



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2020

Norway

100

FREE

/100

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

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

100 /100 **Free**

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



Overview

Norway is one of the most robust democracies in the world. Elections are free and fair, and power regularly rotates between parties. Civil liberties are respected, with independent media and civil society actors holding the government to account. Discrimination against Roma and other minorities remains a problem.

Key Developments in 2019

- The governing Conservative and opposition Labour parties both faltered in local elections in September. The Green, Red, Socialist Left, and Centre parties saw increases in voter support.
- A neo-Nazi sympathizer attempted to attack a mosque in the southwestern municipality of Bærum after murdering his sibling in August. The mosque attack was unsuccessful, and the assailant was charged with murder and attempted murder; his case was ongoing at year's end.

In October, Norway's welfare agency was found to have misinterpreted EU rules when it denied benefits to recipients traveling abroad since at least 2012; least 48 were wrongfully imprisoned on charges of welfare fraud during this period.

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?

4/4

The constitutional monarch, currently King Harald V, appoints the prime minister, who is the leader of the majority party or coalition in the parliament. While the

monarch is officially the head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, his duties are largely ceremonial. The prime minister, Conservative Party leader Erna Solberg, took office in 2013 and received a new mandate following her center-right coalition's victory in the 2017 general election.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	4/4
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Norway's unicameral parliament, the Storting, has 169 members who are directly elected for four-year terms through a system of proportional representation in multimember districts.

An election monitoring mission from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that the 2017 elections were well conducted, offering notable praise for the country's early voting mechanisms. However, the mission found that visually impaired voters experienced some difficulties. The opposition Labour Party led the voting with 49 seats, followed by the ruling Conservatives with 45 seats, the right-wing populist Progress Party with 27, the Centre Party with 19, the Socialist Left Party with 11, the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party with 8 each, and the Green Party and Red Party with 1 each. The Conservatives renewed their governing coalition with the Progress Party, and the Liberal Party joined the bloc in early 2018. The coalition gained a parliamentary majority when the Christian Democrats joined in January 2019.

Local council and municipal elections were held in September 2019. Support for the governing Conservatives fell to their lowest level since the 2003 local elections; the opposition Labour party also faltered, losing its position as the largest party in Oslo and Bergen. The Green, Red, Socialist Left, and Centre parties gained support; the People's Action–No to More Road Tolls (FNB), which was formed in 2014, also did well.

A3 0-4 pts

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

4/4

Elections are regulated by the constitution and the Representation of the People Act of 2002. The National Electoral Committee, whose members are appointed by the king from all parliamentary parties, oversees the conduct of elections with the support of local-level committees. The 2017 OSCE election monitoring mission noted a high degree of public confidence in the country's electoral infrastructure.

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?

4/4

A range of political parties operate freely in Norway.

B2 0-4 pts

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

4/4

Norway has a long history of democratic and peaceful transfers of power after elections. The center-left Labour Party on the one hand, and center-right coalitions led by the Conservatives or the Christian Democrats on the other, have typically rotated in and out of government. Smaller parties wield influence by participating in national and local coalitions.

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

Citizens are generally free from undue interference in their political choices, and no military, foreign, or religious entities exert undemocratic pressure on voters. Public funding is the main source of party revenue, though the 2017 OSCE election monitoring mission noted a sharp increase in private contributions and conveyed concerns that this could allow wealthy donors to acquire undue influence over Norwegian politics.

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 and minority groups enjoy full political rights and electoral opportunities. Women are well represented in Norwegian politics: The posts of prime minister, foreign minister, and finance minister, among others, were held by women in 2019, and 41 percent of parliamentarians were female at year’s end. Minority and LGBT+ interests are addressed through robust antidiscrimination laws and various protections for same-sex couples.

The indigenous Sami population, in addition to participating in the national political process, has its own legislature, the Sameting, which has worked to protect the group’s language and cultural rights and to influence the national government’s decisions about Sami land and resources. The national government has a deputy minister tasked specifically with handling Sami issues.

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?

4/4

The freely elected government and parliament are able to develop and implement policy without undue influence from actors who are not democratically accountable.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

4/4

Provisions of the penal code criminalizing corrupt activity are generally upheld. Official corruption is not viewed as a significant problem in Norway, though cases of corruption have surfaced at major firms in recent years. Norwegian bank DNB faced a money laundering probe in November 2019 after an Icelandic news outlet reported that it was used to route funds from Icelandic fishing company Samherji to shell firms; those funds were allegedly used to bribe Namibian officials.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

4/4

The government generally operates with transparency. Several audits of public grants and other government spending were conducted in 2017, with auditors finding evidence of inadequate management.

The 2006 Freedom of Information Act provides for access to government documents, though it contains exemptions for some information pertaining to national security and foreign policy. Investigative journalists have previously complained that senior government officials use various tactics to avoid or delay inquiries that would expose negligence or wrongdoing.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	4/4
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Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. Norwegians have access to news and commentary from a wide variety of independent outlets. In recent years the courts have grappled with legal questions related to the protection of journalists' sources in criminal cases. In 2017, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that the Norwegian government could not compel journalists to reveal their sources, even if the source had come forward independently.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	4/4
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Freedom of religion is protected by the constitution and generally upheld in practice. However, religiously motivated hate crimes do occur. Norwegian authorities most recently reported 624 hate crimes to the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in 2018; 112 were religiously motivated, while another 15 were separately recorded as acts of anti-Semitism.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	4/4
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Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	4/4
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Private discussion in Norway is free and vibrant.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	4/4
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The right to freedom of assembly is generally respected. There have been tensions in recent years over demonstrations by extremist groups and their potential threat to public security, with some critics calling for far-right marches to be prohibited. In November 2019, Lars Thorson, leader of Stop Islamization of Norway (SIAN), burned a Quran during a rally in Kristiansand, and was physically attacked by a counterprotester. Thorson, his attacker, and four others were detained by police.

Pro-Turkish and pro-Kurdish protesters rallied in Oslo in response to Turkey's military offensive against Kurdish forces in Syria in late October 2019; while many of these demonstrations were peaceful, some protesters clashed, with police using tear gas to disperse them. Seven people were arrested and at least two were injured by the time the clashes subsided.

Other demonstrations were held peacefully in 2019. In mid-May, protesters opposing offshore wind energy projects held nationwide rallies; isolated incidents of vandalism and sabotage were reported. In late May, protesters from environmental group Extinction Rebellion Norway barricaded the entrance to Norway's central bank, calling for its divestment from coal-burning companies.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?	4/4
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Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to form and operate without undue restrictions.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?	4/4
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The right to strike is legally guaranteed—except for members of the military and senior civil servants—and is generally respected in practice. All workers have the right to engage in collective bargaining.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	4/4
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The judiciary is generally considered independent, and the court system, headed by the Supreme Court, operates fairly at the local and national levels. The king appoints judges on the advice of the Judicial Appointments Board, which is composed of legal and judicial professionals as well as representatives of the public.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	4/4
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Law enforcement agencies and the courts generally observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. Criminal defendants have access to counsel at the government's expense, and the principles of due process are typically respected during trial.

In October 2019, labor minister Anniken Hauglie disclosed that the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration (NAV) misinterpreted EU rules on social security when it denied benefits to over 2,400 people who traveled to EU and European Economic Area (EEA) member states since 2012; at least 48 were consequently imprisoned for fraud according to local media reports. Hauglie committed to recompensating those who were previously imprisoned.

F3 0-4 pts

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

4/4

The police are under civilian control, and physical abuse by law enforcement authorities is rare. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

Far-right and extremist violence is a recognized threat in Norway. In August 2019, a neo-Nazi sympathizer murdered his adopted sister, an ethnic Chinese woman, before unsuccessfully attacking a mosque in the southwestern municipality of Bærum. The assailant was arrested and faced murder and attempted murder charges; his case was ongoing at year's end. In December, the national Police Security Service (PST) warned of an increased risk of far-right terrorism.

F4 0-4 pts

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

4/4

The equality and antidiscrimination ombudsman is responsible for enforcing the Gender Equality Act, the Antidiscrimination Act, and other laws designed to protect the basic rights of women, minorities, and other groups at risk of mistreatment.

These laws are generally upheld in practice. The national government also supports Sami-language instruction and media outlets in the relevant regions.

In recent years, the Council of Europe has encouraged Norwegian authorities to address widespread discriminatory attitudes toward Romany communities, and to ensure that Roma have equal access to education and employment. In 2018, the ECHR found that the Norwegian Child Welfare Service violated a Romany woman's rights by denying her contact with a daughter previously removed from her care.

While the number of people seeking refuge in Norway has declined dramatically since 2016, concerns about the refoulement of refugees have persisted, notably with regard to Afghan nationals. In 2018, the Norwegian Institute for Human Rights reported that adolescent asylum seekers received poorer treatment than younger children.

The #MeToo movement has drawn attention to the problem of workplace sexual harassment in Norway since 2017; cases of harassment have since been reported within academia, the arts, and political parties.

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?

4/4

Freedom of movement in Norway is generally respected. People have the ability to change their place of residence, employment, and education. However, some EU- and EEA-born welfare recipients living in Norway reportedly refrained from traveling abroad for fear of losing benefits; in November 2019, local NGO Caritas reported that several thousand were discouraged or stopped from traveling abroad in recent years.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	4/4
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The rights to own property and operate private businesses are established in Norwegian law and upheld in practice.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	4/4
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The government generally does not restrict personal social freedoms. The Gender Equality Act provides equal rights for men and women with respect to marriage, divorce, and other personal status matters.

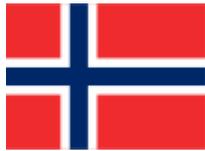
Domestic violence is a problem. In June 2019, Norway's Institute for Human Rights (NIM) estimated that 150,000 people experience domestic violence annually. Later that summer, the government launched a plan of action to combat domestic violence, which included a specific focus on Sami communities.

In 2018, the parliament passed a government-proposed law that bans face coverings, including the niqab and burqa, from teaching environments at all levels of education, effectively placing limits on individuals' choice of dress and personal appearance. The ban did not apply outside classroom settings, for instance during recess or staff meetings.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	4/4
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The principle of equality of opportunity and legal protections against economic exploitation are generally upheld. The government has been active in combating labor and sex trafficking and works to provide services to victims, though the US State Department has recommended that Norwegian authorities increase training and dedicate resources for police, prosecutors, and others responsible for handling trafficking cases.



On Norway

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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

100 / 100 Free

Other Years

2019

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