



Academic Freedom Index Report

Prelims: Academic Freedom Index Report, Global Public Policy Institute, Academic Freedom.

Mains: Academic Freedom Index Report, State of higher Education in India.

Why in News?

According to the **Academic Freedom Index report**, India's academic freedom index is in the bottom 30% among 179 countries in 2022.

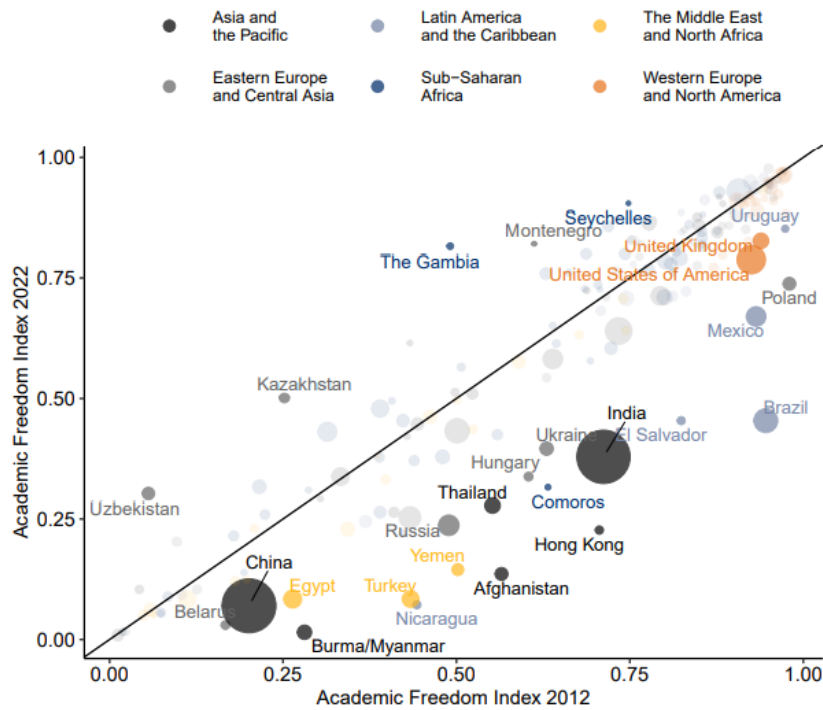
- Academic freedom refers to the **principle that scholars and researchers should have the freedom to pursue their research and express** their findings without interference, censorship, or retaliation from the government, private institutions, or other external entities.

What is the Academic Freedom Index?

- It has been published by **Global Public Policy Institute** as a part of a global time-series dataset (1900-2019) in close cooperation with **Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg**, Scholars at Risk and the V-Dem Institute.
- The report provides **an overview of academic freedom in 179 countries** by assessing five indicators. It is based on **assessments by more than 2,197 country experts from around the world**.
- The **indicators include**,
 - Freedom to research and teach
 - Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination,
 - Institutional autonomy of universities
 - Campus integrity
 - The freedom of academic and cultural expression.
- The scores **are scaled from 0 (low) to 1 (high)**.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Global:**
 - It **identified 22 countries**, including India, China, the United States and Mexico - where it said universities and scholars experience significantly less academic freedom today than they did ten years ago.
 - Only **five small countries** (Gambia, Uzbekistan, Seychelles, Montenegro, and Kazakhstan) representing 0.7 % of the global population, improved their rankings.
 - In the remaining 152 countries, **academic freedom has stayed stagnant**, For the average global citizen, academic freedom has gone back to levels last registered four decades ago.
 - Like China and India, populous countries like the United States of America and Mexico have recorded a decline in academic freedom over the past decade.



▪ **Indian Overview:**

- India scored 0.38, lower than Pakistan’s 0.43 and the United States’ 0.79.
 - India’s freedom index score was high in the past, ranging from **0.60-0.70 between 1950 and 2012**, except from 1974-1978.
 - China’s academic freedom index stood at 0.07 in 2022, occupying the bottom 10 %.
- India scored **low in campus integrity**, which measures the extent to which campuses are free from politically motivated surveillance or security infringements.
- India also fared **poorly in institutional autonomy** and academic and cultural expression related to political issues.
- As for **freedom to research and teach and freedom of academic exchange** and dissemination, India did slightly better than the three indicators above.

India

Overview

Comparison

1900 - 2022

ACADEMIC FREEDOM INDEX (1956)

0.67 *i*



Freedom to Research and Teach (1956)

2.55 *i*



Institutional Autonomy (1956)

2.46 *i*



Academic Exchange and Dissemination (1956)

2.90 *i*



Campus Integrity (1956)

3.08 *i*



Academic and Cultural Expression (1956)

3.03 *i*



Factors for Declining India's Score:

- Around 2013, all aspects of academic freedom began to decline strongly, reinforced with the election in 2014.
- A lack of a legal framework to protect academic freedom has enabled attacks on academic freedom under the ruling government.
- There has been notable pressure on the **institutional dimensions of academic freedom** — institutional autonomy and campus integrity — combined with constraints on the academic freedom of expression.

Suggestions:

- The declines in India and China could bear more consequences as they are home to 2.8 billion people.
- Call on higher education policymakers, university leaders, and research funders to promote academic freedom in their own academic institutions as well as abroad.

[Source: DTE](#)

