

ENGLISH ESPAÑOL



Freedom in the World 2020

Venezuela

16

/100

NOT FREE

<u>Political Rights</u>	2 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	14 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

19 /100 **Not Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)



Overview

Venezuela's democratic institutions have deteriorated since 1999, but conditions have grown sharply worse in recent years due to the continued concentration of power in the executive and harsher crackdowns on the opposition. The authorities have closed off virtually all channels for political dissent, restricting civil liberties and prosecuting perceived opponents without regard for due process. The country's severe humanitarian crisis has left millions struggling to meet basic needs, and driven mass emigration. Government corruption is pervasive, and law enforcement has proven unable to halt violent crime.

Key Developments in 2019

- The Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ) swore in Nicolás Maduro as president in January, following his victory in a snap 2018 election that failed to meet minimum international standards and was widely condemned as illegitimate.
- In January, Venezuela's democratically elected National Assembly declared its head, Juan Guaidó, to be Venezuela's interim president as a constitutional response to Maduro's reelection in the previous year's flawed poll. Guaidó has since received the backing of more than 50 countries, including the United States. Maduro, who has consolidated power over most Venezuelan institutions, and is backed by the country's powerful military and international patrons including Cuba and Russia, has refused to relinquish power.
- The first half of 2019 saw mass demonstrations by those who backed Guaidó's presidential proclamation, notably in January and May. Security forces and allied armed groups responded with violence, and dozens of protest-related deaths were reported. Mass arbitrary detentions of demonstrators took place at the larger protests.
- In September, Maduro's United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) announced that it would end a three-year boycott of the National

Assembly, and that its legislators would take their seats. Analysts suggested that the move was a sign that Maduro might seek to win control of the body by calling for new congressional elections in 2020. The National Constituent Assembly, the progovernment body effectively created by Maduro to supplant the opposition-controlled National Assembly, continued to function as a parallel legislative body serving to empower Maduro.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

0 / 4

The president serves six-year terms. Since 2009, neither the president nor other elected officials have been subject to term limits.

In January 2019, incumbent president Nicolás Maduro was sworn in for a new term after winning the 2018 snap presidential election. The poll saw record-low turnout, with only 46 percent of voters participating—a sharp decline from the nearly 80 percent who participated in the 2013 presidential election. The poll had been initially planned for December 2018, but was moved up to April and then ultimately to May by the National Constituent Assembly, the progovernment body elected through an undemocratic process that in 2017 supplanted the opposition-controlled National Assembly elected two years before. The decision to hold the poll early was widely criticized as a move to benefit Maduro by leaving a crippled and divided opposition little time to coalesce around a unity candidate, and by holding the vote before already dire economic conditions could worsen. Leading opposition figures, including Leopoldo López and Henrique Capriles, were

barred from competing. Maduro sought to intimidate voters by insisting that they present the so-called Fatherland ID card—the special identity card required to receive subsidized food and other services—at government-run booths near polling places. This drove a perception that those who did not vote could see aid revoked. By most international accounts, the election lacked even a veneer of competitiveness.

In January 2019, Venezuela’s democratically elected National Assembly declared its head, Juan Guaidó, to be Venezuela’s interim president as a constitutional response to Maduro’s reelection via a poll that failed to meet minimum international standards and was widely condemned as illegitimate. Guaidó has since received the backing of more than 50 countries, including the United States. At year’s end, Maduro—who holds widespread support among the country’s military and has maintained tight control of the country’s institutions—remained in power.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	0 / 4
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The unicameral, 167-seat National Assembly is popularly elected for five-year terms, using a mix of majoritarian and proportional-representation voting. Three seats are reserved for indigenous representatives. In the 2015 elections, the opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) coalition won 109 seats, while the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) took 55. Subsequent government challenges against certain opposition victories deprived the MUD of a two-thirds majority.

The TSJ repeatedly nullified legislation passed by the National Assembly during 2016, and in 2017 the Maduro administration effectively replaced it with the National Constituent Assembly, a new body elected through an undemocratic process and comprised entirely of regime loyalists. Elections to the new assembly did not give voters the option to reject its establishment,

were widely derided as unconstitutional, and were dismissed by the opposition, which boycotted the vote.

The National Constituent Assembly is formally tasked with drafting a new constitution, but in practice has functioned as a parallel legislative body serving to empower Maduro. Its continued operations in 2019 reinforced its de facto replacement of the legitimate National Assembly.

In September 2019, the PSUV announced that it would end a three-year boycott of the National Assembly, and that its legislators would take their seats. Analysts suggested that the move was a sign that Maduro might seek to win control of the body by calling for new congressional elections in 2020.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

0 / 4

Venezuela's electoral system is subject to political manipulation and institutional interference in favor of the ruling party. The National Electoral Council (CNE) consists of five members, four of whom are openly aligned with the PSUV. The CNE rarely finds that the ruling party has violated any rules, leading to a system in which the opposition is heavily regulated, while the government is unconstrained. After the National Constituent Assembly was created in 2017, it assumed the National Assembly's constitutional role of selecting and confirming members of the CNE. In addition, the National Constituent Assembly has taken over certain CNE functions, including setting election dates. In May 2019, Maduro indicated a desire to hold elections to the weakened National Assembly—headed by opposition leader Juan Guaidó—in 2019 instead of 2020, but ultimately backed away from the idea.

Recent polls have been characterized by authorities' failure to uphold internationally recognized standards for free and fair elections. Presidential and legislative contests alike have seen disqualifications of prominent

opposition candidates, government abuse of public resources, uneven access to the state-dominated media, the diminished presence of international observers, intimidation of state employees, and gerrymandering in favor of the ruling party.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

0 / 4

Opposition leaders are harassed, attacked, imprisoned, and otherwise impeded from participating in political processes or leading political parties in peaceful activities. Since 2015, at least 30 of the 112 elected opposition deputies of the National Assembly, including its current president, have been stripped of their parliamentary immunity or have suffered other legal retaliation, with most such instances taking place in 2018 and 2019.

In 2019, the government cracked down on Guaidó's allies following the democratically elected National Assembly's declaration that Guaidó would serve as Venezuela's interim president. In March, his chief of staff, Roberto Marrero, was arrested at his home; accused of terrorism, he remained in custody at year's end. Edgar Zambrano, vice president of the National Assembly, was among 17 people arrested in May for alleged participation in an attempt to oust Maduro. His family was denied permission to visit him, though were eventually permitted after Zambrano launched a hunger strike that lasted 10 days. Zambrano was eventually released in September, but the charges against him stand.

Additionally, six military and police officials were detained in June on allegations of participating in another plot against Maduro. One of them, navy officer Rafael Acosta, died in custody in late June, with Guaidó, the US State Department, and journalists who had viewed autopsy records attributing his death to torture. In late December 2019, Maduro ordered the arrest of two opposition deputies, Janet Fernández and Fernando Orozco, for being part of an alleged conspiracy against his presidency.

Separately, Leopoldo López, founder of two opposition parties, remained in effective confinement at year's end, having taken refuge in the house of the Spanish ambassador to Venezuela after escaping from house arrest in April 2019.

From June 19 to June 21, 2019, the UN high commissioner for human rights, Michelle Bachelet, was permitted to visit Venezuela. The resulting report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) stated that the Venezuelan government and institutions, over the last decade, had implemented a strategy “aimed at neutralizing, repressing, and criminalizing political opponents and people critical of the government.” It added that “as of 31 May 2019, 793 people remained arbitrarily deprived of their liberty,” and concluded that government forces employed torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against political prisoners to “extract information and confessions, intimidate, and punish.” The report added that “these practices include electric shocks, suffocation with plastic bags, waterboarding, beatings, sexual violence, water and food deprivation, stress positions, and exposure to extreme temperatures.”

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

0 / 4

While discontent with the Maduro administration remains widespread, the government has cut off virtually all avenues for political change. After pushing through the de facto replacement of the National Assembly with the

National Constituent Assembly in 2017, Maduro in 2018 ensured that no publicly known opposition figure would be able to challenge him in the 2018 presidential election. Opposition parties that had boycotted the 2017 municipal elections due to the unjust conditions were banned by the National Constituent Assembly from competing under their names in the presidential election, prompting the opposition MUD coalition to declare a boycott of the process. Opposition parties also boycotted the December 2018 municipal elections, in which just 27 percent of voters participated. In 2019, Maduro maintained his grip on power following the democratically elected National Assembly's decision to name Guaidó interim president.

Both Lopez and Henrique Capriles, a prominent opposition figure and former governor of Miranda State, remain banned from holding public office.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

0 / 4

The Maduro regime increasingly relies on the military, paramilitary forces, and opaque support from foreign states in order to retain political power.

Military leaders have taken control of numerous offices and have increased their own political and economic power, evolving into one of the most important groups inside of Maduro's coalition of power. In addition, in 2019 Maduro continued to strengthen the Bolivarian Militia, a civilian militia group established by the late president Hugo Chávez Frías in 2008 to support the military; the group had over 3 million members in 2019, according to the government. In August, a contingent of the group was incorporated into the National Guard, one of the four components of Venezuela's National Armed Forces, and in November, Maduro announced the distribution of more than 321,000 rifles to militia members tasked with patrolling the streets as part of the government's Christmas security plan. In December, the government announced that the National Constituent Assembly would discuss legislation

to officially consider the militia the fifth component of the military. Meanwhile, the OHCHR report released following Bachelet's visit to Venezuela warned that "state institutions have been steadily militarized over the past decade."

Separately, irregular, state-affiliated armed groups known as *colectivos* routinely commit acts of violence against civilians, particularly at antigovernment protests, and carry out government efforts to intimidate voters. The OHCHR attributed a number of deaths that occurred during protests between January and May 2019 to *colectivos*.

Maduro's government has become increasingly dependent on foreign allies to keep power, particularly Russia and Cuba. In 2019, Russian media outlets reported planned government investments of over \$1 billion into Venezuela's oil and mining industries, providing critical support to the regime during a time of severe economic crisis.

Cuba has significant influence over the military. In August 2019, a Reuters report revealed that Chávez and late Cuban president Fidel Castro had signed agreements in 2008 to allow Cuba's armed forces to "train soldiers in Venezuela, review and restructure parts of the Venezuelan military, train Venezuelan intelligence agents in Havana, and change the intelligence service's mission from spying on foreign rivals to surveilling the country's own soldiers, officers, and even senior commanders." The revelations indicated that Cuban influence is prominent in Venezuela's Directorate General of Military Counterintelligence, which has been accused of torture, political espionage, and arbitrary detentions. Security experts interviewed by Reuters called the agreements crucial in establishing the military backing for Maduro that has helped him survive challenges to his power.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because the Maduro regime has increasingly relied on the military, paramilitary forces, and opaque support from foreign states in order to retain political power in recent years.

B4 0-4 pts

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Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

2 / 4

While several women hold senior positions in government, the general underrepresentation of women in politics contributes to a lack of policy discussions about issues that primarily affect women, such as gender-based violence. Discrimination against LGBT+ Venezuelans impacts their ability to engage in political and electoral processes. The government has professed support for the rights of indigenous people, but in practice they too lack meaningful political representation. Some indigenous leaders have been impeded from running for office and others have been targeted by government stigmatization campaigns.

The de facto replacement of the National Assembly with the progovernment National Constituent Assembly in 2017 effectively erased constitutional protections designed to ensure political representation for indigenous and other groups.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

0 / 4

Venezuela does not function as a representative democracy. The opposition-controlled legislature has had no practical ability to carry out its constitutional mandate since the 2015 elections, and since August 2017 has been supplanted by a body packed with regime loyalists who were elected under undemocratic conditions. While the National Assembly was never formally dissolved, the new National Constituent Assembly granted itself sweeping legislative powers, essentially leaving the old assembly with no functional role.

Military officials, many of them in active service, occupy a number of top positions in government ministries and state-level administrations, and the armed forces perform routine government duties.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	0 / 4
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Corruption is rampant in Venezuela. The government’s economic policies—particularly its currency and price controls—offer significant opportunities for black-market activity and collusion between public officials and organized crime networks, while exacerbating the effects of the economic crisis for poor and middle-class Venezuelans.

The United States, Canada, Panama, the European Union (EU), and others continue to sanction Venezuelan officials for corruption and other offenses that go uninvestigated in Venezuela. For example, in July 2019, three stepsons of Maduro and 13 companies were sanctioned by the United States for skimming funds from “overvalued contracts.” Among them were contracts involving the state food distribution program, a critical lifeline for the millions of Venezuelans affected by food shortages, which officials often exploit for political ends.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	0 / 4
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There is virtually no transparency regarding government spending. Maduro’s regime has consistently failed to publish vital economic data, including monthly inflation statistics. In 2017, President Maduro fired the health minister after the ministry published data confirming a dramatic rise in maternal and infant mortality.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	1 / 4
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Venezuela’s independent journalists operate within a highly restrictive regulatory and legal environment, and risk arrest and physical violence in connection with their work. By the end of 2019, most of the country’s independent newspapers had shut down or moved to an exclusively digital format, where they are subject to frequent blocking, often at times of heightened political tension. (Venezuelan journalists have pointed to the government’s control over newsprint as hastening the decline of print publications in the country.)

Restrictions on online news outlets are mainly implemented by CANTV, the state-run telephone and internet service provider that owns most communications infrastructure, but also by private internet service providers (ISPs). Independent media outlets such as El Pitazo, NTN24 , VIVOplay, VPItv, and La Patilla are among those recently subject to blocking.

Obstruction, intimidation, physical attacks, confiscations of equipment, and detentions and arrests of media workers continued in 2019. There were more than 35 arbitrary detentions of journalists in the first two months of the year alone, according to the National Press Workers’ Union. Among those arrested was Luis Carlos Díaz, arrested for “instigation to commit crimes” in an investigation related to severe blackouts the country suffered in March. He was released under the condition to appear before court every eight days.

A 2017 hate-speech law approved by the National Constituent Assembly mandates fines and up to 20 years' imprisonment for anyone who disseminates information deemed "intolerant" via traditional or social media. The law also allows authorities greater legal grounds to block digital content deemed to be in violation.

The Maduro government maintains a state communications infrastructure used to propagate its political and ideological program. By August, Maduro had made 146 televised appearances in 2019, accumulating more than 1,900 since he took office in 2013. (In contrast, live-streamed speeches by Guaidó were frequently blocked.)

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

3 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom are generally respected, though tensions between the government and the Roman Catholic Church remain high. Government relations with the small Jewish community have also been strained at times.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?

1 / 4

Academic freedom has come under mounting pressure since *chavismo* arrived to power. A school curriculum developed by Chávez government emphasizes socialist concepts. Budget cuts and other funding problems have undermined universities' autonomy and prompted an exodus of academics from the country. The number of students abandoning their studies has increased in turn. In March 2019, the government refused to transfer funds to pay the teachers of public universities if their institutions failed to formally recognize Maduro as president.

In August 2019, the Supreme Court of Justice suspended the head of the Central University of Venezuela (UCV), the biggest and highest-ranked university in the country, changed the voting rules, and ordered elections at nine public universities considered opposition strongholds. Under the directive, if elections are not held within six months of the decision, the court will choose the new authorities. The same month, Maduro assigned César Trómpiz, a close ally, to lead the cabinet bureau responsible for university education; Trómpiz, was tasked with putting the education system “at the service of the greater interests of the nation.”

Students and faculty perceived as holding antigovernment views face harassment and attacks. In February, when the government started to collect signatures against US intervention and in support of chavismo, a group of students of the University of the Armed Forces were threatened with expulsion if they failed to sign. The nongovernmental organization Aula Abierta in a June 2019 report documented at least 15 attacks, including threats and instances of physical assault, against students and professors who sought to defend human rights at their institutions. The body of student Alí Domínguez was found in March after he had denounced corruption at the Bolivarian University of Venezuela, where many faculty members are government supporters. The Venezuelan Education–Action Program on Human Rights (PROVEA) reported that his body showed skull trauma and a nasal septum fracture, and some of his teeth were missing.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the Maduro regime has intensified its interference with the operations of the country’s universities, including by replacing their leaders, and because activism at universities has become increasingly unsafe.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?

1 / 4

Authorities' monitoring of citizens' behavior via their use of the Fatherland ID card and through scrutiny of content posted on social media platforms has created a climate of fear. Social media users have been subject to arrest in response to comments posted online, with at least 18 individuals detained since 2014 for opinions expressed on Twitter alone. In June 2019, Karen Palacios, a clarinetist with the National Philharmonic Orchestra, was arrested for 46 days over tweets critical of the government.

With guidance from Chinese company ZTE, authorities have reportedly developed a sophisticated monitoring system linked to the Fatherland ID card that not only allows them to withhold food aid and other services from political opponents, but also enables them to gather vast troves of data on individuals' voting patterns, medical history, and other activity.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	0 / 4
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Freedom of assembly is guaranteed in the constitution, but is not protected in practice. Protesters can be charged with serious crimes under various laws, and demonstrations perceived as directly challenging Maduro's rule are met with violence by police and state-affiliated armed groups. More than 1,900 people were injured and 136 were killed in 2017, when widespread antigovernment protests in the spring and summer gave way to violent clashes with security forces; at least 102 people were apparently killed directly by security forces or state-affiliated colectivos. The first half of 2019 saw mass demonstrations by those who backed Juan Guaidó's presidential proclamation, notably in January and May. State and municipal police and armed colectivos responded with violence, and dozens of protest-related

deaths were recorded. Mass arbitrary detentions accompanied larger protests, with Amnesty International reporting the arbitrary arrest of 770 demonstrators on a single day in January.

Despite the risk of injury and even death, thousands of protests took place throughout the year, most of which focused on discontent with deteriorating economic and social conditions.

E2 0-4 pts

<p>Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?</p>	<p>1 / 4</p>
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Activists and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are routinely harassed, threatened, and subject to legal and administrative sanctions for their work. Dozens of civil society activists have been physically attacked in recent years. In recent years, the government has focused mainly on attempting to delegitimize these organizations by accusing them of conspiring with foreign governments.

E3 0-4 pts

<p>Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?</p>	<p>1 / 4</p>
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Workers are legally entitled to form unions, bargain collectively, and strike, with some restrictions on public-sector workers' ability to strike. Control of unions has shifted from traditional opposition-allied labor leaders to new workers' organizations that are often aligned with the government. The competition has contributed to a substantial increase in labor violence as well as confusion and delays during industry-wide collective bargaining.

In December 2018, Ruben González, head of the union for workers at the public company Ferrominera de Orinoco, was arrested after a protest on

allegations of violating the union's collective bargaining agreement. His case was heard by a military tribunal, in violation of human rights norms; the court sentenced him to almost six years in prison.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	0 / 4
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Politicization of the judicial branch increased dramatically under Chávez and has progressed further under Maduro. High courts generally do not rule against the government. Political control of the judiciary was reinforced through the appointment of new, regime-loyal judges in 2010 and again in 2015, just before the opposition-controlled National Assembly took office.

In recent years, the TSJ has issued numerous decisions that have bolstered Maduro's power. These include rulings that permitted security forces to break up unsanctioned protests, denied the opposition a supermajority after the 2015 elections by barring three new lawmakers from taking their seats, nullified most legislation passed by the opposition-controlled legislature, and ultimately stripped the National Assembly of its powers, replacing it with a National Constituent Assembly that was elected through a profoundly undemocratic process and is composed entirely of regime loyalists.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	0 / 4
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Opponents of the government and ruling party are routinely detained and prosecuted without regard for due process. In recent years, the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) has increasingly carried out policing functions and arrested opposition politicians and journalists without informing

the Public Ministry or presenting official charges. The military has also assumed roles previously reserved for civilian law enforcement institutions, and foreign governments allege that the military has adopted a permissive attitude toward drug trafficking. According to Venezuelan human rights groups, hundreds of civilians have been tried in military court proceedings since 2017.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?

0 / 4

Venezuela's violent crime rates rank among the highest in the world. Statistics for 2018 released by the Venezuelan Violence Observatory (OVV) placed the country's homicide rate at 81.4 per 100,000 people. The investigative organization Insight Crime, which collects regional crime statistics, said that figure made Venezuela the most dangerous country in Latin America by a wide margin. Venezuela also ranked second-to-last of all countries surveyed in Gallup's 2019 Global Law and Order report, with only 26 percent of Venezuelan respondents saying they felt safe walking at night.

Prison conditions in Venezuela remain among the worst in the Americas. *Pranes*, or gang leaders who operate from prisons, freely coordinate criminal networks throughout Venezuela.

The police and military have been prone to corruption, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The OHCHR, in its July 2019 report on Venezuela, said there had been at least 2,124 deaths during security operations in the first five months of 2019. It further asked the government to dissolve the special forces unit known as FAES, whose members, it said, stand accused of a "shockingly high" number of extrajudicial executions during security operations.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

1 / 4

The rights of indigenous people, who make up 2.5 percent of the population, are upheld by the constitution but poorly protected by authorities. The July 2019 OHCHR report said the economic and social rights of indigenous people had been disproportionately affected by the humanitarian situation. The report singled out as particularly troubling mining activities in the state of Bolivar, which have brought about violations of collective rights, including the right to maintain customs, traditional ways of life, and a spiritual relationship with their land. The OHCHR also documented seven instances of deadly violence against indigenous people in the first five months of 2019. These included at least three deaths during a military operation in a community populated largely by members of the Pemón indigenous group. These events prompted an exodus of more than 900 Pemón to Brazil, with most of those who fled indicating that they would not return to Venezuela due to the fear of persecution.

Although discrimination based on sexual orientation is barred, LGBT+ Venezuelans face widespread intolerance and are occasionally subjected to violence. Segments of the population that were already disadvantaged or marginalized have suffered disproportionately from Venezuela's economic and health crises. People living with HIV/AIDS have suffered due to the government's decision to stop subsidizing antiretroviral drugs.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

2 / 4

The country's currency controls and other economic policies, combined with an enormous decline in the number of flights to and from Venezuela, and periodic border closures, have made it extremely difficult for Venezuelans to travel abroad. Nevertheless, Venezuelans of all social classes continued to flee the country in massive numbers in 2019. In June, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) announced that the total number of emigrants had surpassed 4 million, with 1 million of those having left since November 2018.

G2 0-4 pts

<p>Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?</p>	<p>1 / 4</p>
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Property rights have been affected by years of price controls, nationalizations, overregulation, and corruption. Accusations of mismanagement, underinvestment, graft, and politicized hiring practices within state-owned enterprises are common.

G3 0-4 pts

<p>Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?</p>	<p>2 / 4</p>
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Individuals enjoy broad freedom in their interpersonal and romantic relationships and in their personal appearance.

The politically driven economic collapse in Venezuela has reduced the availability of reproductive health care. Maternal and infant mortality has increased due to a lack of skilled birth attendants and medical supplies, and to poor hospital conditions. While data on the matter is limited, a contraceptives shortage is likely related to an increase in pregnancies among young women and teenage girls. Due to restrictive legislation on abortion,

many women and girls resort to clandestine abortions that are frequently unsanitary and unsafe. Those with means must travel abroad to access legal and safe abortions.

Women relatives of political prisoners are subjected to sexual and gender-based violence and humiliation during visits in detention centers, security operations, and house raids. Women who have been political prisoners have referred to attacks by security forces including sexual violence, threats of rape, and forced nudity.

A 2007 law was designed to combat violence against women, but domestic violence and rape remain common and are rarely punished in practice. Same-sex marriage still is not legal in Venezuela.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the combination of restrictive abortion laws and a politically driven economic collapse have led to sharp increases in maternal and infant mortality in recent years, and because dissidents and their relatives have been subjected to sexual violence by security forces.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

0 / 4

Venezuelan women and children are increasingly vulnerable to sex trafficking within Venezuela and in neighboring countries, as well as in Europe, with the problem exacerbated by worsening economic conditions. Migrants to Venezuela have also been subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. The government has reportedly done little to combat human trafficking.

With job opportunities growing scarce and wages not keeping up with hyperinflation, more citizens have turned to jobs in the informal economy, where they are more exposed to dangerous or exploitative working

conditions. Among businesses that are legally registered, sanctions for labor law violations, when levied, generally target private-sector operations, and not those that are state-run.



On Venezuela

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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

16 / 100 Not Free

Internet Freedom Score

30 / 100 Not Free

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