

Suriname: Background and U.S. Relations

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SUMMARY

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Background

The Republic of Suriname (Suriname) has had constructive ties with the United States for more than three decades. Located on the north-central coast of South America, Suriname borders Guyana, French Guiana, and Brazil and identifies as a Caribbean country. Suriname is a commodity-dependent, developing country with a population of about 657,000 and a per capita income of \$6,840. Its \$4.5 billion economy is dominated by the mineral and energy sectors (gold, oil, and bauxite), which play a key role in driving economic growth, employment, and government revenue.

Suriname held legislative elections on May 25, 2025, in which the Progressive Reform Party (VHP), led by incumbent President Chandrikapersad "Chan" Santokhi (2020-2025), and the National Democratic Party (NDP), led by Jennifer Geerlings-Simons, garnered an almost equal number of seats. Some observers had expected the generally leftist NDP to enter into a coalition with the VHP. Instead, the five smaller parties in the Surinamese National Assembly and the NDP mutually sought out an agreement, securing a two-thirds legislative majority. In June 2025, the National Assembly elected Geerlings-Simons as Suriname's first female president. The Geerlings-Simons administration is expected to contend with several policy challenges, including how best to use expected surges in oil revenues, stabilize the country's finances, promote socioeconomic development, and foster national unity.

U.S. Policy

Since Suriname reestablished electoral democracy in 1991, the U.S. government has characterized U.S.-Suriname relations as constructive. U.S. policy toward Suriname generally has aimed to promote economic prosperity, deepen trade ties, and advance shared regional security interests. The Trump Administration has reaffirmed the United States' "strong and growing" relationship with Suriname and has identified U.S. investment in Suriname as a priority. The United States obligated almost \$372,000 in foreign assistance for Suriname in FY2023—including \$242,000 in International Military Education and Training aid and nearly \$130,000 in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement support. Suriname also has received additional U.S. support through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) regional development assistance programs for the Caribbean. In 2024, U.S. goods exports to Suriname were valued at almost \$382 million and U.S. goods imports from Suriname amounted to almost \$90.8 million.

Congressional Action

The 119th Congress may monitor U.S.-Suriname relations and may seek to shape bilateral collaboration on issues related to regional security and U.S. investment in Suriname, among others. The National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026 (H.R. 4779), would provide "not less than" \$92.5 million for the CBSI. The bill would not designate any CBSI or other foreign assistance funds specifically for Suriname, leaving allocation decisions to the Trump Administration. The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Authorization Act (H.R. 4368/H.R. 4031/S. 820) would authorize appropriations for the CBSI, establish congressional objectives and reporting requirements for the initiative, and designate beneficiary countries, including Suriname. In terms of trade, Suriname is not a beneficiary of the U.S. preferential trade program for Caribbean imports set forth in the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA; P.L. 98-67). The 119th Congress may assess the United States' current trade relations with Suriname and could consider whether Suriname is a candidate for CBERA benefits or other preferential trade programs.

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Introduction¹

The Republic of Suriname (Suriname), located on the north-central coast of South America, borders Guyana, French Guiana, and Brazil (see **Figure A-1**). With a population of roughly 657,000, Suriname is South America's least populous sovereign country. Suriname identifies as a Caribbean country and is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a subregional economic integration organization. Formerly known as Dutch Guiana, Suriname attained its independence from the Netherlands in 1975. The United States and Suriname have maintained constructive relations for more than three decades, particularly on security and economic matters.² The 119th Congress may monitor and shape bilateral collaboration related to regional security and U.S. investment in Suriname, among other issues.

Political Situation

Suriname is a constitutional democracy with uninterrupted elected governance since 1991. For more than a decade prior, the country experienced considerable political instability. In 1980 and

in 1990, a faction of Suriname's military, led in each case by Lieutenant Colonel Desire (Desi) Bouterse, overthrew elected governments. Under Bouterse's leadership, Suriname experienced economic and political unrest and faced international isolation.³ Bouterse subsequently became a populist civilian politician, leading the generally leftist National Democratic Party (NDP) to electoral victories in 2010 and 2015. He served as Suriname's president between 2010 and 2020. In 1999, Bouterse was convicted in absentia in the Netherlands for drug trafficking. In 2019, Bouterse received a 20-year sentence in Suriname for the 1982 killing of 15 political opponents. Suriname's highest court upheld the conviction in 2023, but Bouterse went into hiding and died in 2024.4

Suriname at a Glance

Population: 657,000 (2025, IMF est.).

Area: 63,251 square miles, slightly larger than the state of Georgia (CIA)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)/Per Capita: \$4.5 billion/6,840 (2024, current prices, IMF est.).

Real GDP Growth: 2.4% (2022), 2.5% (2023), 3.0% (2024, est.), 2.7% (2025 projected) (IMF).

Ethnic Groups: Hindustani, 27.4%; Maroon, 21.7%; Creole, 15.7%; Javanese, 13.7%; mixed, 13.4%; and other, 7.6% (CIA).

Languages: Dutch (official); English (widely spoken); Sranang Tongo (native language of Creoles and younger population), Caribbean Hindustani (dialect of Hindi), lavanese, among others (CIA).

Sources: International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2025; Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *World Factbook*.

Under Suriname's system of government, the president is elected indirectly by a two-thirds majority vote of the 51-member unicameral National Assembly. Generally, Suriname's political parties are divided along and within ethnic groups, reflecting the country's complex history and varying political interests. Alongside the multiethnic NDP, Suriname's other main political party is the Progressive Reform Party (VHP), largely representing the Indo-Surinamese (or Hindustani-Surinamese, the descendants of indentured laborers brought from India in the 19th century). Other political parties in the National Assembly include the National Party of Suriname, broadly

¹ This report draws from the past work of Mark Sullivan, a former CRS Specialist in Latin American Affairs.

² U.S. Department of State (DOS), "U.S. Relations with Suriname," November 25, 2024.

³ Hans Ramsoedh, "Democracy and Political Culture in Suriname," in *Post-Colonial Trajectories in the Caribbean: The Three Guianas* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 37.

⁴ International Commission of Jurists, "Suriname: Ex-President's Conviction Upheld, Ending 41 Years of Impunity," December 20, 2023. *Times Caribbean*, "Former Suriname President Desi Bouterse Dies While on the Run, Autopsy Confirms Liver Disease Complications," December 31, 2024.

representing the Creole population (an Afro-Surinamese subgroup descended from Africans who fled enslavement during Dutch colonial times and who largely live in urban areas today); the General Liberation and Development Party (ABOP) and the Brotherhood and Unity in Politics Party (BEP), which represent the Maroon population (another Afro-Surinamese subgroup, largely living in the interior of the country today); the Pertjajah Luhur (PL) representing the Javanese (descendants of what is now known as Indonesia who were brought to the country as contract migrant workers); and the Alternative 2020 party (A20) a faith-based party representing Christian values.

Suriname held legislative elections on May 25, 2025, in which the VHP, led by incumbent President Chandrikapersad "Chan" Santokhi (2020-2025), and the NDP garnered almost an equal number of seats (17 and 18, respectively; see **Figure A-2**). Some observers had expected the NDP to enter into a coalition with the VHP.⁵ Instead, amid frustrations with the political status quo, the five smaller parties and the NDP mutually sought out an agreement, securing a two-thirds legislative majority nearly a month later.⁶ The National Assembly subsequently elected Jennifer Geerlings-Simons, Bouterse's successor as NDP leader, as Suriname's first female president. The NDP traditionally has favored high social spending and economic nationalism; the party has committed to business-friendly policies and sustainable development.⁷ Geerlings-Simons, inaugurated on July 16, may face several challenges, including how best to use expected surges in oil revenues, promote socioeconomic development, foster national unity, and tackle corruption.

Suriname has been working with foreign partners to maintain and bolster economic development and increase investment. For example, Suriname and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations in 1976, and China has made investments in Suriname's oil and energy sector; U.S. companies also have invested in Suriname (see below).

Economic and Social Situation

Suriname is a commodity-dependent, developing country that exports crude oil, gold, bauxite, and rice, among other goods. Suriname's dependence on commodities has contributed to the country's sluggish—and sometimes volatile—growth. From 1990 to 2019, Suriname's economy averaged 2.4% growth. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that Suriname's economy contracted by 16% in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic and by 2.4% in 2021.

In December 2021, the IMF approved a 36-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) that provided Suriname with access to \$688 million in financing to support the former government's economic plan to restore fiscal sustainability, including public debt reduction, while protecting vulnerable populations by expanding social safety net programs. In March 2025, the IMF conducted its ninth and final review of the EFF in Suriname. According to the IMF, "the objectives of the program had been broadly achieved. The economy is growing, inflation is receding, public debt is declining, the autonomy and governance of the central bank have been strengthened, and investor

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⁵ Daily Herald, "Six Parties Sign Intent to Form Coalition with Jennifer Geerlings-Simons as President," May 27, 2025.

⁶ Daily Herald, "Six Parties Sign Intent to Form Coalition with Jennifer Geerlings-Simons as President"; Latin News Daily, "Suriname: Huge Responsibility for New Government," August 2025.

⁷ Latin News Daily, "Suriname: Huge Responsibility for New Government."

⁸ IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2025.

⁹ IMF, "IMF Executive Board Approves Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility for Suriname," December 22, 2021.

confidence is returning."¹⁰ Average annual economic growth was 2.6% from 2022 to 2024; and the economy is expected to grow by 2.7% in 2025.¹¹ The most recently available poverty rate in Suriname was 17.5%, with those in the interior disproportionately affected.¹²

Suriname's economy has concentrated largely on mining, especially exports of gold, but at least eight offshore oil discoveries have been made since 2020. ¹³ Efforts to establish offshore oil and gas production include exploration and development contracts with international oil companies (IOCs). Staatsolie, Suriname's state-owned energy company, has awarded contracts to several IOCs, including TotalEnergies (France), Shell (United Kingdom), Petronas (Malaysia), PetroChina (China), Chevron (United States), APA Corporation (United States), and Qatar Energy (Qatar). Suriname's first oil production is expected by mid-2028, with a forecast production of 220,000 barrels per day. ¹⁴ Experts assess that Suriname's nascent oil and gas industry could help increase economic growth further in the future. ¹⁵ Increased revenues from oil production also could help Suriname address some of the government's ongoing fiscal challenges, including the country's relatively high public debt (as of 2024, Suriname's estimated general government gross debt exceeded 87% of GDP). ¹⁶

Suriname's diverse and vast topography make it one of the few carbon-negative countries, but the population is also susceptible to environmental challenges. Suriname is particularly vulnerable to river and coastal flooding.¹⁷ Over 90% of the country is covered by rainforest, and an estimated 87% of the population lives along the coastal plain, subject to periodic flooding as a result of heavy rainfall. The area at risk includes the capital, Paramaribo, home to about two-thirds of the population and much of Suriname's economic activity (see **Figure A-1**).¹⁸ In August 2025, President Geerlings-Simons met with the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Suriname and emphasized priorities, including strengthening inclusive institutions, investing in nature-based solutions, and preserving biodiversity.¹⁹ Further, those in the interior of Suriname, predominantly Indigenous populations and Maroons, are among the most affected by deforestation, which in turn may worsen drought in areas where communities are dependent on subsistence farming and rivers.²⁰

U.S.-Suriname Relations and Issues for Congress

U.S. relations with Suriname were limited in the 1980s but improved with Suriname's reestablishment of electoral democracy in 1991. In 2025, the Trump Administration reaffirmed

¹⁰ IMF, "IMF Executive Board Completes Final Review Under the Extended Fund Facility Arrangement with Suriname," March 24, 2025.

¹¹ IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2025.

¹² World Bank, Suriname Poverty and Equity Assessment, July 2024.

¹³ Kaieteur News, "Surinamese Invest US\$516M into Country's First Oil Project," March 25, 2025.

¹⁴ Gerold Rozenblan, "French and U.S. Companies to Invest \$10 Billion to Extract Oil Off Suriname's Coast," Associated Press, October 1, 2024.

¹⁵ IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2025; and Economist Intelligence Unit, One-Click Report: Suriname, July 15, 2025.

¹⁶ IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2025.

¹⁷ World Bank, Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, "Suriname," https://www.gfdrr.org/en/suriname.

¹⁸ World Bank Group, "The World Bank in Suriname," April 17, 2024.

¹⁹ United Nations Suriname, "United Nations Resident Coordinator and President of Suriname Reaffirm Partnership for Sustainable Development," press release, September 3, 2025.

²⁰ Jason Pinas, "'We Are Crying for Rain': Suriname's Villages Go Hungry as Drought Bites," Guardian, January 14, 2025.

the United States' "strong and growing" relationship with Suriname, highlighting "shared interests and a mutual commitment to prosperity in the hemisphere." In late March 2025, Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with then-President Santokhi and discussed Suriname's "longstanding and strategic partnership" with the United States. Topics discussed included U.S. investment in Suriname, rule of law, and economic growth. In July 2025, Secretary Rubio and President Geerlings-Simons discussed strengthening the U.S.-Suriname partnership to expand security cooperation, energy security, regional stability, and economic diversification. ²³

Security Situation

U.S. policy in Suriname has long focused on advancing shared security interests. The U.S. Department of State's (DOS's) 2025 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report identified Suriname as a transit country for drugs, primarily cocaine destined for Europe. The report noted that some senior government officials may be engaged in corruption and narcotics trafficking. According to the DOS report, Suriname's complex topography and occasionally weak institutions pose a challenge for interdiction efforts.²⁴ The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) had an active office in Suriname from 2006 until 2016; DEA left Suriname following the arrest of Dino Bouterse, son of then-President Bouterse, in Panama by DEA agents on drug trafficking charges, among other offenses.²⁵ Nevertheless, in October 2024, DEA and Suriname's attorney general's office signed a memorandum of understanding detailing cooperation to combat drug trafficking. money laundering, and cross-border crime. ²⁶ In July 2024, the U.S. Ambassador to Suriname announced that the then-Santokhi administration would "strongly welcome" the return of a DEA office to help combat narcotics trafficking; reestablishing the DEA office also was a point of discussion during Rubio and Santokhi's joint press conference in March 2025.²⁷ Congress may monitor Suriname's security situation and assess whether reestablishing a DEA office would align with current regional security priorities.

Investment in Suriname

According to the DOS's 2024 Investment Climate Statement, extractive industries globally "have historically attracted significant [foreign direct investment]," although a country's political instability, lack of transparency, and weak institutions may "hinder" foreign participation. According to the DOS, Suriname welcomes local and foreign investment to promote economic growth. Suriname was a participant in the Extractive Industry Transparency Index, a multinational effort to promote transparency and accountability in the oil, gas, and mining

²¹ Spokesperson Tammy Bruce, "Secretary Rubio's Call with President Geerlings-Simons of Suriname," U.S. Department of State, July 18, 2025.

²² This paragraph, including the quoted statements, draws from U.S. Secretary of State, "Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Surinamese President Chandrikapersad Santokhi at a Joint Press Availability," March 27, 2025.

²³ Spokesperson Tammy Bruce, "Secretary Rubio's Call with President Geerlings-Simons of Suriname."

²⁴ DOS, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 1, Drug and Chemical Control, Suriname, March 2025.

²⁵ DOS, "Counternarcotics and Law Enforcement Country Program: Suriname," December 15, 2008; DOS, *INCSR*, *Volume 1, Drug and Chemical Control, Suriname*, March 2023.

²⁶ U.S. Embassy in Suriname, Facebook post, October 30, 2024, see https://www.facebook.com/Embassy.Paramaribo/posts/gisteren-tekenden-de-us-drug-enforcement-administration-en-het-kantoor-van-de-su/974084894752482/.

²⁷ U.S. Embassy in Suriname, "Ambassador Robert J. Faucher's Remarks at the OAS Early Warning (Drug) System Launch July 18, 2024," July 18, 2024. U.S. Secretary of State, "Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Surinamese President Chandrikapersad Santokhi at a Joint Press Availability," March 27, 2025.

²⁸ DOS, 2024 Investment Climate Statements: Suriname, July 10, 2025.

sectors, but was removed in 2024 due to a failure to meet reporting deadlines.²⁹ Some U.S. companies have extensive investments in Suriname's extractive industries, including in the energy and mining sectors. In addition to the energy companies mentioned above, U.S. company Newmont Suriname (formerly known as the Suriname Gold Company) began commercial production of gold in Suriname in 2016.³⁰ Congress may monitor U.S. investment in Suriname, examine Suriname's investment climate and transparency efforts, and assess whether—and, if so, how—to foster additional U.S. investment in Suriname.

Trade and Trade Preferences

In 2024, U.S. goods exports to Suriname were valued at \$382.0 million and U.S. goods imports from Suriname amounted to \$90.8 million.³¹ Suriname is a party to the U.S.-CARICOM Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), signed in 2013; TIFA is a strategic framework to discuss and cooperate on trade and investment issues among the parties.³² It established a council to monitor, consider, and discuss trade and investment issues. Suriname is not a designated beneficiary country of the U.S. preferential trade program set forth in the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA; P.L. 98-67), which provides eligible countries with duty-free market access to the United States for certain products.³³ Suriname requested CBERA beneficiary status in 2009.³⁴ The 111th Congress identified Suriname as potentially eligible for CBERA benefits; in 2010, the Trade Policy Staff Committee also requested public comments on the inclusion of Suriname for benefits under the CBERA.³⁵ It is unclear why Suriname was not extended CBERA designation. The 119th Congress may assess U.S.-Suriname trade relations and Suriname's potential qualification for CBERA or other trade preference programs.

In April 2025, President Trump issued an executive order (E.O.) asserting that "a lack of reciprocity" in bilateral trade relationships, disparate tariff rates and non-tariff barriers, and U.S. trading partners' economic policies constitute "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and economy of the United States."³⁶ The E.O. declared a national emergency under the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. §§1601 et seq.) and invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 (50 U.S.C. §§1701 et seq.) to impose a minimum 10% tariff on all U.S. imports with exceptions for certain goods, as of April 5, 2025; the Trump Administration has kept the tariff on imports from Suriname at 10%.³⁷ Due to Suriname's high dependence on

²⁹ See the Extractive Industry Transparency Index's Suriname page at https://eiti.org/countries/suriname.

³⁰ Newmont, "Newmont Suriname Awarded U.S. Secretary of State's Award for Corporate Excellence," October 28, 2024.

³¹ U.S. Census, "Trade in Goods with Suriname," accessed August 26, 2025.

³² Office of the United States Trade Representative, "Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Caribbean Community."

³³ Designated beneficiary countries are required to meet specific eligibility criteria. The President may deny or suspend preferential benefits if the country does not meet these criteria. For more information, see CRS Report R47432, *Caribbean Trade Preference Programs*.

³⁴ Katherine Stubblefield, *Fifteenth Report to Congress on the Operation of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act*, United States Trade Representative, December 2023.

³⁵ Office of the United States Trade Representative, "Trade Policy Staff Committee: Public Comments Regarding Granting Suriname Eligibility for Benefits Under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act and the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act," 75 Federal Register 17198, April 5, 2010.

³⁶ Executive Order 14257, "Regulating Imports with a Reciprocal Tariff to Rectify Trade Practices That Contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Goods Trade Deficits," April 2, 2025.

³⁷ CRS Insight IN11129, *The International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)*, the National Emergencies Act (NEA), and Tariffs: Historical Background and Key Issues.

imported goods, some Surinamese observers have expressed concerns that the tariffs could result in higher prices for Suriname.³⁸ Congress may assess the effects of the tariffs on Suriname's economy and bilateral trade relations and evaluate whether to codify, terminate, or modify the Administration's tariff policies.

Foreign Assistance

The United States obligated almost \$372,000 in foreign assistance for Suriname in FY2023 (latest full-year information available from all U.S. agencies). That total included \$242,000 in International Military Education and Training aid and nearly \$130,000 in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement support. Suriname also has received some development assistance through U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) regional programs for the Caribbean, including under the Caribbean Development Program and Eastern Caribbean activities. In January 2025, the Trump Administration began a review of nearly all U.S. foreign assistance and subsequently canceled thousands of unspecified foreign assistance awards and contracts worldwide. The full scope of the terminations on Suriname remains unclear, though some USAID-managed health, education, security, and environmental programs in the Caribbean reportedly were among the programs terminated.

Suriname has received additional U.S. support through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), a regional foreign assistance program formed in 2009 to reduce illicit trafficking in the region, advance public safety and security, and promote social justice.⁴² In November 2024, the DOS reported that the United States and Suriname "work together to enhance the security and prosperity of the region" under the CBSI "by strengthening military cooperation and building the capacity to disrupt illicit trafficking and transnational crime."⁴³ Past support to Suriname under the CBSI included assistance to provide training and technical assistance to improve Suriname's capabilities to investigate and prosecute money laundering and other financial crimes and build law enforcement capacity in the area of forensic investigation.⁴⁴

The 119th Congress may conduct oversight of the CBSI, consider setting priorities for the initiative, and assess whether to specify CBSI funding for Suriname. The National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026 (H.R. 4779), would provide "not less than" \$92.5 million for the CBSI; the bill would not designate any funds specifically for Suriname, leaving allocation decisions to the Trump Administration. The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Authorization Act (H.R. 4368/H.R. 4031/S. 820) would authorize appropriations for the CBSI; establish congressional priorities and objectives for the initiative; require the DOS to submit various reports to Congress, including a new strategy to increase natural disaster resilience; and designate beneficiary countries, including Suriname. S.Amdt. 3076 would incorporate the text of S. 820 into the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026 (S. 2296).

³⁸ Economist Intelligence Unit, "Suriname Inflation," July, 7, 2025.

³⁹ DOS, "U.S. Foreign Assistance by Country: Suriname," https://www.foreignassistance.gov/cd/suriname/.

⁴⁰ Elissa Miolene, "Nearly 10,000 Awards Cut from USAID, State Department," *Devex*, February 26, 2025. Lauren Irwin, Rubio: 83 Percent of USAID Programs to Be Canceled," *The Hill*, March 10, 2025. Executive Office of the President, "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," 90 *Federal Register* 8619, January 30, 2025.

⁴¹ Carmen Paun, "Documents Reveal Scope of Trump's Foreign Aid Cuts," *Politico*, March 26, 2025.

⁴² CRS In Focus IF10789, Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

⁴³ DOS, "U.S. Relations with Suriname," November 25, 2024.

⁴⁴ See for example, DOS, "U.S. Relations with Suriname," November 25, 2024; and DOS, "The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative: Suriname," December 5, 2013.

Appendix. Suriname-Related Figures



Figure A-I. Map of Suriname

Source: Created by the Congressional Research Service. Data collected from U.S. State Department and ESRI.

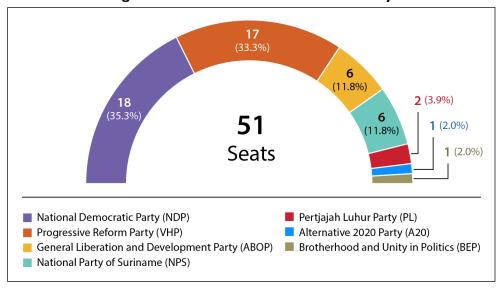


Figure A-2. Suriname's National Assembly

Source: De Nationale Assemblée (National Assembly). Created by the Congressional Research Service.

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