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Governance challenges loom over US political landscape ahead of election



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As citizens in the United States prepare to vote in the presidential election in November, a new analysis highlights critical governance challenges that threaten the efficacy of the US political system.

According to the researchers from the Luskin School of Public Affairs at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), the Los Angeles-based Berggruen Institute and the Hertie School, a university in Berlin, Germany, both democratic accountability and state capacity have sharply declined in the US since 2015, particularly in key swing states.

Democratic accountability, which encompasses electoral, social, and institutional accountability, has decreased significantly, the researchers write. For example, electoral accountability scores dropped from a score of 92 (out of 100) in 2015 to 82 points in 2021.

"Declining democratic accountability means that the power of the American people's voice will be diminished – both in terms of electoral voice and the power of social institutions to check elected officials once in office", the researchers behind the new [Berggruen Governance Index \(BGI\) report](#) conclude.

At state level, they warn, there are even more dramatic declines in democratic norms, with "critical consequences for electoral integrity". Many of the important swing states such as North Carolina, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, or Georgia have seen large drops, the report says.

Voter turnout, a crucial metric of engagement, lags behind other advanced democracies, raising concerns about public involvement in decision-making. It stood at 66 per cent in 2020, trailing most Western European countries where elections were held between 2018 and 2022.

The report also notes what it calls "another widespread problem in the U.S. electoral system - the outsized role of money in politics", adding that the trend is exacerbated by landmark US Supreme Court decisions to remove limits on electoral spending. This dynamic, the researchers conclude, has led to a political landscape where the voices of average citizens are increasingly being marginalized.

Overall, the findings highlight critical governance challenges that have developed over time, impacting democratic accountability, state capacity, and public goods provision in the US. These challenges will persist regardless of the election outcome, the researchers say. A Democratic Party-led administration may address these issues better than one led by Republican Donald Trump, but "both scenarios face significant obstacles", the report concludes.

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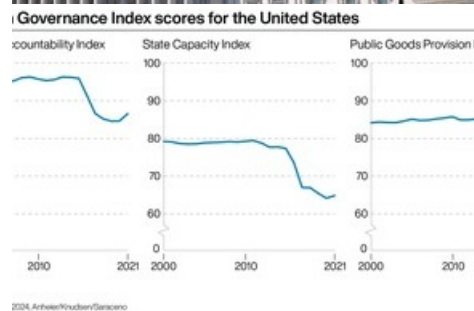
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Medieninhalte



Elections will be held in the USA on November 5. It will also determine the majority in Congress - here the building in Washington D.C. from the outside. (Photo by Saul Loeb / AFP) / More information via ots and www.presseportal.de/en/nr/174021 / The use of this image for editorial purposes is permitted and free of charge provided that all conditions of use are complied with. Publication must include image credits.



The Berggruen Governance Index for the USA for the years 2000 to 2021. There were negative developments in the areas of Democratic Accountability and State Capacity in particular. (Infographic: PA Media for DNA) / More information via ots and www.presseportal.de/en/nr/174021 / The use of this image for editorial purposes is permitted and free of charge provided that all conditions of use are complied with. Publication must include image credits.

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