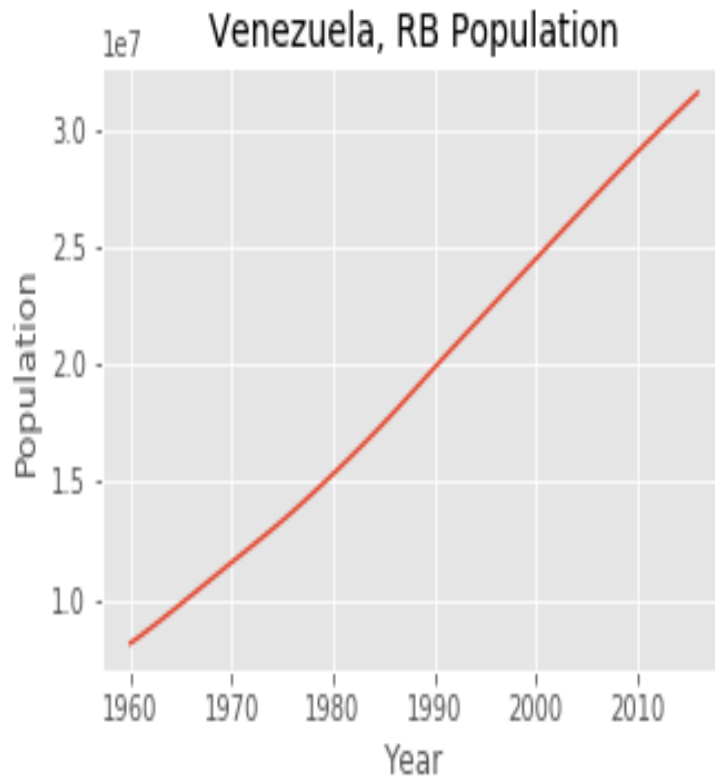


Venezuela, RB



Coordinates: 7°N 65°W / 7°N 65°W; -65 in South America (grey) Venezuela (/ˈvɛnɪzweɪ/ (listen) VEN-ɪ-ZWAYL-ɪ; American Spanish: [beneˈswela]), officially the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Spanish: República Bolivariana de Venezuela), is a federal republic on the northern coast of South America, bordered by Colombia on the west, Brazil on the south, Guyana on the east, the Dutch Lesser Antilles to the north and Trinidad and Tobago to the north-east. Venezuela covers 916,445 km² (353,841 sq mi) and has over 31 million (31,568,179) people. The country has extremely high biodiversity and is ranked 7th in the world's list of nations with the most number of species. There are habitats ranging from the Andes Mountains in the west to the Amazon Basin rain-forest in the south via extensive llanos plains, the Caribbean coast and the Orinoco River Delta in the east. The territory now known as Venezuela was colonized by Spain in 1522 amid resistance from indigenous peoples. In 1811, it became one of the first Spanish-American territories to declare independence which was not securely established until 1821, when Venezuela was a department of the federal republic of Gran Colombia. It gained full independence as a separate country in 1830. During the 19th century, Venezuela suffered political turmoil and autocracy, remaining dominated by regional caudillos (military strongmen) until the mid-20th century. Since 1958, the country has had a series of democratic governments. Economic shocks in the 1980s and 1990s led to several political crises, including the deadly Caracazo riots of 1989, two attempted coups in 1992, and the impeachment of President Carlos Andrés Pérez for embezzlement of public funds in 1993. A collapse in confidence in the existing parties saw the 1998 election of former coup-involved career officer Hugo Chávez and the launch of the Bolivarian Revolution. The revolution began with a 1999 Constituent Assembly, where a new Constitution of Venezuela was written. This new constitution officially changed the name of the country to República Bolivariana de Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).