

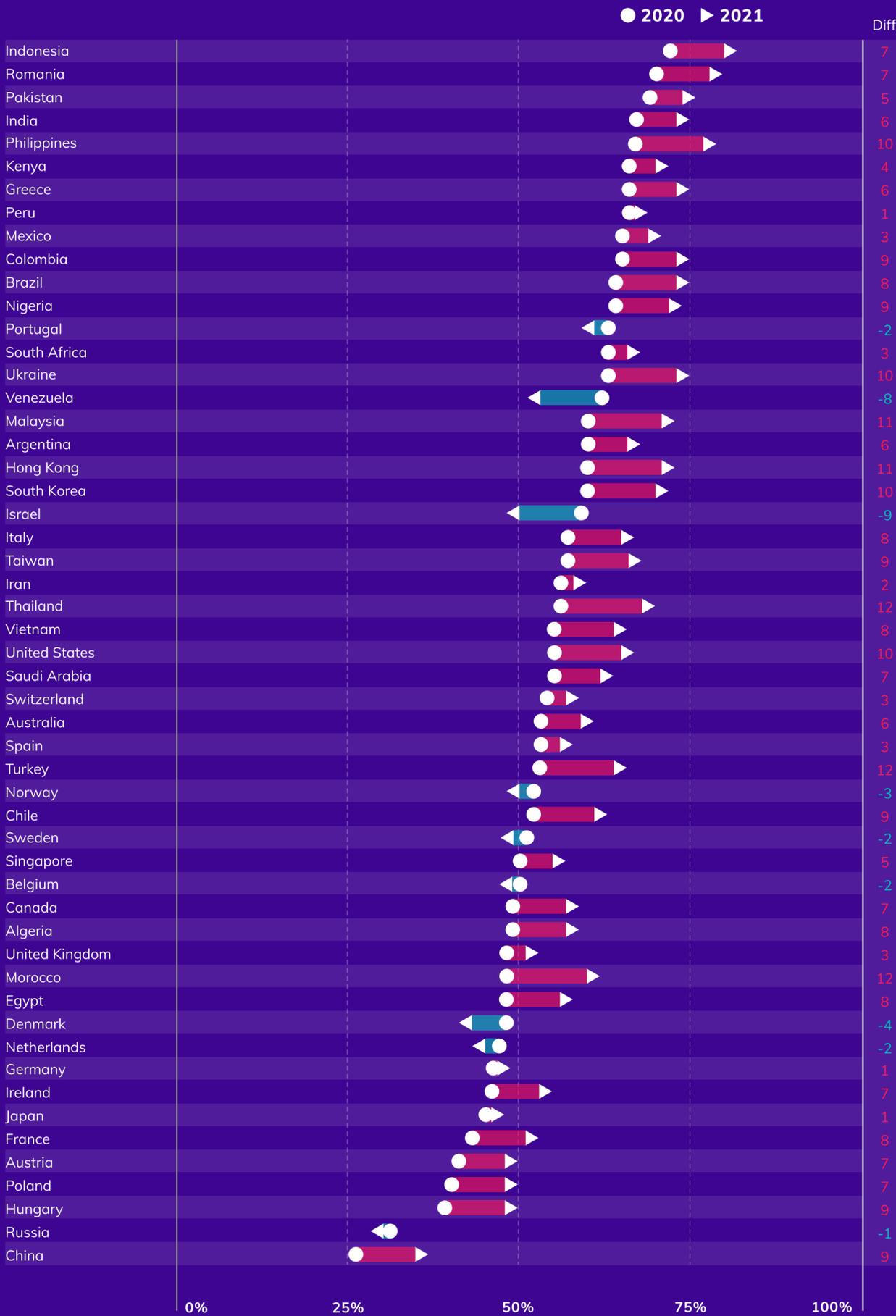
\*Agree includes "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

# Fear of foreign election interference grows in almost all countries since 2020

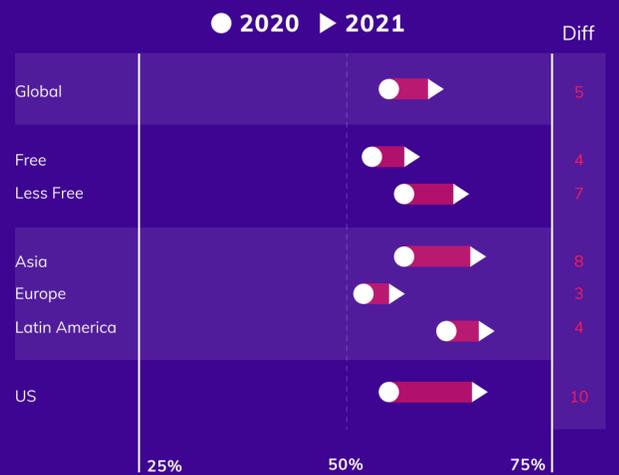
The perception that foreign election interference will “likely” have an influence on people’s next major elections has grown slightly in most countries around the world, both in more democratic and less democratic countries.

## Fear of foreign election interference grows around the world

% say that foreign election interference will likely\* affect their country's next elections.



- ▶ Perception of likely foreign election interference is highest in Indonesia, Romania, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Colombia.
- ▶ It has increased in almost all countries since 2020, growing from 55% to 60% overall. The increase is highest in mostly Asian countries (+8) and in the US (+10).



Think about the next major elections in your country.

How likely do you think that interference from foreign powers will influence the results of the election?

Very likely / Somewhat likely / Somewhat unlikely / Very unlikely / Don't know

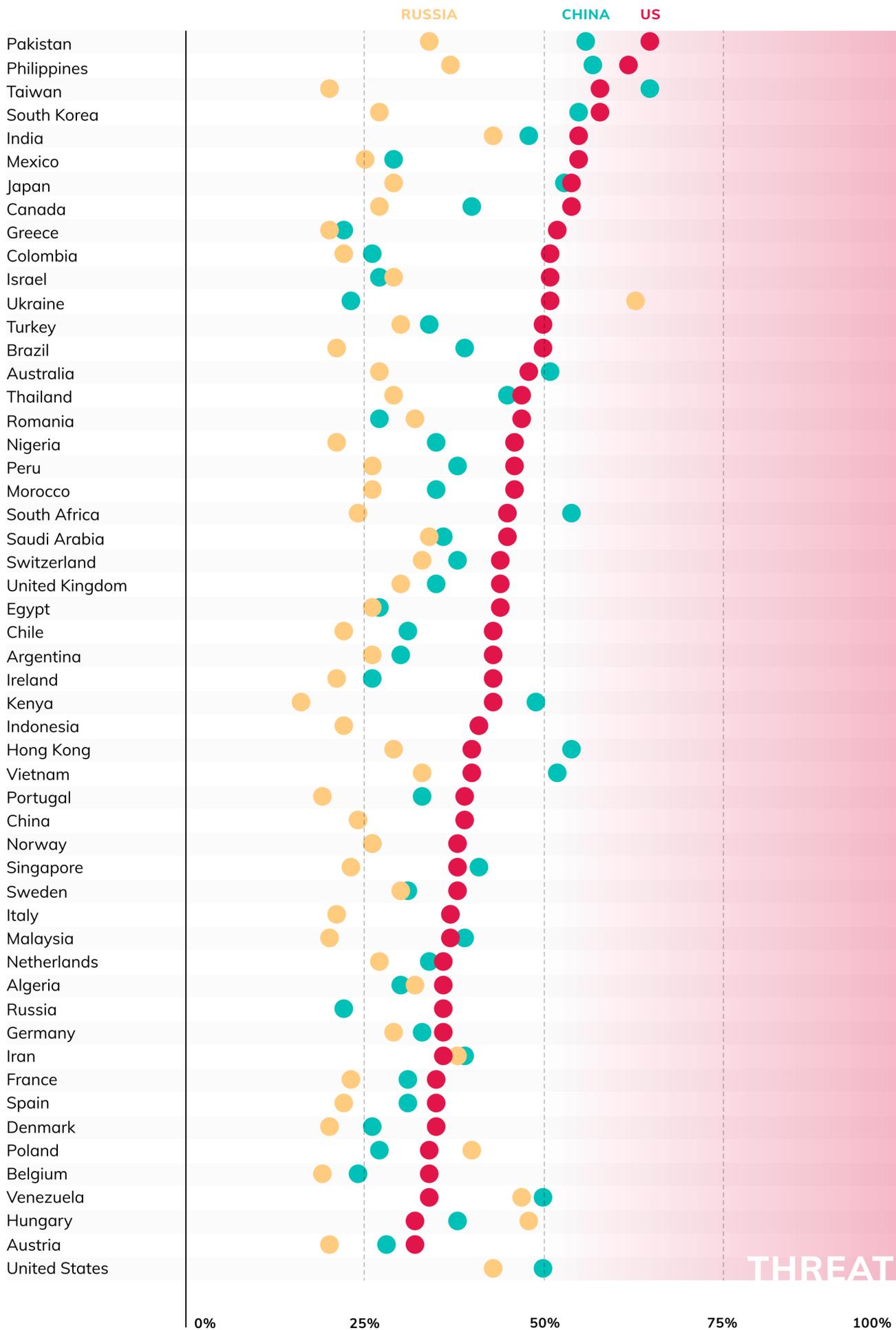
\*Likely includes “Very likely” and “Somewhat likely”

# Superpower Influence

Nearly half (44%) of people around the world are concerned that the US threatens democracy in their country. Fear of Chinese influence is 38%, and fear of Russian influence is lowest at 28%.

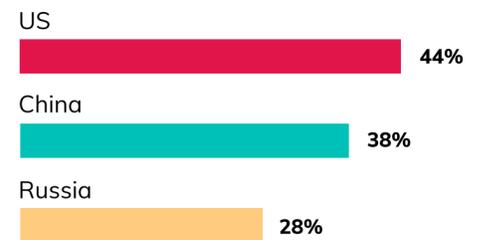
## The US is viewed as a bigger threat to democracy than either China or Russia

% agree\* that the influence of the US / China / Russia threatens democracy in their country



**Far more people believe that their democracy is threatened by the US than either China or Russia.**

Out of the 53 countries surveyed, 46 think the US is a bigger threat than Russia, and 36 countries think the US is a bigger threat than either China or Russia.



"Democracy in my country is threatened by the influence of the US / Russia / China"  
Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

\*Agree includes "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

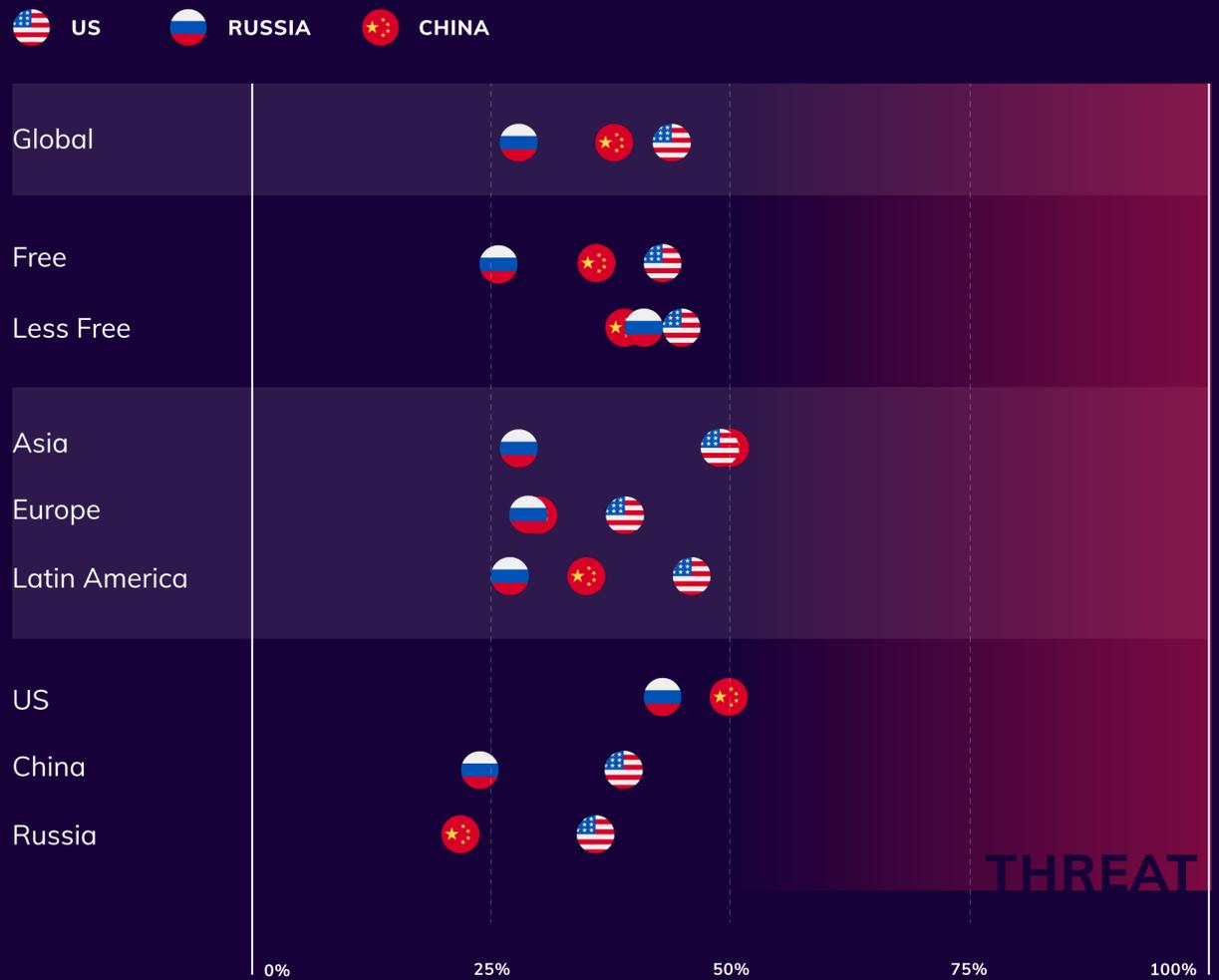
# Superpower Influence - Global

In nearly all major regions of the world, including Europe and Latin America, and in both more democratic countries and in less democratic countries, more people say that the US is a threat to democracy than either Russia and China.

## KEY FINDINGS

### ► The US is considered the bigger threat to democracy in almost all major regions of the world

% agree\* that the influence of the US / China threatens democracy in their country



## Top 5 countries most threatened by:



"Democracy in my country is threatened by the influence of the US / Russia / China"  
 Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

\*Agree includes "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

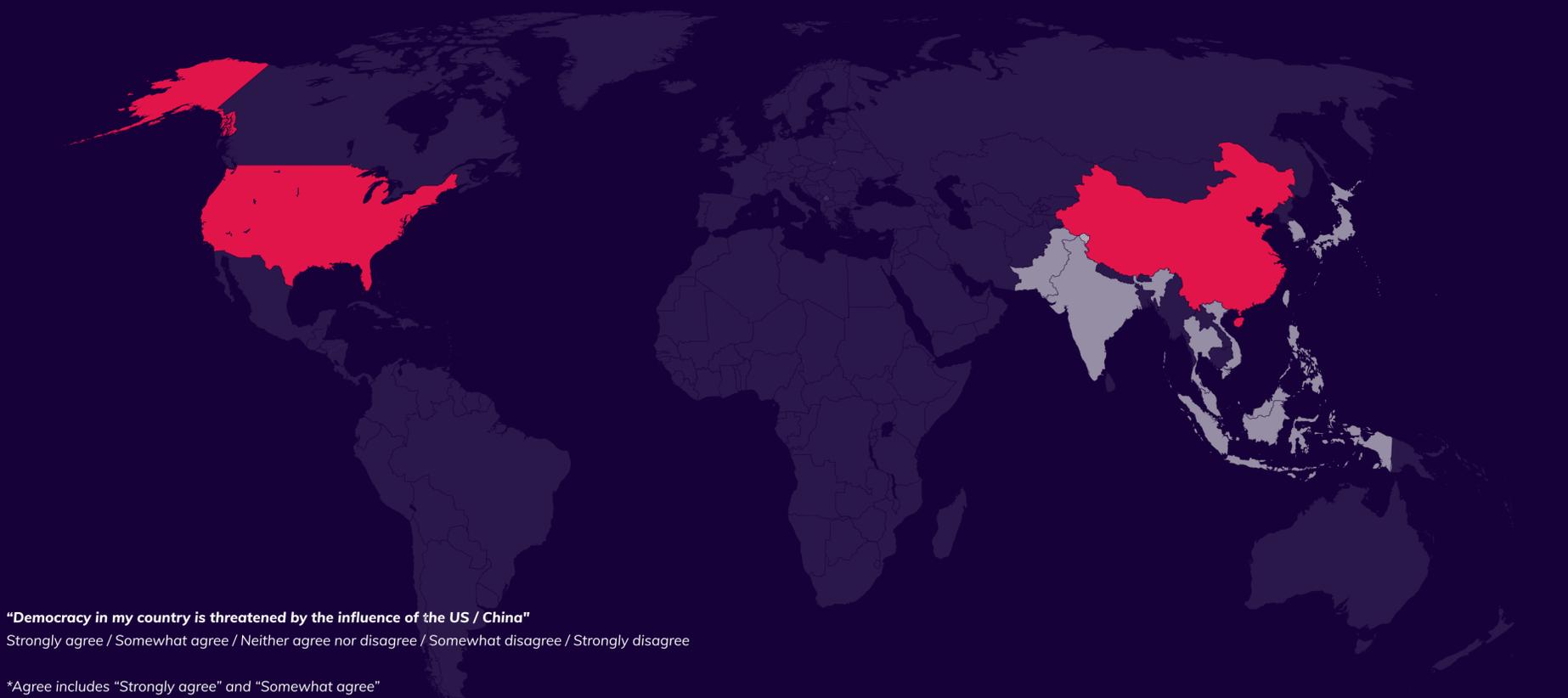
# Superpower Influence - Asia

In many Asian countries currently caught in the US-China power struggle, the majority of people say that both the US and China are a threat to democracy in their country.

## KEY FINDINGS

### ► Both the US and China are perceived as threats to democracy by most people in Asia

% agree that the influence of the US / China threatens democracy in their country



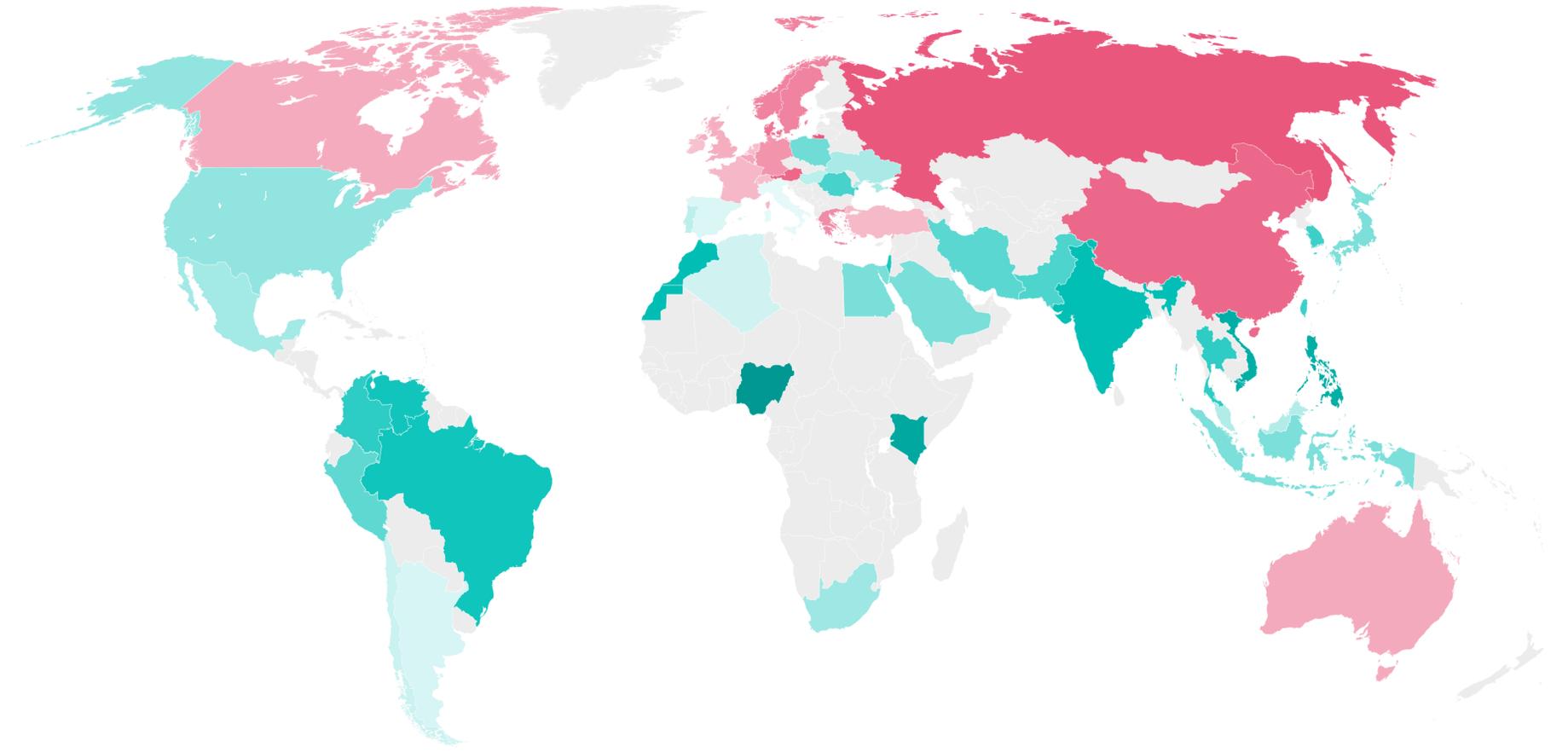
"Democracy in my country is threatened by the influence of the US / China"  
 Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree  
 \*Agree includes "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

# US Impact On Democracy

When it comes to the US's global role in world affairs, the world is split about the US's impact on global democracy: while more countries say the US has a positive than negative impact on democracy (49% positive vs. 35% negative), there is a strong regional divide, with Europe as particularly negative (38% positive vs. 45% negative).

## World is split about the US's impact on democracy worldwide

net opinion\* of the US's influence on democracy worldwide



Overall, do you think the United States has a positive or negative impact on democracy around the world?

Very positive / Somewhat positive / Somewhat negative / Very negative / No impact / Don't know

\*Net opinion is calculated as: % positive - % negative.



### KEY FINDINGS

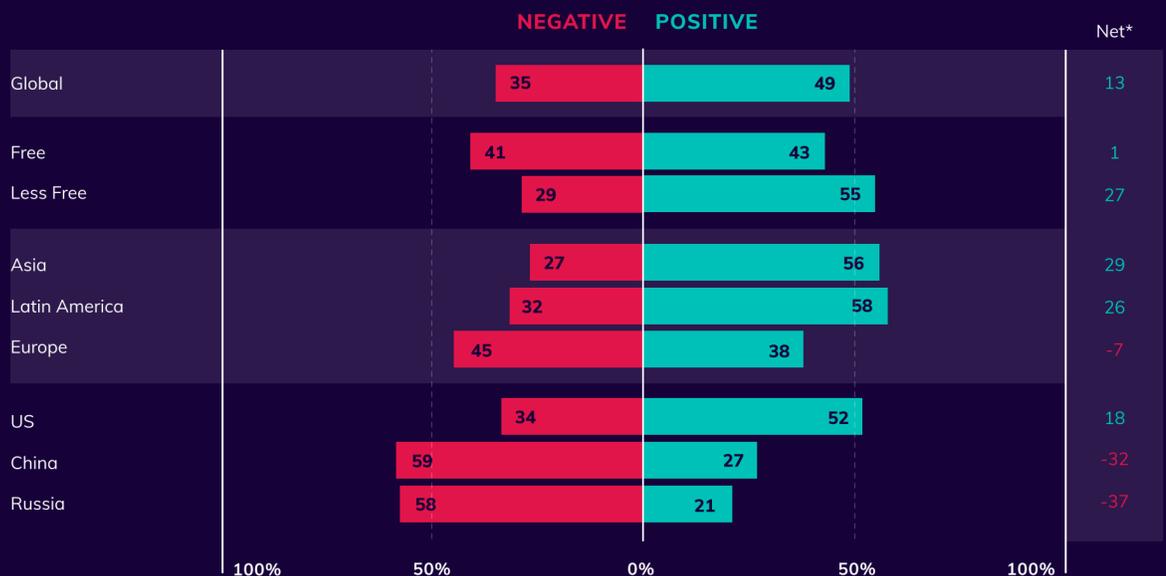
- ▶ **People in Asia and Latin America have a more positive view of the US's role in world affairs than people in Europe.**

The countries that are overwhelmingly negative about the US's influence are Russia (net opinion of -37) and China (-32), followed by European democracies, of which Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway are the most critical.



US

\*Results may vary due to rounding

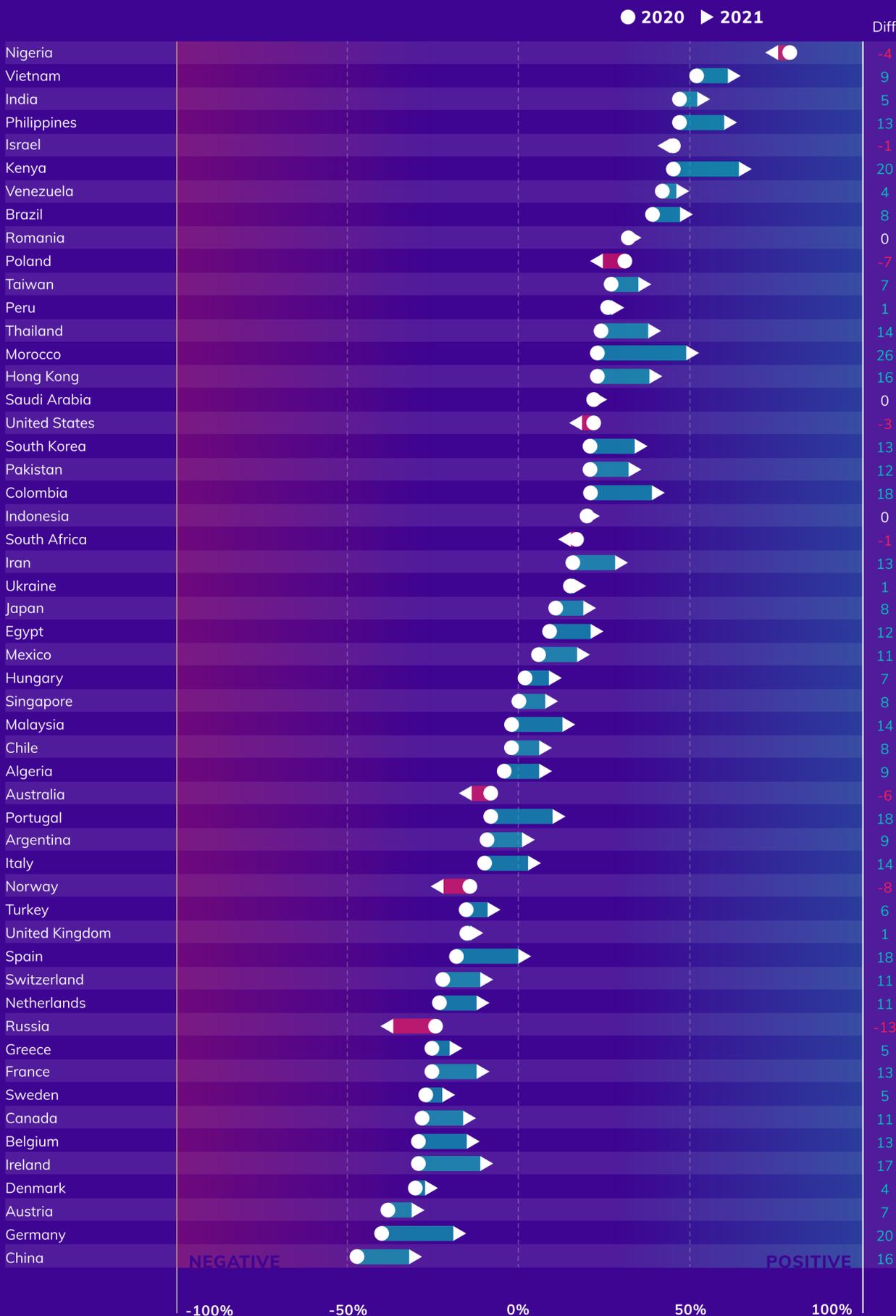


# The Biden Effect: global attitudes towards the US's role in world affairs take a positive turn in 2021

The perception of the US's global influence on democracy has increased significantly around the world since the Spring of 2020, from a net opinion of +6 to a net opinion of +14. This increase is particularly high in Germany (+20) and China (+16).

## Perception of the US's global influence takes a positive turn in 2021

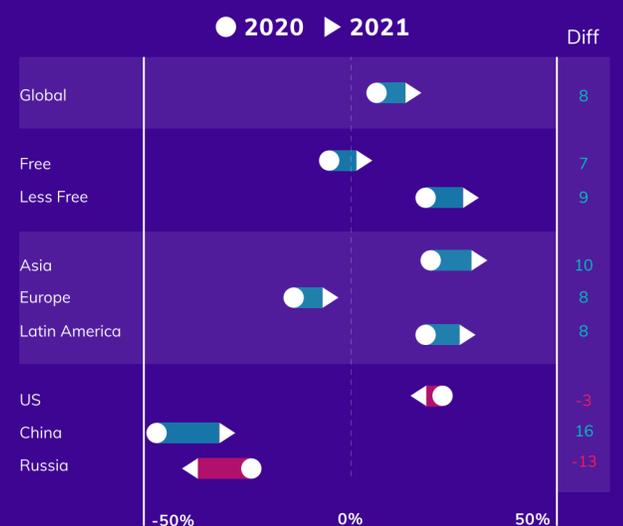
net opinion\* of the US's global influence on democracy



### Russians become more critical

Attitudes towards the US's impact on global democracy take a negative turn in only a few countries: Russia (-13), Norway (-8), Poland (-7), and Australia (-3).

Opinion in the US itself has also decreased slightly, though not significantly (-3).



Overall, do you think the United States has a positive or negative impact on democracy around the world?  
 Very positive / Somewhat positive / Somewhat negative / Very negative / No impact / Don't know

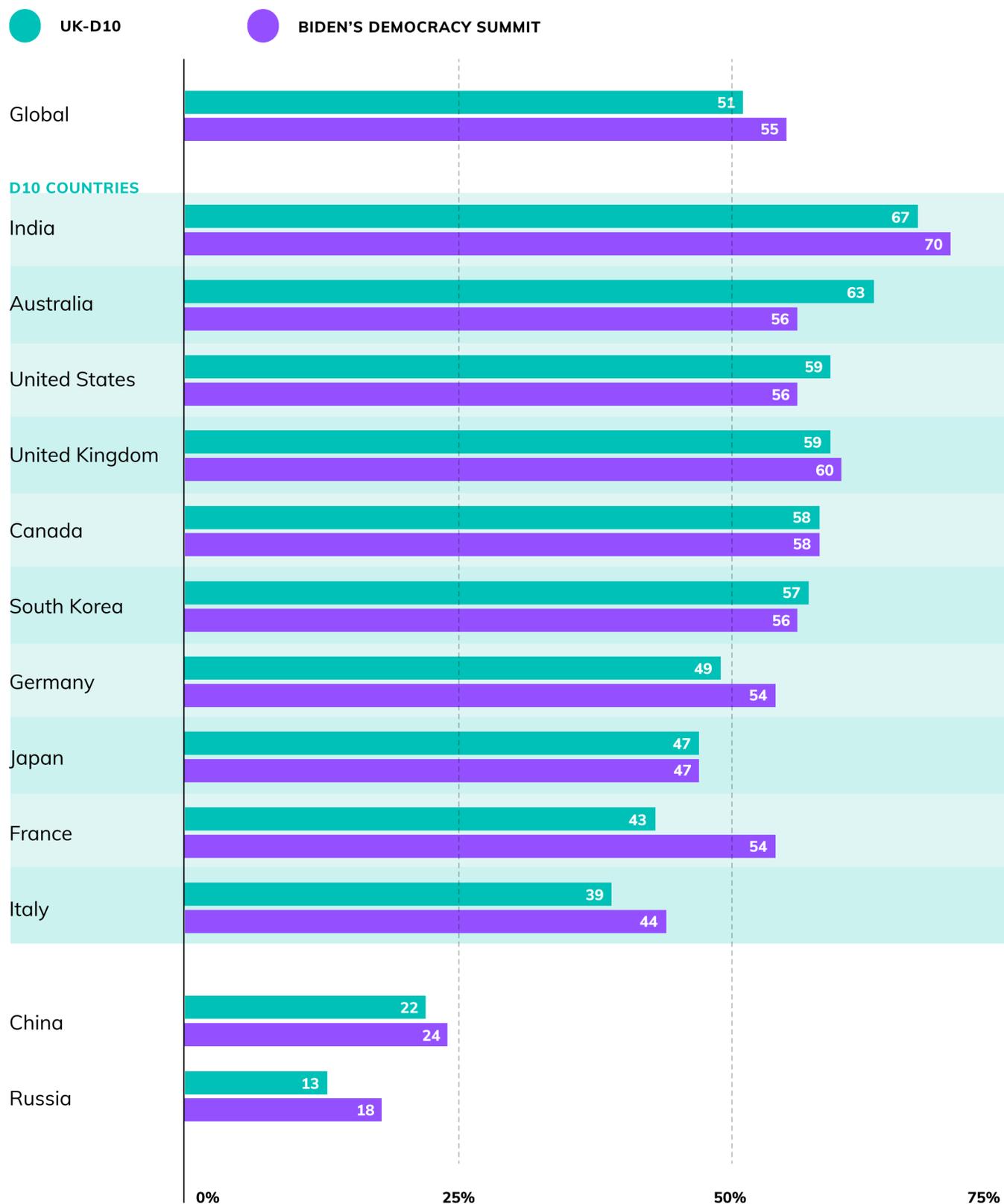
Net opinion is calculated for each year as: % positive - % negative.

# Alliance of Democracies

About half the world supports the "Alliance of Democracies" initiatives proposed by the UK and President Biden, which both have the stated intention to "stand up to countries considered undemocratic, such as China and Russia."

## About half the global population supports both "Alliance of Democracies" initiatives proposed by the UK and Biden

% say the UK-D10 initiative / Biden's Democracy Summit is a good\* idea



Out of the ten D10 countries, the support for both initiatives is highest in India and lowest in Italy. People from the three EU members of the D10 (Italy, France and Germany) are slightly more likely to support the initiative from Biden than the UK.

The two countries that show the least support globally are Russia and China, where only ~23% and ~15% say the initiatives from Biden and the UK are a good idea.

Joe Biden, the President of the United States, plans to organize a conference for democratic countries. One purpose of this group is to stand up to countries considered undemocratic such as China and Russia.

Do you think this is a good or bad idea?

Very good / Somewhat good / Neither good nor bad / Somewhat bad / Very bad / Don't know

\*Good includes both "Very good" and "Somewhat good"

The United Kingdom plans to form a group of democratic countries that includes the UK, the US, India, Japan, France, Germany, Canada, Italy, South Korea and Australia. One purpose of this group is to stand up to countries considered undemocratic, such as China and Russia.

Do you think this is a good or bad idea?

Very good / Somewhat good / Neither good nor bad / Somewhat bad / Very bad / Don't know

# Democracy during COVID

The results of this year's Democracy Perception Index (DPI) offer an unprecedented comparison of attitudes around the world during the COVID pandemic. If COVID is a test for democracies, then the findings in this chapter show that democracies are failing in the eyes of their citizens.

P. 35 **Government Response**

P. 38 **COVID Restrictions**

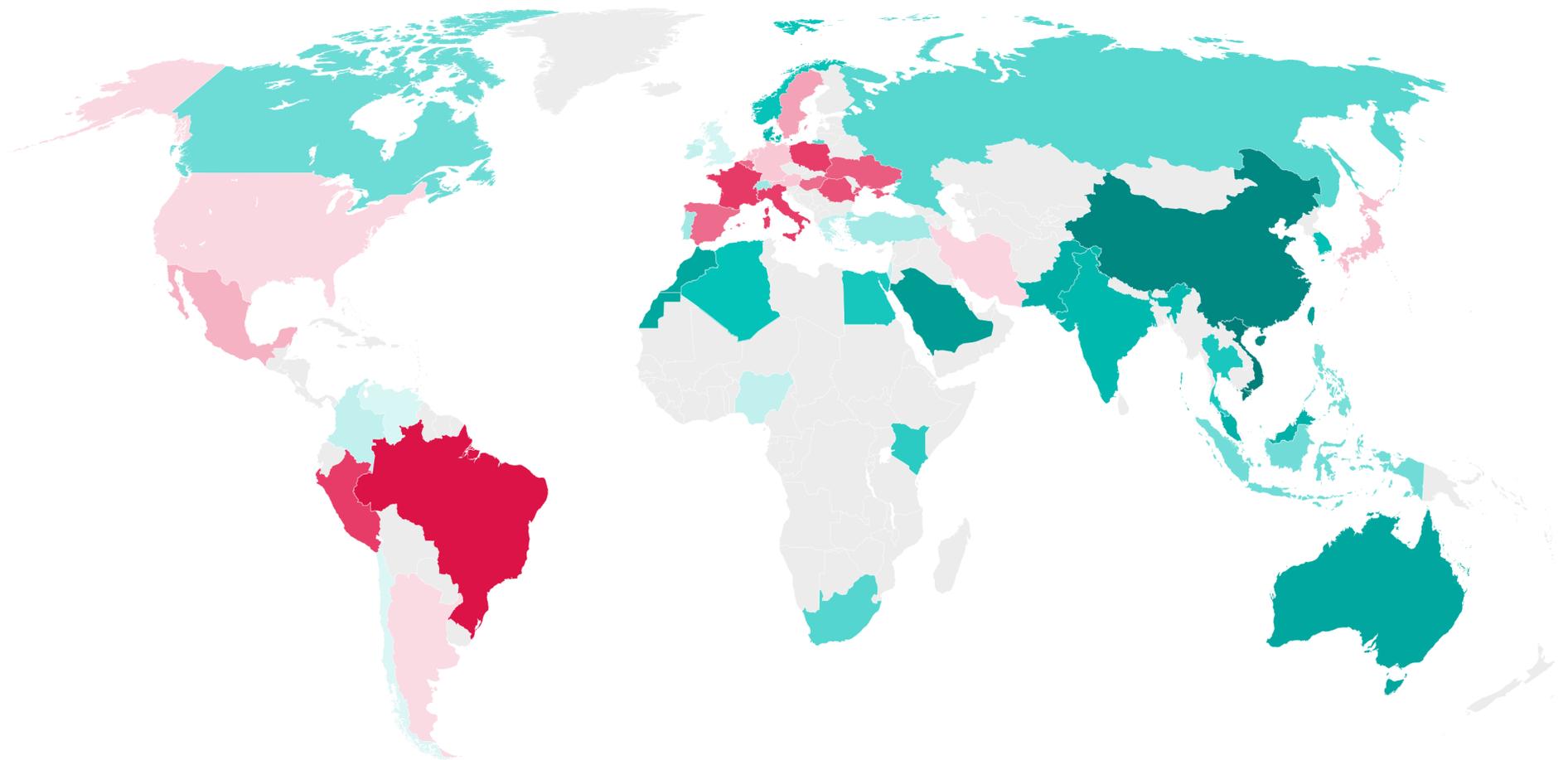


# Government Response

People around the world are sharply divided about how well their country is responding to the COVID crisis. Across all 53 countries surveyed, an average of 58% say that their country is responding well, ranging from 96% in Vietnam to 19% in Brazil.

## COVID: Europe and Latin America are failing in the eyes of their citizens

% say that their country is responding well\* to the COVID 19 crisis



How well do you think your country is responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis?

Very well / Somewhat well / Somewhat poorly / Very poorly / Don't know

\*Well includes "Very well" and "Somewhat well"



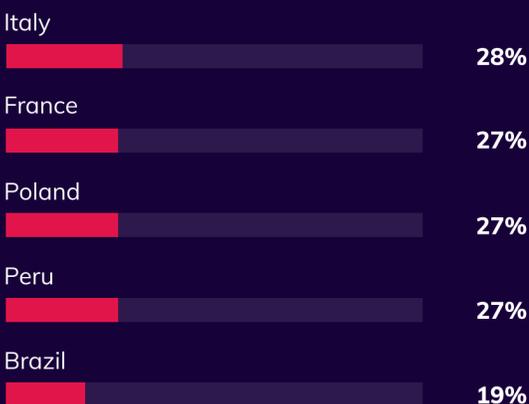
### KEY FINDINGS

Average satisfaction in Asia (75%) is significantly higher than in Europe (45%) and Latin America (42%). People living in democracies are also much less satisfied with their country's response, with only 51% saying their country is responding well.

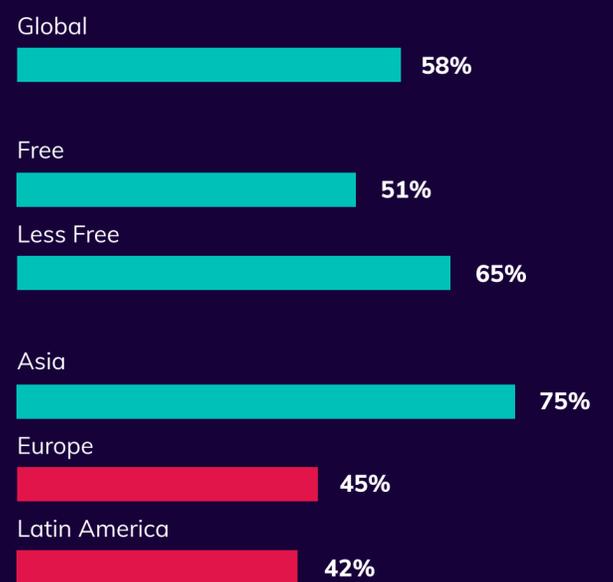
#### Most satisfied



#### Least satisfied



### People in Asia are most satisfied with their country's response

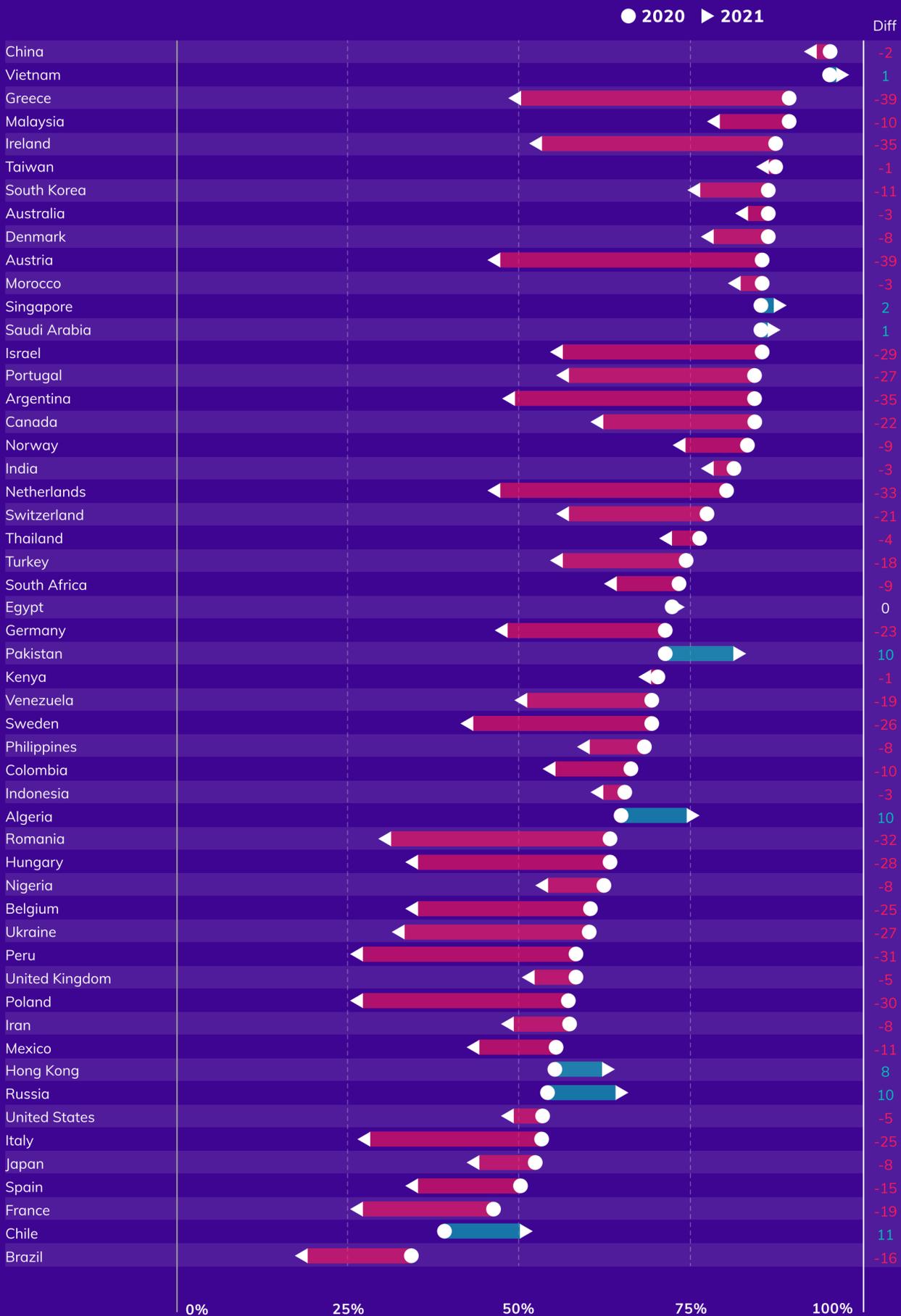


# People are losing faith in their country's handling of COVID - especially in democracies

In the Spring of 2020, 70% of people around the world said their country was responding well to the pandemic. One year later, satisfaction has dropped down 12 points to 58% globally. This downturn is even more severe in more democratic countries (-19), Latin America (-16), and Europe (-24).

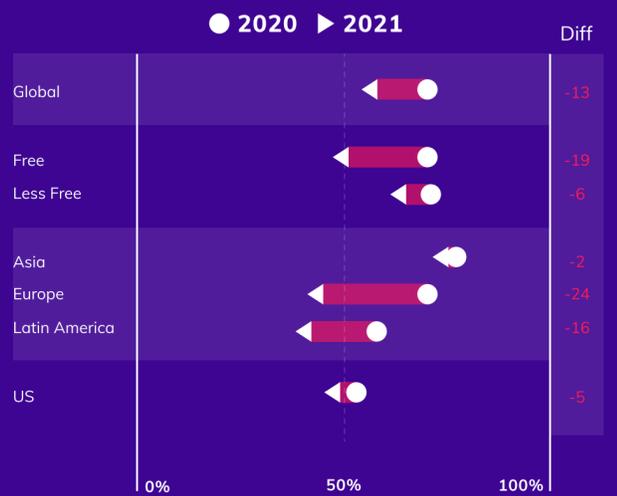
## People are increasingly dissatisfied with their country's COVID response

% say their country is responding well to the COVID crisis in 2020 and 2021



### Satisfaction drops sharply in Europe and Latin America

While a majority of people in Europe (70%) and Latin America (58%) were satisfied with their country's response to COVID during the Spring of 2020, satisfaction has now dropped significantly in both regions: down to 45% in Europe and 42% in Latin America. On the other hand, public opinion in most Asian countries has remained consistently positive over the past year, with the vast majority of people just as satisfied in 2021 as in 2020 (75% vs. 77%).



### Dissatisfaction grows in democracies

Whereas in the Spring of 2020 people in both more democratic and less democratic countries were equally satisfied with their government's response to COVID (around 70%), satisfaction levels have now dropped all the way down to 51% in "free" democracies, significantly more than in less democratic countries (down to 65%).

How well do you think your country is responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis?  
Very well / Somewhat well / Somewhat poorly / Very poorly / Don't know

\*Well includes "Very well" and "Somewhat well"

# Public opinion reflects COVID realities

## KEY FINDINGS

### ▶ Democracies struggle to deal with COVID - in reality, and in the eyes of their citizens

The public's perception of their government's response to COVID largely reflects the reality of the crisis: people are most satisfied with their government's handling of the crisis in countries that have seen the fewest deaths per capita.

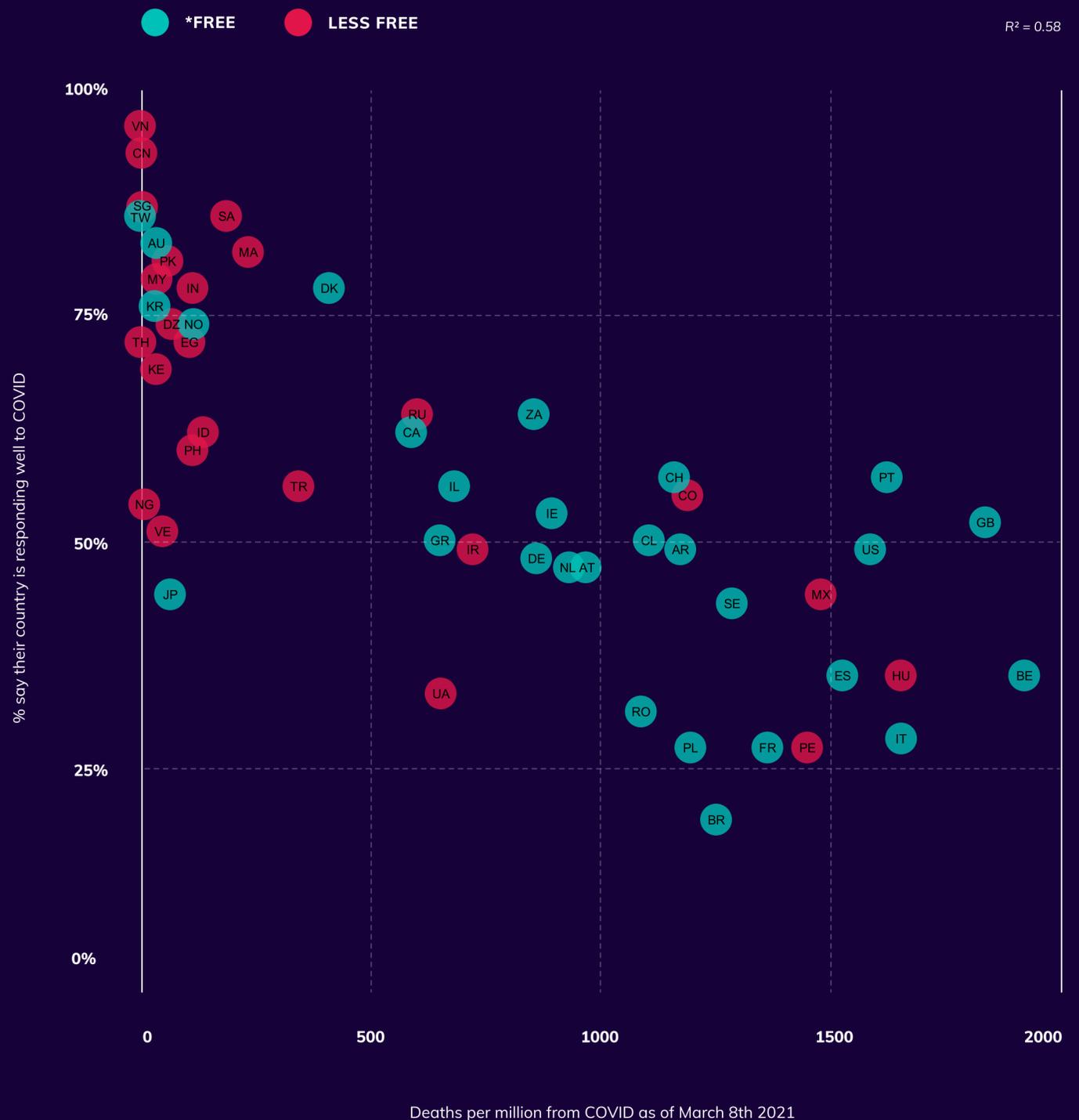
The results paint a grim picture for democracies: COVID deaths per capita are higher and public satisfaction levels are lower in "free" democracies.

China and Vietnam have some of the highest levels of public satisfaction and lowest recorded deaths per capita, with Belgium on the other side of both spectrums.

## \*METHODOLOGY

"Free" includes more democratic countries, based on Freedom House's classification of "Free"

"Less Free" includes less democratic and non-democratic countries, based on Freedom House's classifications of "Partially Free" and "Not Free"



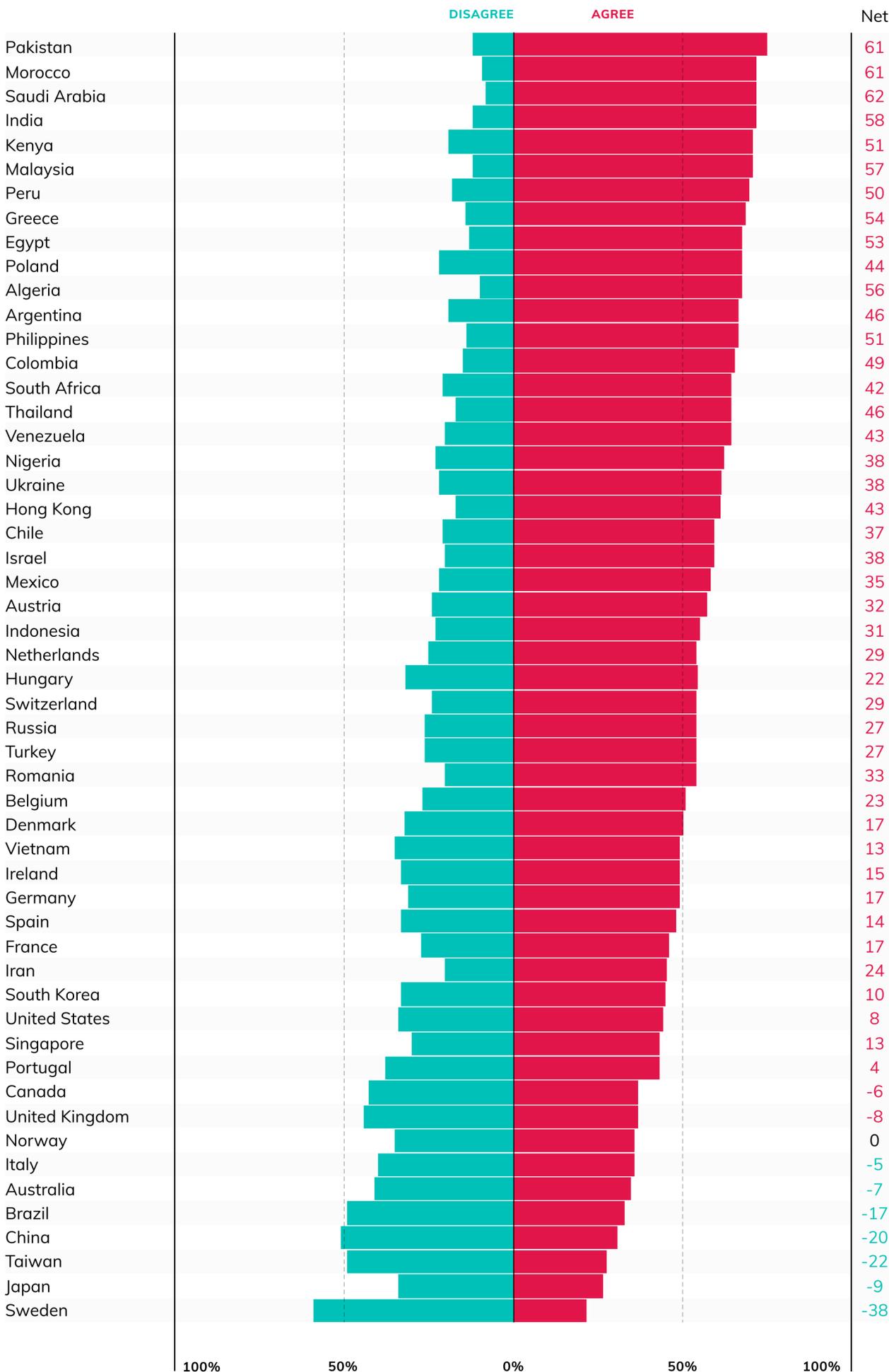
How well do you think your country is responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis?  
Very well / Somewhat well / Somewhat poorly / Very poorly / Don't know

# COVID Restrictions

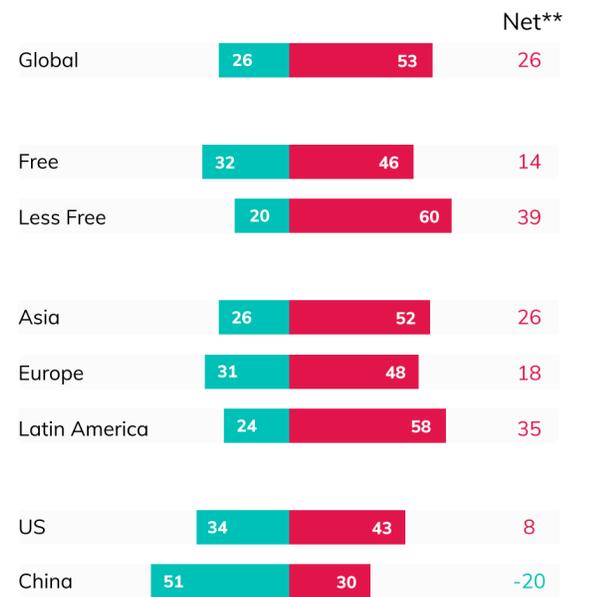
Slightly more than half of the people around the world (53%) say their government has done too much to limit basic freedoms during the COVID crisis. While this concern is higher in less democratic countries (60%), it is still as high as 46% in “free” democracies.

## Majority of people say their country has done too much to limit freedoms during COVID

% agree\* that their government has done too much to limit people's freedoms during COVID



### 46% of people in democratic countries say their freedoms have been restricted too much



\*\*Results may vary due to rounding

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

“My government has done too much to limit people's freedoms during the coronavirus crisis”

Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

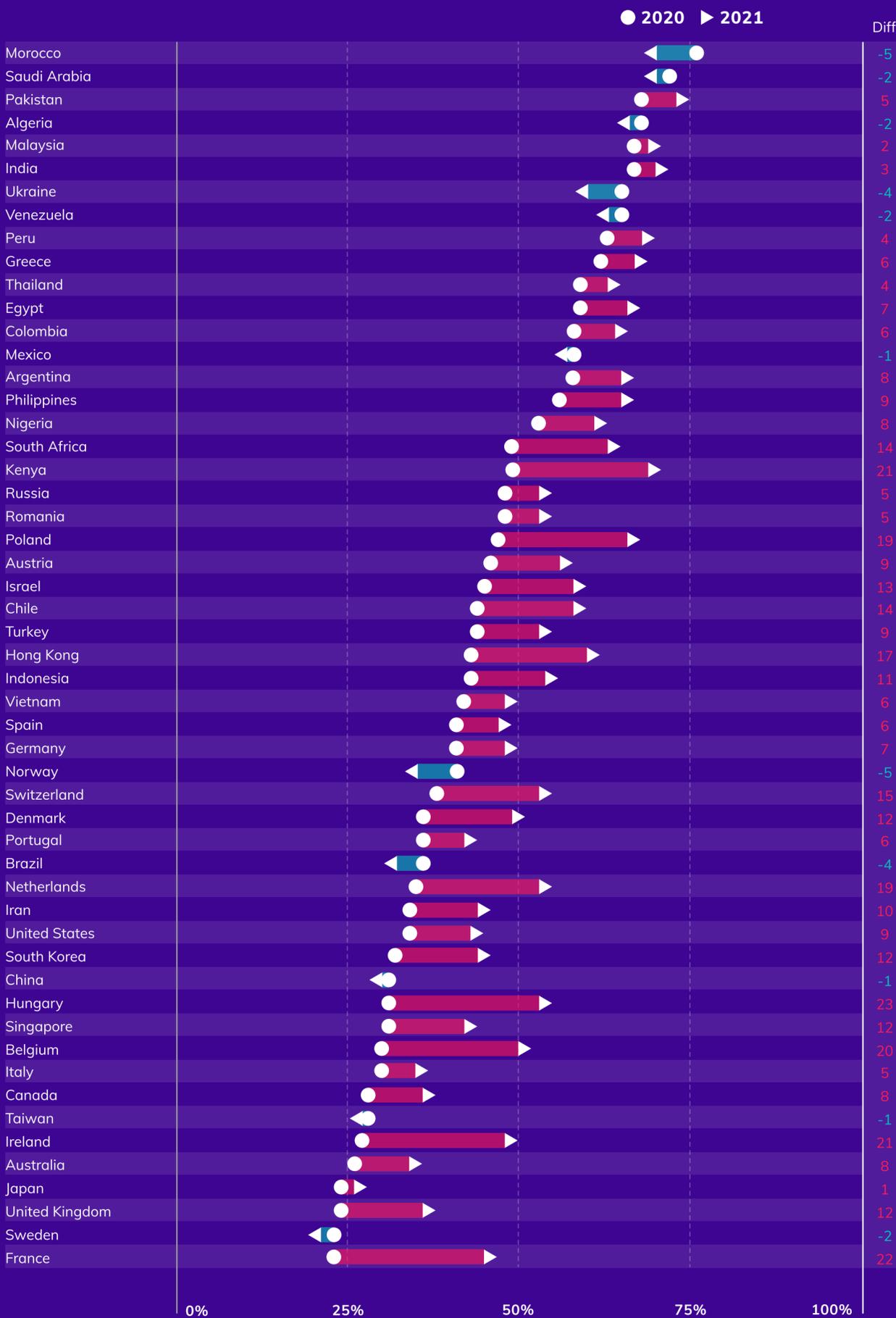
\*Agree includes “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”

# People are increasingly worried about basic freedoms during COVID

The perception that governments have done too much to limit freedoms during COVID has grown over the past year in almost all countries: from a global average of 45% in the Spring of 2020 to 53% in the Spring of 2021.

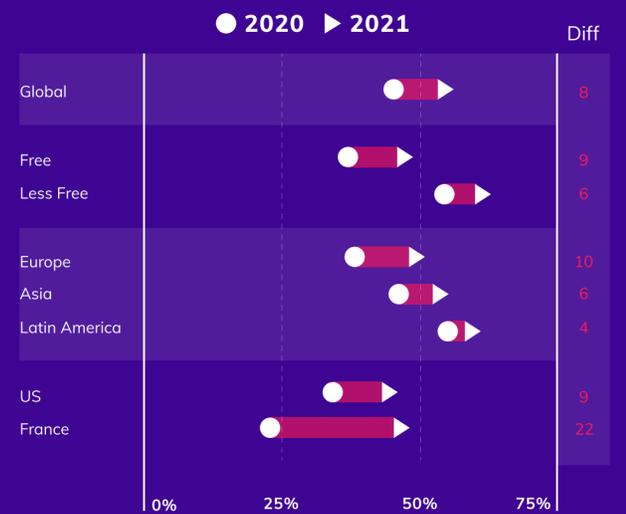
## Concern grows that governments are violating basic freedoms during COVID

% agree\* that their government has done too much to limit people's freedoms during COVID

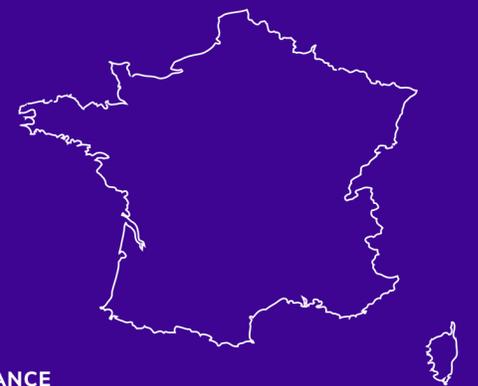


### Concern with COVID restrictions increases most in Europe

► This sentiment has grown most significantly in European countries (+10), led by Hungary (+23), France (+22) and Ireland (+21).



► In the Spring of 2020, France had the lowest level of concern with COVID restrictions (23%). Over the past year, France has seen one of the largest increases in concern, nearly doubling to half the French population (45%).



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
 "My government has done too much to limit people's freedoms during the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis"  
 Strongly agree / Somewhat agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat disagree / Strongly disagree

\*Agree includes "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

# Methodology

This report presents an overview of a study conducted by Latana and the Alliance of Democracies in the Spring of 2021, between February 24th and April 14th. The sample of n=53,194 online-connected respondents was drawn across 53 countries, with an average sample size of around 1,000 respondents per country. Nationally representative results were calculated based on the official distribution of age, gender, and education for each country's population, sourced from the most recent and available data from Barro Lee & UNStat, and census.gov. The average margin of error across all countries sampled is (+/-) 3.2 percentage points.

Here are the full summary tables of the results used in this report: [\(DPI 2021 - Topline Results\)](#)

## Data Collection

Latana's surveys are conducted online through internet-connected devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and computers. Latana follows an open recruitment approach that leverages the reach of over 40,000 third-party apps and mobile websites. To ensure coverage across different demographic groups and geographical regions, Latana targets a highly diverse set of apps and websites – from news to shopping, to sports and games. As a result, Latana generates up to 21 million answers every month from respondents living in as many as 100 different countries.

## Data Privacy and Anonymity

Once a user opts-in to complete a survey, Latana informs the respondent about the nature of the questionnaire and explains that all answers – including the generic demographics that are part of the targeting and quality assurance process – are recorded anonymously. To ensure respondent privacy and a high quality of response data, Latana does not collect any personally identifiable information (PII) on users. In contrast to surveys conducted face-to-face or by telephone, the anonymity offered with Latana's methodology may help reduce response bias, interviewer bias, and respondent self-censorship.

For more information, please contact:

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Senior Researcher at Latana

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# Latana

**Our vision is to lead the development of a new generation of research technologies that enable us to better understand the needs, desires, and preferences of people around the world.**

Latana is an AI-Powered brand tracking solution that leverages key insights to help companies track their brand and campaign performance. An international market leader in brand tracking services, Latana also uses its technology to understand the underlying forces behind the opinions of people worldwide.

We are proud to pioneer advanced machine learning technology that has access to billions of consumers around the globe. This enables us to quickly understand consumer perception, and thus predict consumer behavior - the cornerstone of brand value.

We have devised Brand Analytics, a new insights category nobody has built before. This innovative data solution can be utilized by all companies, large or small, to measure brand health and make better marketing decisions.



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# The Alliance of Democracies Foundation

**Alliance of Democracies vision is to become the world's leading “megaphone” for the cause of democracy.**

## The Alliance of Democracies Foundation

The Alliance of Democracies Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 2017 by Anders Fogh Rasmussen. The Foundation is dedicated to the advancement of democracy and free markets across the globe and runs three core programmes: the Copenhagen Democracy Summit, the Expeditionary Economics Program and the Campaign for Democracy.

## The Copenhagen Democracy Summit

The Copenhagen Democracy Summit is an annual conference bringing together political and business leaders, including current and former heads of government, from the world's democracies. The goal of the Summit is to be the top international forum for analysis on the security and economic challenges facing the democratic world as well as a forum for analysis on the interplay between technology and democratic norms.



Alliance of Democracies



Copenhagen Democracy Summit

## Contact Us

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[www.allianceofdemocracies.org](http://www.allianceofdemocracies.org)



# Questionnaire

Q1

**In your opinion, how important is it for your country to be a democracy?**

Slider: 0 - not at all important; 10 - very important

Q2

**Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?**

I think there is not enough democracy in my country

I think there is the right amount of democracy in my country

I think there is too much democracy in my country

Q3

**Think about your country today. How democratic do you think it is?**

Slider: 0 - not at all democratic; 10 - very democratic

Q4

**Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? "My government usually acts in the interest of..."**

... most people in my country

... a small group of people in my country

Q5

**Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? "Business leaders and CEOs usually act in the interest of..."**

... most people in my country

... a small group of people in my country

Q6

**Overall, do you think that social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) have a positive or negative impact on democracy in your country?**

Very positive

Somewhat positive

Somewhat negative

Very negative

No impact

Don't know

[In Chinese questionnaire "Facebook, Twitter" are replaced with "Qzone, WeChat"]

Q7

**In general, do you think there should be more or less regulation on content that people share on social media platforms?**

More regulation

Neither more nor less

Less regulation

Don't know

Q8

**Think about the next major elections in your country. How likely do you think that interference from foreign powers will influence the results of the election?**

Very likely

Somewhat likely

Somewhat unlikely

Very unlikely

Don't know

Q9

**Overall, do you think the United States has a positive or negative impact on democracy around the world?**

Very positive

Somewhat positive

Somewhat negative

Very negative

No impact

Don't know

Q10

**# The United Kingdom plans to form a group of democratic countries that includes the UK, the US, India, Japan, France, Germany, Canada, Italy, South Korea, and Australia.**

**One purpose of this group is to stand up to countries considered undemocratic, such as China and Russia. Do you think this is a good or bad idea?**

Very good

Somewhat good

Neither good nor bad

Somewhat bad

Very bad

Don't know

[shown randomly to one=half of respondents in each country]

Q11

**# Joe Biden, the President of the United States, plans to organize a conference for democratic countries.**

**One purpose of this group is to stand up to countries considered undemocratic such as China and Russia. Do you think this is a good or bad idea?**

Very good

Somewhat good

Neither good nor bad

Somewhat bad

Very bad

Don't know

[shown randomly to the other half of respondents in each country]

# Questionnaire

Q12

**How well do you think your country is responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis?**

- Very well
- Somewhat well
- Somewhat poorly
- Very poorly
- Don't know

Q13

**Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
“My government has done too much to limit people’s freedoms during the coronavirus crisis”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

**# Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
# “Democracy in my country is threatened by ...”**

Q14

**“... the influence of China”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

[Question excluded in Chinese questionnaire]

Q15

**“... the influence of Russia”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

[Question excluded in Russian questionnaire]

Q16

**“... the influence of the United States”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

[Question excluded in US questionnaire]

Q17

**“... economic inequality”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q18

**“... the influence of Big Tech companies (Google, Amazon, Apple, Facebook)”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

[In Chinese questionnaire company names are replaced with “Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu, Meituan”]

Q19

**“... limitations on free speech”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q20

**“... election interference from foreign powers”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q21

**“... unfair elections and/or election fraud”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree