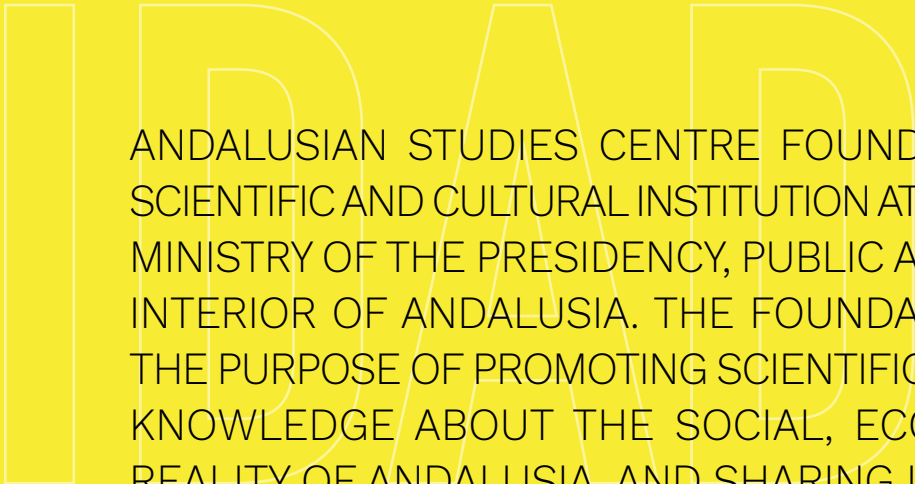


Electoral Freedom in the World (2018-2020)

Spain and Andalusia.
Key recommendations





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Centro de Estudios Andaluces, June 2021
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www.centrodeestudiosandaluces.es

Legal Deposit: SE-1688-05
I.S.S.N.: 1699-8294

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Electoral Freedom in the World (2018-2020)

Spain and Andalusia.
Key recommendations

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Abstract

This document jointly analyzes the three editions published so far of the World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI), corresponding to the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, which the author has directed as Principal Investigator for the Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty. References to the case of Spain and the Autonomous Community of Andalusia for said period are included.

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1. Introduction

This paper jointly analyses the three editions published so far of the World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI), corresponding to the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, which I have directed as lead researcher at the Foundation for the Advancement of Freedom. It includes references to Spain and the Autonomous Community of Andalusia for that period.

The third edition, corresponding to 2020, has recently been published by Freedom Press for the Foundation, in collaboration with the Human Rights Foundation (New York) and with the partnership of the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations of the Autonomous University of Nuevo León (Mexico) and the company Advent-GX (Texas), which specialises in interactive graphics. The first two editions had the collaboration of the Universidad Autónoma de Chile.

The achievement of the third annual edition of this international index is an important milestone, even more so in a particularly difficult year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, because it consolidates research work, shows an advanced level of maturity and allows researchers to project country trends. Thus, the performance of each country is no longer only comparable with that of the other countries, but also with their previous scores for 2019 and 2018.

Just as in 2019 and 2018, it includes well over ten thousand country-specific figures, which are used to construct the four sub-indices that produce the absolute data and the corresponding rankings are constructed from these figures.

While most analyses of electoral systems neglect passive suffrage, this index continues to consider active and passive suffrage separately so that readers and researchers can draw their own conclusions.

In today's world where political governance is firmly anchored in the electoral process, it is also necessary to analyse how much freedom each system provides to its citizens, to compare them and to reveal their strengths and weaknesses. This is where WEFI comes in.

This paper jointly analyses the three editions published so far of the World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI), corresponding to the years 2018, 2019 and 2020

2. Sub-indices and methodology

The WEFI aggregates four indices which we refer to as sub-indices. Below we will detail the research areas of each of them and the most significant results. The allocation methodology has been constant in all four cases and is stable for the three editions published so far, although adjustments have been made in 2020 to the IDP and the relative weights of the sub-indices.

2.1 Methodology

During the research process, relevant sources were identified for each of the indicators, both official and of high academic prestige. The data is generally less than two years old. Those evaluated on a country-by-country basis are transposed into our system by converting scales. From the other datasets, assignment standards were extrapolated to score each country.

The main ranking additionally provides the score and the position of each country in each of the four sub-indices. The ranking table for each sub-index is also included. Finally, an alphabetical listing of countries allows each country to be found in the main index and in the four sub-indices. In total, WEFI assigns between ten and eleven thousand scores for the one hundred and ninety-eight ranked countries (see <http://www.fun-dalib.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IMLE-2020.pdf>).

It is important to note that, except for the best and worst WEFI 2020 countries, there is generally no correlation between performance on a single sub-index and the position in the main ranking. There are a number of countries with a high degree of freedom of active or passive suffrage, or voter empowerment, but with a much worse performance in the other sub-indices.

Similarly, a high level of general political development does not always indicate an equally high level of electoral freedom. In this sense, as we shall see, Spain's performance, and with it that of the autonomous community

of Andalusia, varies in the four sub-indices. Thus, while Spain occupies 23rd position in the IDP ranking and 29th position in the ILSA ranking (thus improving its position with respect to the absolute ranking), it drops to 66th position in the IEE ranking, and to 74th position in the ILSP ranking.

2.2. Sub-indices

2.2.1. Political Development Index (IDP –Spanish acronym)

This sub-index has been expanded since 2020 to contribute fifteen percent to the overall computation. It collects fifteen indicators, mainly official, designed to measure the preconditions of electoral freedom in each country. They are grouped into three areas: political and legal indicators, indicators of general freedom in other aspects of society and indicators of economic development. The main improvement in this edition is the addition of a basic indicator derived from the Human Rights Foundation's classification of political systems. In this way, the IDP better fulfils its corrective function as a control sub-index for the WEFI as a whole.

As can be seen in table 1, out of the ten most politically developed countries, only Switzerland, Denmark and Iceland achieve a place in the top ten of WEFI 2020 (see absolute ranking in section 3). In other words, this third edition confirms that not all countries with high political development guarantee their citizens equivalent levels of electoral freedom. A high IDP is influential but guarantees nothing.

2.2.2. Freedom of Active Suffrage Index (ILSA Spanish acronym)

Active suffrage contributes thirty per cent to the overall index. It is constructed on the basis of four broad areas incorporating more than a dozen indicators: the universality of voting and voting restrictions, the characteristics of voter rights, the voter register, and election and counting procedures (Table 2).

Table 1

Political Development Index (PDI) 2020 Índice de Desarrollo Político (IDP) 2020		
RANK Puesto	SCORE Puntos	
1	96.28	Switzerland Suiza
2	96.14	Luxembourg Luxemburgo
3	96.00	Monaco Mónaco
4	95.91	Liechtenstein
5	95.85	Canada Canadá
6	95.34	Netherlands, The Países Bajos
7	95.25	New Zealand Nueva Zelanda
8	95.19	Norway Noruega
9	95.19	Denmark Dinamarca
10	94.67	Iceland Islandia
Source: World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI) 2020 Fuente: Índice Mundial de Libertad Electoral (IMLE) 2020		

Table 2

Active Suffrage Freedom Index (ASFI) 2020 Índice de Libertad de Sufragio Activo (ILSA) 2020		
RANK Puesto	SCORE Puntos	
1	87.92	New Zealand Nueva Zelanda
2	87.08	United Kingdom Reino Unido
3	85.83	Australia
4	84.61	United States of America Estados Unidos de A.
5	84.25	India
6	82.92	Iceland Islandia
7	81.67	Czech Republic República Checa
8	81.67	Moldova Moldavia
9	81.42	Slovenia Eslovenia
10	81.25	Hungary Hungría
Source: World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI) 2020 Fuente: Índice Mundial de Libertad Electoral (IMLE) 2020		

2.2.3. Freedom of Passive Suffrage Index (ILSP Spanish acronym)

Passive suffrage also contributes thirty percent to the overall index. The areas taken into account to determine the freedom to vote were the following: restrictions to the right to vote, requirements for exercising the right to vote, barriers to entry, characteristics of the electoral campaign, characteristics of the electoral process and distortion of the result. In total, fifteen indicators were considered to cover these areas (Table 3).

Table 3

Passive Suffrage Freedom Index (PSFI) 2020 Índice de Libertad de Sufragio Pasivo (ILSP) 2020		
RANK Puesto	SCORE Puntos	
1	84.67	Kiribati
2	84.18	Latvia Letonia
3	83.97	Croatia Croacia
4	82.86	Estonia
5	82.42	Switzerland Suiza
6	82.41	Barbados
7	82.10	Denmark Dinamarca
8	82.02	Czech Republic República Checa
9	81.83	Finland Finlandia
10	81.21	Italy Italia
Source: World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI) 2020 Fuente: Índice Mundial de Libertad Electoral (IMLE) 2020		

2.2.4. Voter Empowerment Index (IEE Spanish acronym)

This sub-index contributes twenty-five percent to the absolute score. The degree of voter empowerment is assessed by fourteen indicators for the following areas: election effectiveness, direct voter decision-making procedures, political pluralism, real power of representatives, the ability to recall them, and integrity of the political process (table 4).

Table 4

Elector Empowerment Index (EEI) 2020 Índice de Empoderamiento del Elector (IEE) 2020		
RANK Puesto	SCORE Puntos	
1	85.50	Uruguay
2	84.45	Costa Rica
3	84.19	Ireland Irlanda
4	81.53	Palau Palaos
5	81.29	Finland Finlandia
6	81.02	Peru Perú
7	80.84	Panama Panamá
8	80.84	Iceland Islandia
9	79.49	Switzerland Suiza
10	78.15	San Marino
Source: World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI) 2020 Fuente: Índice Mundial de Libertad Electoral (IMLE) 2020		

3. Absolute ranking of the 2020 World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI)

This is the absolute ranking of the WEFI 2020, which classifies countries according to their electoral freedom and also shows their score. For comparison, the ranking and score of the previous year is also shown, as well as the corresponding level of variation.

The shades of green represent the categories of freedom: extremely high, very high, high, and acceptable (75 or more points out of a total of one hundred). Those in magenta represent the following levels of electoral freedom: insufficient, low, very low, and extremely low. These categories and the general score for each country are based on the followed sub-indices: Political Development Index (IDP, 15% of the absolute index, Freedom of Active Suffrage Index, Freedom of Passive Suffrage Index and Voter Empowerment Index (ILSA, ILSP and IEE, 30% for the first two, and 25% for the last.)

Table 5

RANK Puesto	WEFI 2020. COUNTRY IMLE 2020. País	SCORE 2020 Puntos 2020	SCORE 2019 Puntos 2019	VARIATION Variación	RANK IN 2019 Puesto en 2019	VARIATION Variación
1	Finland Finlandia	83.22	79.96	+3,26	3	+2
2	Iceland Islandia	83.22	79.59	+3,63	4	+2
3	Ireland Irlanda	81.37	80.98	+0,39	1	-2
4	Switzerland Suiza	81.37	80.77	+0,60	2	-2
5	Australia	80.63	77.72	+2,91	6	+1
6	Denmark Dinamarca	80.22	77.83	+2,39	5	-1
7	Czech Republic República Checa	80.17	74.60	+5,57	22	+15
8	Slovenia Eslovenia	79.92	76.34	+3,58	9	+1
9	United Kingdom Reino Unido	79.16	75.37	+3,79	17	-8
10	Estonia	79.07	76.50	+2,57	7	-3
11	Italy Italia	78.89	75.72	+3,17	15	+4
12	Latvia Letonia	78.77	76.38	+2,39	8	-4
13	Chile	78.75	75.78	+2,97	14	+1
14	Portugal	78.31	76.28	+2,03	10	-4
15	Lithuania Lituania	77.82	75.85	+1,97	13	-2
16	Uruguay	77.75	75.21	+2,54	18	+2
17	Sweden Suecia	77.60	74.72	+2,88	21	+4
18	New Zealand Nueva Zelanda	77.56	71.48	+6,08	42	+24
19	Poland Polonia	77.41	75.91	+1,50	12	-7
20	Andorra	77.12	70.80	+6,32	52	+32
21	Panama Panamá	76.88	73.51	+3,37	26	+5
22	Costa Rica	76.75	73.97	+2,78	23	+1
23	Malta	76.59	74.96	+1,63	19	-4
24	Luxembourg Luxemburgo	76.36	74.80	+1,56	20	-4
25	Norway Noruega	76.27	73.44	+2,83	28	+3
26	France Francia	76.07	72.31	+3,76	34	+8
27	Croatia Croacia	76.05	71.51	+4,54	41	+14
28	India	76.02	73.89	+2,13	25	-3
29	Canada Canadá	76.01	73.44	+2,57	27	-2
30	Cyprus Chipre	75.98	70.58	+5,40	55	+25
31	Bulgaria	75.74	71.21	+4,53	45	+14
32	Netherlands, The Países Bajos	75.65	72.71	+2,94	33	+1
33	Austria	75.57	72.79	+2,78	31	-2
34	Slovakia Eslovaquia	74.97	72.11	+2,86	37	+3
35	United States of America Estados Unidos de A.	74.88	70.71	+4,17	54	+19
36	Japan Japón	74.82	70.76	+4,06	53	+17
37	Spain España	74.60	71.11	+3,49	50	+13
38	Mauritius Mauricio	73.88	72.26	+1,62	35	-3
39	Palau Palaos	73.75	73.91	-0,16	24	-15

40	San Marino	73.56	72.11	+1,45	36	-4
41	Dominican Republic República Dominicana	73.54	76.13	-2,59	11	-30
42	Brazil Brasil	73.39	71.15	+2,24	48	+6
43	Belgium Bélgica	73.14	67.96	+5,18	77	+34
44	South Africa Sudáfrica	73.10	69.66	+3,44	63	+19
45	Argentina	73.08	68.85	+4,23	68	+23
46	Romania Rumanía	73.01	70.14	+2,87	56	+10
47	Liechtenstein	72.78	69.94	+2,84	58	+11
48	Kiribati	72.73	72.74	+0,01	32	-16
49	Cape Verde Cabo Verde	72.62	67.23	+5,39	80	+31
50	Paraguay	72.54	69.89	+2,65	60	+10
51	Peru Perú	72.48	73.23	-0,75	29	-22
52	Mexico México	72.40	68.08	+4,32	73	+21
53	Suriname Surinam	72.08	66.93	+5,15	83	+30
54	Germany Alemania	71.98	70.05	+1,93	57	+3
55	Korea, South Corea del Sur	71.94	67.99	+3,95	74	+19
56	Papua New Guinea Papúa Nueva Guinea	71.56	68.91	+2,65	67	+11
57	Macedonia	71.48	71.52	-0,04	40	-17
58	Trinidad and Tobago Trinidad y Tobago	71.36	66.74	+4,62	86	+28
59	Colombia	71.15	75.42	-4,27	16	-43
60	Ukraine Ucrania	71.14	68.65	+2,49	69	+9
61	Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosnia y Herzegovina	70.94	71.17	-0,23	47	-14
62	Ghana	70.71	66.56	+4,15	88	+26
63	Namibia	70.69	68.24	+2,45	70	+7
64	Benin	70.64	67.98	+2,66	76	+12
65	Barbados	70.43	62.63	+7,80	124	+59
66	Marshall Islands Islas Marshall	70.19	69.30	+0,89	65	-1
67	Vanuatu	69.94	71.31	-1,37	43	-24
68	Saint Kitts and Nevis San Cristóbal y Nieves	69.90	66.93	+2,97	84	+16
69	Guatemala	69.87	71.82	-1,95	38	-31
70	Mongolia	69.85	65.37	+4,48	96	+26
71	El Salvador	69.81	70.96	-1,15	51	-20
72	Israel	69.70	67.98	+1,72	75	+3
73	Jamaica	69.70	64.52	+5,18	102	+29
74	Nauru	69.26	59.57	+9,69	145	+71
75	Greece Grecia	69.21	68.09	+1,12	72	-3
76	Serbia	69.20	67.88	+1,32	78	+2
77	Liberia	69.15	66.75	+2,40	85	+8
78	Fed. States of Micronesia EE.FF. de Micronesia	68.88	65.60	+3,28	94	+16
79	São Tomé and Príncipe Santo Tomé y Príncipe	68.86	66.70	+2,16	87	+8
80	Bahamas	68.70	60.82	+7,88	135	+55
81	Antigua and Barbuda Antigua y Barbuda	68.62	65.20	+3,42	97	+16
82	Indonesia	68.59	63.60	+4,99	108	+26
83	Georgia	68.55	66.34	+2,21	89	+6
84	East Timor Timor Oriental	68.11	69.93	-1,82	59	-25
85	Saint Vincent and the G. San Vicente y las G.	68.07	63.37	+4,70	112	+27
86	Albania	68.04	66.10	+1,94	90	+4

87	Botswana	67.92	63.33	+4,59	113	+26
88	Taiwan (Rep. of China) Taiwán (Rep. de China)	67.81	64.84	+2,97	100	+12
89	Grenada Granada	67.54	62.66	+4,88	123	+34
90	Tuvalu	67.52	56.71	+10,81	161	+71
91	Saint Lucia Santa Lucía	67.41	62.89	+4,52	119	+28
92	Niger Níger	67.22	65.17	+2,05	98	+6
93	Lesotho	67.02	62.22	+4,80	125	+32
94	Dominica	66.90	63.28	+3,62	114	+20
95	Solomon Islands Islas Salomón	66.79	62.68	+4,11	122	+27
96	Belize	66.58	57.17	+9,41	158	+62
97	Senegal	66.37	63.14	+3,23	116	+19
98	Lebanon Líbano	65.98	61.21	+4,77	132	+34
99	Samoa	65.50	62.79	+2,71	120	+21
100	Mali	65.48	63.65	+1,83	106	+6
101	Cook Islands Islas Cook	65.17	69.35	-4,18	64	-37
102	Tonga	64.77	60.52	+4,25	137	+35
103	Monaco Mónaco	64.31	61.04	+3,27	133	+30
104	Guyana	63.49	59.14	+4,35	151	+47
105	Moldova Moldavia	63.06	71.70	-8,64	39	-66
106	Bhutan Bhután	62.58	54.73	+7,85	171	+65
107	Sri Lanka	62.40	72.83	-10,43	30	-77
108	Kosovo	61.00	71.22	-10,22	44	-64
109	Hungary Hungría	60.65	71.12	-10,47	49	-60
110	Philippines, The Filipinas	58.81	71.20	-12,39	46	-64
111	Seychelles	58.56	66.99	-8,43	82	-29
112	Fiji	58.12	64.29	-6,17	104	-8
113	Burkina Faso	58.04	67.66	-9,62	79	-34
114	Ecuador	57.99	68.10	-10,11	71	-43
115	Bolivia	57.82	69.10	-11,28	66	-49
116	Algeria Argelia	57.70	54.90	+2,80	169	+53
117	Nepal	57.40	69.67	-12,27	62	-55
118	Nicaragua	57.33	69.70	-12,37	61	-57
119	Haiti Haití	56.72	53.89	+2,83	175	+56
120	Madagascar	56.69	66.06	-9,37	91	-29
121	Tunisia Túnez	56.67	66.00	-9,33	92	-29
122	Niue	56.64	62.92	-6,28	118	-4
123	Nigeria	56.51	64.43	-7,92	103	-20
124	Pakistan Pakistán	56.32	65.57	-9,25	95	-29
125	Montenegro	55.88	67.21	-11,33	81	-44
126	Honduras	55.15	64.80	-9,65	101	-25
127	Guinea-Bissau	54.87	61.92	-7,05	127	=0
128	Kyrgyzstan Kirguistán	54.45	65.11	-10,66	99	-29
129	Gambia, The El Gambia	54.33	63.38	-9,05	111	-18
130	Kenya	54.25	65.66	-11,41	93	-37
131	Sierra Leone Sierra Leona	54.18	60.61	-6,43	136	+5
132	Guinea	53.59	63.06	-9,47	117	-15
133	Comoros Comoras	53.47	56.77	-3,30	159	+26
134	Malaysia Malasia	53.44	62.75	-9,31	121	-13
135	Zambia	53.40	59.93	-6,53	142	+7
136	Maldives Maldivas	53.21	63.23	-10,02	115	-21
137	Malawi	52.59	61.32	-8,73	131	-6
138	Bangladesh	52.50	63.58	-11,08	110	-28
139	Mauritania	52.07	62.19	-10,12	126	-13
140	Armenia	51.62	61.71	-10,09	129	-11
141	Central African Rep. Rep. Centroafricana	51.15	59.72	-8,57	144	+3
142	Ivory Coast Costa de Marfil	50.62	59.29	-8,67	148	+6
143	Mozambique	50.35	59.51	-9,16	147	+4
144	Togo	49.95	59.27	-9,32	149	+5
145	Tanzania	48.18	57.68	-9,50	155	+10

146	Myanmar	47.93	55.39	-7,46	168	+22
147	Iraq	46.40	61.58	-15,18	130	-17
148	Egypt Egipto	46.30	63.59	-17,29	109	-39
149	Sudan Sudán	46.07	60.97	-14,90	134	-15
150	Libya Libia	45.61	63.62	-18,01	107	-43
151	Morocco Marruecos	44.21	59.52	-15,31	146	-5
152	Jordan Jordania	43.96	60.03	-16,07	141	-11
153	Burundi	43.33	63.78	-20,45	105	-48
154	Venezuela	43.26	61.90	-18,64	128	-26
155	Turkey Turquía	42.83	58.51	-15,68	152	-3
156	Belarus Bielorrusia	42.73	56.76	-14,03	160	+4
157	Russia Rusia	42.69	60.40	-17,71	140	-17
158	Djibouti Yibuti	42.61	54.68	-12,07	172	+14
159	Chad	42.41	59.18	-16,77	150	-9
160	Tajikistan Tayikistán	42.03	59.84	-17,81	143	-17
161	Afghanistan Afganistán	41.90	60.45	-18,55	139	-22
162	Kazakhstan Kazajistán	41.77	57.80	-16,03	154	-8
163	Iran Irán	41.28	55.87	-14,59	166	+3
164	Congo, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Rep. Dem. del	41.13	56.39	-15,26	163	-1
165	Uzbekistan Uzbekistán	41.12	56.04	-14,92	165	=0
166	Turkmenistan Turkmenistán	40.61	57.21	-16,60	157	-9
167	Angola	40.54	60.52	-19,98	138	-29
168	Yemen	40.39	56.38	-15,99	164	-4
169	Rwanda	40.31	54.57	-14,26	173	+4
170	Uganda	39.83	57.61	-17,78	156	-14
171	Singapore Singapur	39.45	54.40	-14,95	174	+3
172	Gabon Gabón	39.33	58.18	-18,85	153	-19
173	Azerbaijan Azerbaiyán	38.80	55.44	-16,64	167	-6
174	Zimbabwe	38.38	51.80	-13,42	178	+4
175	Congo, Republic of the Congo, República del	37.28	56.58	-19,30	162	-13
176	Ethiopia Etiopía	35.97	53.80	-17,83	176	=0
177	Cambodia Camboya	33.71	52.98	-19,27	177	=0
178	Bahrain Baréin	33.45	43.01	-9,56	183	+5
179	Cameroon Camerún	33.38	50.33	-16,95	179	=0
180	Eswatini	32.62	45.61	-12,99	181	+1
181	Vietnam	32.42	45.95	-13,53	180	-1
182	Laos	30.12	44.65	-14,53	182	=0
183	Syria Siria	28.89	42.00	-13,11	184	+1
184	Kuwait	27.63	38.40	-10,77	188	+4
185	Cuba	27.03	39.83	-12,80	186	+1
186	Equatorial Guinea Guinea Ecuatorial	26.81	40.84	-14,03	185	-1
187	Thailand Tailandia	23.85	13.19	+10,66	196	+9
188	Oman Omán	23.71	34.92	-11,21	191	+3
189	Korea, North Corea del Norte	23.49	36.22	-12,73	190	+1
190	United Arab Emirates Emiratos Árabes Unidos	23.22	36.66	-13,44	189	-1
191	Somalia	21.96	39.33	-17,37	187	-4
192	Palestine Palestina	17.80	54.78	-36,98	170	-22
193	China, People's Rep. of Rep. Pop. de China	16.27	33.27	-17,00	192	-1
194	Eritrea	5.50	18.88	-13,38	194	=0
195	Qatar	3.66	16.33	-12,67	195	=0
196	South Sudan Sudán del Sur	1.12	20.73	-19,61	193	-3
197	Brunei Brunéi	0.01	4.73	-4,72	198	+1
198	Saudi Arabia Arabia Saudí	0.00	11.95	-11,95	197	-1

Source: World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI) 2020

4. Key Findings

In 2020, more than a century after the end of World War One, worldwide electoral freedom continues to be found in a precarious situation, as is shown by the poor performance of a substantial number of countries in the third edition of the WEFI.

There are still countries which do not hold any kind of elections or referendums, or some which only hold certain types of them. Physical violence and coercion in electoral processes, which affect both candidates and voters, continue to be a problem in many countries.

In particular, women, young people, LGBTQ+ individuals, people who practise certain religions, ethnic minorities and disabled people continue to face serious difficulties when it comes to electoral freedom, as well as directly suffering from attacks, vetoes, and suffrage restrictions, all over the world.

Paradoxically, the right of active suffrage, whose implementation should be completely optional in the interest of maximum electoral freedom, is not uncommonly used as a mechanism of control over the population by the State, single or dominant parties, or the facto powers, such as the military or religious institutions.

Therefore, there are countries where voting continues to be obligatory, and in which there are even penalties (some of them severe) for those who do not exercise their right of active suffrage. Even in countries which, according to the third edition of the WEFI, have an outstanding, very high, or high level of electoral freedom in the absolute ranking – like Australia, Luxembourg or Belgium – voting is obligatory, due to tradition or the fact that it is considered a civic right for all.

However, with respect to those specific countries with greater electoral freedom, it is noteworthy that, for the first time since the creation of the WEFI in 2018, seven countries have achieved a striking level of electoral freedom: Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Switzerland, Australia, Denmark and the Czech Republic. None of these come as a surprise for this study project on electoral freedom and, in fact, all of these countries are habitually found in the top positions in the absolute ranking (table 6).

The country that leads the ranking for the first time is Finland, which has also placed among the top four positions since the very first edition.

Following Finland in the ranking is another Nordic country, which came fourth in the 2019 ranking, and also came second in 2018. It is necessary to clarify that the margins are always very close between first and second

Tabla 6

SCORE <i>Puntos</i>	ELECTORAL FREEDOM CATEGORY <i>Categoría de libertad electoral</i>	COUNTRIES (2020) <i>Países (2020)</i>	COUNTRIES (2019) <i>Países (2019)</i>
80-100	Outstanding <i>Altísima</i>	7	2
75-80	Very high <i>Muy alta</i>	26	16
70-75	High <i>Alta</i>	33	39
65-70	Acceptable <i>Aceptable</i>	35	42
60-65	Insufficient <i>Insuficiente</i>	8	42
55-60	Low <i>Baja</i>	17	27
50-55	Very low <i>Muy baja</i>	17	11
0-50	Remarkably low <i>Bajísima</i>	55	19

Source: World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI) 2020

place, and in order to resolve the tie, the third decimal place is used to determine the respective order. This also happened in the 2020 edition of the WEFI, between third and fourth place.

In third place comes Ireland, after leading the ranking in the 2018 and 2019 editions. In fourth place is Switzerland, the paradigm of direct democracy, after it placed second in 2019, and third in 2018. Australia is in fifth place, and it came sixth in 2019 and fifth in 2018.

The remaining countries in the Top 10 of the third edition's ranking are Denmark, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, and Estonia. These countries are typically found in the top positions.

Europe therefore continues to have the greatest number of countries in the Top 10.

All of these countries display an outstanding performance in most of the WEFI indicators. Nonetheless, even these countries have their own shortcomings when it comes to their citizens' electoral freedom.(table 7).

At the other end of the spectrum, the ten countries with the worst performances

continue to be situated in South-East Asia, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa, which are still the worst countries for electoral rights (as well as the Maghreb), apart from notable exceptions such as India, Japan, Mauritius and Israel.











In the 2020 edition, the crazed communist dictatorship of North Korea is found in position 189th, followed by the United Arab Emirates, Somalia, Palestine, China, Eritrea, Qatar, South Sudan, Brunei, and Saudi Arabia, the country with the worst level of electoral freedom: in the previous two editions, it came second-to-last. With zero points, electoral freedom simply is non-existent in Saudi Arabia.

All of these countries are typically found in the lowest positions on the ranking. Moreover, in Brunei, Eritrea, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Palestine, there are no parliamentary or presidential elections. In fact, the Sultanate of Brunei represents a particularly extreme case in this regard, since it has not held any direct legislative elections since 1962, and at a local level, only certain consultative bodies are selected, whose candidates can be vetoed by the regime. In Somalia and China parliamentary elections are held but the vote is delegated/indirect.

Tabla 7

THE MOST FREE ELECTORAL SYSTEMS				Los sistemas electorales más libres			
RANK Puesto	SCORE Puntos			RANK Puesto	SCORE Puntos		
1	83.22		Finland <i>Finlandia</i>	11	78.89		Italy <i>Italia</i>
2	83.22		Iceland <i>Islandia</i>	12	78.77		Latvia <i>Letonia</i>
3	81.37		Ireland <i>Irlanda</i>	13	78.75		Chile
4	81.37		Switzerland <i>Suiza</i>	14	78.31		Portugal
5	80.63		Australia	15	77.82		Lithuania <i>Lituania</i>
6	80.22		Denmark <i>Dinamarca</i>	16	77.75		Uruguay
7	80.17		Czech Republic <i>República Checa</i>	17	77.60		Sweden <i>Suecia</i>
8	79.92		Slovenia <i>Eslovenia</i>	18	77.56		New Zealand <i>Nueva Zelanda</i>
9	79.16		United Kingdom <i>Reino Unido</i>	19	77.41		Poland <i>Polonia</i>
10	79.07		Estonia	20	77.12		Andorra
Source: World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI) 2020 Fuente: Índice Mundial de Libertad Electoral (IMLE) 2020							

Tabla 8

THE LEAST FREE ELECTORAL SYSTEMS				Los sistemas electorales menos libres			
RANK Puesto	SCORE Puntos			RANK Puesto	SCORE Puntos		
198	0.00		Saudi Arabia <i>Arabia Saudí</i>	188	23.71		Oman <i>Omán</i>
197	0.01		Brunei	187	23.85		Thailand <i>Tailandia</i>
196	1.12		South Sudan <i>Sudán del Sur</i>	186	26.81		Equatorial Guinea <i>Guinea Ecuatorial</i>
195	3.66		Qatar	185	27.03		Cuba
194	5.50		Eritrea	184	27.63		Kuwait
193	16.27		China	183	28.89		Syria
192	17.80		Palestine <i>Palestina</i>	182	30.12		Laos
191	21.96		Somalia	181	32.42		Vietnam
190	23.22		Un. Arab Emirates <i>Emiratos Árabes Un.</i>	180	32.62		Eswatini <i>Esuatini</i>
189	23.49		Korea, North <i>Corea del Norte</i>	179	33.38		Cameroon <i>Camerún</i>
Source: World Electoral Freedom Index (WEFI) 2020 Fuente: Índice Mundial de Libertad Electoral (IMLE) 2020							

In the United Arab Emirates, parliamentary elections are held, but a particularly restrictive system of census-suffrage, akin to 19th century Europe, remains. In South Sudan, there have been no elections or referendums since Independence, nearly a decade ago. These countries mostly, if not entirely, show a deplorable performance in all categories. (table 8)

The slight improvement for Thailand, with respect to the 2018 and 2019 editions, comes in response to the general elections of 2019 (despite successive delays) – these were the first elections to come after the *coup d'état* in 2014 (in 2016 a fraudulent constitutional referendum was held), and the long-lasting military *junta*. However, it will be necessary to closely follow the country's future development, in order to determine if its relatively democratic tradition takes hold again, or if this is a mere illusion.

Venezuela – the leading Latin American exponent – and Cuba are also found in a situation similar to the aforementioned regimes (communist, single-party, and theocratic systems), since they have a total lack of electoral freedom. On the other hand, Chile, Uruguay, Panama and Costa Rica have far greater levels of electoral freedom.

In fact, Venezuela's level of electoral freedom continues to fall sharply, and the country is

found at number 154, after being ranked 128 in 2019 and 102 in 2018. Venezuela's outlook looks grim if the Chavist regime of Maduro, which has created legal and institutional systems parallel to the formal ones, continues.

Erdoğan's Turkey is also drifting into authoritarianism, falling to position 155 in the ranking, after placing at 152 in 2019 and 135 in 2018.

Lower still is Russia, the post-Soviet epicentre, which displays the same downwards trend. Vladimir Putin has implemented a constitutional reform which will prolong his already extensive time in power. Russia had dropped to position 157, after being at 140 in 2019 and 134 in 2018. Conversely, we can once again see that several countries from the ex-Soviet Bloc and its allies are now achieving high scores of electoral freedom in the ranking, as is shown by the Czech Republic (7th overall), Slovenia (8th), or the three Baltic Republics (Estonia at 10, Latvia at 12, and Lithuania at 15). All of them, therefore, are among the 15 best countries in the world for electoral freedom.

In particular, Slovenia and Estonia are two of the very few countries in the world whose legal system offers the right to vote to certain individuals under 18 years old, which is the same case for Germany (54th

overall, with a high level of electoral freedom). In Austria (33rd overall with a very high level of electoral freedom), the voting age is 16 in all elections.

It is in fact a higher legal voting age which, alongside other factors, reduces the ranking of countries such as Taiwan (Taiwanese citizens can vote in national elections at 20 years old), which has moved up to position 88 in the third edition. It is one of the most commendable exceptions of Asian democracy (alongside the aforementioned India and Japan, or South Korea), only mere kilometres away from the enormous communist dictatorship of China, the largest electoral prison in the world.

The fourth edition of the WEFI (2021) will allow for the collection of information about electoral freedom in a post COVID-19 world (and the pandemic's epicentre was indeed China). The edition will find out, for example, if the declaration of various states of emergency or alarm, or the required suspension of electoral processes, has been used by States – particularly non-democratic ones – in order to strengthen themselves and increase their power over the population. It will also analyse the populist attitudes in a world afflicted by an unprecedented pandemic, the first since the Spanish Flu of 1918.

4.1 References to Spain and Andalusia

Spain, and along with it, the autonomous community of Andalusia, is found at position 37 on the WEFI ranking 2020, which means that they are both areas of high electoral freedom. Nevertheless, they lag behind countries with a similar cultural environment, such as the Czech Republic (7th), Slovenia (8th), Estonia (10th), Latvia (12th), Chile (13th), Portugal (14th), Lithuania (15th), Poland (19th), Panama (21st), Croatia (27th), India (28th), Cypress (30th), Bulgaria (31st) and Slovakia (34th).

However, as has already been noted, Spain's performance varies in all four sub-indices. That's to say, while its ranking for Political Development Index is 23, and its ranking for Freedom of Active Suffrage Index is at 29 (thus improving its overall score), its score for Voter Empowerment Index is found at number 66,

and its Freedom of Passive Suffrage Index score is even worse, placing at 74. Therefore, Spain's performance in Voter Empowerment and Freedom of Passive Suffrage – particularly the latter – is far worse than its performance in the first two indices.

Spain's, and Andalusia's, performance, therefore has room for improvement in the passive suffrage section (difficult access to political-electoral activity), which comes from barriers to political-electoral activity (such as the presentation of guarantees for voter turnout in elections for the House of Representatives and the Andalusian Parliament, and the minimum legal thresholds of votes for the allocation of seats in both legislative chambers), or the absence of open or available lists of candidates.

Therefore, among the main recommendations compiled in the following section, which are all valid for any country, those applicable to Spain and Andalusia would help to improve the country's position in the ranking, as well as its scores corresponding to the four respective indices, but above all for Empowerment of the Voter and Freedom of Passive Suffrage.

5. Key Recommendations

An electorate system that truly guarantees full freedom of its citizens in electoral matters should respond to these thirty principal demands:

1. Universal suffrage for both sexes and without the marginalisation of ethnic groups of another nature
2. No requirements for the vote beyond age and full mental capacities.
3. Low voting age, ideally at 16 years old
4. Automatic registry of citizens as voters, without needing to sign up in order to vote
5. Constant and truthful update of the electoral census
6. Voluntary character to the vote, without penalization to those who do not exercise this right.
7. Penal protection of the process, with increased sentences for those who modify or manipulate it
8. High proportionality of the allocation system and prioritization of candidates' votes where possible, preferring Single Transferable Vote systems with individual election – without lists – based on the preferential vote which allows one to take full advantage of the will of each voter.
9. A second count of votes in all electoral process
10. Rapid and transparent publication of electoral results
11. Correct management of postal votes and of the participation of citizens from abroad.
12. Simple requirements for political parties and candidates when contesting (elimination of the collection of signatures and payment of deposits or fees)
13. Possibility of competition on equal terms for independent candidates.
14. Private funding of parties and candidates. In case of state funding, equitable distribution of funds.
15. If state media exists, equitable distribution of the space made available to candidates.
16. Non-discrimination between those who are and are not represented during electoral processes
17. Full liberty to campaign, with no restrictions of any kind
18. Integrity of the procedure
19. Free publication of polls including on election day
20. Election of the day of reflection
21. Electoral boards completely independent of the Executive
22. Multiple, multi-member electoral constituencies of sufficient size to guarantee proportionality, with the voter choosing the individual candidates of his or her choice.
23. No political representatives appointed by the Head of State or by the government
24. Absence of malapportionment (deviation between the percentage of seats allocated to a constituency and the percentage of eligible citizens) and practices such as gerrymandering (redrawing of constituencies with the aim of obtaining electoral benefits for one or more candidates.
25. Effective systems of direct democracy, including binding referendums and recall elections.
26. Removal of thresholds and other barriers to representation.
27. Freedom and independence of elected representatives with respect to political formations and parliamentary
28. Intra-party democracy

29. Full freedom to form new political parties without hindrance of any kind
30. Real power of elected representatives and of the assemblies and chambers in front of executive powers and against *de facto* powers of any kind.

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