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

Updated May 24, 2021

**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 political climate in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on the U.S. Department of State's description of each country's political system and selected nongovernmental indices that measure democracy trends worldwide. Using tables and graphs to illustrate regional trends, this report provides a snapshot of democracy indicators from the following sources: (1) the U.S. Department of State's *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*; (2) Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2020 Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); (3) the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) *Democracy Index 2020*; (4) Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2021*; and (5) the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-Dem's) Liberal Democracy Index in its *Democracy Report 2021*. Additional resources appear at the end of the report.

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May 24, 2021

**Carla Y. Davis-Castro**  
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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 political climate in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on the U.S. Department of State's description of each country's political system and selected nongovernmental (NGO) indices that measure democracy trends 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 In Focus IF10460, *Latin America and the Caribbean: U.S. Policy Overview*, by Mark P. Sullivan;
- CRS Report R46514, *U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean: FY2021 Appropriations*, by Peter J. Meyer and Rachel L. Martin;
- CRS Report 98-684, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Fact Sheet on Leaders and Elections*, by Carla Y. Davis-Castro; and
- CRS Report R45733, *Combating Corruption in Latin America: Congressional Considerations*, coordinated by June S. Beittel.

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

## Democracy Indices and Source Notes

This report compiles information from the U.S. State Department 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 2020 Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI); (2) the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) *Democracy Index 2020*; (3) Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2021*; and (4) the Varieties of Democracy Institute's (V-DEM's) Liberal Democracy Index in its *Democracy Report 2021*.

### Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)

Bertelsmann Stiftung, a private foundation based in Germany, has published the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) biannually since 2006. Key regional findings and country reports are available in English (BTI publishes the full regional report in German). BTI 2020 evaluates the quality of democracy, a market economy, and political management 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.<sup>1</sup> The political transformation indicators also determine country classification: *democracy in consolidation*, *defective democracy*, *highly defective democracy*, *moderate autocracy*, and *hardline autocracy*.<sup>2</sup> BTI evaluates all Central and South American nations. With the exception of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica, BTI does not evaluate Caribbean nations. In its global report, BTI notes that “in some Latin American countries, the degree to which autocratic alternatives are clearly rejected has diminished significantly. Strong declines in the scores assessing approval of democracy, though at different levels, can be seen in countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Panama” but the report also highlights the opposite: “two Latin American countries have shown that the path of backsliding is just as reversible as that of progressive democratization,” in reference to Ecuador and Colombia.<sup>3</sup>

**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 2020 Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI).

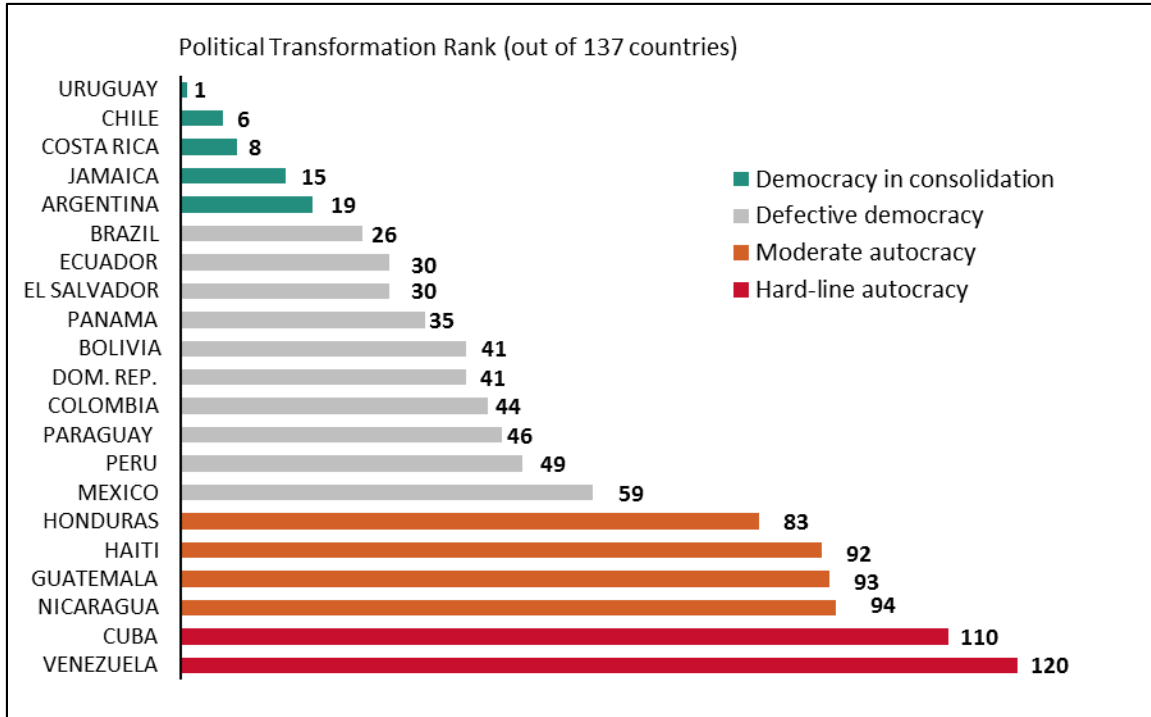
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<sup>1</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Methodology,” accessed May 14, 2021, available at <https://www.bti-project.org/en/methodology.html>. Also see <https://www.bti-project.org/en/index/political-transformation.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Political Transformation,” accessed May 14, 2021, at <https://www.bti-project.org/en/index/political-transformation.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.

<sup>3</sup> Sabine Donner, *BTI 2020: Resistance to democratic regression and authoritarian rule is growing, Global Findings Democracy*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, at [https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/reports/global-report-d/global\\_findings\\_democracy\\_2020\\_EN.pdf](https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/reports/global-report-d/global_findings_democracy_2020_EN.pdf).

**Figure I. BTI's 2020 Political Transformation Global Ranking of Latin American and Caribbean Countries**



**Source:** Created by CRS using Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2020 Transformation Index. According to BTI's analysis, no Latin American or Caribbean countries fell into the category of highly defective democracies.

## 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. The current report provides an annual snapshot of the state of democracy for 165 independent states and two territories.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> EIU evaluates all Central and South American nations. With the exceptions of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, EIU does not

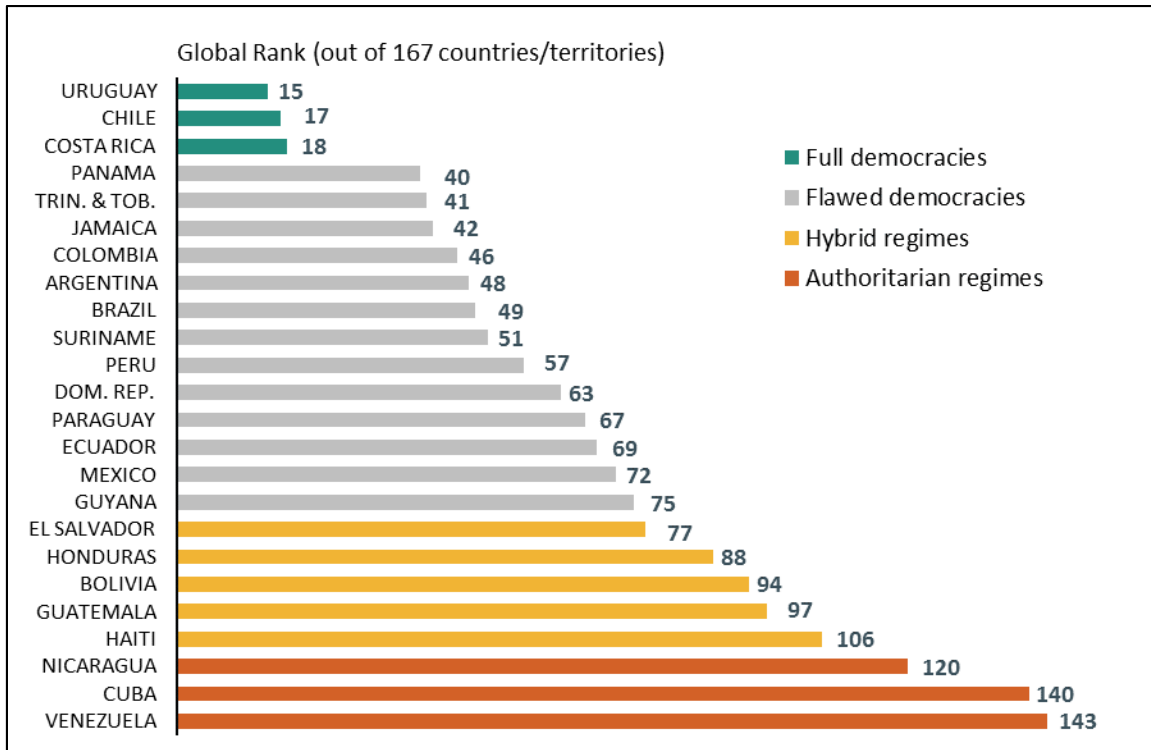
<sup>4</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) did not produce a democracy index report covering 2007 or 2009.

<sup>5</sup> EIU, *Democracy Index 2020: In sickness and in health?* 2020, at <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/>, p. 56-57. 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.”

evaluate Caribbean nations. According to the EIU’s *Democracy Index 2020*, the Latin America and Caribbean region’s overall score went down for the fifth year in a row from 6.13 in 2019 to 6.09 in 2020 (on a 0 to 10 scale).<sup>6</sup> The three countries in the region classified in 2020 as full democracies are Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. EIU’s *Democracy Index 2020* identified three countries in the region as authoritarian regimes: Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 2** shows the global rank and classification of Central and South American and Caribbean countries according to the EIU’s *Democracy Index 2020*.

**Figure 2. EIU Democracy Index 2020 Global Ranking for Latin American and Caribbean Countries**



**Source:** Created by CRS using EIU’s *Democracy Index 2020*.

### 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.<sup>8</sup> The 2020 report covers 195 countries and 15 territories. 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

<sup>6</sup> EIU, *Democracy Index 2020: In sickness and in health?* 2020, at <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/>, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Until 1978, the annual report was titled *The Comparative Study of Freedom*.

scores then determines whether it has an overall status of *free*, *partly free*, or *not free*.<sup>9</sup> Freedom House evaluates all Central and South American and Caribbean nations. Freedom House's report covering 2020 found that the top countries with one-year democratic declines included El Salvador and the top countries with largest democratic declines over the last decade included Venezuela, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.<sup>10</sup> Peru's status went from "free" to "partly free" due to "due to extended political clashes between the presidency and Congress since 2017 that have heavily disrupted governance and anticorruption efforts, strained the country's constitutional order, and resulted in an irregular succession of four presidents within three years."<sup>11</sup> The countries with the largest one-year democratic gains included Bolivia and Chile. The report's analysis is based on data that are detailed in full on the Freedom House's report web page.<sup>12</sup> Freedom House's webpage "Countries," lists the current freedom scores of all countries.<sup>13</sup>

**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 2021*. Countries receive 0 to 4 points on 25 indicators (10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators) for a total of up to 100 points.

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<sup>9</sup> 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 13, 2021, at <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Repucci and Amy Slipowitz, *Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy Under Siege*, Freedom House, 20210, at [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FIW2021\\_World\\_02252021\\_FINAL-web-upload.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FIW2021_World_02252021_FINAL-web-upload.pdf), p. 6 and p. 13.

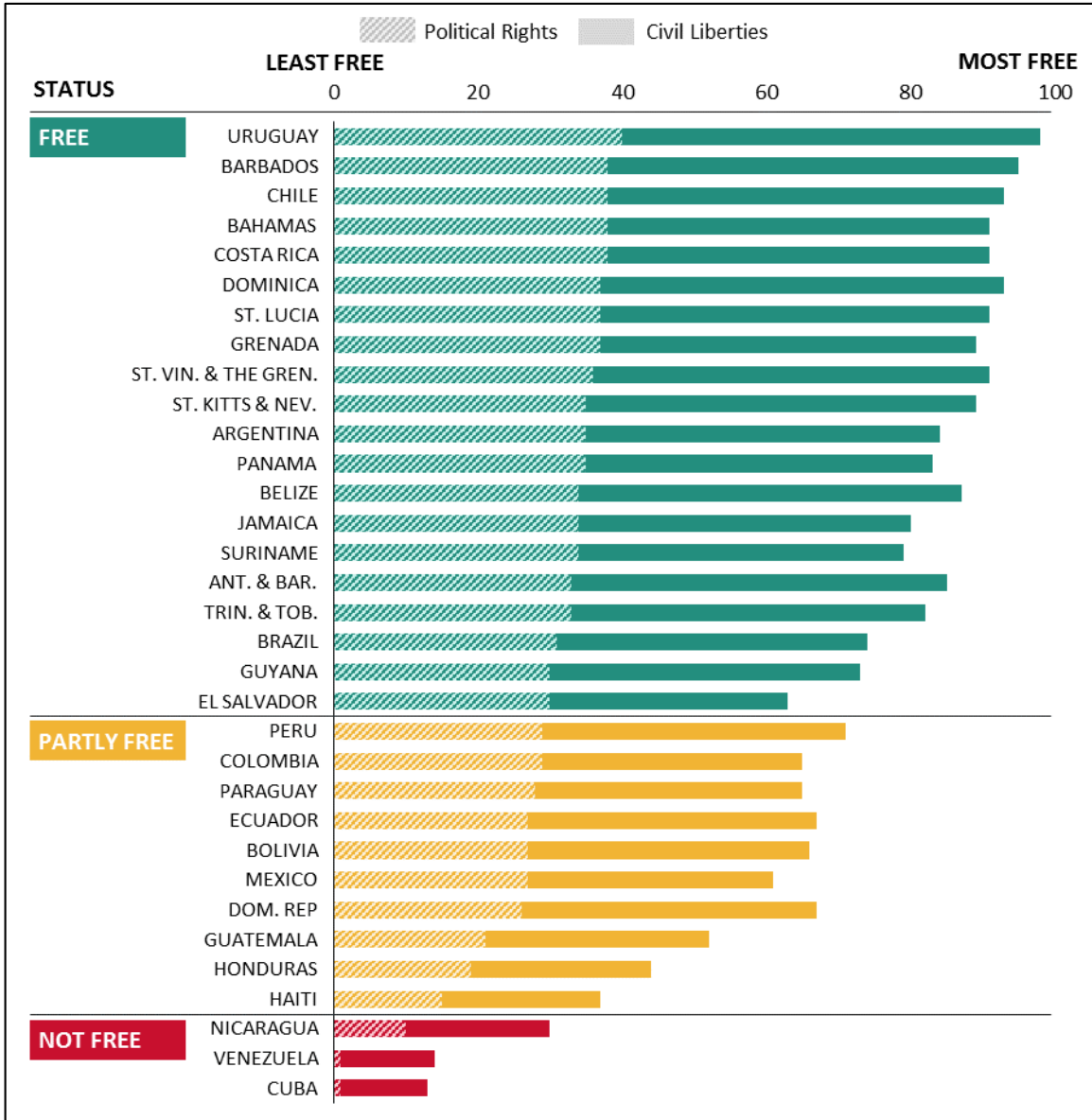
<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

<sup>12</sup> Freedom House, "Freedom in the World: About the report," accessed May 13, 2021, at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>.

<sup>13</sup> Freedom House, "Countries and Territories," accessed April 19, 2021, at <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.



**Figure 3. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2021* Aggregate Scores for Latin American and Caribbean Countries**



Source: Created by CRS using Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2021*.

### 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 2021*'s Liberal Democracy Index is based on 71 indicators that capture liberal

and electoral aspects of democracy.<sup>14</sup> V-Dem evaluates all Central and South American nations. V-Dem evaluates a subset of Caribbean nations, namely Barbados, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Based on the “Regimes of the World” measure, the V-Dem 2021 report grouped 179 countries into four categories: *liberal democracy*, *electoral democracy*, *electoral autocracy*, and *closed autocracy*.<sup>15</sup> The report notes that “a few governments in democracies do seem to be using the pandemic to erode democratic institutions. This risk of pandemic backsliding is high in El Salvador . . . and to a lesser extent in . . . Paraguay.”<sup>16</sup> A few countries have advanced according to the index, such as Ecuador, while V-Dem found that other countries in the region have become more autocratic, including Brazil and Bolivia.<sup>17</sup>

**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 2021*.

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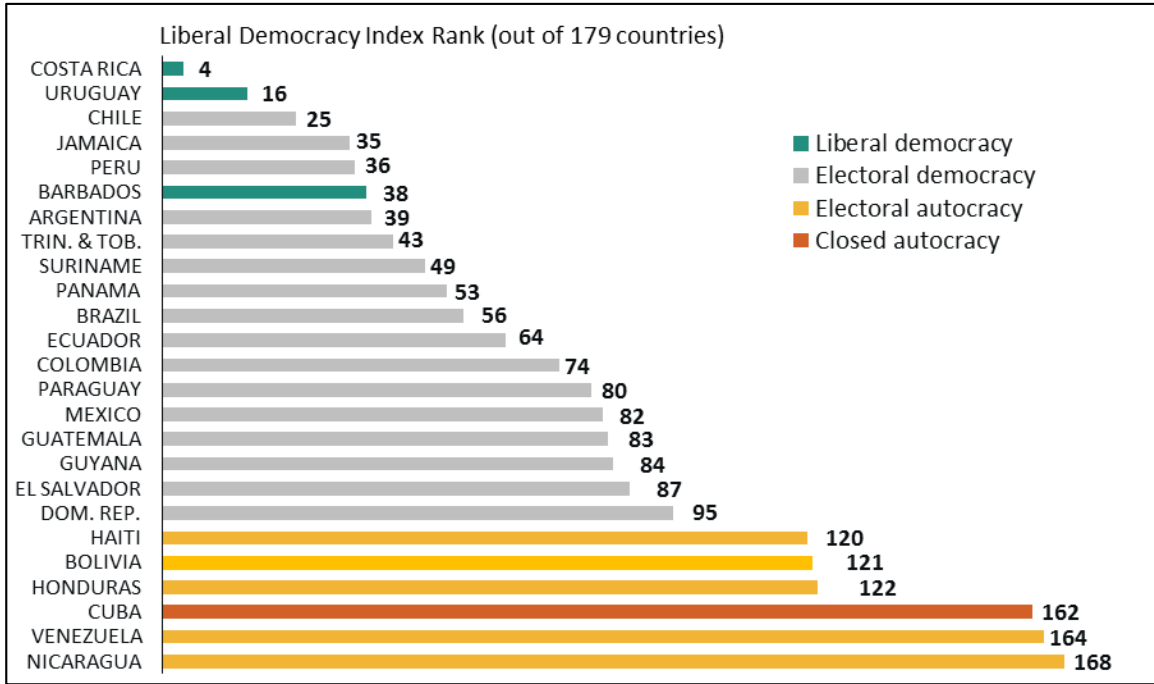
<sup>14</sup> Nazifa Alizada, Rowan Cole, Lisa Gastaldi, Sandra Grahn, Sebastian Hellmeier, Palina Kolvani, Jean Lachapelle, Anna Lührmann, Seraphine F. Maerz, Shreeya Pillai, and Staffan I. Lindberg, *Democracy Report 2021: Autocratization Turns Viral*, University of Gothenburg Varieties of Democracy Institute, at [https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer\\_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr\\_2021\\_updated.pdf](https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr_2021_updated.pdf), p. 42. Hereinafter, V-Dem, *Democracy Report 2021*.

<sup>15</sup> 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.”

<sup>16</sup> V-Dem, *Democracy Report 2021*, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> V-Dem, *Democracy Report 2021*, p. 23 and p. 19.

**Figure 4. V-Dem Democracy Report 2021's Liberal Democracy Index Rank for Latin American and Caribbean Countries**



**Source:** Created by CRS using the Varieties of Democracy Institute's *Democracy Report 2021*.

## Compilation of Democracy Indicators

In the tables below, 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 *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*.<sup>18</sup> This U.S. government information is included here for comparison with findings from the democracy indicators published by NGOs.

**Table 1** looks at Caribbean countries' global democracy rankings according to Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2020 Transformation Index, EIU's *Democracy Index 2020*, Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2021*, and V-Dem's *Democracy Report 2021*. **Table 2** compares the same reports for Mexico and Central America, as does **Table 3** for South America.

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 5 for EIU, footnote 9 for Freedom House, and footnote 15 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.

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, March 30, 2021, at <https://www.state.gov/report/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>.

**Table I. Caribbean: 2020 Democracy Rankings**

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2020		EIU Democracy Index 2020		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021				V-Dem Democracy Report 2021	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank <sup>a</sup> (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type <sup>b</sup>
<b>Antigua &amp; Barbuda</b> (parliamentary multiparty democracy)	—	—	—	—	85	33	52	Free	—	—
<b>Bahamas</b> (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	91	38	53	Free	—	—
<b>Barbados</b> (parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	95	38	57	Free	38	(-) Liberal democracy
<b>Belize</b> (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	87	34	53	Free	—	—
<b>Cuba</b> (authoritarian state)	110	Hardline autocracy	140	Authoritarian	13	1	12	Not free	162	Closed autocracy
<b>Dominica</b> (parliamentary multiparty democracy)	—	—	—	—	93	37	56	Free	—	—

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2020		EIU Democracy Index 2020		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021				V-Dem Democracy Report 2021	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank <sup>a</sup> (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type <sup>b</sup>
<b>Dominican Republic</b> (representative constitutional democracy)	41	Defective democracy	63	Flawed democracy	67	26	41	Partly free	95	Electoral democracy
<b>Grenada</b> (parliamentary democracy)	—	—	—	—	89	37	52	Free	—	—
<b>Guyana</b> (multiparty democracy)	—	—	75	Flawed democracy	73	30	43	Free	84	(-) Electoral democracy
<b>Haiti</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	92	Moderate autocracy	106	Hybrid regime	37	15	22	Partly free	120	Electoral autocracy
<b>Jamaica</b> (constitutional parliamentary democracy)	15	Democracy in consolidation	42=	Flawed democracy	80	34	46	Free	35	Electoral democracy
<b>St. Kitts and Nevis</b> (parliamentary multiparty democracy and federation)	—	—	—	—	89	35	54	Free	—	—

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2020		EIU Democracy Index 2020		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021				V-Dem Democracy Report 2021	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank <sup>a</sup> (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type <sup>b</sup>
<b>St. Lucia</b> (parliamentary multiparty democracy)	—	—	—	—	91	37	54	Free	—	—
<b>St. Vincent and the Grenadines</b> (parliamentary multiparty democracy)	—	—	—	—	91	36	55	Free	—	—
<b>Suriname</b> (constitutional democracy)	—	—	51	Flawed democracy	79	34	45	Free	49	Electoral democracy
<b>Trinidad &amp; Tobago</b> (parliamentary democracy)	13	Democracy in consolidation	41	Flawed democracy	82	33	49	Free	43	(+) Electoral democracy

**Source:** Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department's *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2020 Transformation Index, EIU's *Democracy Index 2020*, Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2021*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute's *Democracy Report 2021*.

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

- a. EIU's symbol "=" indicates a tying score or equal rank with another country.
- b. V-Dem's symbol (-) indicates that, taking uncertainty into account, the country could belong to the lower category while (+) signifies that the country could belong to the higher category.

**Table 2. Mexico and Central America: 2020 Democracy Rankings**

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2020		EIU Democracy Index 2020		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021				V-Dem Democracy Report 2021	
	Political Transfor- mation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank <sup>a</sup> (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type
<b>Costa Rica</b> (constitutional republic)	8	Democracy in consolidation	18=	Full democracy	91	38	53	Free	4	Liberal democracy
<b>El Salvador</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	30	Defective democracy	77	Hybrid regime	63	30	33	Partly Free	87	Electoral democracy
<b>Guatemala</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	93	Moderate autocracy	97	Hybrid regime	52	21	31	Partly free	83	Electoral democracy
<b>Honduras</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	83	Moderate autocracy	88	Hybrid regime	44	19	25	Partly free	122	Electoral autocracy
<b>Mexico</b> (federal multiparty republic)	59	Defective democracy	72	Flawed democracy	61	27	34	Partly free	82	Electoral democracy
<b>Nicaragua<sup>b</sup></b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	94	Moderate autocracy	120	Authoritarian	30	10	20	Not free	168	Electoral autocracy



Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2020		EIU Democracy Index 2020		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021				V-Dem Democracy Report 2021	
	Political Transformation Global Rank (of 137)	Status	Global Rank <sup>a</sup> (of 167)	Regime Type	Aggregate Score	Political Rights Score	Civil Liberties Score	Freedom Status	Liberal Democracy Index Global Rank (of 179)	Regime Type
<b>Panama</b> (constitutional multiparty democracy)	35	Defective democracy	40	Flawed democracy	83	35	48	Free	53	Electoral democracy

**Sources:** Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department’s 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s 2020 Transformation Index, EIU’s Democracy Index 2020, Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2021, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute’s (V-Dem) Democracy Report 2021.

**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 a tying score or equal rank with another country.
- b. “Constitutional multiparty republic” is the political system description from the U.S. State Department’s 2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nicaragua, while the 2020 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: 2020 Democracy Rankings**

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2020		EIU Democracy Index 2020		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021				V-Dem Democracy Report 2021	
	Political Transformation 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 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Argentina</b> (federal constitutional republic)	16	Democracy in consolidation	48	Flawed democracy	84	35	49	Free	39	Electoral democracy

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2020		EIU Democracy Index 2020		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021				V-Dem Democracy Report 2021	
	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 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Bolivia</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	41	Defective democracy	94	Hybrid regime	66	27	39	Partly free	121	Electoral autocracy
<b>Brazil</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	26	Defective democracy	49	Flawed democracy	74	31	43	Free	56	Electoral democracy
<b>Chile</b> (constitutional multiparty democracy)	6	Democracy in consolidation	17	Full democracy	93	38	55	Free	25	(+) Electoral democracy
<b>Colombia</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	44	Defective democracy	46	Flawed democracy	65	29	36	Partly free	74	Electoral democracy
<b>Ecuador</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	30	Defective democracy	69	Flawed democracy	67	27	40	Partly free	64	Electoral democracy
<b>Paraguay</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	46	Defective democracy	67	Flawed democracy	65	28	37	Partly free	80	Electoral democracy
<b>Peru</b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	49	Defective democracy	57	Flawed democracy	71	29	42	Partly free	36	Electoral democracy

Country (U.S. State Dept. political system description)	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2020		EIU Democracy Index 2020		Freedom House Freedom in the World 2021				V-Dem Democracy Report 2021	
	Political Transformation 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 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Uruguay</b> (constitutional republic)	1	Democracy in consolidation	15	Full democracy	98	40	58	Free	16	(-) Liberal democracy
<b>Venezuela<sup>b</sup></b> (constitutional multiparty republic)	120	Hardline autocracy	143	Authoritarian	14	1	13	Not free	164	Electoral autocracy

**Source:** Compiled by CRS using the U.S. State Department’s *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s 2020 Transformation Index, EIU’s *Democracy Index 2020*, Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World 2021*, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute’s *Democracy Report 2021*.

**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 U.S. State Department’s *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Venezuela*: “While Venezuela is legally a multiparty, constitutional republic, the illegitimate authoritarian regime led by Nicolas Maduro usurped control over the executive, judicial, citizens’ power (which includes the prosecutor general and ombudsman), and electoral branches of government, and stood up a parallel, illegitimate legislative body alongside the existing elected one.”

**Table 4** provides 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	Organization	Resource Type	URL
Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2020 Transformation Index	Bertelsmann Stiftung	Political Transformation Index ranks 137 countries	<a href="https://www.bti-project.org/en/index/political-transformation.html">https://www.bti-project.org/en/index/political-transformation.html</a>
	Bertelsmann Stiftung	Governance Index ranks 137 countries	<a href="https://www.bti-project.org/en/index/governance.html">https://www.bti-project.org/en/index/governance.html</a>
	Bertelsmann Stiftung	Regional report on 22 Latin American and the Caribbean countries	<a href="https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/reports/regional-reports/regional_report_LAC_2020_EN.pdf">https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/reports/regional-reports/regional_report_LAC_2020_EN.pdf</a>
	Bertelsmann Stiftung	Global report covers 137 countries	<a href="https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/reports/global-report-d/global_findings_democracy_2020_EN.pdf">https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/reports/global-report-d/global_findings_democracy_2020_EN.pdf</a>
<i>Democracy Index 2020</i>	Economist Intelligence Unit	Global report covers 167 countries and territories	<a href="https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/">https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/</a>
<i>Democracy Report 2021</i>	Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)	Global report covers 179 countries	<a href="https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr_2021_updated.pdf">https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr_2021_updated.pdf</a>
<i>Electoral Integrity Worldwide 2019</i>	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	<a href="https://www.electoralintegrityproject.com/the-year-in-elections-2019">https://www.electoralintegrityproject.com/the-year-in-elections-2019</a>
<i>Freedom in the World 2021</i>	Freedom House	Global report covers 210 countries and territories	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FIW2021_World_02252021_FINAL-web-upload.pdf">https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FIW2021_World_02252021_FINAL-web-upload.pdf</a>
	Freedom House	Map	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiw&amp;year=2021">https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiw&amp;year=2021</a>
	Freedom House	Country ranking list	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores</a>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Resource Type</b>	<b>URL</b>
Global State of Democracy Indices 2019	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (International IDEA) Global State of Democracy Initiative	Interactive map looks at 116 indicators for 162 countries from 1975-2019	<a href="https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/indices/world-map">https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/indices/world-map</a>
<i>Global State of Democracy 2019</i>	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance	Report looks at global trends in democracy from 1975-2015 across 158 countries	<a href="https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/the-global-state-of-democracy-2019.pdf">https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/the-global-state-of-democracy-2019.pdf</a>
<i>Rule of Law Index 2020</i>	World Justice Project	Report measures how the rule of law is experienced and perceived in 128 countries and jurisdictions	<a href="https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-ROLI-2020-Online_0.pdf">https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-ROLI-2020-Online_0.pdf</a>
	World Justice Project	Interactive map and data tables cover 128 countries and jurisdictions	<a href="https://www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/">https://www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/</a>
<i>Mexico States Rule of Law Index 2019-2020</i>	World Justice Project	Country report on the adherence to the rule of law in Mexico's 32 states (also available in Spanish)	<a href="https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/MSI-eng-2.pdf">https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/MSI-eng-2.pdf</a>
Worldwide Governance Indicators	World Bank	Data on 6 aggregate indicators of governance for 214 countries from 1996-2019; in particular, see Voice and Accountability indicator	<a href="https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/">https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/</a>

**Source:** Compiled by CRS.

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