

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

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

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 2026 Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); (2) the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) *Democracy Index* 2025; (3) Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* 2026; and (4) the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-Dem's) Liberal Democracy Index in its *Democracy Report* 2026. 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.

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

- CRS Report R48960, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Western Hemisphere: Issues for Congress*, coordinated by Peter J. Meyer, Joshua Klein, and Kyla H. Kitamura.
- CRS In Focus IF12876, *Western Hemisphere: Issues for the 119th Congress*, 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 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) 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 2025 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 [archived] 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 2026 Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); (2) the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) *Democracy Index 2025*; (3) Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2026*; and (4) the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-Dem's) Liberal Democracy Index in its *Democracy Report 2026*.

Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)

Bertelsmann Stiftung, a private foundation based in Germany, has published the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) biannually since 2006. BTI 2026 reviewed the period of February 2023 through January 2025 with global, regional, and country reports that evaluated the state of democracy, the economy, and governance in 137 countries. (It excluded countries that were

members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development by the year 1989, considered to be “long-consolidated democratic systems and in which economic development can be regarded as well-advanced.”¹ The BTI ranked 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.² The political transformation criteria also determine each country’s classification: *democracy in consolidation*, *defective democracy*, *highly defective democracy*, *moderate autocracy*, or *hardline autocracy*.³ BTI evaluates all Central and South American nations except for Belize, Guyana, and Suriname. Among Caribbean nations, BTI evaluates Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

In its 2026 regional report, BTI found that “democratic and economic transformation, as well as the quality of governance ... showed no pronounced trend during the review period [February 2023 through January 2025]....

[O]verall, developments since February 2023 point to either stagnation or continuity, depending on perspective.”⁵ The report added

that “no country experienced a regime shift

toward democracy or autocracy during the review period, though Guatemala’s trajectory improved” from a hardline autocracy to a moderate autocracy.⁶ Meanwhile, “the steepest democratic decline occurred in the moderate autocracy of El Salvador.”⁷ In its global report, BTI highlighted that, of all the states under review “today, 56% are governed autocratically,” and “two-thirds of the countries assessed since 2006 are now less democratic than they were 20 years ago.”⁸ At the same time, the same global report noted “improvements in strategic prioritization, implementation and policy learning are particularly visible in countries such as Brazil ... and Guatemala.”⁹

BTI’s Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean 2026

“Overall, progress toward democratic consolidation faces substantial barriers. While levels of democratization vary widely across the region, most countries remain stuck in the category of defective democracy, reflecting enduring weaknesses in the rule of law, party systems and political integration.”⁴

¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Methodology,” accessed June 29, 2026, <https://bti-project.org/en/methodology>.

² Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Methodology,” accessed May 20, 2026, <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.

³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Methodology,” accessed May 20, 2026, <https://bti-project.org/en/methodology>. 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>.

⁴ Ariam Macias-Weller and Thomas Kestler, *Enduring Weaknesses and Emerging Challenges—BTI Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2026, p. 9, https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/global/BTI_2026_Regional_Report_LAC.pdf.

⁵ Macias-Weller and Kestler, *BTI Regional Report*, p. 4.

⁶ Macias-Weller and Kestler, *BTI Regional Report*, p. 9.

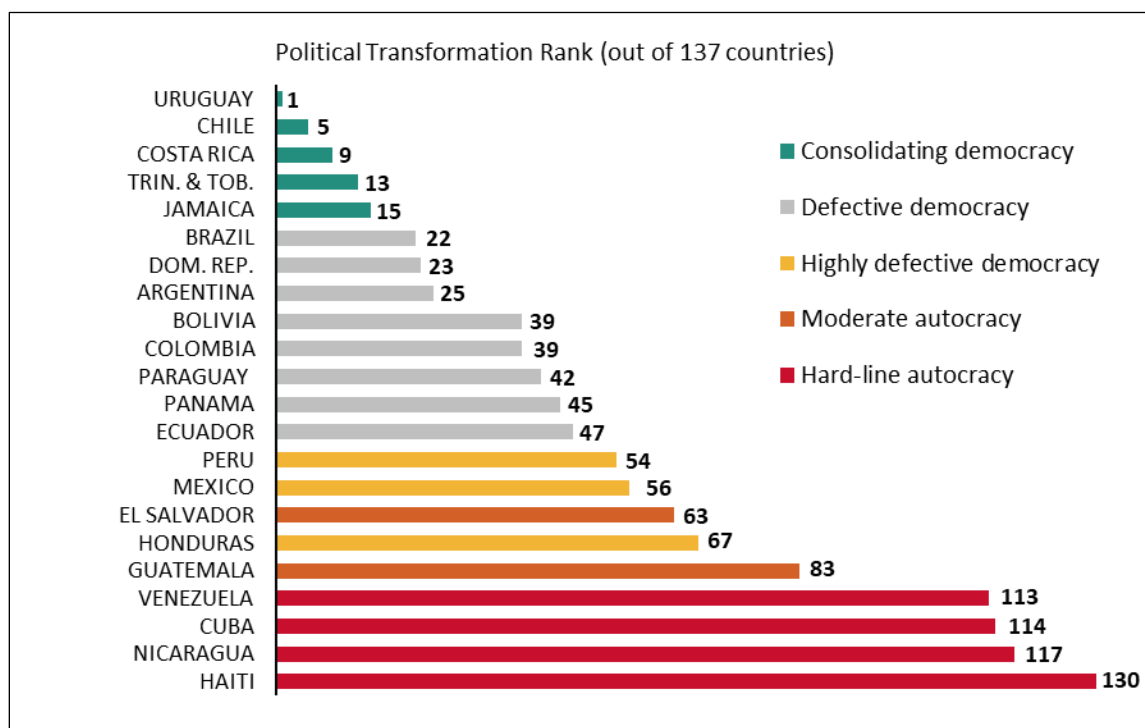
⁷ Macias-Weller and Kestler, *BTI Regional Report*, p. 6.

⁸ Sabine Donner et al., *Repression Meets Resistance: BTI 2026 Global Findings*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2026, p. 4, https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/global/BTI_2026_Global_Findings_EN.pdf.

⁹ Donner et al., *Repression Meets Resistance*, p. 5.

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 2026 Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI).

Figure 1. BTI's 2026 Political Transformation Global Ranking of Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2026 Transformation Index.

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

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), based in London and New York, has produced a democracy index since 2006.¹⁰ The most recent report provided an annual snapshot of the state of democracy for 165 independent states and two territories.¹¹ The EIU classified 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.¹²

¹⁰ The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) did not produce a democracy index report covering 2007 or 2009.

¹¹ EIU, *Democracy Index 2025: Democracy Stabilises After Eight Years of Decline*, 2026, summary report, <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2025/>.

¹² EIU, *Democracy Index Report: World*, 2025 (full report), pp. 65-66. 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 (continued...)”

EIU evaluated Mexico and all Central and South American nations. With respect to the Caribbean, EIU looked at Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Please note that the summary report of EIU's *Democracy Index 2025* can be freely downloaded, but the full report may require a subscription.

According to the EIU's *Democracy Index 2025* summary report, covering calendar year 2025, the Latin America and Caribbean region's average score rose to 5.71 from 5.61 after nine years of declining scores.¹⁴ Specifically, EIU found that 13 out of 24 countries recorded score improvements.¹⁵ EIU reported that the "most important positive regional development in 2025" occurred in Bolivia, putting it in the top five countries worldwide with the biggest score improvements from 2024 to 2025 along with Argentina.¹⁶ On the other hand, Colombia registered "the steepest score decline in 2025."¹⁷

EIU's Democracy Index 2025

"Latin America and the Caribbean scores above the global average on electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation and civil liberties. Although it is the worst-performing region in political culture, this category saw the greatest improvement from 2024 (albeit from a low base)."¹³

Figure 2 shows the global rank and classification of Central and South American and Caribbean countries according to the EIU's full report on the *Democracy Index 2025*.

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."

¹³ EIU, *Democracy Index 2025* (summary), p. 23.

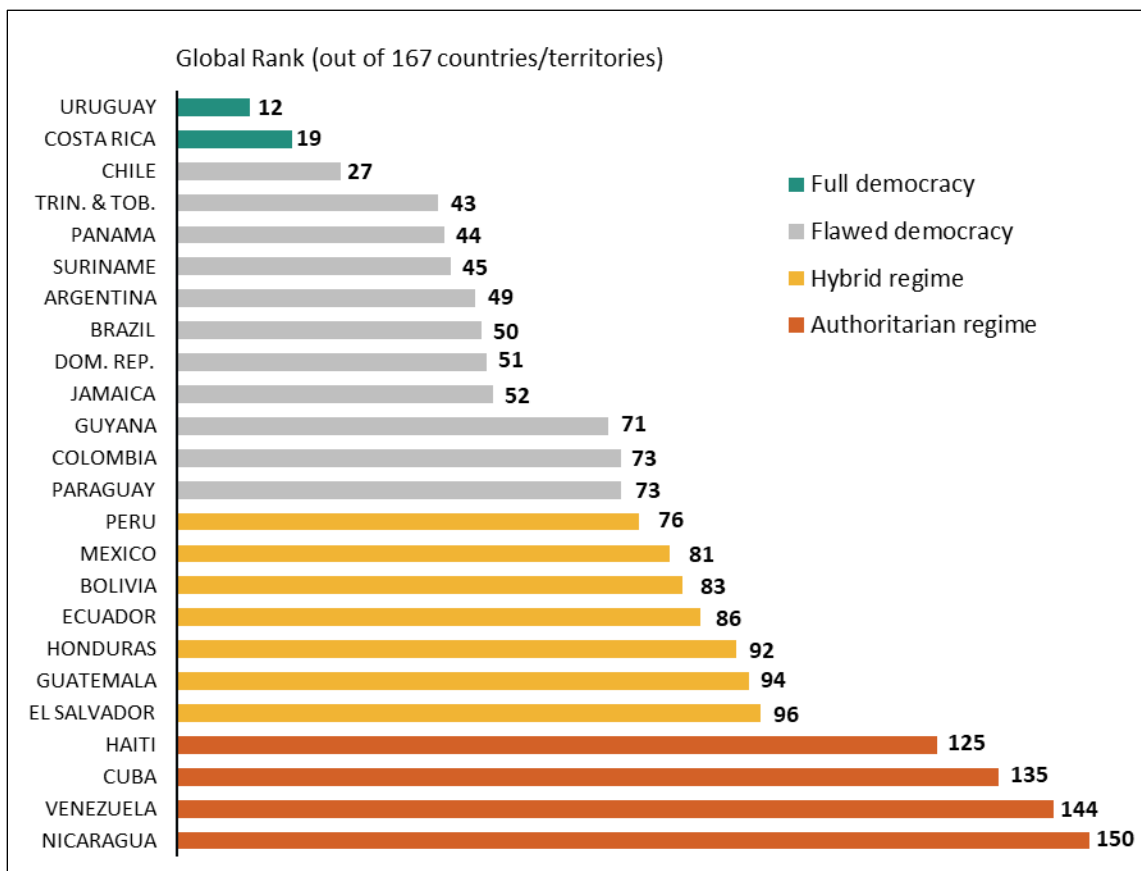
¹⁴ EIU, *Democracy Index 2025* (summary), pp. 10, 23.

¹⁵ EIU, *Democracy Index 2025* (summary), p. 23.

¹⁶ EIU, *Democracy Index 2025* (summary), pp. 23, 11.

¹⁷ EIU, *Democracy Index 2025* (summary), p. 23.

Figure 2. EIU's Democracy Index 2025 Global Ranking for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using EIU's Democracy Index 2025 (full report).

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 1972.¹⁸ The 2026 report, which covered calendar year 2025, measured 195 countries and 13 territories, including all Latin American and Caribbean countries.¹⁹ Freedom House assigned 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*.²⁰ The report's analysis was based on data that are not available online but can be requested from Freedom House.²¹ The Freedom House website also listed the current freedom scores with a detailed profile for each assessed country.²²

In 2025, Freedom House classified 23 out of 35 countries in the Americas as “free,” a region that includes North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. The report highlighted that “only six countries earned score improvements for the year, while 12 registered score declines.”²⁴ According to the report, “El Salvador recorded the region's largest decline in score for the second consecutive year.”²⁵ On the other hand, Freedom House determined that Bolivia's rating improved “from Partly Free to Free status, which it last held in 2002.”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* 2026. 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 2026

“Major threats to freedom in the Americas during 2025 included criminal violence and mounting restrictions on civic space.”²³

¹⁸ Until 1978, the annual report was titled *The Comparative Study of Freedom*.

¹⁹ Yana Gorokhovskaia et al., *Freedom in the World 2026: The Growing Shadow of Autocracy*, Freedom House, March 2026, p. 2, https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/FIW2026_final_digital%20%281%29.pdf.

²⁰ 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 May 21, 2026, <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>.

²¹ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World: About the Report,” accessed May 21, 2026, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>.

²² Freedom House, “Countries and Territories,” accessed May 21, 2026, <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.

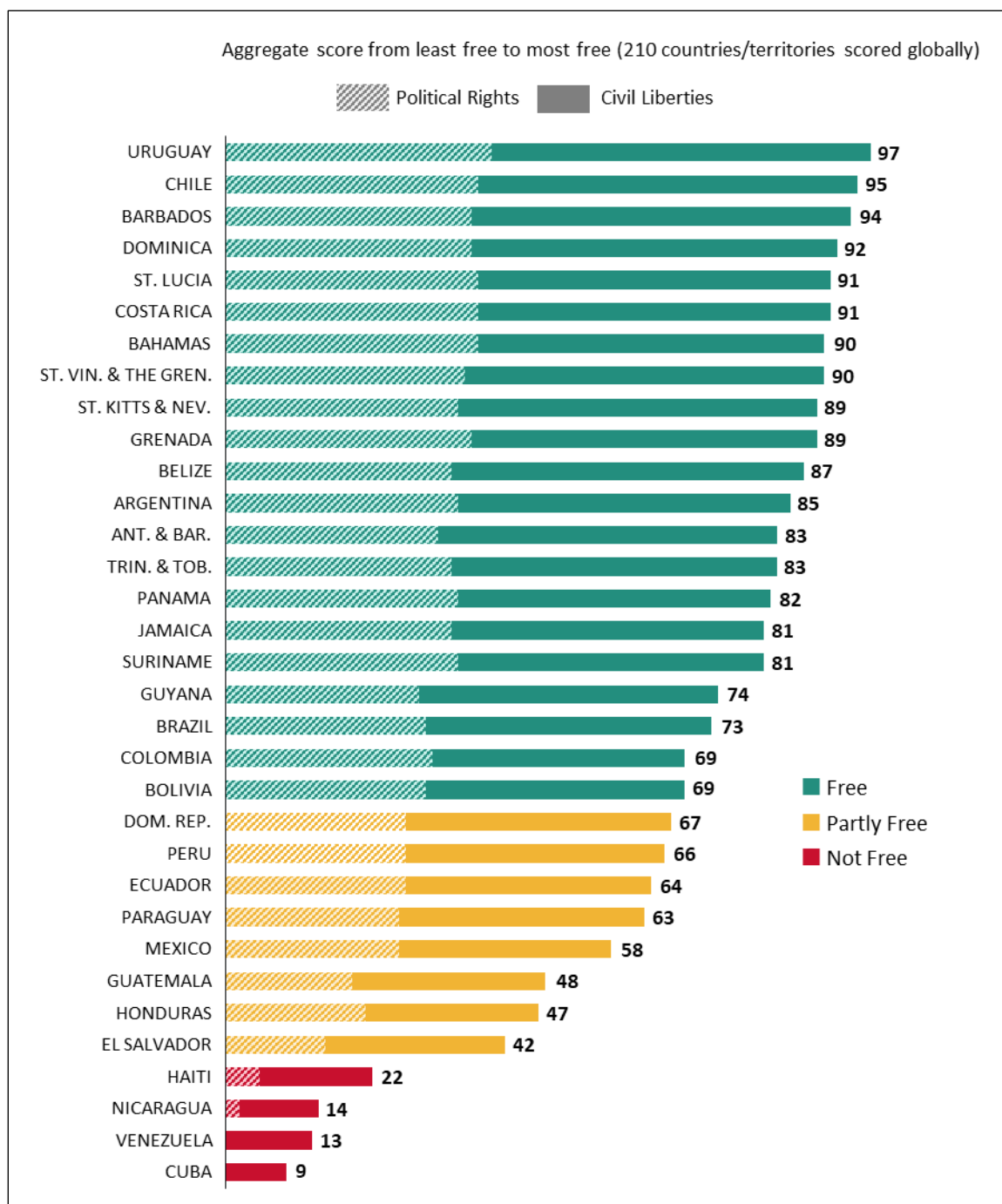
²³ Gorokhovskaia et al., *Freedom in the World* 2026, p. 27.

²⁴ Gorokhovskaia et al., *Freedom in the World* 2026, p. 27.

²⁵ Gorokhovskaia et al., *Freedom in the World* 2026, p. 27.

²⁶ Gorokhovskaia et al., *Freedom in the World* 2026, p. 27.

Figure 3. Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* 2026 Aggregate Scores for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* 2026.

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 2026* includes the Liberal Democracy Index, which is composed of two parts using formulas that are detailed in the 2026 codebook: the Electoral Democracy Index (46 indicators that examine freedom of expression, freedom of association, percentage of the population with voting rights, elections practices, and selection practices for elected officials) and the Liberal Component Index (20 indicators that examine the structure of the legislature, equality before the law, and individual liberties as well as judicial and legislative constraints on the executive branch).²⁷ V-Dem evaluated Mexico and all Central and South American nations. V-Dem evaluated a subset of Caribbean nations: Barbados, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The V-Dem 2026 report, covering calendar year 2025, grouped 179 countries into four categories according to its Regimes of the World measure: *liberal democracy*, *electoral democracy*, *electoral autocracy*, and *closed autocracy*.²⁹ In describing the Latin American

and the Caribbean population, the report stated that 71% lived in democracies, "making it the second most democratic region," with autocracies accounting for the remaining 29%.³⁰ On the one hand, V-Dem found "four democratizing countries (or 16% of the region): the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Brazil, and Guatemala," characterizing the last three as "U-turn democratizers—countries that are reversing autocratization."³¹ On the other hand, the report determined that "autocratization continues in six countries (or 24% of the region): Argentina, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru."³²

V-Dem's Democracy Report 2026

"Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most democratic region in the world by 2025. Peaking on both democracy measures in the early 2000s, it is in decline since then."²⁸

²⁷ Michael Coppedge et al., "V-Dem Codebook v16," Varieties of Democracy Project, 2026, pp. 452-453, https://www.v-dem.net/documents/70/codebook_v16.pdf.

²⁸ Marina Nord et al., *Democracy Report 2026: Unraveling the Democratic Era?*, V-Dem Institute, 2026, p. 57, https://www.v-dem.net/documents/75/V-Dem_Institute_Democracy_Report_2026_lowres.pdf.

²⁹ Although not officially endorsed by the V-Dem Steering Committee, V-Dem data is used to sort countries into regime types based on Anna Lührmann et al., "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." See Nord et al., *Democracy Report 2026*, p. 25, and Coppedge et al., "V-Dem Codebook v16," p. 317.

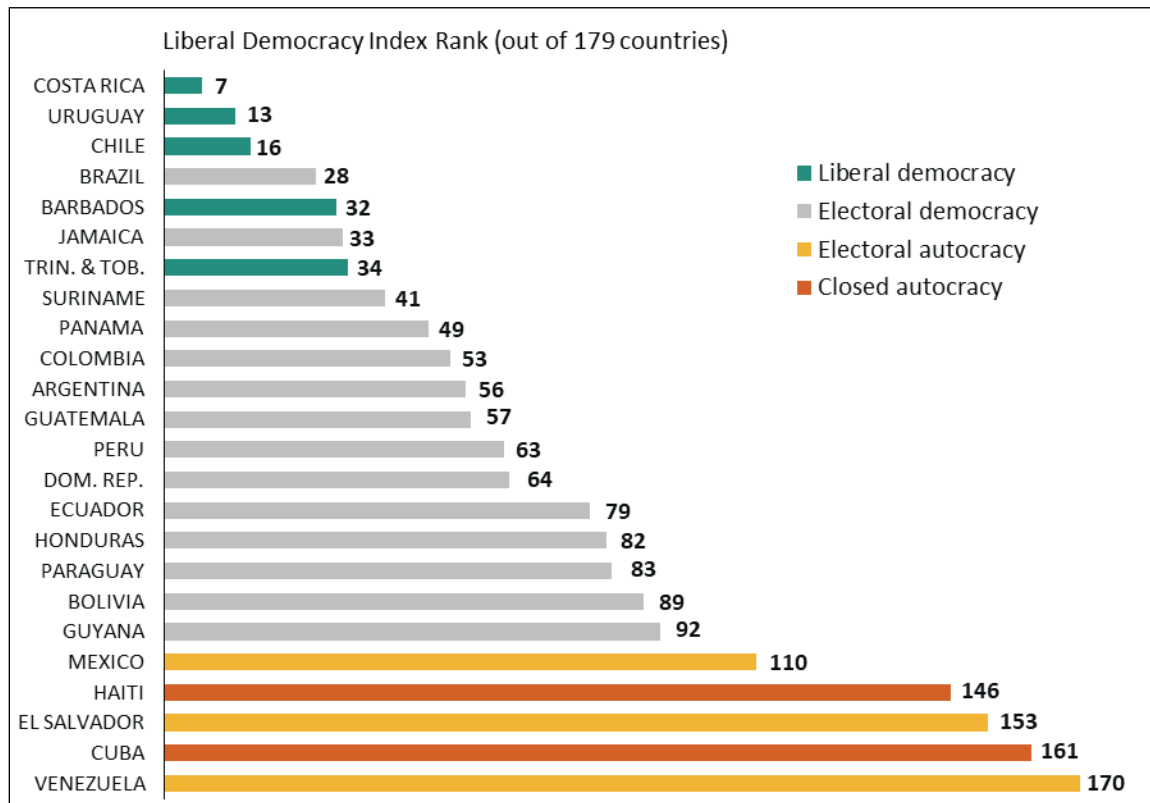
³⁰ Nord et al., *Democracy Report 2026*, pp. 11-12.

³¹ Nord et al., *Democracy Report 2026*, p. 20.

³² Nord et al., *Democracy Report 2026*, p. 20.

Figure 4 shows the liberal democracy index rank and classification of all Central and South American and Caribbean countries according to V-Dem's *Democracy Report 2026*.

Figure 4. V-Dem's *Democracy Report 2026*'s Liberal Democracy Index Rank for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using the Varieties of Democracy Institute's *Democracy Report 2026*.

Compilation of Democracy Indicators

Table 1, below, looks at Caribbean countries' global democracy rankings according to Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2026 Transformation Index, EIU's *Democracy Index 2025* (full report), Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2026*, and V-Dem's *Democracy Report 2026*. **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 by the IPU data tools, which categorize political systems.³³ Each report evaluates a different set of countries, leaving inconsistent rankings across the sources in the tables below. Countries are listed alphabetically in each table.

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 3 for BTI, footnote 12 for EIU, footnote 20 for Freedom House, and footnote 29 for V-Dem, or consult the full reports.

³³ Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Compare Data on Parliaments: Political Systems," 2026, https://data.ipu.org/compare/?field=political_systems®ion=americas&chart=map&year_to=#.

Table 1. Caribbean: 2025 Democracy Rankings

Country (IPU political systems category)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2026		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2025		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World 2026</i>				V-Dem <i>Democracy Report</i> 2026	
	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 (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	83	32	51	Free	—	—
The Bahamas (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	90	38	52	Free	—	—
Barbados (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	94	37	57	Free	32	(-) Liberal democracy
Belize (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	87	34	53	Free	—	—
Cuba (communist system)	114	Hard-line autocracy	135	Authoritarian regime	9	0	9	Not free	161	Closed autocracy
Dominica (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	92	37	55	Free	—	—
Dominican Republic (presidential system)	23	Defective democracy	51	Flawed democracy	67	27	40	Partly free	64	Electoral democracy

Country (IPU political systems category)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2026		EIU Democracy Index 2025		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2026				V-Dem Democracy Report 2026	
	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
Grenada (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	89	37	52	Free	—	—
Guyana (presidential- parliamentary system)	—	—	71	Flawed democracy	74	29	45	Free	92	(-) Electoral autocracy
Haiti (presidential system)	130	Hard-line autocracy	125=	Authoritarian regime	22	5	17	Not free	146	Closed autocracy
Jamaica (parliamentary system)	15	Consolidating democracy	52	Flawed democracy	81	34	47	Free	33	Electoral democracy
St. Kitts and Nevis (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	89	35	54	Free	—	—
St. Lucia (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	91	38	53	Free	—	—
St. Vincent and the Grenadines (parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	90	36	54	Free	—	—

Country (IPU political systems category)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2026		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2025		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World</i> 2026				V-Dem <i>Democracy Report</i> 2026	
	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
Suriname (presidential system)	—	—	45	Flawed democracy	81	35	46	Free	41	Electoral democracy
Trinidad & Tobago (parliamentary system)	13	Consolidating democracy	43	Flawed democracy	83	34	49	Free	34	(-) Liberal democracy

Source: Compiled by CRS using the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data on political systems, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s 2026 Transformation Index (BTI), the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) *Democracy Index* 2025 (full report), Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World* 2026, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem) *Democracy Report* 2026.

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).

- 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.
- IPU noted that “The mandate of all members of the Haitian Chamber of Deputies expired in January 2020 in the absence of elections.” For more information, see CRS Report R47394, *Haiti: Recent Developments and U.S. Policy*, by Karla I. Rios and Clare Ribando Seelke, and CRS Report 98-684, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Fact Sheet on Leaders and Elections*, by Carla Y. Davis-Castro.

Table 2. Mexico and Central America: 2025 Democracy Rankings

Country (IPU political systems category)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2026		EIU Democracy Index 2025		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2026				V-Dem Democracy Report 2026	
	Political Transformation 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 (presidential system)	9	Consolidating democracy	19	Full democracy	91	38	53	Free	7	Liberal democracy
El Salvador (presidential system)	63	Moderate autocracy	96	Hybrid regime	42	15	27	Partly Free	153	Electoral autocracy
Guatemala (presidential system)	83	Moderate autocracy	94=	Hybrid regime	48	19	29	Partly free	57	Electoral democracy
Honduras (presidential system)	67	Highly defective democracy	92	Hybrid regime	47	21	26	Partly free	82	(-) Electoral democracy
Mexico (presidential system)	56	Highly defective democracy	81	Hybrid regime	58	26	32	Partly free	110	(+) Electoral autocracy
Nicaragua^c (presidential system c)	117	Hard-line autocracy	150=	Authoritarian regime	14	2	12	Not free	175	Electoral autocracy
Panama (presidential system)	45	Defective democracy	44	Flawed democracy	82	35	47	Free	49	Electoral democracy

Sources: Compiled by CRS using the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data on political systems, Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2026 Transformation Index (BTI), the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s *Democracy Index 2025* (full report), Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2026*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-Dem's) *Democracy Report 2026*.

Notes: Although Belize is located in Central America, it is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and is listed in **Table 1**.

- 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. IPU noted that "In the presidential elections held together with the parliamentary polls, President Ortega was re-elected for a fourth consecutive term, along with his wife, the Vice President Rosario Murillo.... Prior to the 2021 elections, several potential presidential candidates were arrested.... The European Union said the elections had 'taken place without democratic guarantees and their results lack legitimacy.' ... The Organization of American States (OAS) adopted a resolution stating the 2021 elections had no democratic legitimacy." For more information, see CRS Report R48294, *Nicaragua: In Brief*, by Karla I. Rios, and CRS Report 98-684, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Fact Sheet on Leaders and Elections*, by Carla Y. Davis-Castro.

Table 3. South America: 2025 Democracy Rankings

Country (IPU political systems category)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2026		EIU Democracy Index 2025		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2026				V-Dem Democracy Report 2026	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status Index	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score (out of 100)	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
Argentina (presidential system)	25	Defective Democracy	49	Flawed democracy	85	35	50	Free	56	Electoral democracy
Bolivia (presidential system)	39	Defective democracy	83	Hybrid regime	69	30	39	Free	89	Electoral democracy
Brazil (presidential system)	22	Defective democracy	50	Flawed democracy	73	30	43	Free	28	(+) Electoral democracy
Chile (presidential system)	5	Consolidating democracy	27	Flawed democracy	95	38	57	Free	16	(-) Liberal democracy
Colombia (presidential system)	39	Defective democracy	73=	Flawed democracy	69	31	38	Free	53	Electoral democracy

Country (IPU political systems category)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2026		EIU Democracy Index 2025		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2026				V-Dem Democracy Report 2026	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status Index	Global Rank (of 167) ^a	Regime Type	Aggregate Score (out of 100)	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^b
Ecuador (presidential system)	47	Defective democracy	86	Hybrid regime	64	27	37	Partly free	79	Electoral democracy
Paraguay (presidential system)	42	Defective democracy	73=	Flawed democracy	63	26	37	Partly free	83	Electoral democracy
Peru (presidential system)	54	Highly defective democracy	76	Hybrid regime	66	27	39	Partly free	63	Electoral democracy
Uruguay (presidential system)	1	Consolidating democracy	12	Full democracy	97	40	57	Free	13	(-) Liberal democracy
Venezuela (presidential system)	113	Hard-line autocracy	144=	Authoritarian regime	13	0	13	Not free	170	Electoral autocracy

Source: Compiled by CRS using Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data on political systems, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s 2026 Transformation Index (BTI), EIU’s *Democracy Index 2025* (full report), Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World 2026*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute’s (V-Dem’s) *Democracy Report 2026*.

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.
- IPU noted that “According to the National Electoral Council (CNE), the presidential alliance ... won 253 seats in the 285-member National Assembly (see IPU note 2). The elections were boycotted by PUD, an alliance of opposition parties (see IPU note 3). Other opposition alliances won a total of 29 seats.” For more information, see CRS In Focus IF10715, *Venezuela: Overview of U.S. Sanctions Policy*, by Clare Ribando Seelke, and CRS Report 98-684, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Fact Sheet on Leaders and Elections*, by Carla Y. Davis-Castro.

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 2026 Global Findings	Regional report examines 137 countries and analyzes the results of the 2026 Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) covering February 1, 2023, to January 31, 2025
	BTI Governance Index 2026	Index ranks 137 countries composed of scores for level of difficulty, steering capability, resource efficiency, consensus-building, and international cooperation
	BTI 2026 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 Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean 2026	Regional report examines 22 countries and analyzes the results of the 2026 BTI covering February 1, 2023, to January 31, 2025
Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)	Democracy Index 2025 (summary)	Summary of global report covers 167 countries and territories (full report may require a subscription)
Electoral Integrity Project	Electoral Integrity Global Report 2025	Annual report summarizes data from Perceptions of Electoral Integrity dataset based on a survey of academic experts for 194 countries with case studies from Mexico and El Salvador
Freedom House	Countries and Territories Rankings 2026	Global ranking list covers global freedom, internet freedom, and democracy scores for 208 countries and territories
	Freedom in the World 2026	Global report covers 208 countries and territories
	Freedom Map 2026	Map shows map of “Freedom in the World” report covering 208 countries and territories as well as map of “Freedom on the Net” report regarding internet and digital media freedom in 72 countries

Organization	Title and Year Published	Resource Type and Notes
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)	Global State of Democracy Indices (2025)	Interactive map illustrates four aspects of democracy in 173 countries from 1975 to 2025 as well as providing datasets and methodology
	Global State of Democracy Report 2025	Global report looks at democracy trends from 1975 to 2024 across 173 countries
U.S. Department of State	Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2024	Global report covers all countries receiving U.S. assistance and all United Nations member states
Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)	Datasets (2026)	Includes current and past datasets for downloading as well as reference documents
World Bank	Democracy Report 2026	Global report covers 179 countries
	Worldwide Governance Indicators (2025)	Data on six aggregate indicators of governance for over 200 countries from 1996 to 2024; in particular, see Voice and Accountability indicator
World Justice Project	Rule of Law Index 2025	Website with interactive map and data graphics that cover 143 countries and jurisdictions from 2015 to 2025
	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 (2021-2022)	Country reports cover 30 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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