

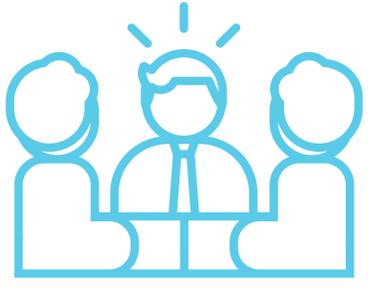
Introduction

The [Democratic Space Barometer](#) provides democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) practitioners and policy-makers with analysis they can use to inform their global and regional strategies and programming approaches. For example, these forecasts can help:

- Better anticipate and respond to opening or closing democratic space.
- Inform strategic and contingency planning processes.
- Identify unexpected threats or emerging opportunities.

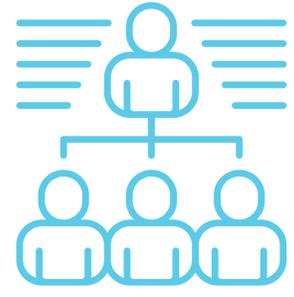
The Democratic Space Barometer estimates the probability that a country will experience at least one **opening** event (shift towards more democratic governance) or at least one **closing** event (shift towards more autocratic governance) within a two-year window. These probabilities are referred to as "forecasts." The barometer estimates the probability of opening and closing events across six democratic spaces:

What is an "event"?
An opening or closing event refers to a statistical event - a substantial movement in one direction or the other in the index that represents a thematic space. Importantly, when we say event, we are not referring to a specific political or historical event, like a protest or an episode of repression. However, these specific "real-world" events, or accumulations of them, may drive movement on an index, resulting in a statistical "event."



Associational

The degree of civil society autonomy from the state, and citizens' ability to freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals, as measured by the V-Dem "[Core Civil Society Index](#)."



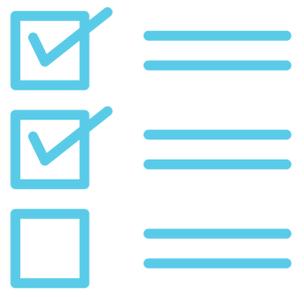
Governing

The degree to which the legislative and judicial branches can hold the executive branch accountable as well as legislative and judicial oversight over the bureaucracy and security services, as measured by the V-Dem "[Horizontal Accountability Index](#)."



Economic

The extent to which public sector employees grant favors in exchange for bribes (or other material inducements), and how often they steal, embezzle, or misappropriate public funds or other state resources for personal or family use, as measured by the V-Dem "[Public Corruption Index](#)."



Electoral

The ability of the population to hold their government accountable through elections and political parties, as measured by the V-Dem "[Vertical Accountability Index](#)."



Individual

The extent to which laws are transparent, rigorously enforced, public administration impartial, and the extent to which citizens enjoy access to justice, secure property rights, freedom from forced labor, freedom of movement, physical integrity rights, and freedom of religion, as measured by the V-Dem "[Equality Before the Law and Individual Liberty Index](#)."



Informational

The degree of media censorship, harassment of journalists, media bias, media self-censorship, whether the media is critical and pluralistic, as well as the freedom of discussion and academic and cultural expression, as measured by the V-Dem "[Freedom of Expression and Alternative Sources of Information Index](#)."

How to Understand the Forecasts:

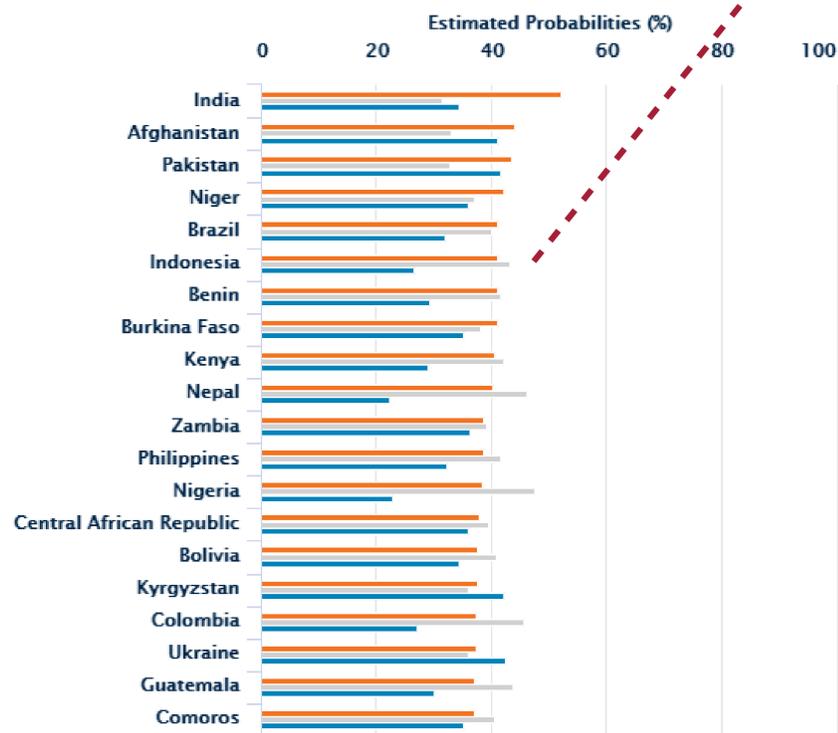
For each country, for all six spaces, the barometer reports three numbers:

- the probability of a **closing** event,
- the probability of an **opening** event,
- and the probability there will be no opening AND no closing event.*

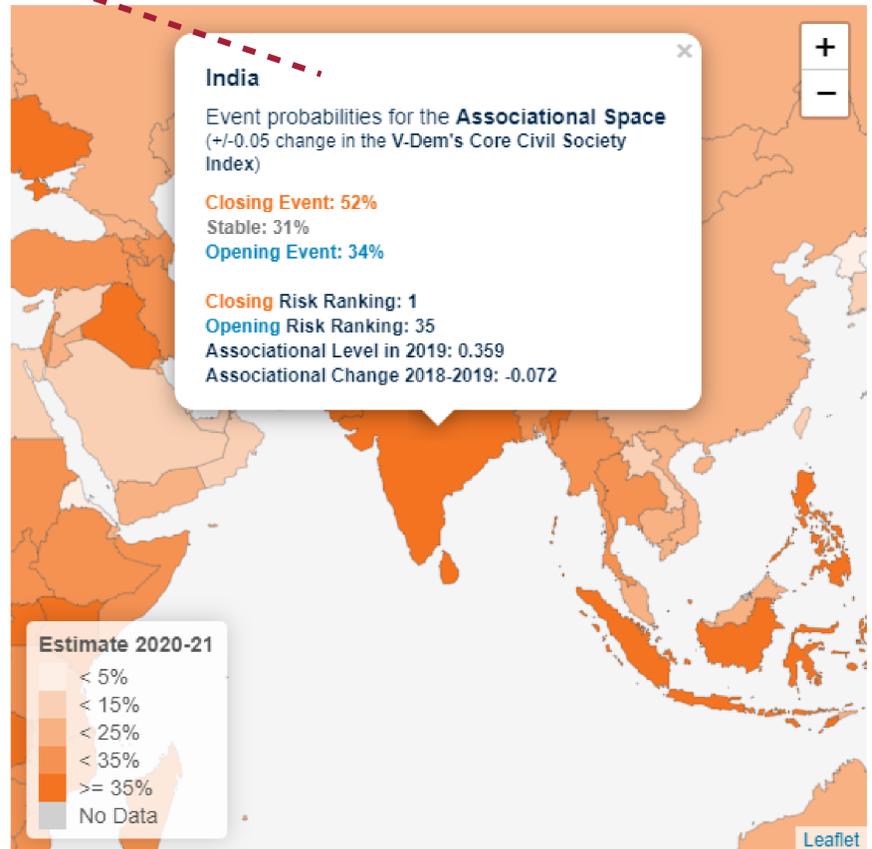
These three probabilities **do not sum to 100%**. The occurrence of a substantial opening event and a substantial closing event over a two-year span are not mutually exclusive events. Though relatively rare, a country can experience back-to-back opening and closing events within the same space within the two-year period.

These figures are visible in the screenshot of the Barometer below:

Top 20 Closing Event Estimates for the Associational Space
Global, 2020-2021



The bar chart shows all three probabilities for the top 20 countries ordered from highest to lowest according to the type of event and region. Click on a bar for more case-specific information.



The map focuses on type of event for the specified space. Additional information for each country is available by clicking on the map.

What are forecasts based on?

The main source for the barometer is the [Varieties of Democracy \(V-Dem\)](#) dataset. Each democratic space is represented by a specific V-dem index, and the predictions are generated by machine learning models that incorporate the V-Dem data and political and economic data from other external sources -- in all, over 450 variables for 169 countries going back to 1970.

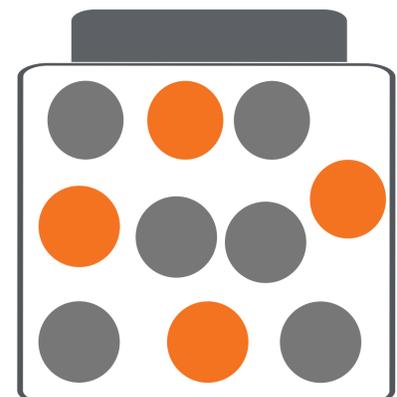
Interpreting Probability:

These forecasts produce probabilities, not certainties. A high probability does not necessarily mean an event (**opening** or **closing**) will occur. Similarly, a low probability does not necessarily mean that an event will not occur. As an example, let's examine this jar of ten marbles.

The jar contains four **orange marbles (40%)** and six gray marbles (60%). Although the probability of drawing a gray marble is higher, in repeated blind draws, we should still expect to pull out an **orange marble** sometimes.

Also, these probabilities are averages, not single events. If we were to draw a single marble from the jar hundreds or thousands of times (replacing it after each draw), we should EXPECT to draw gray marbles 60% of the time. But we cannot predict with much certainty whether any single draw will be an **orange** or gray marble.

If we apply this logic to the [Democratic Space Barometer](#), a country with a 40% chance of closing in the Associational Space, for example, may have better odds of experiencing a closing event compared to other countries, but in 60% of cases with similar characteristics and circumstances, a closing event may not occur.



These forecasts should be a supplement to, and not as a replacement for, practitioners' and policy-makers' deep expertise about these complex processes in specific contexts. **Decisions about resource allocation, strategy, program design, contingency planning, and especially operational security should not be made based on these forecasts alone.**

Exercise One: How to use the Barometer for Global or Regional Strategy

Global and regional comparisons can help practitioners make more informed decisions about the strategic planning, contingency planning, and operational risk. The Top 20 rankings chart (top left tile) and the global map (top right tile) indicate potential "hot spots" – countries with a high risk of **closing**, or a high opportunity for **opening**. Use these to quickly "scan the horizon" and identify countries that warrant further investigation.

The Democratic Space Barometer estimates the probability that a country will experience at least one **opening event** (shift towards more democratic governance) or at least one **closing event** (shift towards more autocratic governance) within a **two-year window (2020-2021)**. We estimate the probability of opening and closing events across **six spaces of democratic governance**: *Associational, Economic, Electoral, Governing, Individual, and Informational*.

2020-2021 Forecasts

Use the options below to compare the 2020-2021 estimates for opening and closing events for specific spaces in different regions and countries.

Type: Closing Event Opening Event

Space: Associational

Region: Global

Associational Space
The degree of CSO autonomy from the state and citizens' ability to freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals.

V-Dem Index
Core Civil Society (ranges from 0 to 1)

Opening/Closing event threshold
Year-to-year change of +/- 0.05

Top 20 Closing Event Estimates for the Associational Space
Global, 2020-2021

Estimated Probabilities (%)

Country	Estimated Probability (%)
India	~85
Afghanistan	~75
Pakistan	~70
Niger	~65
Brazil	~60
Indonesia	~55
Benin	~50
Burkina Faso	~45
Kenya	~40
Nepal	~35
Zambia	~30
Philippines	~25
Nigeria	~20
Central African Republic	~15
Bolivia	~10
Kyrgyzstan	~5
Colombia	~5
Ukraine	~5
Guatemala	~5
Comoros	~5

The bar chart shows all three probabilities for the top 20 countries ordered from highest to lowest according to the type of event and region. Click on a bar for more case-specific information.

The map focuses on type of event for the specified space. Additional information for each country is available by clicking on the map.

To use the forecasts in your global or regional strategic planning process, go through the following steps:

1. Filter the Barometer by any of the following categories:
 - **opening** or **closing** event
 - one of the six democratic spaces
 - regional or global map and ranking
2. Hover over the **blue**, **orange**, or gray bars in the ranking tile on the left, or click on a country in the map on the right to view details on probabilities of opening or closing.
3. Once you've selected the forecasts for your region and space, consider what the data mean for your global or regional strategy. Here are some prompts and discussion questions to help you incorporate the forecast data into your planning process.

General Comparisons for Strategic Planning:

- How do our current and upcoming programs compare to what the forecasts suggest?
- Are there high risk/opportunity countries where we need to further examine? Are there countries you are worried about but that are relatively low risk/opportunity according to the forecast?
- Conversely, are there countries where we have invested a lot of resources that are relatively low risk/opportunity over the next two years?

Contingency Planning and Adaptation:

- To what extent can we rapidly adapt or scale up activities to mitigate potential risks or take advantage of potential opportunities, based on the forecasts?
- How can we better position ourselves to respond to such threats or openings?

Patterns or Trends in the Forecasts:

- In your region, are there patterns of threats and opportunities across spaces? Do our regional strategy and programmatic approaches reflect or diverge from these expectations?
- What adaptations to our strategy or approaches should we consider or plan for, given these regional patterns or trends?
- Is there a space or sector that you are very worried (or optimistic) about but that does not seem to register in the forecast?

When forecasts and experts disagree:

For all of the prompts above, where the forecasts diverge from your expectations, further analysis and discussion can be particularly useful to better understand risk and opportunities. Here are some additional questions to help guide your analysis when the forecast shows something different from what you expect:

- What information is available to our team or country experts that did not factor into the forecasts?
- What other regional events or trends, especially recent events, may be affecting our analysis? For example, how might a crisis spill over into neighboring countries in ways that have not shown up in the data yet?
- Have any major events transpired since the data and forecasts were released that might cause us to revise the forecasts? Keep in mind the data and forecasts are released annually each Spring based on data collected the previous calendar year.

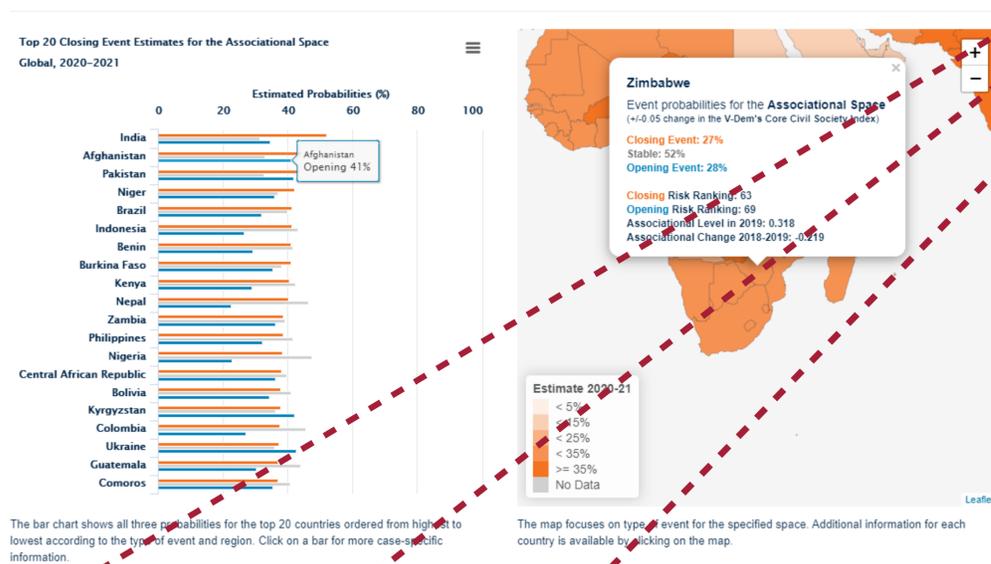
Exercise Two: How to use the Barometer for Country Context and Program Design:

The forecast dashboard also displays the probability of **opening** and **closing** events for six different democratic spaces in each country. These predictions can help inform our analysis when designing programs, developing risk analyses and contingency planning. The "Estimates by Space" chart (bottom left tile) displays these probabilities, while the "V-Dem Index" chart (bottom right tile) displays the historical trend line for the V-Dem indicators for each democratic space described above.

Associational Space
The degree of CSO autonomy from the state and citizens' ability to freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals.

V-Dem Index
Core Civil Society (ranges from 0 to 1)

Opening/Closing event threshold
Year-to-year change of +/- 0.05

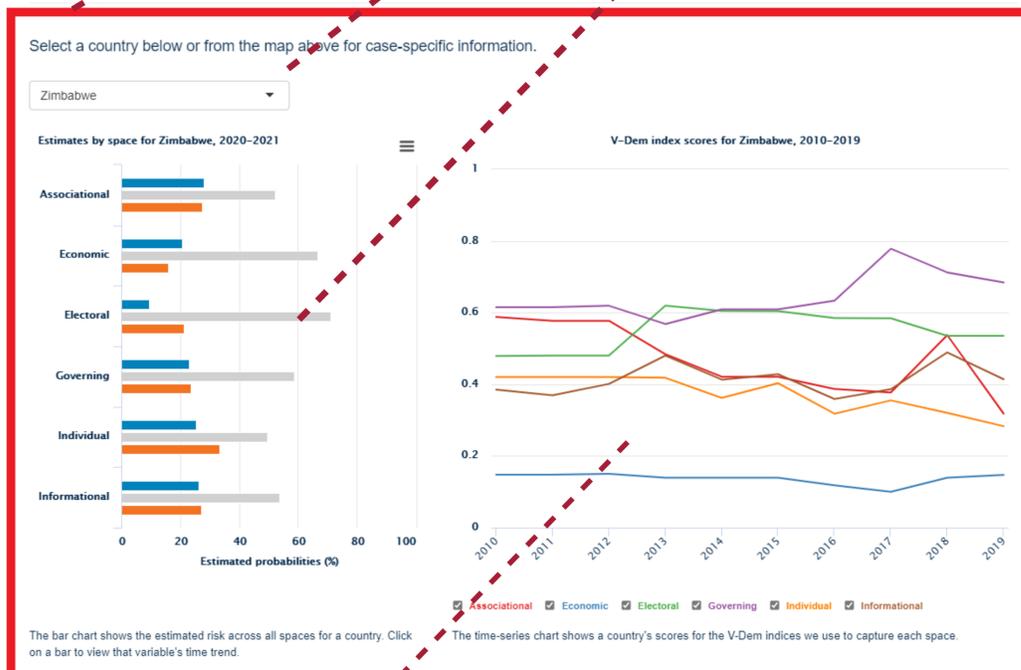


To use the forecasts in context analysis or program design, go through the following steps:

1. Scroll to the second set of graphs near the bottom of the page.
2. Select the country you are interested in from the drop-down menu (or double-click a country from the global map).
3. Hover over the bars to see the estimated probability of **opening**, **closing**, and stability in each democratic space.
4. Consider what this data means for the sequencing and types of activities planned.

Contingencies and Risk Management

- How do the forecasts compare to our program activities scheduled for the next 12-24 months?
- Based on the risks or opportunities suggested by the forecasts, how might we need to adapt or adjust these activities?
- For example, if the forecasts suggest a relatively high risk of **closing** in the civic/associational space, are CSO partners prepared to adapt programmatically and operationally to more a more restrictive environment? What can we do now to help them prepare for that?



Country-level Trends Analysis

- How do the forecasts compare to the historical trend lines for each indicator in the bottom right tile?
- Are there spaces in your country where the forecasts suggest a trend will continue? These patterns can suggest the forecasts are picking up consistent institutional fundamentals, like the gradual erosion of civic or media freedoms.
- Are there spaces in which the forecasts suggest a trend will plateau or reverse? In these cases, the forecast might be picking up short-term, dramatic event (such as an economic crisis, violent conflict, a coup, etc.). What events in the last calendar year (i.e. the time period on which the forecasts are based), might be driving these predictions?

Program Activity Design and Sequencing

- How do the probabilities of **opening** and **closing** events compare across spaces in our context? Should we consider reprioritizing or shifting the sequence of activities in any of our projects to account for the possible openings and closings?
- Are any forecasts or predictions from the barometer surprising to you? Again, forecasts often accord with the expectations of country experts, but discrepancies are opportunities for deeper reflection and analysis.
- Is there a space that you expected to be relatively consistent, but which the forecast shows high potential for a significant shift either toward **opening** or **closing**?
- Conversely, are there spaces in which you expect substantial opening or closing that the forecast does not identify? What are some possible explanations for this?