

Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Compilation of Selected Indices

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This report provides a regional snapshot of the state of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on selected nongovernmental indices that measure democracy worldwide. Using tables and graphs to illustrate regional trends, this report provides a snapshot of democracy indicators from the following sources: (1) Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2024 Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); (2) the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) *Democracy Index* 2024; (3) Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* 2025; and (4) the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-Dem's) Liberal Democracy Index in its *Democracy Report* 2025. Additional resources appear at the end of the report.

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Introduction

For decades, U.S. policy has broadly reflected the view that the spread of democracy around the world is favorable to U.S. interests. The current trajectory of democracy around the world is an issue of interest for Congress, which has generally supported U.S. democracy promotion efforts. This report provides a regional snapshot of the state of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean based on selected nongovernmental organizations' (NGOs') indices that measure democracy worldwide.

For additional information on democracy in the global context, see the following products:

- CRS Report R47890, *Democracy and Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy: Evolution, Tools, and Considerations for Congress*, by Michael A. Weber.
- CRS In Focus IF10795, *Global Human Rights: The Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, by Michael A. Weber.
- [Archived] CRS Report R45344, *Global Trends in Democracy: Background, U.S. Policy, and Issues for Congress*, by Michael A. Weber.

For related information about democracy in Latin American and the Caribbean, see the following products:

- CRS Report R48266, *U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean: FY2025 Appropriations*, by Peter J. Meyer.
- CRS Report 98-684, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Fact Sheet on Leaders and Elections*, by Carla Y. Davis-Castro.

CRS also publishes reports on specific Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Democracy Indices and Source Notes

This report compiles information from the U.S. Department of State and data from the most recent findings of four NGOs' democracy indices, which are each discussed briefly below. Findings from these indices cover developments during calendar year 2024 or earlier and do not reflect more recent events. CRS does not endorse the methodology or accuracy of any particular democracy index. Findings and scores for particular countries may vary across indices for a variety of reasons, including differing coverage periods, methodologies, and subjective expert assessments. (For a discussion about definitions of democracy and critiques of democracy indices, see CRS Report R45344, *Global Trends in Democracy: Background, U.S. Policy, and Issues for Congress*, by Michael A. Weber.)

The following indices are discussed below: (1) Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2024 Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); (2) the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) *Democracy Index 2024*; (3) Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2025*; and (4) the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-Dem's) Liberal Democracy Index in its *Democracy Report 2025*.

Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)

Bertelsmann Stiftung, a private foundation based in Germany, has published the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) biannually since 2006. BTI 2024, which reviews the period of February 2021 through January 2023, includes global, regional and country reports that evaluate the state of democracy, the economy, and governance in 137 developing and transition countries.

The BTI ranks these countries' political transformation using five criteria: (1) stateness, (2) political participation, (3) rule of law, (4) stability of democratic institutions, and (5) political and social integration.¹ The political transformation criteria also determine each country's classification: *democracy in consolidation*, *defective democracy*, *highly defective democracy*, *moderate autocracy*, or *hardline autocracy*.² BTI evaluates all Central and South American nations except for Belize, Guyana, and Suriname. Among Caribbean nations, BTI evaluates Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica.

In its 2024 regional report, BTI finds that “the ongoing political unrest in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean is reflected in the continuing downward drift in the quality of democracy.”⁴ The report adds that despite the measured progress of Honduras and the Dominican Republic, “the BTI 2024 observation period proved to be the most autocratic in the region to date,” naming El Salvador as the most “significant autocratization.”⁵ In its global report, BTI highlights harsher political climates in the region, with “many countries employing a more confrontational style” as well as “creeping state dysfunctionality drawn out over many years” in Mexico and Peru.⁶ On the other hand, the regional report also notes that Latin America and the Caribbean are still home to 16 democracies.⁷

BTI's Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean 2024

“The transformation process in Latin America and the Caribbean ... was marked by contradictory signals and developments.... This reinforces the impression that the region has entered an era of turmoil and is exploring a variety of options, but without any clear vision of its own.”³

Figure 1 shows the global rank and classification of all Central and South American and Caribbean countries according to the Political Transformation Rank, a component of the 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI).

¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Methodology,” accessed March 25, 2025, at <https://bti-project.org/en/methodology>. For political transformation criteria, (1) stateness examines the monopoly on the use of force, state identity, interference of religious dogmas, and basic administration; (2) political participation examines free and fair elections, effective power to govern, association and assembly rights, and freedom of expression; (3) rule of law examines separation of powers, independent judiciary, prosecution of office abuse, and civil rights; (4) stability of democratic institutions examines performance of democratic institutions and commitment of democratic institutions; and (5) political and social integration examines the party system, interest groups, approval of democracy, and social capital.

² Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Methodology,” accessed March 25, 2025, at <https://www.bti-project.org/en/methodology.html>. BTI uses seven threshold values to mark minimum requirements for a democracy: (1) free and fair elections, (2) effective power to govern, (3) association/assembly rights, (4) freedom of expression, (5) separation of powers, (6) civil rights, and (7) monopoly on the use of force and basic administration. BTI classifies a country as an autocracy if any one of seven political transformation indicators falls short of the relevant threshold. BTI considers failing states autocracies. See also Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Regional Dashboard: Latin America and the Caribbean,” accessed January 17, 2025, <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/regional-dashboard/LAC?&cb=00000>.

³ Ariam Macias-Weller and Peter Thiery, *Lost in transformation?—BTI Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, p. 4.

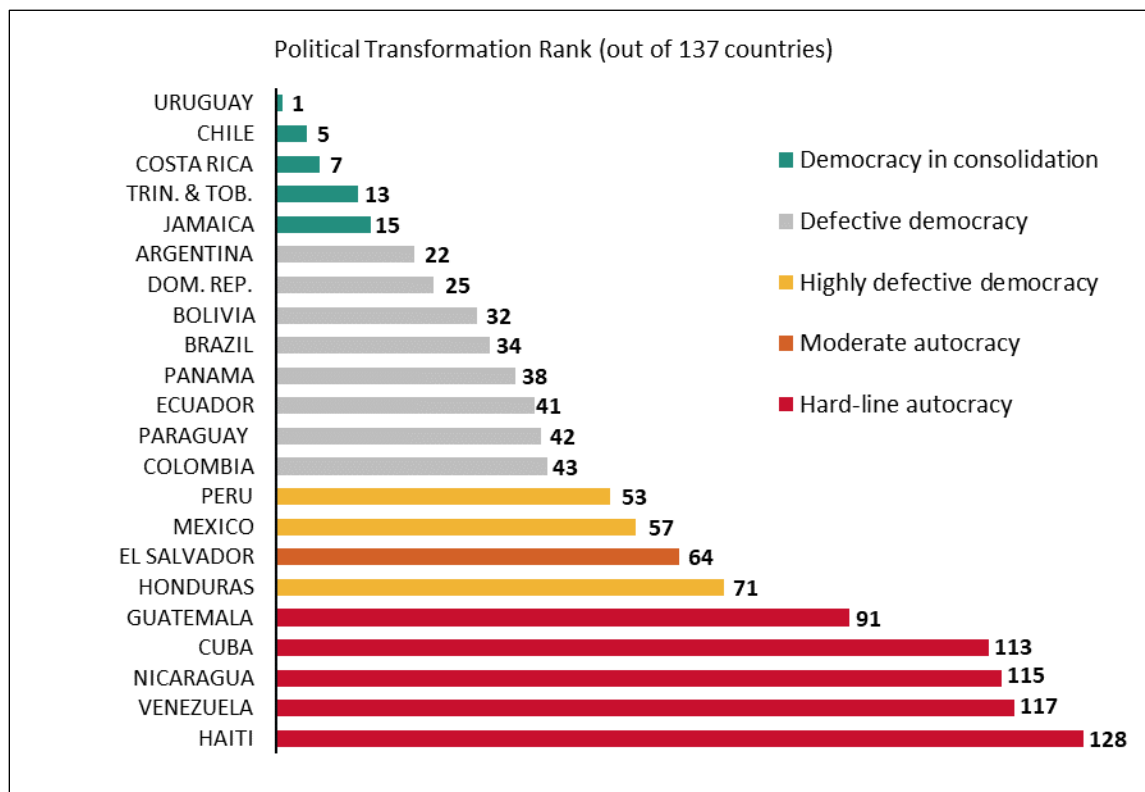
⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Sabine Donner and Hauke Hartmann, *Global findings BTI 2024: Less Democratic, Less Successful*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, p. 26 and 12.

⁷ Ariam Macias-Weller and Peter Thiery, *Lost in transformation?—BTI Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, p. 7.

Figure I. BTI's 2024 Political Transformation Global Ranking of Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2024 Transformation Index.

Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s *Democracy Index*

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), based in London and New York, has produced a democracy index since 2006.⁸ The most recent report provides an annual snapshot of the state of democracy for 165 independent states and two territories.⁹ The EIU classifies countries as *full democracies*, *flawed democracies*, *hybrid regimes*, or *authoritarian regimes* based on an aggregate score of 60 indicators in five categories: (1) electoral process and pluralism, (2) civil liberties, (3) the functioning of government, (4) political participation, and (5) political culture.¹⁰ EIU evaluates Mexico and all Central and South American nations. With respect to the Caribbean, EIU looks at Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

According to the EIU's *Democracy Index 2024*, covering calendar year 2024, the Latin America and Caribbean region's overall score declined from 5.68 in 2023 (on a 0 to 10 scale) to 5.61 in 2024, described as the "ninth consecutive year of democratic backsliding in the region."¹² According to EIU, of the 24 countries evaluated, "17 registered a decline in their score in 2024, five improved their scores and two countries recorded no change."¹³ EIU reports that Jamaica, Colombia, and Brazil "experienced the biggest reversals this year, while the Dominican Republic and Mexico made the biggest improvement."¹⁴ In 2024, two countries in the region were classified as full democracies (Costa Rica and Uruguay), while four countries in the region were identified as authoritarian regimes (Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela).¹⁵ The report notes one classification changes with Paraguay downgraded from "flawed democracy" to "hybrid regime."¹⁶

EIU's Democracy Index 2024

"Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean has its strengths and weaknesses: the region performs above the global average on *electoral process and pluralism*, *political participation* and *civil liberties*, as well as for *functioning of government* (although its score in the latter category is quite low). However, it is the worst-performing region for *political culture*."¹¹

Figure 2 shows the global rank and classification of Central and South American and Caribbean countries according to the EIU's *Democracy Index 2024*.

⁸ The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) did not produce a democracy index report covering 2007 or 2009.

⁹ EIU, *Democracy Index 2024: What's wrong with representative democracy?* 2025.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 87-88. EIU defines terms as: *full democracies* are countries where the "functioning of government is satisfactory. Media are independent and diverse.... effective system of checks and balances ... judiciary is independent and judicial decisions are enforced ... only limited problems." *Flawed democracies* have "free and fair elections ... basic civil liberties are respected. However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation." *Hybrid regimes* have "substantial election irregularities ... government pressure on opposition parties and candidates ... corruption tends to be widespread and the rule of law is weak. Civil society is weak ... and the judiciary is not independent." In *authoritarian regimes*, "state political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed ... some formal institutions of democracy may exist, but these have little substance ... elections ... are not free and fair.... disregard for abuses and infringements of civil liberties ... repression of criticism of the government and pervasive censorship. There is no independent judiciary."

¹¹ Ibid., p. 52.

¹² Ibid., p. 52 and 13.

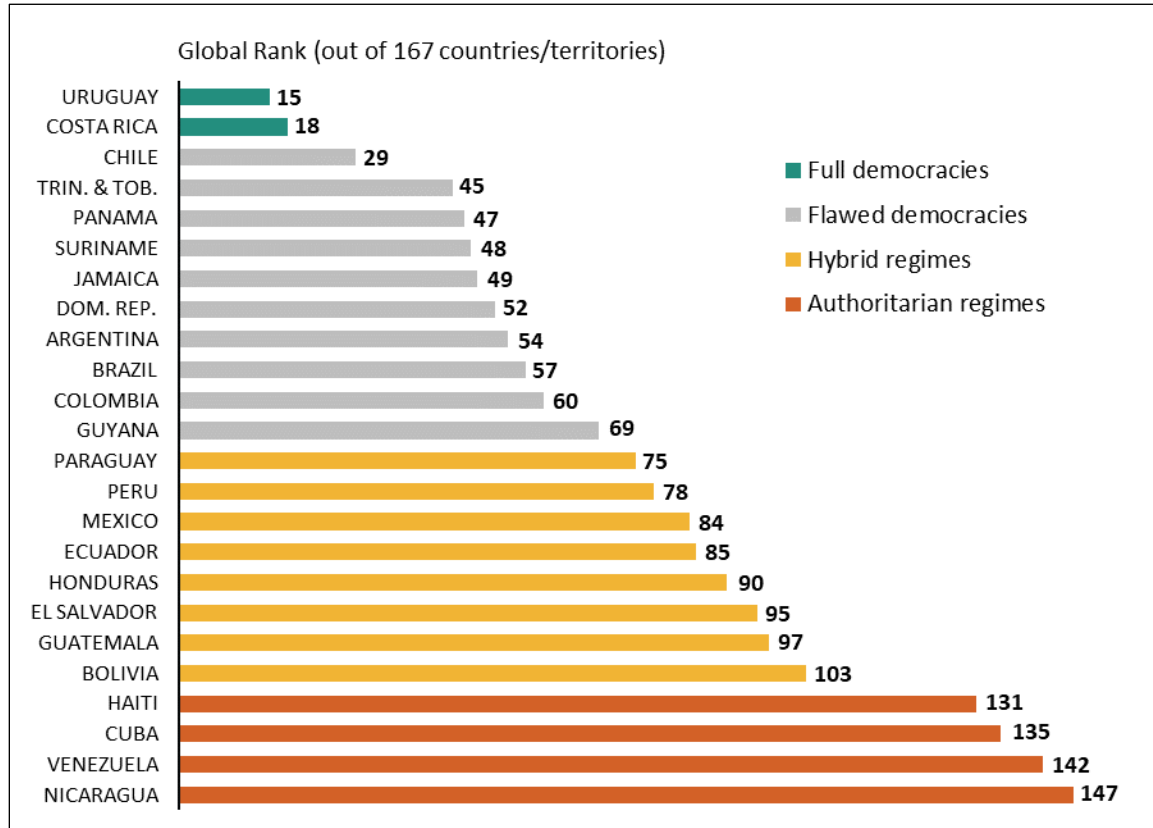
¹³ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Figure 2. EIU's Democracy Index 2024 Global Ranking for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using EIU's Democracy Index 2024.

Freedom House's *Freedom in the World*

Freedom House is a U.S.-based NGO that conducts research on democracy, political freedom, and human rights worldwide. It has published a global report on political rights and civil liberties, now called *Freedom in the World*, annually since 1972.¹⁷ The 2025 report, which covers calendar year 2024, measures 195 countries and 13 territories, including all Latin American and Caribbean countries.¹⁸ Freedom House assigns each country 0 to 4 points on 25 different indicators—10 indicators for political rights and 15 indicators for civil liberties—for a total of up to 100 points. The calculation equally weights a country's aggregate political rights and civil liberties scores to determine whether the country has an overall status of *free*, *partly free*, or *not free*.¹⁹ The report's analysis is based on data that are detailed in full on the Freedom House's website.²⁰ The website also lists the current freedom scores with a detailed profile for each assessed country.²¹

Freedom House classified 22 out of 35 countries in the region as “free” in 2024.²³ The report section titled “Americas” covers all countries in the Western Hemisphere and highlighted that “[12] out of 35 countries recorded overall score declines, while only 7

registered improvements.”²⁴ According to the report, Haiti and El Salvador tied for the year's largest score declines in the region and ranked among the top four largest score declines in the world.²⁵ On the other hand, Freedom House determined that Guatemala “experienced the region's largest score improvement.”²⁶ **Figure 3** shows the aggregate scores of all Central and South American and Caribbean countries according to the relevant Freedom House country web pages for *Freedom in the World 2025*. The political rights scores and the civil liberties scores, which comprise the aggregate scores, can be found under the Freedom House heading for each country in **Table 1**, **Table 2**, and **Table 3**.

Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2025

“Despite retaining its status as one of the world's freest regions, the Americas suffered further erosion to political rights and civil liberties in 2024.”²²

¹⁷ Until 1978, the annual report was titled *The Comparative Study of Freedom*.

¹⁸ Yana Gorokhovskaia and Cathryn Gothra, *Freedom in the World 2025: The Uphill Battle to Safeguard Rights*, Freedom House, February 2025, p. 23.

¹⁹ The methodology is derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “The political rights questions are grouped into three subcategories: Electoral Process (3 questions), Political Pluralism and Participation (4), and Functioning of Government (3). The civil liberties questions are grouped into four subcategories: Freedom of Expression and Belief (4 questions), Associational and Organizational Rights (3), Rule of Law (4), and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (4).” The methodology questions and table for calculating country status are listed online at Freedom House, “Freedom in the World Research Methodology,” accessed March 25, 2025, at <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>.

²⁰ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World: About the report,” accessed March 25, 2025, at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>.

²¹ Freedom House, “Countries and Territories,” accessed March 25, 2025, at <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.

²² Yana Gorokhovskaia and Cathryn Gothra, *Freedom in the World 2025: The Uphill Battle to Safeguard Rights*, Freedom House, February 2025, p. 27.

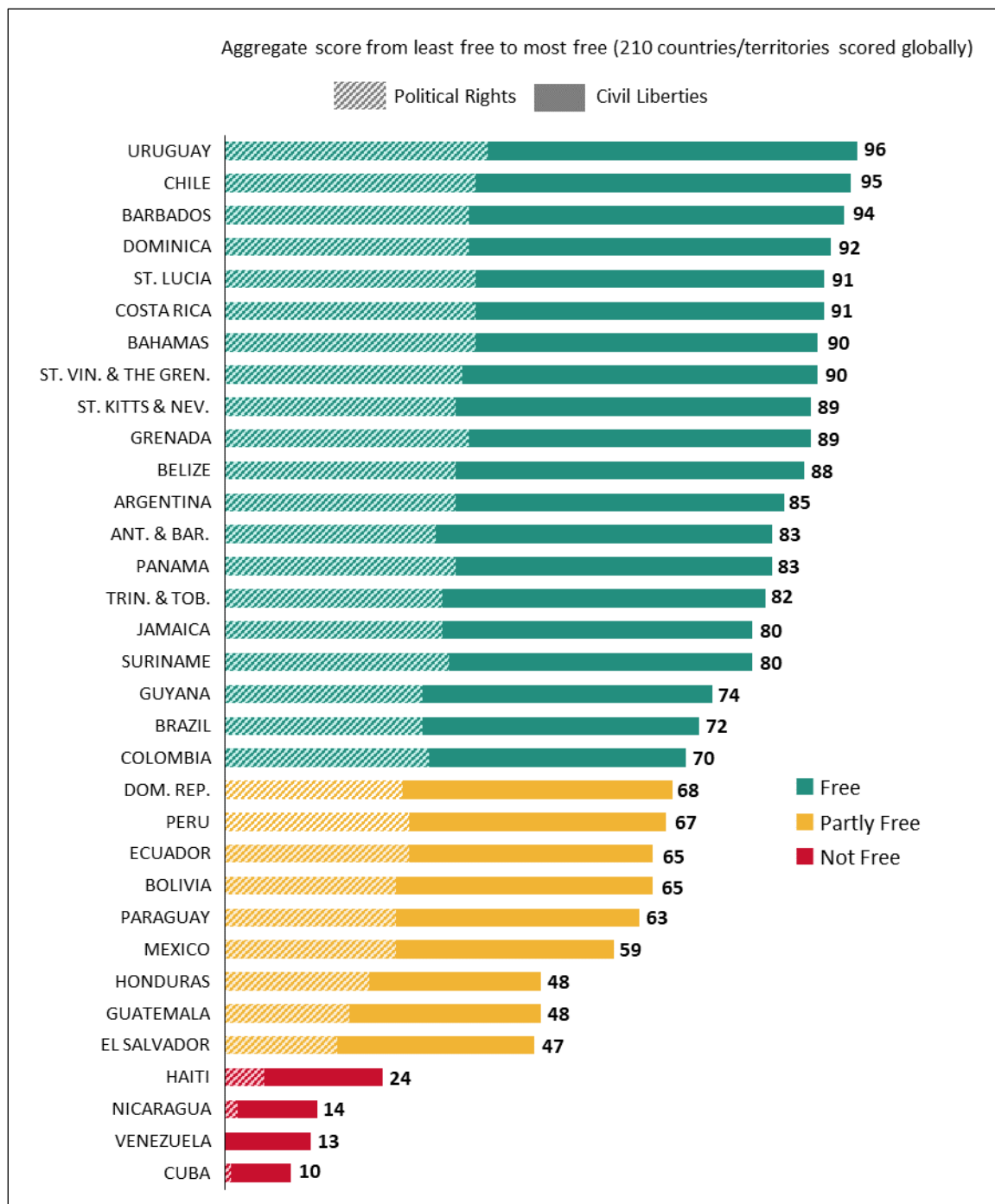
²³ Ibid. Note that this number includes the United States and Canada as they are part of the “Americas” region as defined by Freedom House.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 27 and p. 1.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

Figure 3. Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* 2025 Aggregate Scores for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* 2025.

Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem)'s Liberal Democracy Index

The Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem), headquartered at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, collects democracy data through its research team in collaboration with country experts. In 2017, V-Dem published its first global report measuring the status of democracy. V-Dem's *Democracy Report 2025* includes the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI), which is based on 71 indicators that capture liberal and electoral aspects of democracy.²⁷ V-Dem evaluates Mexico and all Central and South American nations. V-Dem evaluates a subset of Caribbean nations: Barbados, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The V-Dem 2025 report, covering calendar year 2024, grouped 179 countries into four categories: *liberal democracy*, *electoral democracy*, *electoral autocracy*, and *closed autocracy*.²⁹ The report stated that “most of the population in Latin America and The Caribbean – 64% – live in electoral democracies,” with 4% of the population residing in liberal democracies, 6% in electoral autocracies, and 3% in closed autocracies.³⁰ The report described Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, and Honduras as “democratizing countries” and noted that the first three are “successfully reversing autocratization processes of the previous years.”³¹ On the other hand, the report counts seven countries as “currently regressing: Argentina, El Salvador, Guyana, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru.”³² On Mexico, the report stated that it “ranks as ‘grey zone’ electoral democracy (ED-) meaning that its status as a democracy is uncertain by the end of 2024.”³³

V-Dem's Democracy Report 2025

“Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region in the world that scores substantially higher on its population-weighted average than on its country-based averages. In this region, large and populous countries are, on average, *more democratic* than smaller ones.”²⁸

²⁷ Marina Nord, David Altman, Fabio Angiolillo, Tiago Fernandes, Ana Good God, and Staffan I. Lindberg, *Democracy Report 2025: 25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped?*, March 2025, University of Gothenburg, V-Dem Institute, p. 57.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁹ Using its data, V-Dem sorts countries into regime types based on Anna Lührmann, Marcus Tannenberg, and Staffan I. Lindberg, “Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes,” *Politics & Governance*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2018), pp. 60-77. This article states “that Dahl’s theory of polyarchy (1971, 1998) provides the most comprehensive and most widely accepted theory of what distinguishes a democracy based on six ... institutional guarantees (elected officials, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, associational autonomy, and inclusive citizenship).” The article defines democracies as having “*de-facto* multiparty, free and fair elections, and Dahl’s institutional prerequisites minimally fulfilled.” An electoral democracy is one in which “the rule of law or liberal principles [are] not satisfied” and a liberal democracy is one in which “the rule of law and liberal principles [are] satisfied.” Autocracies have “no *de-facto* multiparty, or free and fair elections, or Dahl’s institutional prerequisites not minimally fulfilled.” An electoral autocracy has “*de jure* multiparty elections for the chief executive and the legislature” and a closed autocracy has “no multiparty elections for the chief executive or the legislature.”

³⁰ Marina Nord, David Altman, Fabio Angiolillo, Tiago Fernandes, Ana Good God, and Staffan I. Lindberg, *Democracy Report 2025: 25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped?*, March 2025, University of Gothenburg, V-Dem Institute, p. 16.

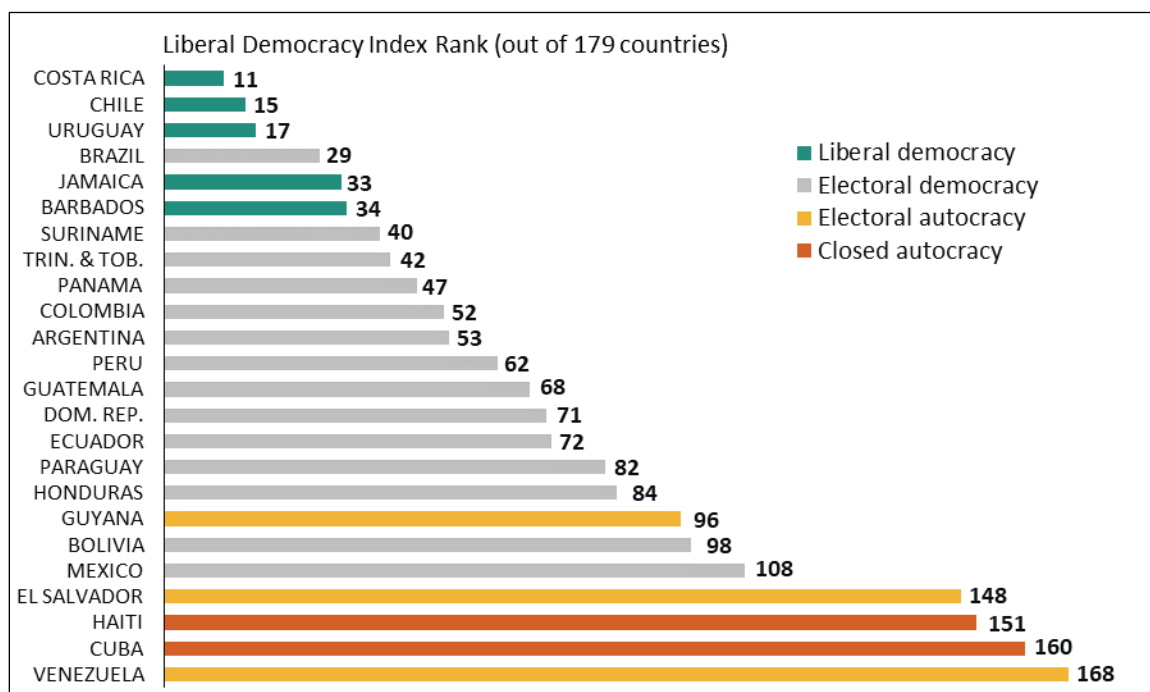
³¹ Ibid., p. 21. Further discussion on Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador can be found on p. 34.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 25. This page also provided further discussion on Peru and, on the following page, Nicaragua.

Figure 4 shows the liberal democracy index rank and classification of all Central and South American and Caribbean countries according to the *Varieties of Democracy Institute's Democracy Report 2025*.

Figure 4.V-Dem's Democracy Report 2025's Liberal Democracy Index Rank for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using the Varieties of Democracy Institute's *Democracy Report 2025*.

Compilation of Democracy Indicators

Table 1, below, looks at Caribbean countries' global democracy rankings according to Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2024 Transformation Index, EIU's *Democracy Index 2024*, Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2025*, and V-Dem's *Democracy Report 2025*. **Table 2** compares the same reports for Mexico and Central America, as does **Table 3** for South America. In each table, the country name is followed by parentheses with the nature of the country's political system, as described in the U.S. State Department's 2022 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (the 2023 updated report does not include descriptions of country political systems).³⁴

Each index is based on a unique methodology and the rankings are not necessarily comparable. For more details on the methodologies, see "Democracy Indices and Source Notes" above. For term definitions of each index, see footnote 2 for BTI, footnote 10 for EIU, footnote 19 for Freedom House, and footnote 29 for V-Dem, or consult the full reports. Each report evaluates a different number of countries, so there are missing rankings for some countries. Countries are listed alphabetically in each table.

³⁴ U.S. Department of State, *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, March 20, 2023.

Table I. Caribbean: 2024 Democracy Rankings

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2024		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2024		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World</i> 2025				V-Dem <i>Democracy Report</i> 2025	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score (out of 100)	Political Rights Score (out of 40)	Civil Liberties Score (out of 60)	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
Antigua & Barbuda (multiparty parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	83	32	51	Free	—	—
The Bahamas (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	90	38	52	Free	—	—
Barbados (parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	94	37	57	Free	34	(-) Liberal democracy
Belize (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	88	35	53	Free	—	—
Cuba (authoritarian state)	113	Hard-line autocracy	135	Authoritarian	10	1	9	Not free	160	Closed autocracy
Dominica (multiparty parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	92	37	55	Free	—	—

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2024		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2024		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World 2025</i>				V-Dem <i>Democracy Report</i> 2025	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score (out of 100)	Political Rights Score (out of 40)	Civil Liberties Score (out of 60)	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
Dominican Republic (representative constitutional democracy)	25	Defective democracy	52	Flawed democracy	68	27	41	Partly free	71	Electoral democracy
Grenada (parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	89	37	52	Free	—	—
Guyana (multiparty democracy)	—	—	69	Flawed democracy	74	30	44	Free	96	(+) Electoral autocracy
Haiti (multiparty constitutional republic)	128	Hard-line autocracy	131	Authoritarian	24	6	18	Not free	151	Closed autocracy
Jamaica (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	15	Democracy in consolidation	49	Flawed democracy	80	33	47	Free	33	(-) Liberal democracy
St. Kitts and Nevis (multiparty parliamentary democracy and federation)	—	—	—	—	89	35	54	Free	—	—

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2024		EIU Democracy Index 2024		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025				V-Dem Democracy Report 2025	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score (out of 100)	Political Rights Score (out of 40)	Civil Liberties Score (out of 60)	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
St. Lucia (constitutional monarchy with a multiparty parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	91	38	53	Free	—	—
St. Vincent and the Grenadines (multiparty parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	90	36	54	Free	—	—
Suriname (constitutional democracy)	—	—	48	Flawed democracy	80	34	46	Free	40	Electoral democracy
Trinidad & Tobago (parliamentary democracy)	13	Democracy in consolidation	45	Flawed democracy	82	33	49	Free	42	(+) Electoral democracy

Source: Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department's 2022 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2024 Transformation Index, EIU's *Democracy Index 2024*, Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2025*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute's *Democracy Report 2025*.

Notes: Although Belize is located in Central America and Guyana and Suriname are located in South America, all three are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

a. EIU's symbol "—" indicates that one or more countries were ranked equally.

b. V-Dem's symbol (-) indicates that, taking uncertainty into account, the country could belong to the lower category, while (+) signifies that the country could belong to the higher category.

Table 2. Mexico and Central America: 2024 Democracy Rankings

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2024		EIU Democracy Index 2024		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025				V-Dem Democracy Report 2025	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score (out of 100)	Political Rights Score (out of 40)	Civil Liberties Score (out of 60)	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
Costa Rica (constitutional republic)	7	Democracy in consolidation	18	Full democracy	91	38	53	Free	11	Liberal democracy
El Salvador (constitutional multiparty republic)	64	Moderate autocracy	95	Hybrid regime	47	17	30	Partly Free	148	Electoral autocracy
Guatemala (constitutional multiparty republic)	91	Hard-line autocracy	97	Hybrid regime	48	19	29	Partly free	68	Electoral democracy
Honduras (constitutional multiparty republic)	71	Highly defective democracy	90	Hybrid regime	48	22	26	Partly free	84	(-) Electoral democracy
Mexico (multiparty federal republic)	57	Highly defective democracy	84	Hybrid regime	59	26	33	Partly free	108	(-) Electoral democracy
Nicaragua^c (authoritarian political system)	115	Hard-line autocracy	147	Authoritarian	14	2	12	Not free	175	(-) Electoral autocracy

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2024		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2024		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World</i> 2025				V-Dem <i>Democracy</i> <i>Report</i> 2025	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score (out of 100)	Political Rights Score (out of 40)	Civil Liberties Score (out of 60)	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
Panama (multiparty constitutional democracy)	38	Defective democracy	47	Flawed democracy	83	35	48	Free	47	Electoral democracy

Sources: Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department's *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2024 Transformation Index, EIU's *Democracy Index 2024*, Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2025*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-Dem) *Democracy Report 2025*.

Notes: Although Belize is located in Central America, it is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and is listed in **Table I**.

- a. EIU's symbol "=" indicates that one or more countries were ranked equally.
- b. V-Dem's symbol (-) indicates that, taking uncertainty into account, the country could belong to the lower category, while (+) signifies that the country could belong to the higher category.
- c. "Constitutional multiparty republic" was the political system description from the U.S. State Department's *2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nicaragua*. Later, the *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nicaragua* stated: "Nicaragua has a highly centralized, authoritarian political system dominated by President Daniel Ortega Saavedra and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo Zambrana. Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) party exercises total control over country's the executive, legislative, judicial, and electoral functions."

Table 3. South America: 2024 Democracy Rankings

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2024		EIU Democracy Index 2024		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025				V-Dem Democracy Report 2025	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status Index	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
Argentina (federal constitutional republic)	22	Defective Democracy	54=	Flawed democracy	85	35	50	Free	53	Electoral democracy
Bolivia (constitutional multiparty republic)	32	Defective democracy	103=	Hybrid regime	65	26	39	Partly free	98	Electoral democracy
Brazil (constitutional multiparty republic)	34	Defective democracy	57	Flawed democracy	72	30	42	Free	29	Electoral democracy
Chile (constitutional multiparty democracy)	5	Democracy in consolidation	29	Flawed democracy	95	38	57	Free	15	(-) Liberal democracy
Colombia (constitutional multiparty republic)	43	Defective democracy	60	Flawed democracy	70	31	39	Free	52	Electoral democracy
Ecuador (constitutional multiparty republic)	41	Defective democracy	85	Hybrid regime	65	28	37	Partly free	72	Electoral democracy

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2024		EIU Democracy Index 2024		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025				V-Dem Democracy Report 2025	
	Political Transformation Global Rank (of 137)	Status Index	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
Paraguay (multiparty constitutional republic)	42	Defective democracy	75	Hybrid regime	63	26	37	Partly free	82	Electoral democracy
Peru (constitutional multiparty republic)	53	Highly defective democracy	78	Hybrid regime	67	28	39	Partly free	62	Electoral democracy
Uruguay (constitutional republic)	1	Democracy in consolidation	15	Full democracy	96	40	56	Free	17	(-) Liberal democracy
Venezuela^c (multiparty constitutional republic)	117	Hard-line autocracy	142	Authoritarian	13	0	13	Not free	168	Electoral autocracy

Source: Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department’s 2022 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s 2024 Transformation Index, EIU’s *Democracy Index 2024*, Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World 2025*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute’s *Democracy Report 2025*.

Notes: Although Guyana and Suriname are located in South America, both are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and are listed in **Table I**.

- EIU’s symbol “=” indicates that one or more countries were ranked equally.
- V-Dem’s symbol (-) indicates that, taking uncertainty into account, the country could belong to the lower category, while (+) signifies that the country could belong to the higher category.
- From the U.S. State Department’s 2022 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Venezuela*: “While Venezuela is legally a multiparty, constitutional republic, the regime of Nicolas Maduro claims control over all public institutions. In November 2021, the Maduro regime organized regional and municipal elections largely perceived as skewed in their favor. Election observers and media reported arbitrary arrests, criminalization of opposition parties’ activities, bans on candidates, and media censorship during the elections. The European Union was allowed to act as election observer for the first time in 15 years, but the Maduro regime asked its observers to leave the country before they could present their final report. In the final report, the European Union noted significant structural deficiencies to the electoral system and provided the regime with 23 recommendations to improve electoral conditions.”

Selected Resources

Table 4 provides selected resources for further information about democracy indicators for Latin American and Caribbean nations, although many resources cover other geographic areas as well. The sources are organized alphabetically by authoring organization followed by the titles organized chronologically and then alphabetically. This is not an exhaustive list.

Table 4. Selected Resources for Democracy Indicators

Organization	Title and Year Published	Resource Type and Notes
Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI)	BTI's 2024 Global Findings	Regional report covers 137 countries and analyzes the results of BTI's 2024 Transformation Index from February 1, 2021, to January 31, 2023
	BTI 2024 Governance Index	Index ranks 137 countries composed of scores for level of difficulty, steering capability, resource efficiency, consensus-building, and international cooperation
	BTI 2024 Political Transformation Index	Index ranks 137 countries composed of scores for stateness, political participation, rule of law, stability of democratic institutions, and political and social integration
	BTI's Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean 2024	Regional report covers 22 countries and analyzes the results of BTI's 2024 Transformation Index from February 1, 2021, to January 31, 2023
Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)	Democracy Index 2024	Global report covers 167 countries and territories
Electoral Integrity Project	Electoral Integrity Worldwide 2019	Report and data from cumulative study covering national presidential and parliamentary elections from July 1, 2012 to December 31, 2018
Freedom House	Countries and Territories Rankings 2025	Global ranking list covering global freedom, internet freedom, and democracy scores for 210 countries and territories
	Freedom in the World 2025	Global report covers 210 countries and territories
	Freedom in the World: About the Report	Provides links to downloadable data-sets utilized for <i>Freedom in the World</i> reports past and present
	Global Freedom Status Map 2025	Map shows global freedom, internet freedom, and democracy states for 210 countries and territories

Organization	Title and Year Published	Resource Type and Notes
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)	Global State of Democracy Indices (2023)	Interactive map looks at 165 indicators for 174 countries from 1975-2023
	Global State of Democracy Report 2024	Global report looks at trends in democracy from 1975-2023 across 173 countries
	The State of Democracy in the Americas 2021	Regional report includes all Latin American countries and some Caribbean countries and is also available in Spanish
U.S. State Department	Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2022	Global report covers all countries receiving U.S. assistance and all United Nations member states; the 2023 updated report does not include descriptions of country political systems
Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)	Datasets (2025)	Includes current and past datasets for downloading as well as reference documents
World Bank	Democracy Report 2025	Global report covers 179 countries
	Worldwide Governance Indicators (2024)	Data on six aggregate indicators of governance for over 200 countries from 1996-2023; in particular, see Voice and Accountability indicator
World Justice Project	Rule of Law Index 2024	Website with interactive map and data tables cover 142 countries and jurisdictions from 2015-2024
	Mexico States Rule of Law Index 2023-24 (Spanish only)	World Justice Project's only subnational index that examines the rule of law in each of Mexico's 32 states
	Rule of Law Country Reports (2023)	Country reports cover 25 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean based on key findings from the General Population Poll 2022

Source: Compiled by CRS.

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