

Experience Rochester

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AND THE 2020 ELECTION

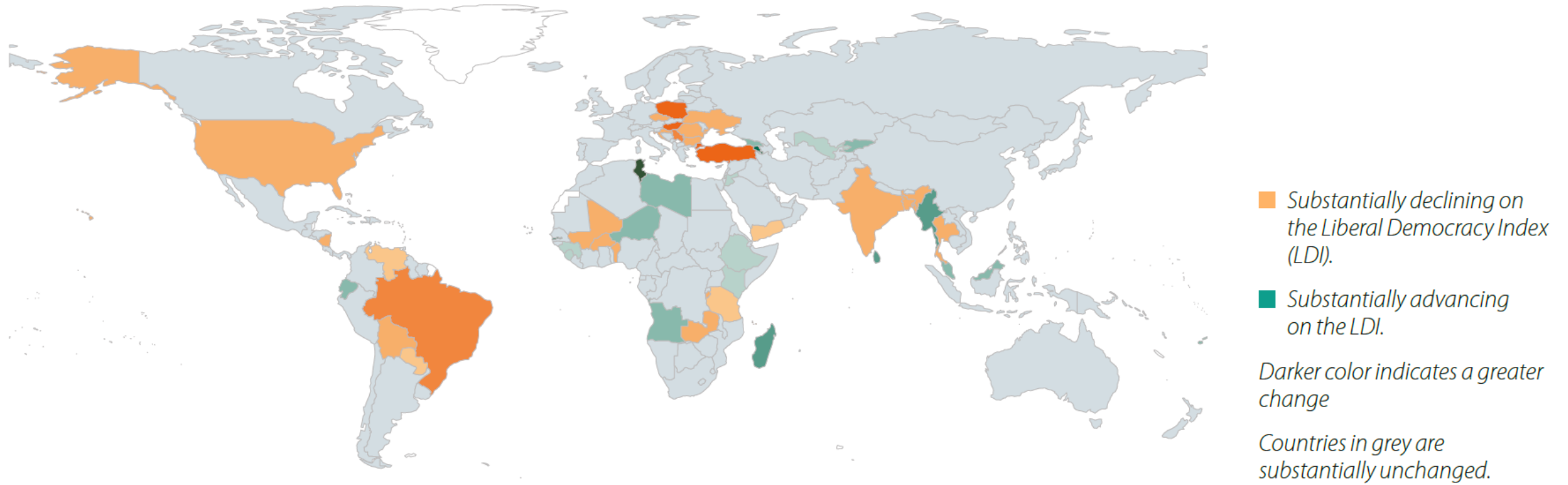
Thursday, October 29

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Professor of Political Science
University of Rochester

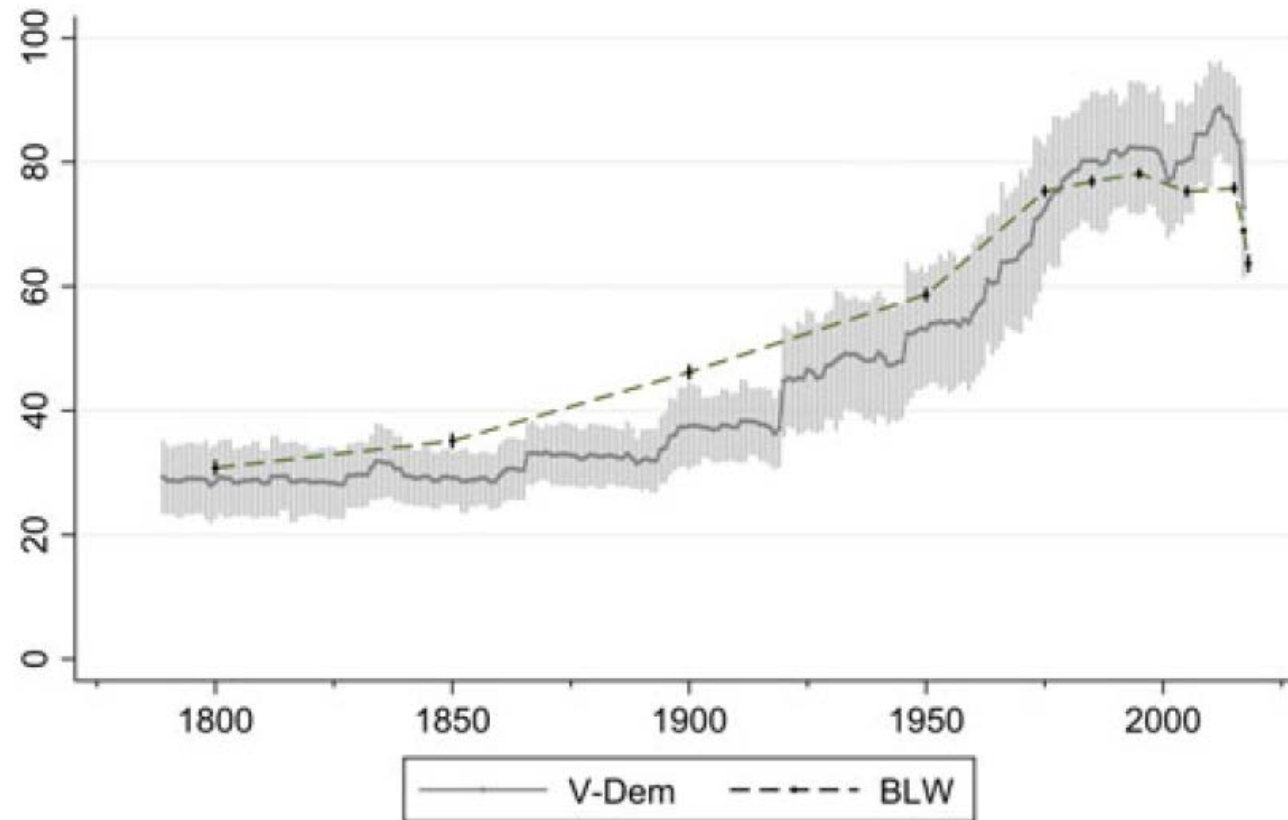


DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING AROUND THE WORLD

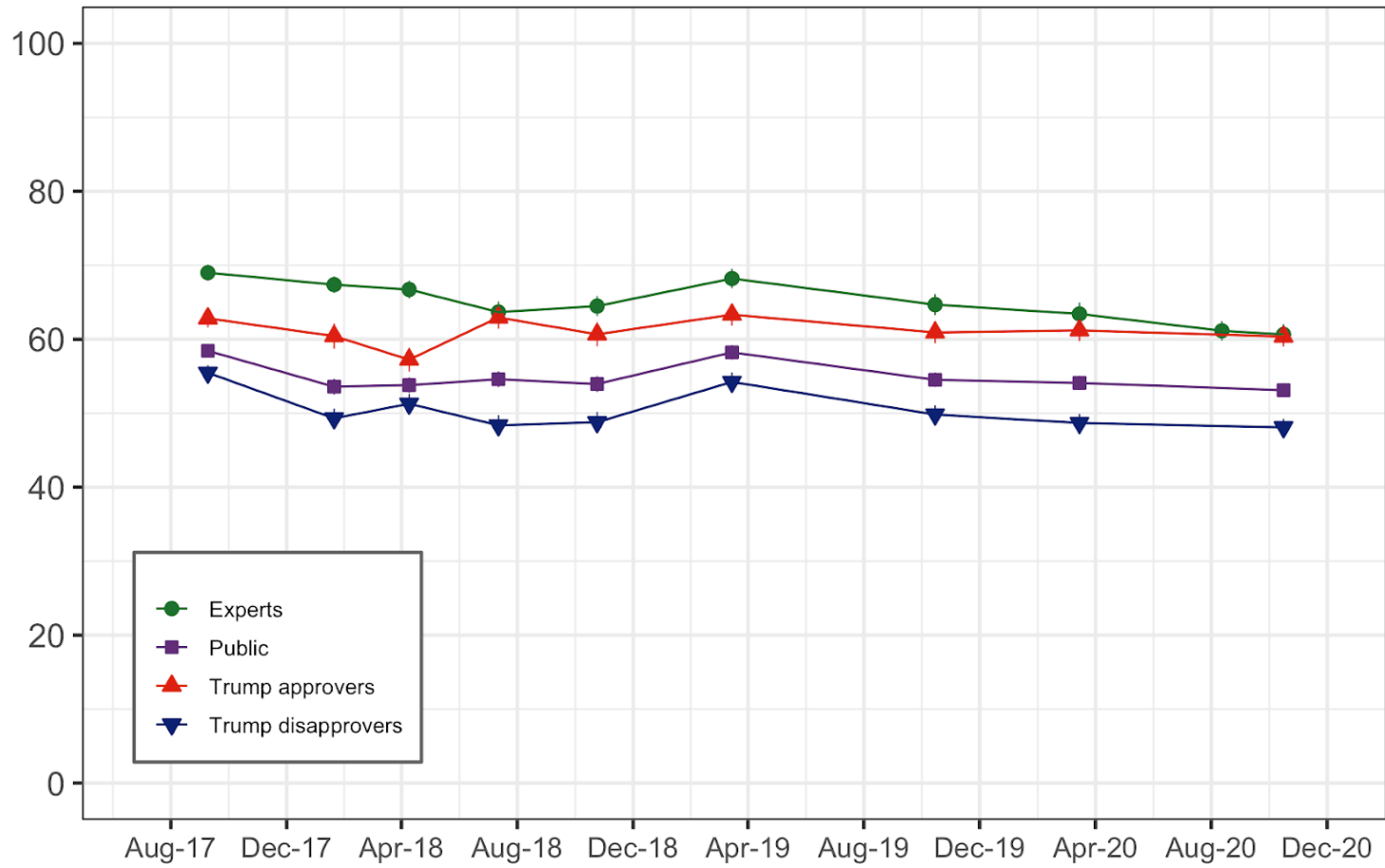
FIGURE 2: COUNTRIES SUBSTANTIALLY DEMOCRATIZING OR AUTOCRATIZING, 2009–2019



Ratings of U.S. democracy from V-Dem and Bright Line Watch



Expert and public ratings of U.S. democracy: 2017-2020



Ratings of U.S. democracy by experts surveyed by Bright Line Watch on a 0-100 scale. Figure shows mean values across twelve survey waves. Vertical error bars are 95% confidence intervals. Source: @BrightLineWatch

PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY

Voting and Elections	Rights and Protections	Institutions and Accountability	Discourse and Norms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fraud-free elections• Politicians concede• Equal voting rights• Votes have equal impact• No foreign influence• Campaign funding• Candidates disclosure• Policy and contributions• Districts not biased• High participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equal political/legal rights• Law is enforced equally• Free speech• Protest tolerated• Free press• No political violence• Agencies don't punish• All parties allowed• Opinions heard on policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constitution limits executive• Legislature limits executive• Judiciary limits executive• Judicial Independence• Investigations independent• Sanctions for misconduct• No private gains from office• Government statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common understanding of facts• Compromise sought• Patriotism not questioned

BRIGHT LINE WATCH BATTERY

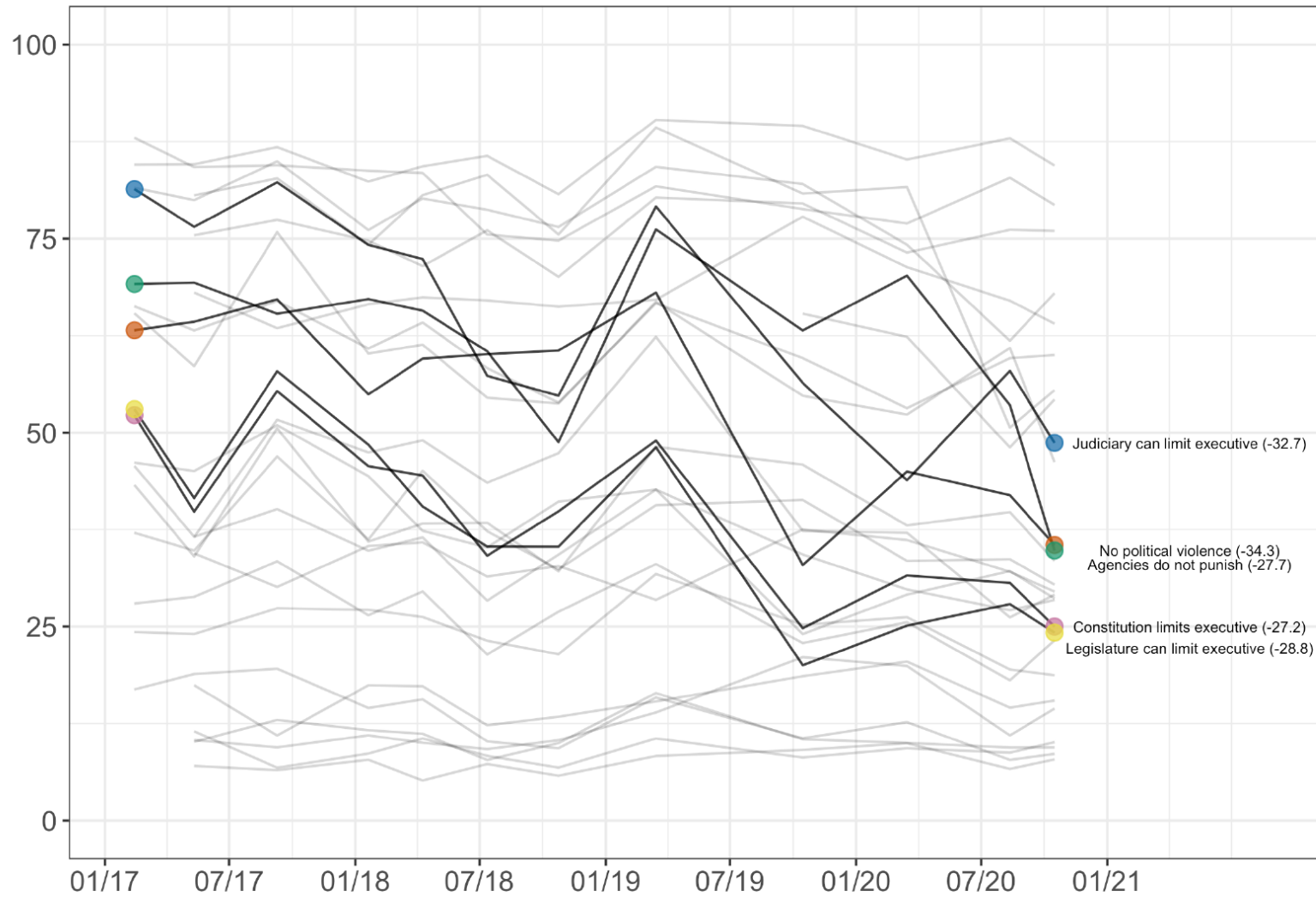
“How important are these characteristics for democratic government?”

- Not relevant
- Beneficial
- Important
- Essential

“How well do the following statements describe the United States as of today?”

- The U.S. does not meet this standard
- The U.S. partly meets this standard
- The U.S. mostly meets this standard
- The U.S. fully meets this standard
- Not sure

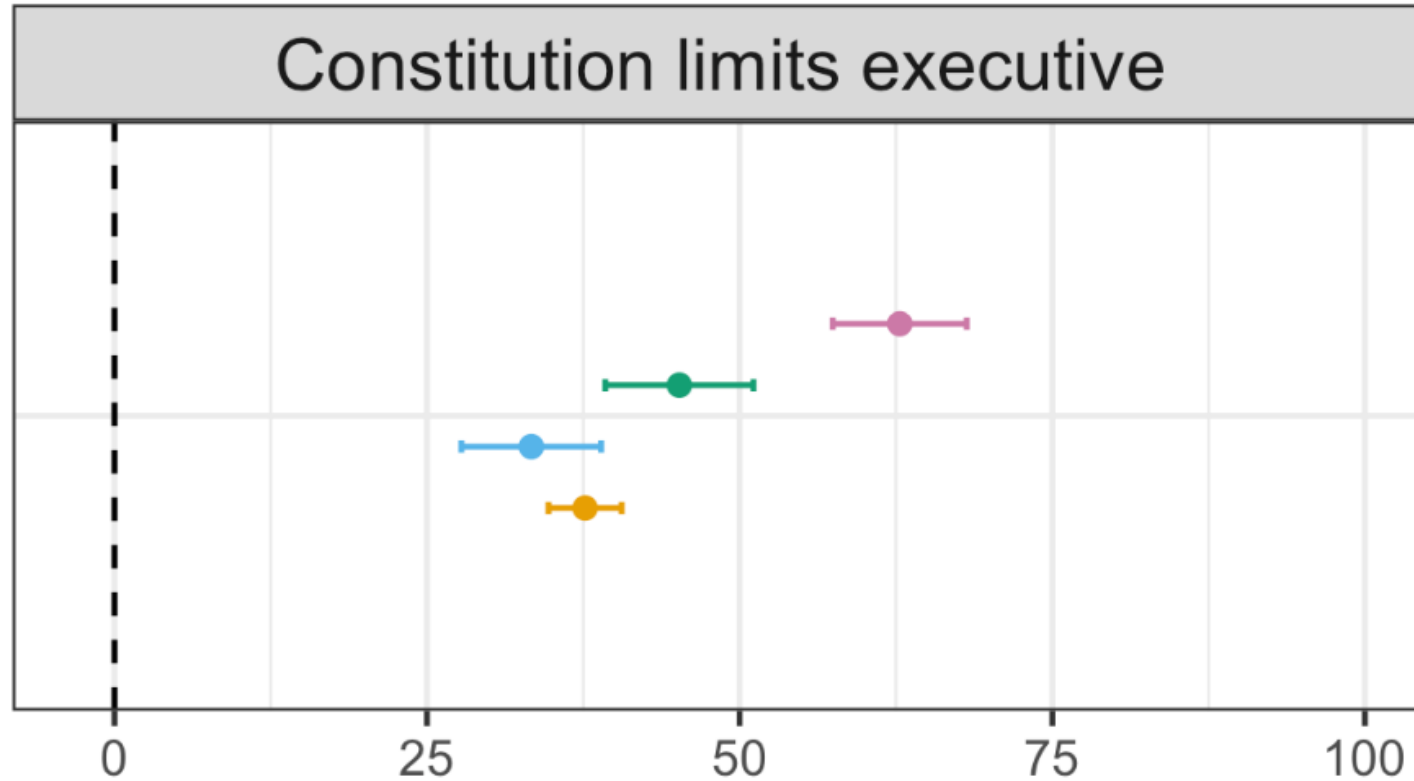
Expert ratings of performance over time on democratic principles



Top 5 largest declines since February 2017 are shown in colored points and black lines.

Source: @BrightLineWatch

EXPERT IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE GAP



—●— Feb. 2017 —●— Sept. 2017 —●— Mar. 2019 —●— Aug. 2020

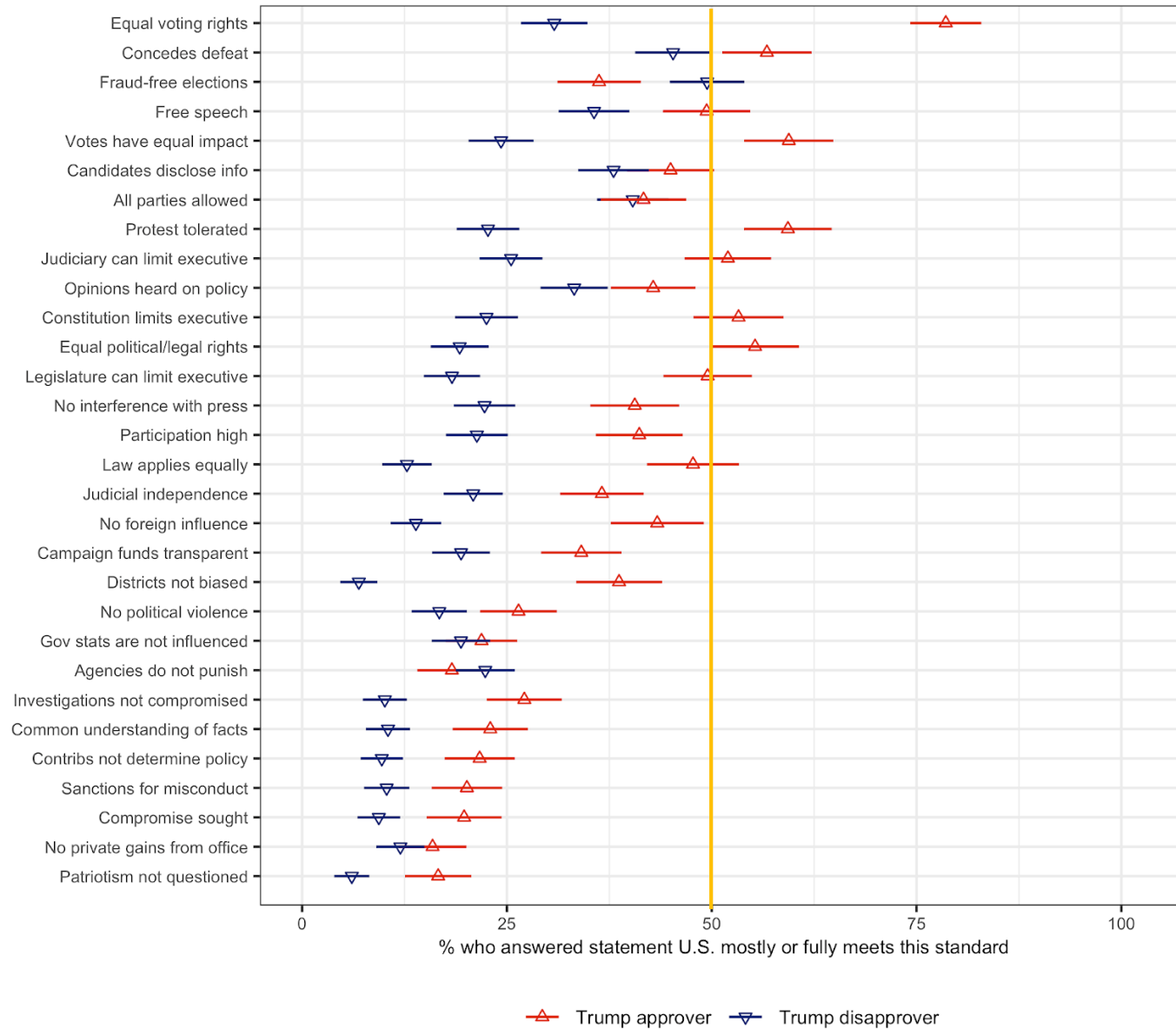
Expert perceptions of gaps between importance and performance on 28 democratic principles, 2017-2020



— Feb. 2017 — Sept. 2017 — Mar. 2019 — Aug. 2020

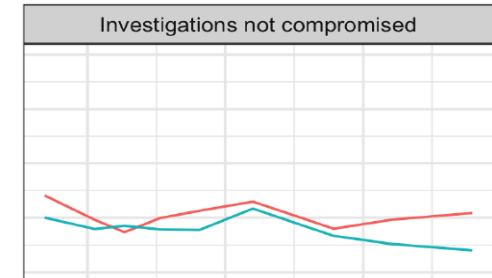
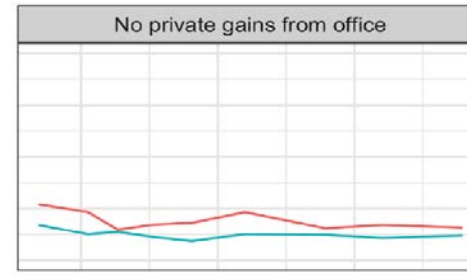
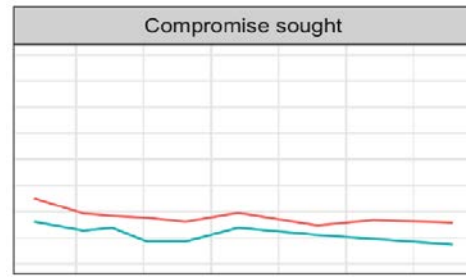
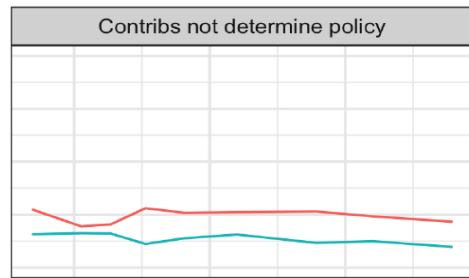
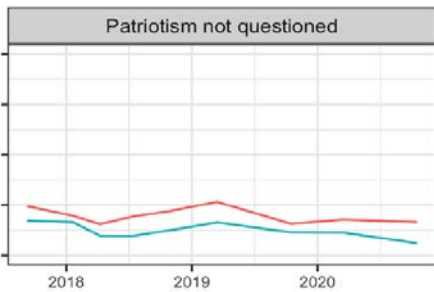
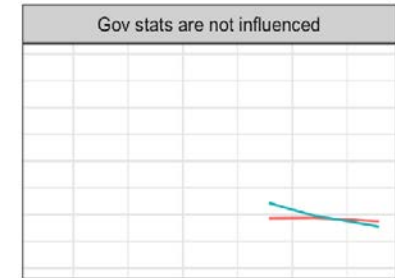
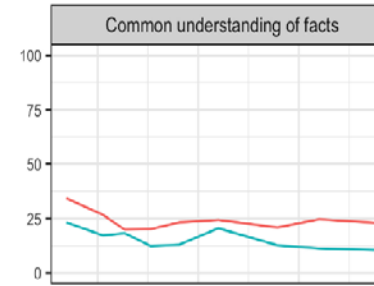
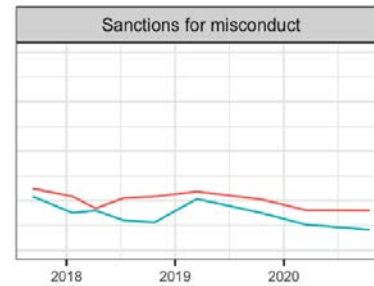
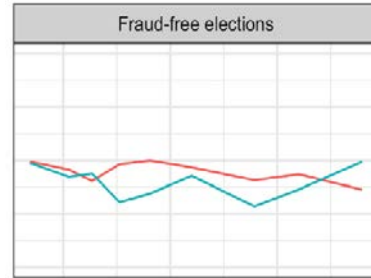
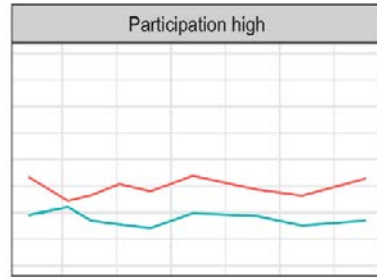
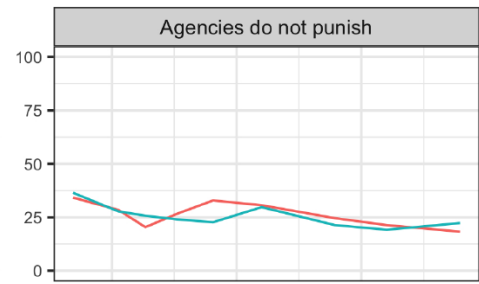
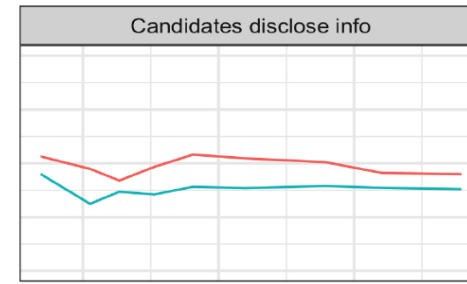
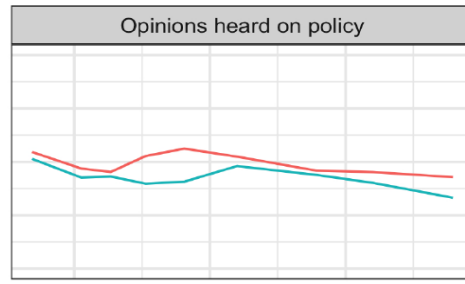
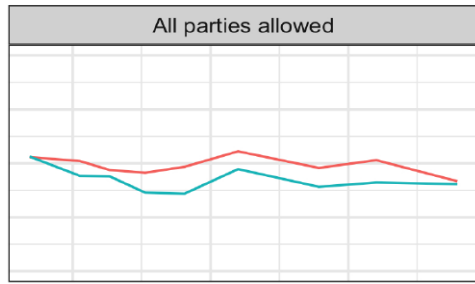
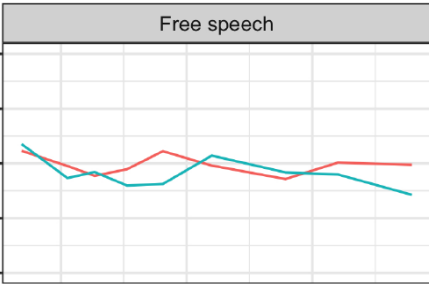
Horizontal axis is % who answered statement is 'mostly important' or 'essential' to democracy minus % who say U.S. 'mostly' or 'fully meets' this standard. Facets are ordered by increasing difference between importance and performance for August 2020. Horizontal error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Public ratings of U.S. democratic performance by support for Trump

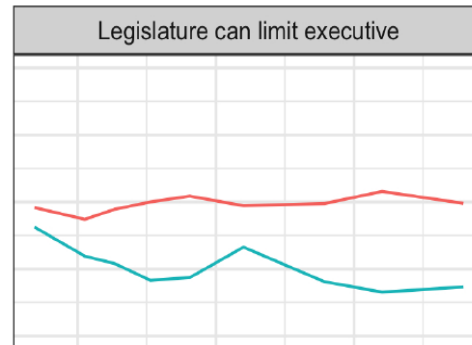
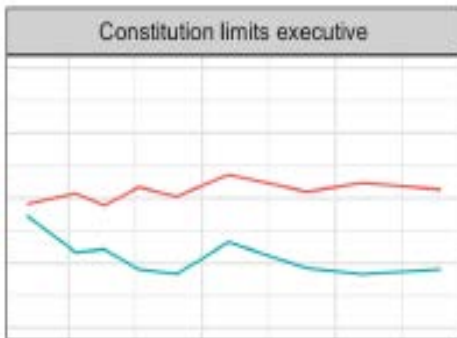
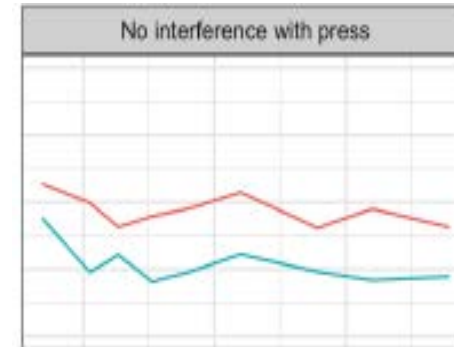
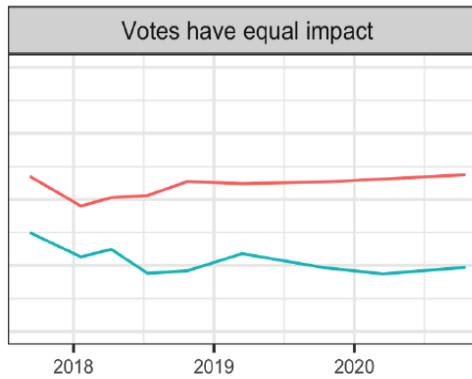
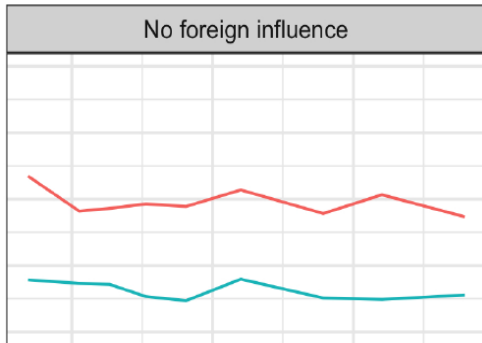
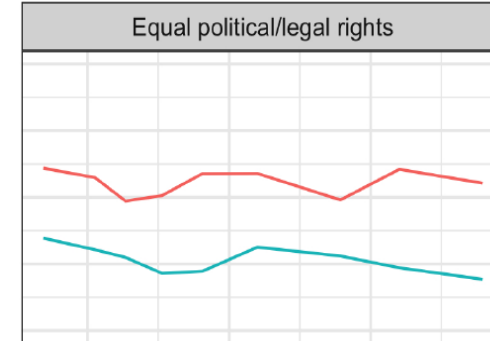
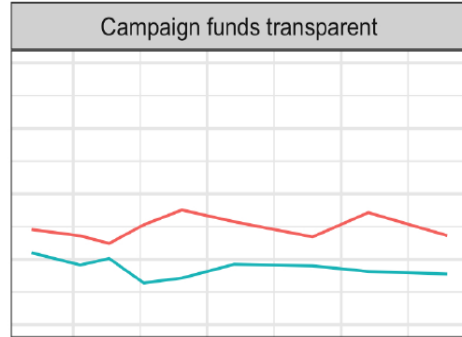
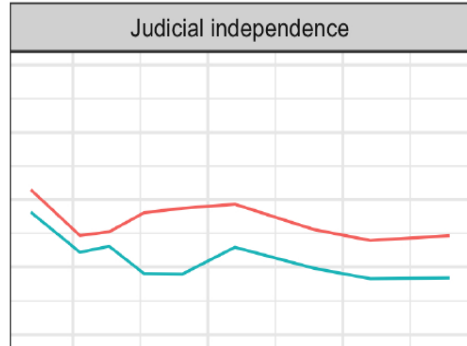


Statements are in descending order of average performance ratings for all respondents.
Horizontal error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE CONSENSUS



PUBLIC PERFORMANCE POLARIZATION



THREE TAKEAWAYS

- 1. US is part of a broader global trend of democratic backsliding.**
- 2. Gradual decline in overall expert rankings of American democracy, with sharpest drops in checks and balances.**
- 3. Public consensus over weaknesses in American democracy, but also areas of significant polarization over perceptions of performance.**