

INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE BRIEFING

Why Democracies Are Struggling to Get Anything Done

Six countries, six different ways the machinery jams, and what the data says about whether it's actually getting worse.

Cross-referencing Pew Research Center, the Edelman Trust Barometer, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, V-Dem, and contemporaneous reporting on each country case.



What's inside the full report

The complete report runs several pages and draws on eighteen primary sources. Here's the structure, plus the summary table it opens with.

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The clearest case, and why
The United States: the trust collapse, the index downgrades, the record 43-day shutdown, and Fukuyama's concept of "vetocracy."
- 2

How we picked these six
Why only established democracies made the list, and what "Structural," "Recurring," and "Single rupture" actually mean.
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The complete six-country list
Belgium, France, Israel, Germany, and the United Kingdom, each with sourced figures and dates.
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Also worth watching
The Netherlands' own record-breaking coalition talks, and the EU's supranational veto problem.
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The caveat that matters most
Why global democracy scores just stabilized for the first time in eight years, and what still gets done despite the gridlock.

NO.	COUNTRY	PATTERN	WHY IT'S ON THE LIST
1	United States	Structural	Trust in government at a record-low 17%; downgraded to an "electoral democracy" by V-Dem in 2025.
2	Belgium	Structural	652 days without a federal government, a self-broken world record.
3	France	Recurring	A force-through tool used 100+ times since 1958, most recently toppling a government in 91 days.
4	Israel	Recurring	Five national elections between April 2019 and November 2022.
5	Germany	Single rupture	A coalition collapsed in November 2024; 181 days without a confirmed government.
6	United Kingdom	Single rupture	Parliament rejected every Brexit alternative on the table, twice.

The full report also includes an interactive dashboard version of this table, comparing each country against a real global democracy index, filterable and kept current as these situations develop.

EXCERPT FROM THE FULL REPORT

The clearest case: the United States

The US shows up on this list because it combines two things: a real, measured decline by more or less every major index, and a textbook illustration of the mechanism behind it. On trust alone, the drop is stark, from 73% in 1958 to 17% in September 2025, with Democrats' trust in government falling to a historic low of 9% that year and Republicans holding at 26%, a partisan gap that is itself part of the story.

On the institutional side, V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index put the US at 0.57 in 2025, its lowest score since 1965, and reclassified the country from a "liberal democracy" to an "electoral democracy," citing particularly large declines in legislative and judicial constraints on executive power.

The most concrete recent example is the 43-day federal government shutdown that ended in November 2025, the longest in US history, surpassing the previous 34-day record from 2018 and 2019. The dispute centered on healthcare subsidies, Medicaid funding, and the executive branch's authority to withhold congressionally approved funds.

Continues in the full report, alongside Belgium, France, Israel, Germany, and the United Kingdom

GET THE FULL REPORT

This is a short taste of the complete briefing.

The full report covers all six countries in depth, two more cases worth watching, the complete methodology, eighteen cited sources, and comes with a live interactive dashboard you can embed or share. Get in touch and we'll send it over, or talk to us about custom, continuously updated institutional data for your own sector.

THE FULL PACKAGE INCLUDES

- The complete written report (Word and PDF)
- The interactive governance-gridlock dashboard, filterable by country
- Full source list with 18 primary citations
- Custom data or refresh schedule, on request

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This preview reflects public research available as of August 2026 and is an institutional synthesis, not a partisan argument for or against any party, leader, or country. Sources include Pew Research Center, the Edelman Trust Barometer, the Economist Intelligence Unit, and V-Dem. Full citations are in the complete report.