

The Great Reset: The Pandemic and Democratic Attitudes

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Cambridge Centre for the Future of Democracy

● Global Satisfaction with Democracy Dataset

- ▶ Built in partnership with the HUMAN Surveys Project
- ▶ Over 10 million respondents
- ▶ Over 5,000 country surveys
- ▶ 175 countries between 1973–2021
- ▶ Now also includes support for democracy and trust in government

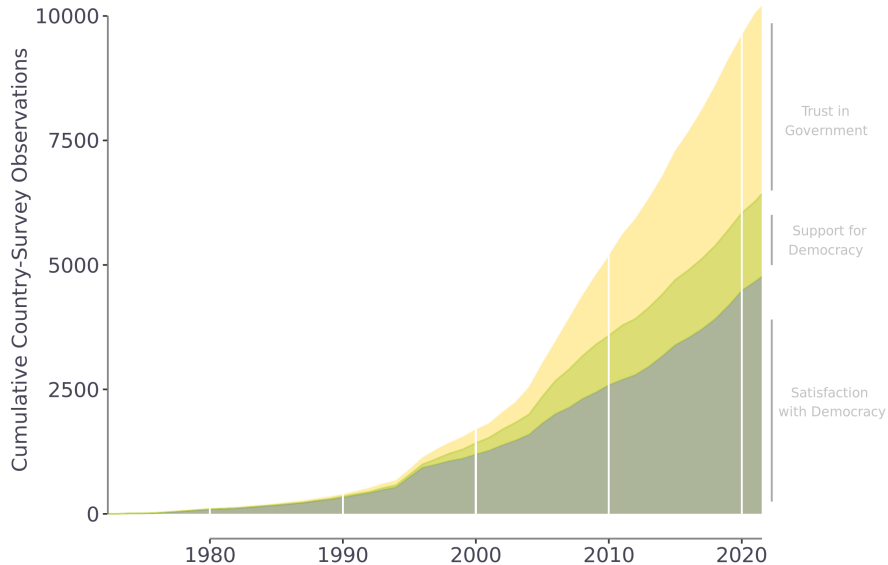
● YouGov Surveys (2016–21)

- ▶ International COVID-19 Tracker Survey (2020–21)
- ▶ Specially fielded surveys on key items (2019–21)
- ▶ Globalism Survey (2016–21)

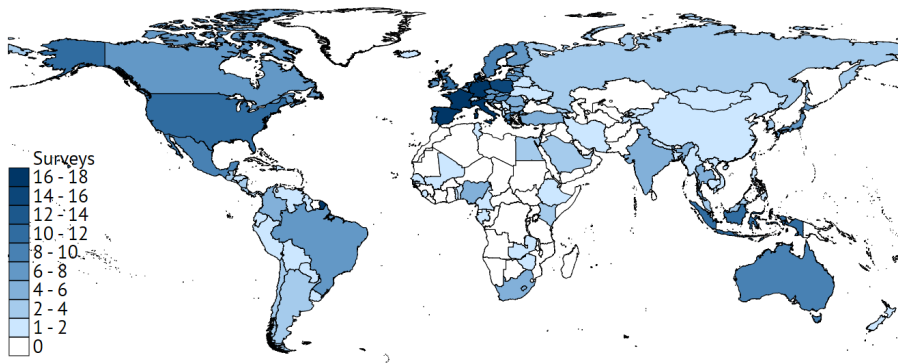


2022 Report. The Great Reset: Public Opinion, Populism, and the Pandemic.

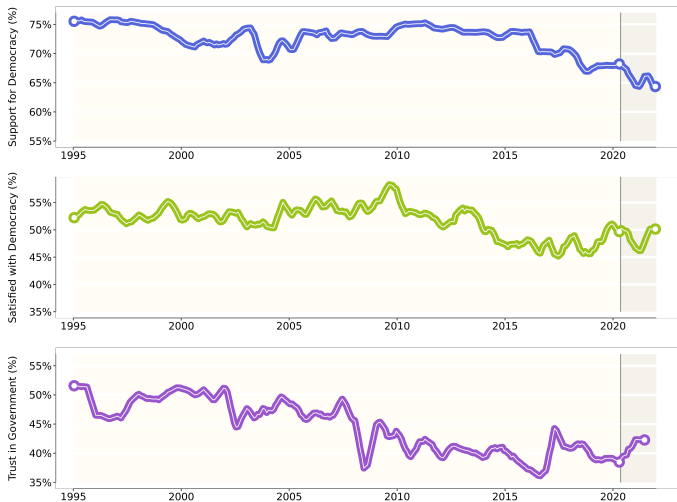
Data for Three Key Indicators



Data Collected During the Pandemic (2020-21)



Trends on Three Key Indicators



Population-weighted average for all countries currently rated as "Free" by Freedom House.

And then the Pandemic Happened

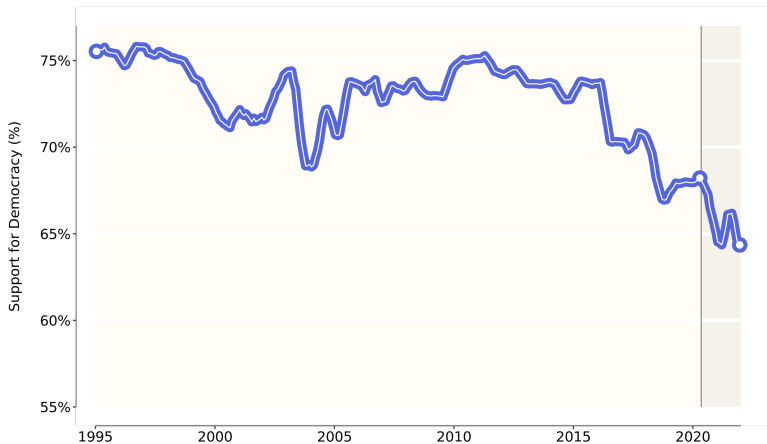




The "Pandemic Paradox"

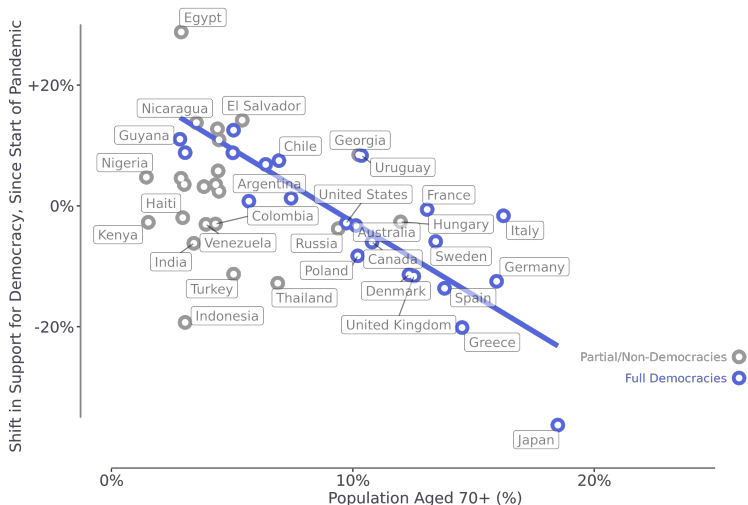
- There are 3 key trends in the pandemic (2020-21) data:
 - ▶ Support for democracy has (continued to) decline. However:
 - ▶ Trust in government and in experts have risen;
 - ▶ Support for populism – whether agreement with populist attitudes or support for individual populist leaders – has truly collapsed.
- The implications for democratic stability open to debate.
 - ▶ In the short term, if populism is the main driver of democratic backsliding, then post-pandemic era could mark an end or at least a pause in the democratic recession.
 - ▶ Longer term, if erosion of support for democracy and value of basic civil liberties could still undermine stability.

1. Support for Democracy Fragile



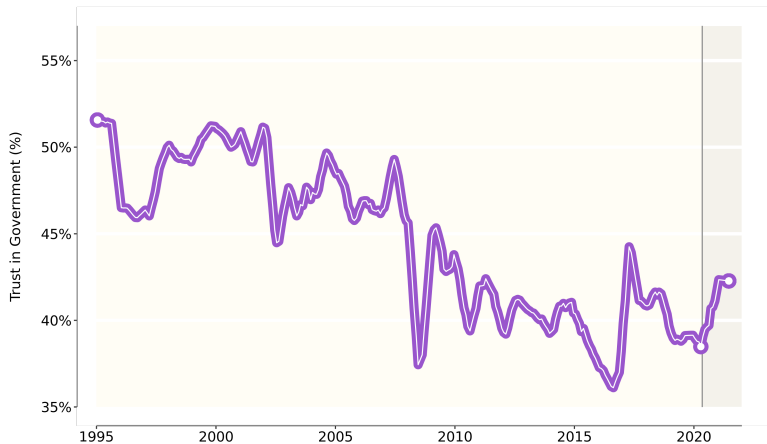
Support for democracy measured by the percentage of survey respondents reporting that democracy is the best possible form of government. Cambridge Centre for the Future of Democracy, 2022.

Linked to Pandemic Impact



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But Trust in Government (Somewhat) Rebounds



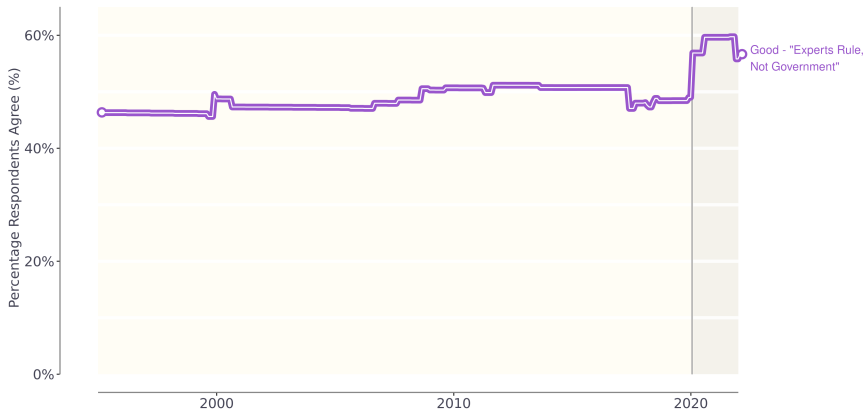
Support for democracy measured by the percentage of survey respondents reporting that democracy is the best possible form of government. Cambridge Centre for the Future of Democracy, 2022.

2. Has the Pandemic Killed Populism?

Experts are Back in Fashion



And the Survey Indicators Agree



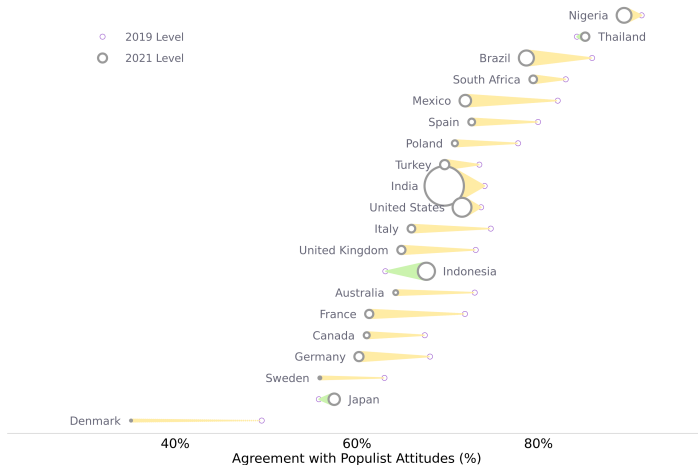
Percentage of survey respondents who rate it is "very good" or "fairly good" to have "experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best". Population-weighted average of 8 western democracies with complete data up until October 2021: the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Denmark. Source: WVS/EVS (1995–2021), Pew (2017), YouGov (2017–2021).

Measuring Populism (And Trends in Populism)

We measure trends in global “populist attitudes” using average agreement with four items designed to tap core populist beliefs according to the conventional literature:

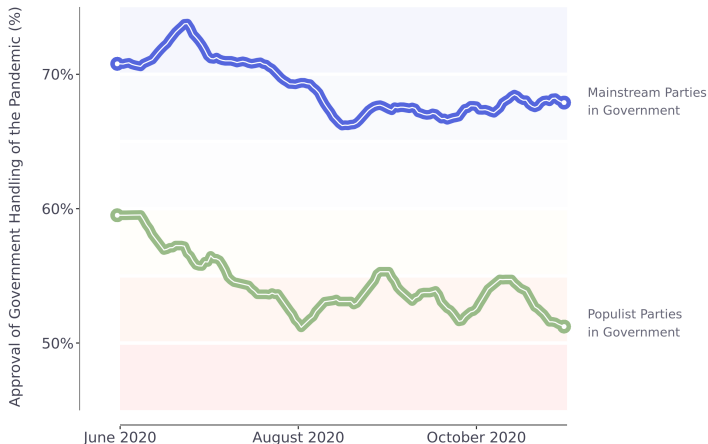
- ➊ **My country is divided between ordinary people and the corrupt elites who exploit them.**
- ➋ **The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country's politics.**
- ➌ **The power of a few special interests prevents our country from making progress.**
- ➍ **A lot of important information is deliberately concealed from the public out of self-interest.**

Populist Attitudes in Strong Decline (2019-21)



Source: YouGov Globalism Project, 2019–21.

Populist Leaders Have Had a “Bad Pandemic”

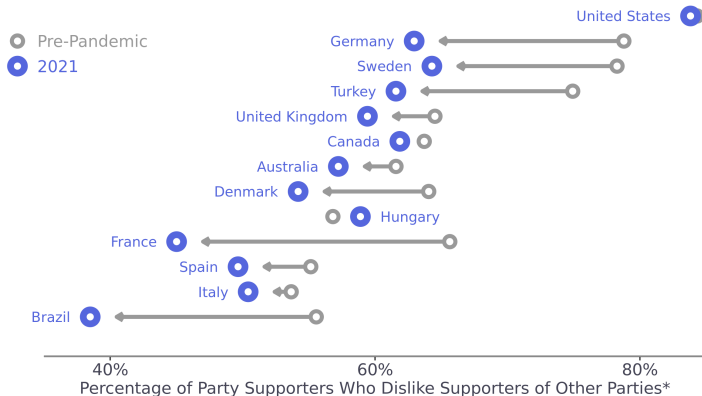


Population-weighted mean averages. Countries with populists in government: United States (Donald J. Trump), Brazil (Jair Bolsonaro), Philippines (Rodrigo Duterte), Italy (Five Star Movement), Spain (Podemos), and India (Narendra Modi). Countries with mainstream parties in office: France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Finland, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Norway. Source: YouGov COVID-19 Tracking Survey, 2020-1.

2022-3 Not Looking Any Better

- Viktor Orbán (Hungary) facing elections in April 2022
- Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil) facing elections in October 2022
- Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey) facing elections before June 2023
- PiS (Poland) facing elections before Fall 2023

Affective Polarization Also Down



* The proportion of supporters of each party (those whose favourability towards a party is 7 out of 10 or higher) who also express a strong dislike (less than 3 out of 10 favourability) for other parties, taking the four main parties in each country.

Conclusions for 2022

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- Before the pandemic, a key challenge facing global democracies was the restoration of trust in government, the rise of populism and the spread misinformation.
- But the pandemic has inverted this.
- Today, trust in government and experts have risen and populism has been weakened – including support for key populist leaders facing re-election in 2022-3.
- In the short run, this might be very positive for countries at risk of democratic backsliding.
- Longer term, while trust in authorities has been restored, citizen support for democracy and basic democratic (civil) liberties remain fragile.

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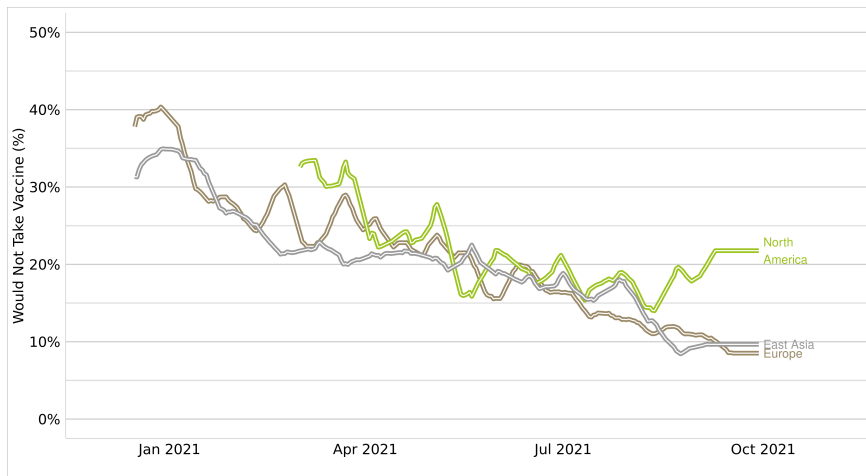
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Appendix Slides

Vaccine Skepticism Confined to a Residual Minority

Would Refuse to take COVID-19 Vaccine



Source: YouGov COVID-19 Tracker, 2020–21.

Satisfaction with Democracy Worldwide, 1995-2020

