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

Updated September 27, 2023

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

R46016



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 2022 Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); (2) the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) *Democracy Index 2022*; (3) Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2023*; and (4) the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-Dem's) Liberal Democracy Index in its *Democracy Report 2023*. Additional resources appear at the end of the report.

R46016

September 27, 2023

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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 (NGO) indices that measure democracy worldwide.

For additional information on democracy in the global context, see 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 R46781, *Latin America and the Caribbean: U.S. Policy and Key Issues in the 117th Congress*, coordinated by Mark P. Sullivan;
- CRS Report R47331, *U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean: FY2023 Appropriations*, by Peter J. Meyer
- CRS In Focus IF12031, *Anti-corruption Efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean*, by June S. Beittel and Rachel L. Martin
- 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 four nongovernmental (NGO) indices, which are each discussed briefly below. CRS does not endorse the methodology or accuracy of any particular democracy index. (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 2022 Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); (2) the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) *Democracy Index 2022*; (3) Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2023*; and (4) the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-DEM's) Liberal Democracy Index in its *Democracy Report 2023*.

Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)

Bertelsmann Stiftung, a private foundation based in Germany, has published the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) biannually since 2006. BTI 2022, which reviews the period of February 1, 2019, to January 31, 2021, includes global, regional and country reports as well as three thematic reports that evaluate the state of democracy, the economy, and governance in 137 developing and transition countries. For political transformation specifically, BTI ranks countries 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. Among Caribbean nations, BTI evaluates Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica.

In its 2022 regional report, BTI finds that “the political turmoil observed in the majority of Latin American countries is also reflected in the continuing decline in the quality of democracy.”⁴ In its global report, BTI highlights Brazil’s “steady decline in its quality of democracy” over the past decade, Mexico’s “organized drug crime and the

exceedingly brutal fight against gang activities have undermined the quality of democracy,” and Central America’s “long-term autocratization trends.”⁵ On the other hand, the report also highlights that some democracies “have been consistently classified as consolidating and stable over the past 20 years in addition to being able to maintain their high level of democracy despite myriad transformation challenges.” This group, according to the report, includes Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay in Latin America, and Jamaica in the Caribbean.⁶

BTI's Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean 2022

“Brought into intense focus by the magnifying glass of the coronavirus pandemic, Latin America’s oft-cited economic structural weaknesses – extreme inequality, weak economic productivity and fractured social systems – have once again been exposed.”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 2022 Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI).

¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Methodology,” accessed August 1, 2023, at <https://www.bti-project.org/en/methodology.html>. 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 August 1, 2022, 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.

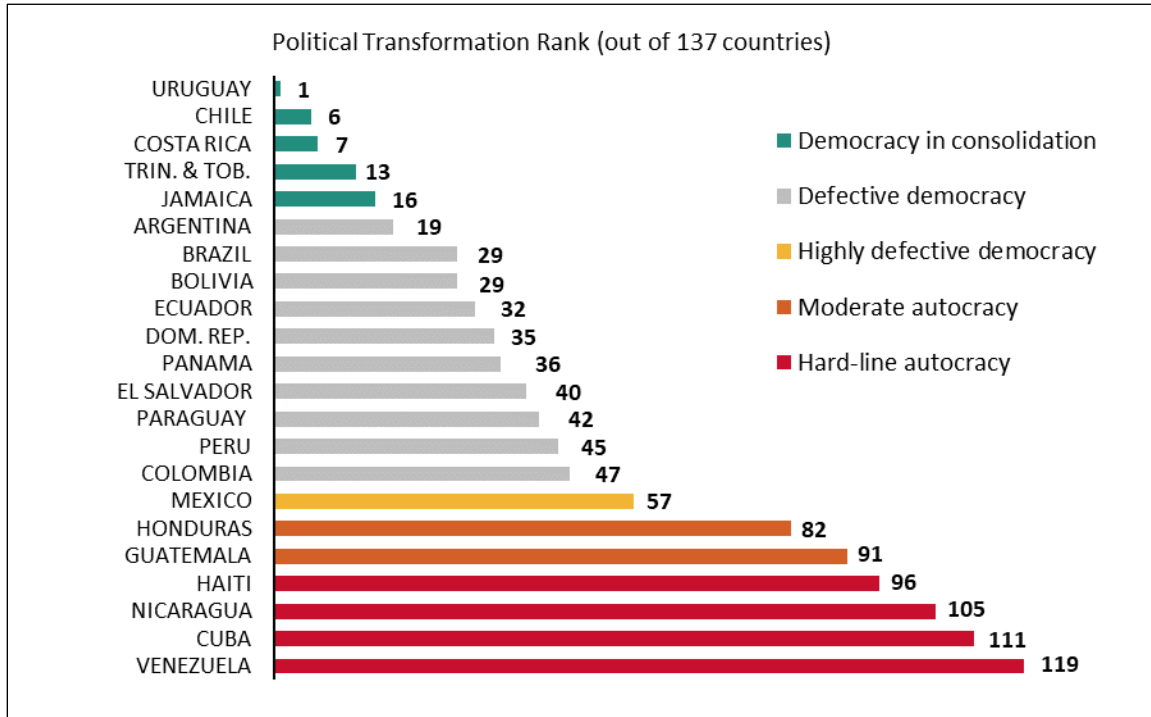
³ Peter Thiery, *Paradigms Lost. New opportunities for transformation?—BTI Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022, p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Hauke Hartmann and Peter Thiery, *Global findings BTI 2022*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, pp. 5, 7-8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Figure I. BTI's 2022 Political Transformation Global Ranking of Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2022 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 2006.⁷ The most recent report provides an annual snapshot of the state of democracy for 165 independent states and two territories.⁸ 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.⁹ EIU evaluates 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 2022*, the Latin America and Caribbean region's overall score declined from 5.83 in 2021 to 5.79 in 2022 (on a 0 to 10 scale). According to EIU, "a broad-based increase in scores related to the lifting of pandemic-

EIU's Democracy Index 2022

"Weak state capacity is a major cause of the region's low scores," as it is home to "some of the world's most unequal and corrupt countries" along with the "growth of transnational criminal organizations."¹⁰

related restrictions that had affected civil liberties ... are offset by a sharp deterioration in scores in a handful of countries."¹¹ The report identifies three countries whose declining scores are driving the overall region's score down: Haiti, El Salvador, and Mexico.¹² In 2022, three countries in the region were classified as full democracies (Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay), while four countries in the region were identified as authoritarian regimes (Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela).¹³ Following a downgrade in the 2021 report, Chile regained its status as a "full democracy" and Peru was downgraded from a "flawed democracy" to a "hybrid regime."¹⁴

Figure 2 shows the global rank and classification of Central and South American and Caribbean countries according to the EIU's *Democracy Index 2022*.

⁷ The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) did not produce a democracy index report covering 2007 or 2009.

⁸ EIU, *Democracy Index 2022: Frontline Democracy and the battle for Ukraine*, 2023, p. 3.

⁹ EIU, *Democracy Index 2022: Frontline Democracy and the battle for Ukraine*, 2023, pp. 66-68. EIU defines terms as: *full democracies* are countries where the "functioning of government is satisfactory. Media are independent and diverse.... effective 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."

¹⁰ EIU, *Democracy Index 2022: Frontline Democracy and the battle for Ukraine*, 2023, pp. 43.

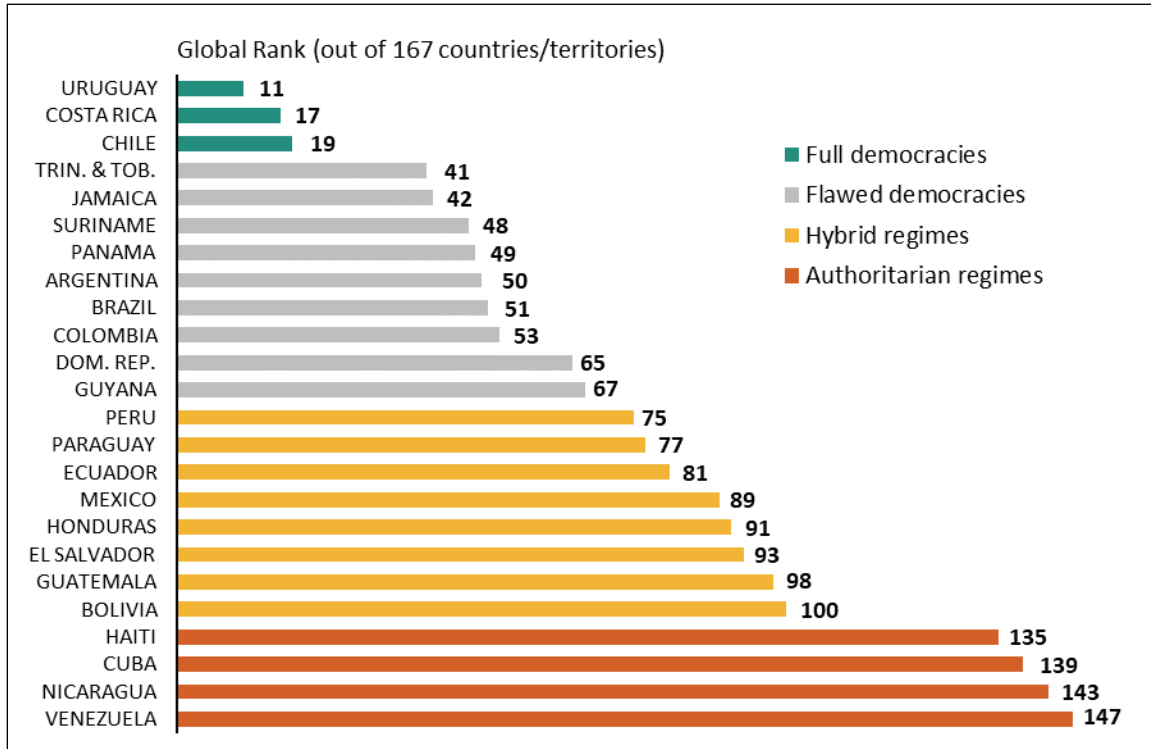
¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Figure 2. EIU's Democracy Index 2022 Global Ranking for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using EIU's Democracy Index 2022.

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 1972.¹⁵ The 2023 report, which covers calendar year 2022, measures 195 countries and 15 territories.¹⁶ 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*.¹⁷ The report's analysis is based on data that are detailed in full on the Freedom House's report web page.¹⁸ Freedom House's webpage "Countries," lists the current freedom scores of all countries with a detailed profile for each.¹⁹ Freedom House evaluates all Central and South American and Caribbean nations.

Freedom House found that the top countries with one-year democratic declines in 2022 included Nicaragua and El Salvador.²¹ Over the last decade, the top countries with largest democratic declines include Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela, and Haiti.²² Colombia was among the top countries with a one-year democratic gain, earning a six-point increase in its aggregate score and a status change from "partly free" to "free."²³ Meanwhile, Peru's status was downgraded to "partly free" after only a "one year stint in the Free category."²⁴

Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2023

"The countries of the region continue to grapple with serious threats to political stability and fundamental rights... Perennial weaknesses in the rule of law remained a challenge for many countries in the region."²⁰

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 2023*.

¹⁵ Until 1978, the annual report was titled *The Comparative Study of Freedom*.

¹⁶ Yana Gorokhovskaia, Adrian Shabaz, and Amy Slipowitz, *Freedom in the World 2023: Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy*, Freedom House, 2023, p. 21.

¹⁷ 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 July 31, 2023, at <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>.

¹⁸ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World: About the report," accessed July 31, 2023, at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

¹⁹ Freedom House, "Countries and Territories," accessed July 31, 2023, at <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

²⁰ Yana Gorokhovskaia, Adrian Shabaz, and Amy Slipowitz, *Freedom in the World 2023: Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy*, Freedom House, 2023, p. 25.

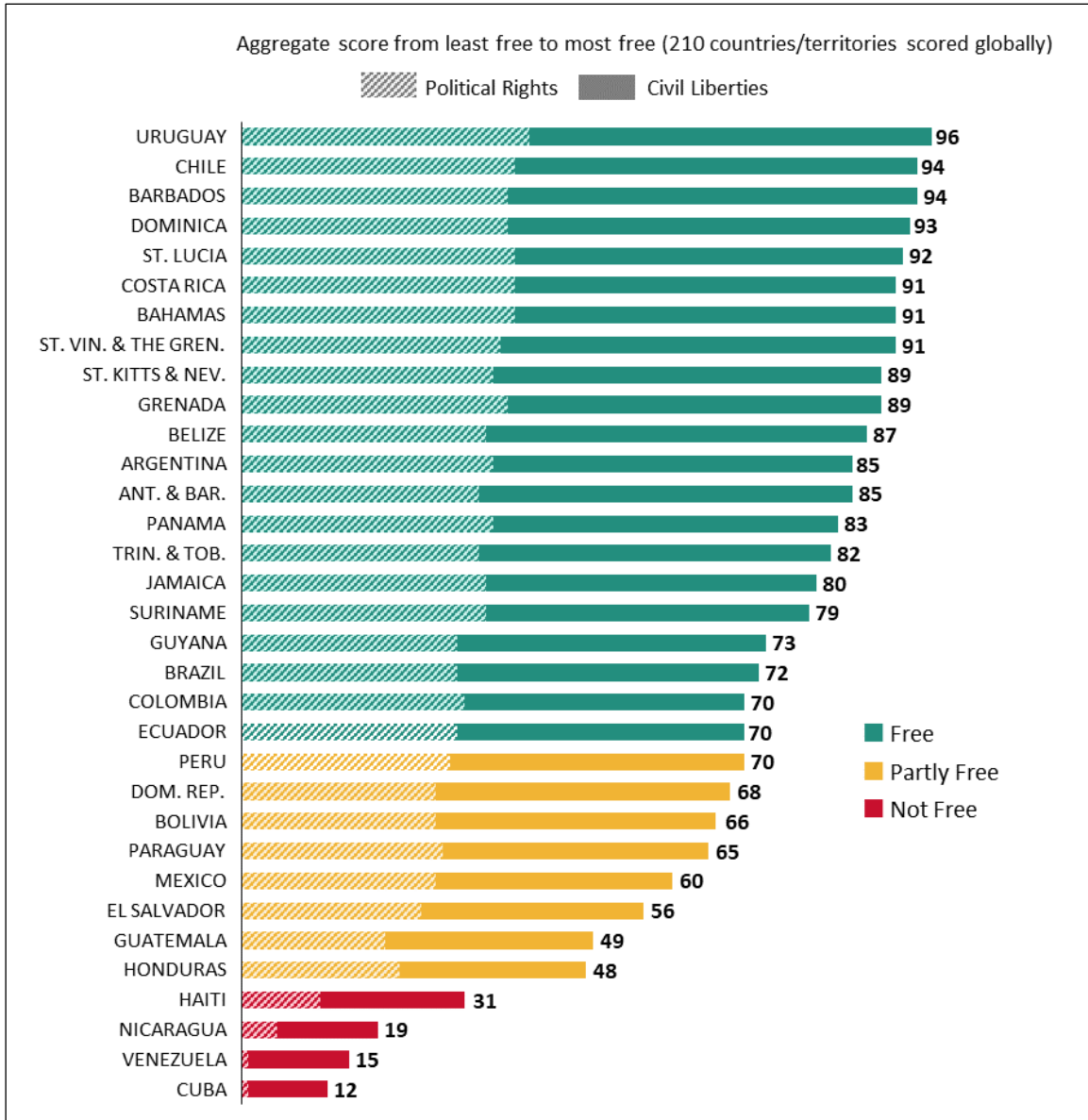
²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Figure 3. Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2023 Aggregate Scores for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2023.

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 2023* includes the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI), which is based on 71 indicators that capture liberal and electoral aspects of democracy.²⁵ V-Dem evaluates 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 2023 report, covering calendar year 2022, grouped 179 countries into four categories: *liberal democracy*, *electoral democracy*, *electoral autocracy*, and *closed autocracy*.²⁷ The report states that the “vast majority of Latin Americans (83%) live in electoral democracies” and “autocracies in the region are comparatively small countries ... making up 12% of the region’s inhabitants.”²⁸ Declining LDI scores, what is referred to in the report as “autocratizing,” were recorded for Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela.²⁹ The report finds that “declines in academic freedom are linked to autocratization” in several countries around the world including Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Uruguay.³⁰ Since last year, Haiti was downgraded to a “closed autocracy.”³¹ The report also notes that in the region, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Honduras have seen improved LDI scores over the past decade; the 2023 report upgraded Honduras to an “electoral democracy.”³²

V-Dem's Democracy Report 2023

“The 2022 regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean is lower than at any point in time since 1989.”²⁶

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 2023*.

²⁵ Evie Papada et al., *Democracy Report 2023: Defiance in the Face of Autocratization*, Varieties of Democracy Institute, p. 50.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁷ 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.”

²⁸ Evie Papada et al., *Democracy Report 2023: Defiance in the Face of Autocratization*, Varieties of Democracy Institute, p. 14.

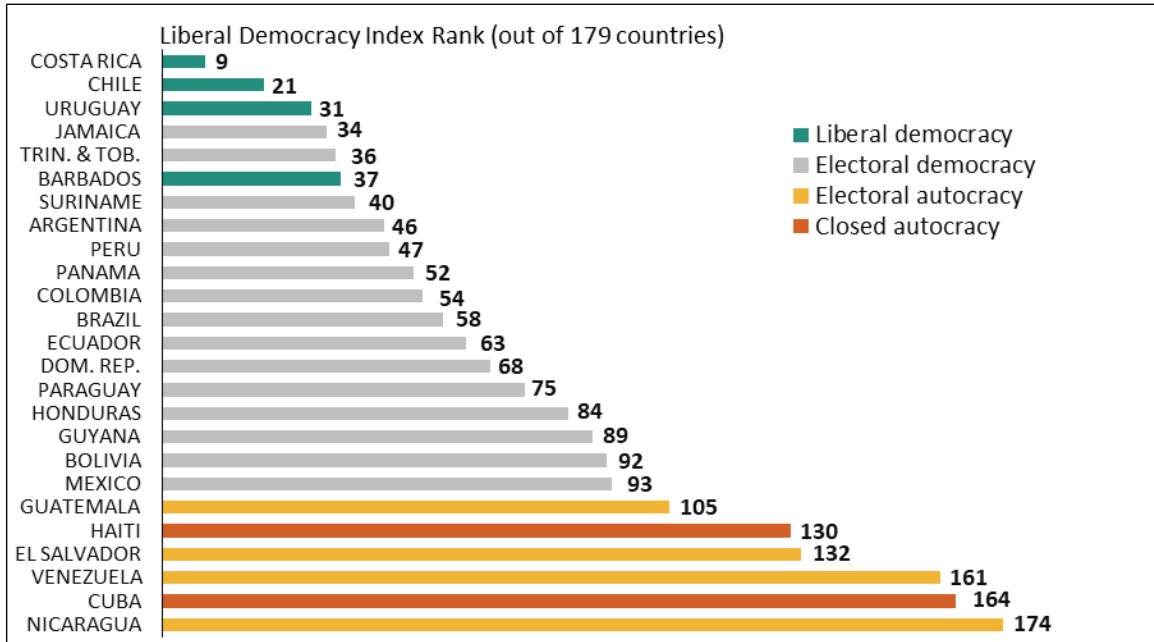
²⁹ Ibid., p. 21 and 27.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 37.

³¹ Ibid., p. 40.

³² Ibid., p. 21.

Figure 4. V-Dem's Democracy Report 2023's Liberal Democracy Index Rank for Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Source: Created by CRS using the Varieties of Democracy Institute's *Democracy Report 2023*.

Compilation of Democracy Indicators

Table 1 below looks at Caribbean countries' global democracy rankings according to Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2022 Transformation Index, EIU's *Democracy Index 2022*, Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2023*, and V-Dem's *Democracy Report 2023*. **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*.³³

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 9 for EIU, footnote 17 for Freedom House, and footnote 27 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.

³³ U.S. Department of State, *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, March 20, 2023.

Table I. Caribbean: 2022 Democracy Rankings

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2022		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2022		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World 2023</i>				V-Dem <i>Democracy Report</i> 2023	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^a
Antigua & Barbuda (multiparty parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	85	33	52	Free	—	—
The Bahamas (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	91	38	53	Free	—	—
Barbados (parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	94	37	57	Free	37	(-) Liberal democracy
Belize (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	87	34	53	Free	—	—
Cuba (authoritarian state)	111	Hard-line autocracy	139	Authoritarian	12	1	11	Not free	164	Closed autocracy
Dominica (multiparty parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	93	37	56	Free	—	—

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2022		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2022		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World 2023</i>				V-Dem <i>Democracy Report</i> 2023	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^a
Dominican Republic (representative constitutional democracy)	35	Defective democracy	65	Flawed democracy	68	27	41	Partly free	68	Electoral democracy
Grenada (parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	89	37	52	Free	—	—
Guyana (multiparty democracy)	—	—	67	Flawed democracy	73	30	43	Free	89	(-) Electoral democracy
Haiti (multiparty constitutional republic)	96	Hard-line autocracy	135	Authoritarian	31	11	20	Not free	130	(+) Closed autocracy
Jamaica (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	16	Democracy in consolidation	42	Flawed democracy	80	34	46	Free	34	(+) Electoral 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 2022		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2022		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World</i> 2023				V-Dem <i>Democracy Report</i> 2023	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^a
St. Lucia (constitutional monarchy with a multiparty parliamentary system)	—	—	—	—	92	38	54	Free	—	—
St. Vincent and the Grenadines (multiparty parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	91	36	55	Free	—	—
Suriname (constitutional democracy)	—	—	48	Flawed democracy	79	34	45	Free	40	Electoral democracy
Trinidad & Tobago (parliamentary democracy)	13	Democracy in consolidation	41	Flawed democracy	82	33	49	Free	36	(+) Electoral democracy

Source: Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department’s 2022 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s 2022 Transformation Index, EIU’s *Democracy Index 2022*, Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World 2023*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute’s *Democracy Report 2023*.

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. 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: 2022 Democracy Rankings

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2022		EIU <i>Democracy Index</i> 2022		Freedom House <i>Freedom in the World</i> 2023				V-Dem <i>Democracy</i> <i>Report</i> 2023	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^a
Costa Rica (constitutional republic)	7	Democracy in consolidation	17	Full democracy	91	38	53	Free	9	Liberal democracy
El Salvador (constitutional multiparty republic)	40	Defective democracy	93	Hybrid regime	56	25	31	Partly Free	132	Electoral autocracy
Guatemala (multiparty constitutional republic)	91	Moderate autocracy	98	Hybrid regime	49	20	29	Partly free	105	Electoral autocracy
Honduras (constitutional multiparty republic)	82	Moderate autocracy	91	Hybrid regime	48	22	26	Partly free	84	(-) Electoral democracy
Mexico (multiparty federal republic)	57	Highly defective democracy	89	Hybrid regime	60	27	33	Partly free	93	Electoral democracy
Nicaragua^b (authoritarian political system)	105	Hard-line autocracy	143	Authoritarian	19	5	14	Not free	174	(-) Electoral autocracy

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2022		EIU Democracy Index 2022		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023				V-Dem Democracy Report 2023	
	Political Transformation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^a
Panama (multiparty constitutional democracy)	36	Defective democracy	49	Flawed democracy	83	35	48	Free	52	Electoral democracy

Sources: Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department’s *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s 2022 Transformation Index, EIU’s *Democracy Index 2022*, Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World 2023*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute’s (*V-Dem*) *Democracy Report 2023*.

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

- a. 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.
- b. “Constitutional multiparty republic” was the political system description from the U.S. State Department’s *2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nicaragua*, while the *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nicaragua* states: “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 the executive, legislative, judicial, and electoral functions.”

Table 3. South America: 2022 Democracy Rankings

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2022		EIU Democracy Index 2022		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023				V-Dem Democracy Report 2023	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status Index	Global Rank (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^a
Argentina (federal constitutional republic)	19	Democracy in consolidation	50	Flawed democracy	85	35	50	Free	46	Electoral democracy
Bolivia (constitutional multiparty republic)	29	Defective democracy	100	Hybrid regime	66	27	39	Partly free	92	Electoral democracy
Brazil (constitutional multiparty republic)	29	Defective democracy	51	Flawed democracy	72	30	42	Free	58	Electoral democracy
Chile (constitutional multiparty democracy)	6	Democracy in consolidation	19	Full democracy	94	38	56	Free	21	(-) Liberal democracy
Colombia (constitutional multiparty republic)	47	Defective democracy	53	Flawed democracy	70	31	39	Free	54	Electoral democracy
Ecuador (constitutional multiparty republic)	32	Defective democracy	81	Hybrid regime	70	30	40	Free	63	Electoral democracy

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2022		EIU Democracy Index 2022		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023				V-Dem Democracy Report 2023	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status Index	Global Rank (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type ^a
Paraguay (multiparty constitutional republic)	42	Defective democracy	77	Hybrid regime	65	28	37	Partly free	75	Electoral democracy
Peru (constitutional multiparty republic)	45	Defective democracy	75	Hybrid regime	70	29	41	Partly free	47	Electoral democracy
Uruguay (constitutional republic)	1	Democracy in consolidation	11	Full democracy	96	40	56	Free	31	(-) Liberal democracy
Venezuela^b (multiparty constitutional republic)	119	Hard-line autocracy	147	Authoritarian	15	1	14	Not free	161	Electoral autocracy

Source: Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department’s 2022 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s 2022 Transformation Index, EIU’s *Democracy Index 2022*, Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World 2023*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute’s *Democracy Report 2023*.

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

- a. 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.
- b. 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 in Central and South America and the Caribbean, although many cover other geographic areas as well. The sources are organized alphabetically by title. This is not an exhaustive list.

Table 4. Selected Resources for Democracy Indicators

Title and Year Published	Organization	Resource Type and Notes
BTI 2022 Political Transformation Index	Bertelsmann Stiftung	Index ranks 137 countries composed of scores for stateness, political participation, rule of law, stability of democratic institutions, and political and social integration
BTI 2022 Governance Index	Bertelsmann Stiftung	Index ranks 137 countries composed of scores for level of difficulty, steering capability, resource efficiency, consensus-building, and international cooperation
BTI's Regional Report Latin America and the Caribbean 2022	Peter Thiery, Bertelsmann Stiftung	Regional report covers 22 countries and analyzes the results of BTI's 2022 Transformation Index from February 1, 2019, to January 31, 2021
BTI's 2022 Global Findings	Hauke Hartmann and Peter Thiery, Bertelsmann Stiftung	Regional report covers 137 countries and analyzes the results of BTI's 2022 Transformation Index from February 1, 2019, to January 31, 2021
Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2022	U.S. State Department	Global report covers all countries receiving U.S. assistance and all United Nations member states
Democracy Index 2022	Economist Intelligence Unit	Global report covers 167 countries and territories
Democracy Report 2023	Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)	Global report covers 179 countries
Electoral Integrity Worldwide 2019	Electoral Integrity Project, an independent academic project based at Harvard University and the University of Sydney	Report and data from cumulative study covering national presidential and parliamentary elections from July 1, 2012 to December 31, 2018
Freedom in the World 2023	Freedom House	Global report covers 210 countries and territories
About the Report 1973-2023	Freedom House	Provides links to downloadable, raw data-sets utilized for <i>Freedom in the World 2023</i> report and earlier years
Global Freedom Status Map 2023	Freedom House	Map shows global freedom, internet freedom, and democracy states for 210 countries and territories

Title and Year Published	Organization	Resource Type and Notes
Countries and Territories Rankings 2023	Freedom House	Global ranking list covering global freedom, internet freedom, and democracy scores for 210 countries and territories
Global State of Democracy Indices (2022)	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (International IDEA) Global State of Democracy Initiative	Interactive map looks at 157 indicators for 174 countries from 1975-2022
Global State of Democracy Report 2022	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance	Global report looks at trends in democracy from 1975-2022 across 173 countries
The State of Democracy in the Americas 2021	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance	Regional report includes all Latin American countries and some Caribbean countries and is also available in Spanish
Rule of Law Index 2022	World Justice Project	Global report measures how the rule of law is experienced and perceived in 140 countries and jurisdictions
Rule of Law Index 2022	World Justice Project	Website with interactive map and data tables cover over 100 countries and jurisdictions from 2015-2022
The Rule of Law Country Reports (2023)	World Justice Project	Country reports cover 26 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean based on key findings from the General Population Poll 2022
Worldwide Governance Indicators (2022)	World Bank	Data on 6 aggregate indicators of governance for 208 countries from 1996-2021; in particular, see Voice and Accountability indicator

Source: Compiled by CRS.

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Acknowledgments

Research Librarian Clayton Levy assisted with the update of this report.

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