

# Cabo Verde

FREE

**92**  
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	<b>38</b> /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	<b>54</b> /60

**LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS****90 /100    Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



# Overview

Cabo Verde is a stable democracy with competitive elections and periodic transfers of power between rival parties. Civil liberties are generally protected, but access to justice is impaired by an overburdened court system, and crime remains a concern. Other outstanding problems include persistent inequities for women and migrant workers.

## Key Developments in 2019

- In November, the parliament adopted new legislation that instituted a 40 percent gender quota for candidate lists in future national and local elections.
- In December, the government announced it would expand a camera surveillance system on the islands of São Vicente, Sal, and Boa Vista. While observers voiced privacy concerns when the system was introduced in Praia and three other cities in 2017, police claim the system helped solve several hundred crimes in Praia.
- In August, the government formed the Corruption Prevention Council (CPC), which is meant to identify areas of the economy that are vulnerable to corruption and evaluate the effectiveness of existing anticorruption efforts.

## Political Rights

### A. Electoral Process

**A1** 0-4 pts

<b>Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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The president is directly elected for up to two consecutive five-year terms. The prime minister, who holds most executive authority, is nominated by and accountable to the

National Assembly, and is formally appointed by the president.

Incumbent president Jorge Carlos Fonseca of the Movement for Democracy (MpD) was reelected in late 2016 with 74 percent of the vote. His main challenger was independent candidate Albertino Graça, who took about 23 percent. The voting was generally considered free and fair. Ulisses Correia e Silva, also of the MpD, was appointed as prime minister in early 2016, a month after legislative elections.

**A2** 0-4 pts

<b>Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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Members of the 72-seat National Assembly are directly elected in multimember constituencies to serve five-year terms. In the 2016 legislative election, the MpD, then in opposition, won 40 seats. The governing African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde (PAICV) was reduced to 29 seats, and the Democratic and Independent Cabo Verdean Union (UCID) took 3. International observers assessed the elections as largely free and fair.

**A3** 0-4 pts

<b>Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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The legal framework provides for fair and competitive elections. The National Elections Commission (CNE), whose members are elected by a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, is generally considered impartial.

## **B. Political Pluralism and Participation**

**B1** 0-4 pts

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**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?**

**4/4**

There are no significant impediments to the formation and competition of political parties. A number of different parties are active, though only the PAICV and the MpD have held power at the national level.

**B2** 0-4 pts

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

**4/4**

The opposition has a realistic opportunity to gain power through elections. There have been three democratic transfers of power between the PAICV and the MpD since independence in 1975, the most recent in 2016.

**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?**

**4/4**

The political choices of voters and candidates are free from undue external influence. However, there were some reports of vote buying and of voters being pressured near polling stations during the 2016 elections.

**B4** 0-4 pts

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

**4/4**

Women have full and equal political rights, and have become more involved in politics in the last decade. Nevertheless, traditional social constraints have somewhat impaired their participation, with women holding 25 percent of the parliament's seats and 29 percent of municipal assembly seats. In November 2019, the National Assembly adopted the Gender Parity Law, which introduced a 40 percent gender quota for candidate lists at the national and local levels.

*Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to increased political participation by women over the last decade, as well as the introduction of new gender quotas.*

## C. Functioning of Government

**C1** 0-4 pts

<b>Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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The prime minister and cabinet determine the policies of the government, under the supervision of the National Assembly and the president. The government is able to implement laws and policies without undue interference from unelected entities.

**C2** 0-4 pts

<b>Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?</b>	<b>3/4</b>
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Cabo Verde has relatively low levels of corruption overall, but bribery and nepotism are problems at the municipal level. Allegations of graft have surrounded costly infrastructure projects and other spending measures in recent years. In August 2019, the government formed the CPC, which is tasked with identifying areas vulnerable to corruption and evaluating the effectiveness of current anticorruption efforts. The new body is designed to operate independently of Cabo Verdean prosecutors and investigators.

**C3** 0-4 pts

**Does the government operate with openness and transparency?**

**3/4**

The current government has taken a number of steps to improve transparency, including the publication of more information about state operations and finances online. The government generally adheres to legal guarantees of public access to information. However, many officeholders fail to comply with rules requiring them to declare their personal assets and income. A PAICV-backed bill that would have forced government agencies to publish more information online was rejected by legislators in October 2019.

## **Civil Liberties**

### **D. Freedom of Expression and Belief**

**D1** 0-4 pts

**Are there free and independent media?**

**4/4**

Press freedom is guaranteed by law and generally respected in practice, though Article 105 of the electoral code prohibits media organizations from disseminating opinions on or criticism of parties and candidates after a certain date during a campaign period. Publicly and privately owned media outlets are largely free of government control. Most Cabo Verdeans use television to keep informed; in August 2019, the Cabo Verde National Statistics Institute (INECV) reported that 82 percent of residents use that medium, with most viewers watching publicly owned Radio and Television of Cabo Verde (RTC). According to the INECV, 42 percent of residents

additionally listen to radio stations including Rádio Cabo Verde, Rádio Nova, and Rádio Crioula.

The main constraints affecting the media are economic. Precarious finances at many outlets undermine journalists' job security and their ability to undertake investigative reporting projects. In recent years, the government has reduced advertising in private print outlets, compounding an already difficult situation. A lack of funding has contributed to the closure of a number of privately owned newspapers, decreasing the diversity of information in the print sector.

RTC journalists were previously subject to a strict code of ethics, but the country's Regulatory Authority for Social Communication (ARC) ruled in June 2019 that the code violated journalists' freedom of expression. In response to the ruling, RTC suspended the code later that month.

*Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because there have been no significant undue restrictions on the flow of news and information in recent years, and because a restrictive code of conduct that applied to some Cabo Verdean journalists was rescinded in 2019.*

**D2** 0-4 pts

<b>Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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The constitution establishes the separation of church and state, though the Roman Catholic Church receives some privileges, such as the recognition of Catholic marriages under civil law. While all religious groups are required to register with the Justice Ministry to obtain tax and other benefits, the process is not restrictive, and there are no limitations on freedom of worship.

**D3** 0-4 pts

<b>Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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Academic freedom is respected, and the educational system is not affected by political indoctrination.

**D4** 0-4 pts

<b>Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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There are no significant constraints on individuals' freedom of expression. The government is not known to engage in online surveillance or improper monitoring of personal communications.

## **E. Associational and Organizational Rights**

**E1** 0-4 pts

<b>Is there freedom of assembly?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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Freedom of assembly is legally guaranteed and observed in practice. Several demonstrations took place in 2019. On July 5, the day Cabo Verde celebrates its independence from Portugal, several thousand people called for greater autonomy in a rally on the island of São Vicente. In a mid-August rally, coffee growers called for the renegotiation of debts and adjustments to coffee prices.

**E2** 0-4 pts

<b>Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely in the country, focusing on a variety of social, economic, environmental, and cultural issues.

International human rights institutions, local organizations, and journalists are able to monitor prison conditions and other human rights indicators without government interference.

**E3** 0-4 pts

<b>Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?</b>	<b>3/4</b>
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The constitution protects the right to unionize, and workers may form and join unions in practice. However, the government restricts the right to strike in broadly defined essential industries, and formal collective bargaining is reportedly uncommon in the private sector. Despite those restrictions, workers in the public and private sectors held strikes in 2019; staff at the National Institute of Meteorology and Geophysics (INMG) held an action in late February over the loss of a productivity bonus, while Praia firefighters held a two-day strike in early July over the lack of hazard pay.

## **F. Rule of Law**

**F1** 0-4 pts

<b>Is there an independent judiciary?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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The judiciary is independent, though the courts are overburdened and understaffed. In September 2019, the Superior Council of the Judiciary (CSMJ) reported that 18 new judges were recruited during the year in an effort to address understaffing.

**F2** 0-4 pts

<b>Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?</b>	<b>3/4</b>
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Police and prosecutors generally observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. Defense attorneys are provided to indigent defendants. However, due to the limited capacity of the court system, there are often delays in detainees' first hearings before a judge, and many cases are dropped because defendants in detention are denied a timely trial. In February 2019, the Bar Association for the Sal and Boa Vista Region launched a legal aid program that placed 21 volunteer lawyers in courthouses on those islands, in an effort to ensure speedier justice there.

**F3** 0-4 pts

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

**4/4**

Law enforcement officials are sometimes accused of excessive force, but perpetrators are often investigated and punished by oversight bodies.

Cabo Verde is generally free of major crime or unrest, with the country's murder rate falling for four years in a row; the government reported 34 murders in 2019, a slight decline from the 37 reported in 2018. Nevertheless, violent crime does occur; in July 2019, the mayor of Praia was shot and wounded after two assailants attacked him near a gym; the assailants remained at large at year's end. In addition, street crime and smuggling are perceived as consistent problems.

In 2017, the government permitted Chinese technology firm Huawei to install surveillance cameras in Praia and three other cities as part of its Safe City project. While observers voiced privacy concerns, the government has maintained its support for the program. In February 2019, the National Police (PN) reported that the camera system helped solve 900 cases in Praia since its installation. In December, the government announced that it would expand the program on the islands of São Vicente, Sal, and Boa Vista.

Prison conditions are poor and often overcrowded, but the government has been working to improve conditions, which includes changes in legislation, the implementation of a social reintegration program for prisoners, and the construction of more cells and bathrooms.

**F4** 0-4 pts

<b>Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?</b>	<b>3/4</b>
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Gender discrimination is prohibited by law, but wage discrimination and unequal access to education persist for women. No comprehensive antidiscrimination legislation exists for the entire population. Immigrants often face discriminatory treatment by employers.

Same-sex relations are not criminalized, and the law provides protections against job discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, LGBT+ people are reportedly subjected to physical violence and verbal abuse.

## **G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights**

**G1** 0-4 pts

<b>Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?</b>	<b>4/4</b>
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Individual freedom of movement is recognized by law, and there are no significant restrictions in practice. People may freely change their place of employment or education.

**G2** 0-4 pts

<b>Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?</b>	<b>3/4</b>
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Property rights are generally respected. The legal framework and government policies are supportive of private business activity, though obstacles such as corruption and legal and bureaucratic inefficiency remain a concern. Small and medium-size businesses are one of the main sources of income for families whose members are not directly employed in the public services.

**G3** 0-4 pts

<b>Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?</b>	<b>3/4</b>
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Personal social freedoms are generally protected, including in matters of marriage and family law. Authorities enforce laws against rape and domestic abuse, but such violence remains a serious problem, and insufficient public resources are dedicated to supporting and protecting victims.

Same-sex marriages are not recognized.

**G4** 0-4 pts

<b>Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?</b>	<b>3/4</b>
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The law prohibits forced labor and other exploitative practices, and the government actively enforces such safeguards in the formal sector. However, 43 percent of the Cabo Verdean workforce operates outside of the sector according to an October 2019 report from the public National Statistics Institute (INE), consequently lacking paid leave or social security support.

Immigrant workers who lack employment contracts remain vulnerable to abuses, and children are reportedly exposed to sex trafficking and illegal work in agriculture or domestic service. In June 2019, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child warned that minors and adolescents in Cabo Verde were vulnerable to sexual abuse, prostitution, and child pornography.

## On Cabo Verde

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### Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

**92/100** Free

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2019
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