

Rights Intelligence Dataset – Methodology Overview

What does the dataset cover?

The Rights Intelligence dataset provides scores out of 5 and grades on an ‘A’ to ‘E’ scale for approximately 190 countries on three dimensions of human rights performance:

- **Empowerment Rights** – covers a collection of freedoms that allow individuals to be who they are and actively participate in society without fear of reprisal.
- **Safety from the State** – covers physical integrity rights, which captures how safe people are from arbitrary violence or coercion by agents of the state.
- **Economic and Social Rights Performance** – measures how well states are using their available resources to ensure people enjoy their rights to education, food, health, housing, and work.

Taken together, the first two dimensions capture people’s civil and political rights as defined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR guarantees civil and political freedoms, ensuring individuals can engage in religious, political, and intellectual activities free from coercion or discrimination. Other core United Nations treaties further elaborating those rights include the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Convention against Torture, and others.

The third dimension, Economic and Social Rights, is based on the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These rights ensure people can enjoy their rights to food, health, education, housing, work, and social security, which are essential for a life of dignity. Under the ICESCR countries must achieve the best possible outcomes with their available resources. Therefore, a low-income country can score well on economic and social rights if it uses its resources effectively, even if its outcomes are not as good as those of wealthier nations. This aspect differentiates economic and social human rights performance from traditional development indicators.

How do we do this?

HRMI produces the Rights Intelligence dataset using a Bayesian measurement model that combines multiple data sources for each of the three dimensions of rights. We choose this approach because:

- It effectively reveals underlying factors across diverse measures.
- It creates a more comprehensive dataset for analysts needing cross-country data as an input to other work, than relying solely on the HRMI Rights Tracker dataset, which, while more detailed, covers fewer countries. The Rights Tracker remains a crucial input.

- It treats the respect and protection of each dimension of human rights as *latent* (hidden, or unobservable) variables that *cause* the outcomes that we observe, such as HRMI expert survey responses and Amnesty International reports.
- It incorporates useful information from various observable sources, even some that are outside our human rights framework.¹
- It generates certainty bands as well as estimated mean scores, enhancing transparency about the precision of our country scores and enabling meaningful comparisons over time and across countries.

The table below summarises the primary source of the data inputs that are used to produce the *Safety* and *Empowerment* dimensions of the Rights Intelligence dataset.

Human rights dimension	Primary source of data inputs
Empowerment Rights	Human rights experts (via HRMI Rights Tracker); academic experts, US State Department country reports.
Safety from the State	Human rights experts (via HRMI Rights Tracker); Amnesty International reports; Human Rights Watch reports; US State Department country reports; academic experts; academic analysis of media reports.
Economic and Social Rights Performance	Various social and economic indicators that have been collected in-country following internationally harmonised standards, and published by multilateral agencies, including: the World Bank, UNESCO, FAO, UN, WHO, Eurostats, OECD.

For Economic and Social Rights Performance (ESRP), the 2024 update used available scores for the rights to education, health, housing, food, and work, published on the Rights Tracker, as the sole input. Due to limited data availability for food and work, we combined these into a single "food and work" category. The resulting four scores were then combined into a single ESRP score for each country. These scores draw on a range of underlying indicators as indicated in the table above. Work is underway to expand the range of indicators used.

Composite country scores

In response to user requests, we developed a methodology for combining the three dimension scores into a single *composite* score for each country. We use a 'weighted worst rank methodology', essentially ensuring that a country's composite score can only be as high as its weakest dimension, encouraging balanced progress across all human rights dimensions. For a nation to improve its composite score, it must prioritise and address areas where it performs most poorly, aligning with the ethos of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that all rights are equal and interdependent.

¹ HRMI measures human rights as they are defined in International human rights law. Some of the adjacent datasets we draw on measure related but slightly different concepts.

Country grades

To aid with interpretation of the country scores, the Rights Intelligence dataset also grades each country on an A-E scale on each dimension of human rights.

Grade	
A	Leader (top 10%)
B	Above median
C	Median
D	Below median
E	High alert (bottom 10%)

To illustrate, the time trend chart below shows that Gabon's scores for empowerment rights fluctuate in the narrow range of 3.3 – 3.9 (out of a maximum of 5) over the 2007-2023 period. The country grades – indicated at the right side of the chart – show that Gabon has fluctuated between a D grade (below median) and B grade (above median). The shaded band around the scores represents the 80% certainty band, and the grade thresholds are also shown.

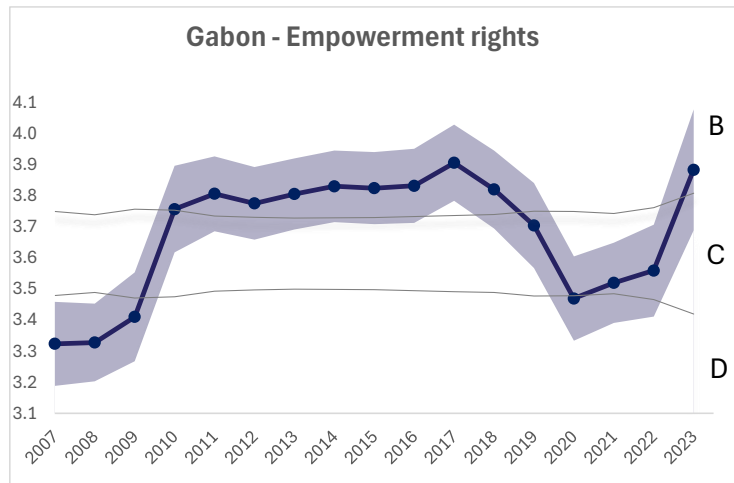


Figure 1 Example of how the Rights Intelligence dataset presents a country's performance over time

Limitations

While we strive to use the best data sources, significant data limitations persist, particularly for countries with contested borders or multiple state actors. A key problem is that most data sources for civil and political rights (excluding the HRMI Rights Tracker) focus solely on state violations within a country's borders. For instance, they often reference Israel's 1968 borders, overlooking Israel's human rights violations in Gaza and the West Bank. This narrow framework contradicts the July 2024 International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling which affirms Israel's full obligations as an occupier in Gaza. Addressing this gap would require additional resources to expand the HRMI expert survey to encompass Israel and Palestine, enabling us to collect data that accurately reflects these complexities. Similar issues arise for other states with contested borders.

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