

The National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) Data Collection Project

Courtenay R. Conrad (UNCC), Jacqueline H.R. DeMeritt (UNT), Will H. Moore (FSU), & Ryan M. Welch (FSU)

Although states claim a monopoly on coercion within their sovereign territory, various institutions exist to constrain state power vis-à-vis their citizens. With respect to state repression, constitutions (e.g., Keith, 2002), electoral rules (e.g., Cingranelli & Filippov, 2010), and domestic judiciaries (e.g., Powell & Staton, 2009) have been shown to influence human rights outcomes. We explore the effects of a relatively new domestic political institution on human rights: the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). NHRIs are outgrowths of domestic Ombudsman offices and are charged with protecting the human rights of the citizens of the state in which they are established. The United Nations, under the Paris Principles, encourages the establishment of NHRIs, as well as the public distribution of reports of their activities. Yet there is little comparative, large-N research on the activities and effects of NHRIs. Our project addresses this via content analysis of NHRI annual reports, as well as other sources. More specifically, we generate descriptive and quantitative data of two types: *Institutional Data* that record information on the institutional structure, origins, and other characteristics of the population of national NHRIs, and *Behavioral Data* that record information on the activities of NHRIs that publish reports on the World Wide Web.

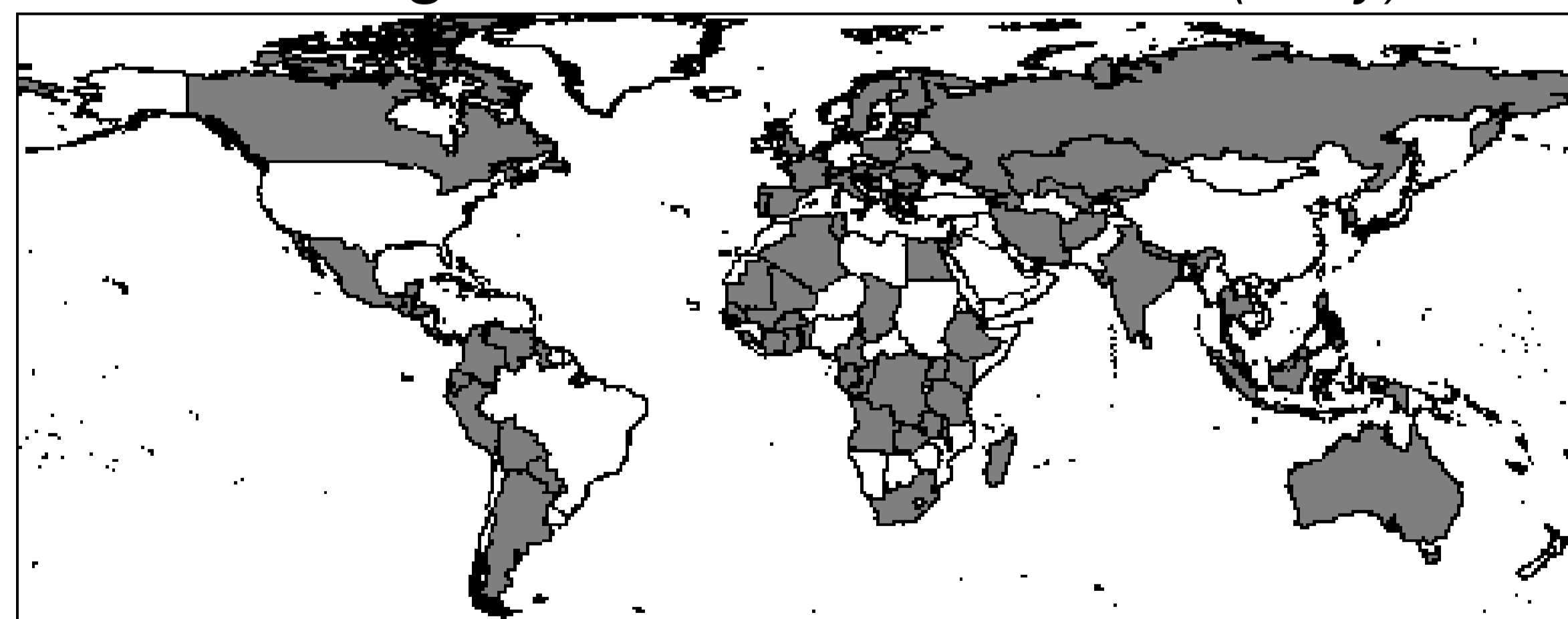
What is an NHRI?

NHRIs are domestic bodies that sit at the intersection of government and civil society. Rather than represent and pursue government or NGO goals exclusively, NHRIs are mandated to promote and protect citizens' human rights.

Data Collection

- **Spatial Domain:** 101 NHRIs have been accredited by the UN Subcommittee on Accreditation of the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.
- **Temporal Domain:** 1993 through 2010

Figure 1: States with an NHRI (Grey)



Cingranelli, David & Mikhail Filippov. 2010. "Electoral Rules and Incentives to Protect Human Rights." *Journal of Politics*.

Keith, Linda Camp. 2002. "Constitutional Provisions for Individual Human Rights: Are they more than Mere Window Dressing?" *Political Research Quarterly*.

Powell, Emilia J. & Jeffrey K. Staton. 2009. "Domestic Judicial Institutions and Human Rights Treaty Violations." *International Studies Quarterly*.

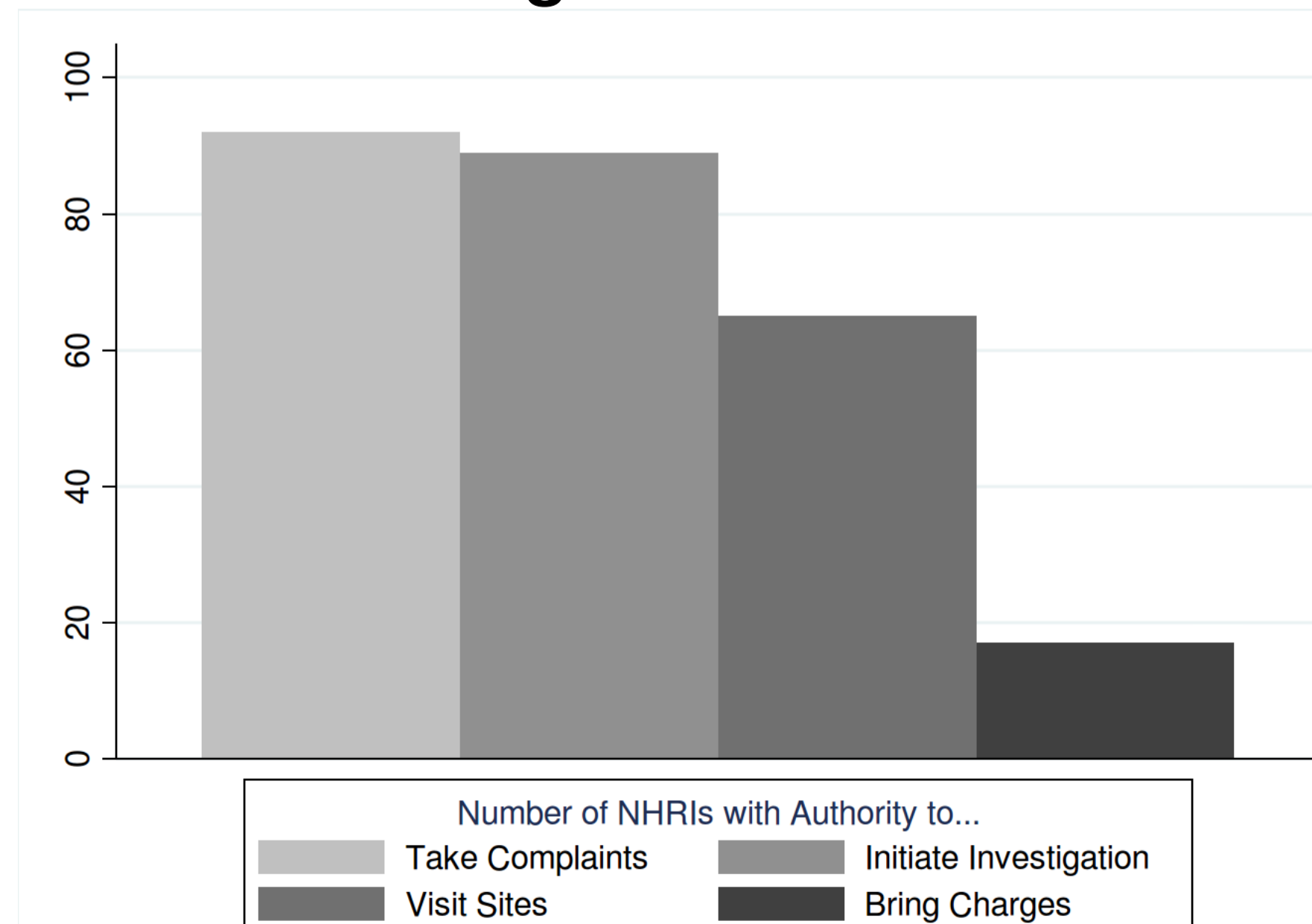
NHRI Institutional Data

These are cross-sectional data on the emergence of NHRIs, their design, and the extent to which they are independent of and accountable to governments. These data focus on the *de jure* responsibilities and abilities of NHRIs. The unit of observation is the NHRI. These data are collected.

The **Institutional Data** include information on...

- ICC Status
- NHRI Office Type
- NHRI Origination Information
- NHRI Stated Objectives
- Scope of NHRI Jurisdiction
- NHRI Relationship to Government Institutions and NGOs
- NHRI Appointment Procedures

Figure 2: Institutions' Jurisdiction



NHRI Behavioral Data

These are annual and event data on the functions and activities of NHRIs, which fall into two main categories: (1) the hearing of a complaint, and (2) the execution of an initiative. These data focus on the *de facto* responsibilities and abilities of NHRIs. Data are collected at two units of observation: event (when the NHRI reports on an individual case) and annual (when complaints or initiatives are aggregated by the NHRI).

- **Complaint:** A formal declaration made to an NHRI, by an individual or group, that alleges a violation of human rights as defined in international and/or national law.
- **Initiative:** NHRIs monitor human rights conditions, educate and train potential violators, and engage in other activities to improve human rights conditions.

The **Behavioral Data** include information on...

- Complaint(s)
- Complainant(s)
- Victim(s)
- Agencies of Abuse
- Outcomes of Complaint(s)
- Types of Initiative(s)
- Targets of Initiative(s)
- Outcomes of Initiative(s)