

# Leading The Rise: Women for Rights and Democracy

## A Global Action Summit

Issue Brief

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### HIGHLIGHTS

**71%**

Percentage of the world's population living in autocracies, or 5.7 billion people, as of 2023.

**48%**

Percentage increase, in the previous ten years, of the world's population living in autocracies.

**29%**

Percentage of the world's population, or 2.3 billion people, living in liberal and electoral democracies.

**44%**

Percentage of the world's population, or 3.5 billion, living in so called electoral autocracies, where elections are used as a means to legitimize autocratic leaders.

Statistics from V-Dem Institute's 2024 Democracy Report

### WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP & GLOBAL AUTHORITARIANISM

Authoritarianism is on the rise. By any measure, the world has become less democratic, with more people living in countries with authoritarian leadership. According to one widely cited analysis, the level of democracy experienced by the average global citizen is down to 1985 levels. This trend has a direct and inextricable link to restricted rights for women and girls, and the backlash toward the increase of women in leadership.

Because women are often in the vanguard of democratic movements, they are explicitly targeted by predominantly male authoritarian leaders. As agents of change, women are judged by authoritarians as posing the greatest threat to their power. Harvard University's Erica Chenoweth and Zoe Marks have documented that, "misogyny and authoritarianism are not just common comorbidities but mutually reinforcing ills."

Women are instrumental in holding the line between democracy and the rise of authoritarianism, between peace and conflict, and in determining if the movement for rights and democracy will backslide or advance. They lead and crucially support democratic movements, assemble and support electoral coalitions and lead all manners of democratic resistance and advancement. Women pose one of the biggest threats to authoritarian leaders, and perhaps the world's greatest force for democratic advancement and rights. This is particularly true in this year when more than half the world's population is participating in elections.

#### Outcomes

The Global Action Summit will include three core outcomes:

- 1 Empowering Individual Leaders:** 100 concrete actions by 100 women leaders, every individual participant will commit to a single action they can implement in their community.
- 2 Fostering Global Connections:** A Playbook of actionable practices and recommendations for countering authoritarianism, drawn from diverse geographies and causes.
- 3 Driving Collective Action** A fundable, actionable campaign that unites our network around a shared goal.

### FURTHER READING

[V-Dem Institute. Democracy Report. \(2024\)](#)

[Freedom House. Freedom in the world 2023: The global expansion of authoritarian rule. \(2023\)](#)

[Foreign Affairs. Revenge of the Patriarchs: Why Autocrats Fear Women. \(2022\)](#)

**"Aspiring autocrats and patriarchal authoritarians have good reason to fear women's political participation: when women participate in mass movements, those movements are both more likely to succeed and more likely to lead to more egalitarian democracy."**

Revenge of the Patriarchs: Why Autocrats Fear Women. Foreign Affairs (2022). Erica Chenoweth and Zoe Marks.