[Template:Other uses](/wiki/Template:Other_uses" \o "Template:Other uses) [Template:Redirect](/wiki/Template:Redirect) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Venezuela** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) [Template:Respell](/wiki/Template:Respell); [Template:IPA-es](/wiki/Template:IPA-es)), officially the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** ([Template:Lang-es](/wiki/Template:Lang-es)), is a [federal republic](/wiki/Federal_republic) located on the northern coast of [South America](/wiki/South_America). It is bordered by [Colombia](/wiki/Colombia) on the west, [Brazil](/wiki/Brazil) on the south, [Guyana](/wiki/Guyana) on the east, and the islands of [Trinidad and Tobago](/wiki/Trinidad_and_Tobago) to the north-east. Venezuela's territory covers around [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) with an estimated population around 33,221,865. Venezuela is considered a state with [extremely high biodiversity](/wiki/Megadiverse_countries) (currently ranks 7th in the world's list of nations with the most number of species),[[1]](#cite_note-1) with habitats ranging from the [Andes](/wiki/Andes) Mountains in the west to the [Amazon Basin](/wiki/Amazon_Basin) rain-forest in the south, via extensive [*llanos*](/wiki/Los_Llanos,_Venezuela) plains and Caribbean coast in the center and the [Orinoco River Delta](/wiki/Orinoco_Delta) in the east.

The territory currently known as Venezuela was [colonized by Spain](/wiki/Spanish_colonization_of_the_Americas) in 1522 amid resistance from [indigenous peoples](/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Venezuela). In 1811, it became one of the first Spanish-American colonies to [declare independence](/wiki/First_Republic_of_Venezuela), which was not securely established until 1821, when Venezuela was a department of the federal republic of [Gran Colombia](/wiki/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*](/wiki/Caudillo) (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](/wiki/Caracazo) riots of 1989, [two attempted coups in 1992](/wiki/1992_Venezuelan_coup_d'état_attempts), and the impeachment of President [Carlos Andrés Pérez](/wiki/Carlos_Andrés_Pérez) for embezzlement of public funds in 1993. A collapse in confidence in the existing parties saw the [1998 election](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_1998) of former coup-involved career officer [Hugo Chávez](/wiki/Hugo_Chávez) and the launch of the [Bolivarian Revolution](/wiki/Bolivarian_Revolution), beginning with a [1999 Constituent Assembly](/wiki/1999_Constituent_Assembly_of_Venezuela) to write a new [Constitution of Venezuela](/wiki/Constitution_of_Venezuela). This new constitution officially changed the name of the country to *República Bolivariana de Venezuela* (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).

Venezuela is a [federal](/wiki/Federation) [presidential republic](/wiki/Presidential_republic) consisting of [23 states](/wiki/States_of_Venezuela), the [Capital District](/wiki/Venezuelan_Capital_District) (covering [Caracas](/wiki/Caracas)), and [federal dependencies](/wiki/Federal_Dependencies_of_Venezuela) (covering Venezuela's offshore islands). Venezuela also claims all [Guyanese](/wiki/Guyana) territory west of the [Essequibo River](/wiki/Essequibo_River), a [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) tract dubbed [*Guayana Esequiba*](/wiki/Guayana_Esequiba) or the *Zona en Reclamación* (the "zone being reclaimed").[[2]](#cite_note-2) Venezuela is among the most urbanized countries in Latin America;[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[4]](#cite_note-4) the vast majority of Venezuelans live in the cities of the north, especially in the capital (Caracas) which is also the largest city in Venezuela.

Since the discovery of oil in the early 20th century, Venezuela has the world's [largest oil reserves](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_proven_oil_reserves) and has been one of the world's leading exporters of oil. Previously an underdeveloped exporter of agricultural commodities such as [coffee](/wiki/Coffee) and [cocoa](/wiki/Cocoa_bean), oil quickly came to dominate exports and government revenues. The [1980s oil glut](/wiki/1980s_oil_glut) led to an [external debt crisis](/wiki/Latin_American_debt_crisis) and a long-running economic crisis, in which [inflation](/wiki/Inflation) peaked at [100% in 1996](/wiki/Economy_of_Venezuela#1960s_–_1990s) and poverty rates rose to 66% in 1995[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) as (by 1998) [per capita](/wiki/Per_capita) [GDP](/wiki/GDP) fell to the same level as 1963, down a third from its 1978 peak.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The recovery of [oil prices](/wiki/Price_of_petroleum) in the early 2000s gave Venezuela oil funds not seen since the 1980s.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The Venezuelan government then initiated [populist](/wiki/Populist)/[revisionist](/wiki/Revisionism_(Marxism)) policies that initially boosted the Venezuelan economy and increased social spending, significantly reducing [economic inequality](/wiki/Economic_inequality) and [poverty](/wiki/Poverty).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6)[[7]](#cite_note-7) Such populist policies were questioned since their initiation and the over dependence on oil funds led to overspending on social programs while strict government polices, which were initially supposed to prevent [capital flight](/wiki/Capital_flight), created difficulties for Venezuela's import-reliant businesses.[[8]](#cite_note-8)[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)[[9]](#cite_note-9)[[10]](#cite_note-10) Venezuela under Hugo Chávez suffered "one of the worst cases of [Dutch Disease](/wiki/Dutch_Disease) in the world" due to the Bolivarian government's large dependence on oil sales.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[[12]](#cite_note-12) Poverty and inflation began to increase into the 2010s.[[13]](#cite_note-13) [Nicolás Maduro](/wiki/Nicolás_Maduro) was elected in 2013 after the death of Chavez. Venezuela devalued its currency in February 2013 due to the rising shortages in the country,[[14]](#cite_note-14) [which included those of](/wiki/Shortages_in_Venezuela) milk, flour, and other necessities. This led to an increase in malnutrition, especially among children.[[15]](#cite_note-15)[[16]](#cite_note-16) In 2014, Venezuela entered an [economic recession](/wiki/Economic_recession).[[17]](#cite_note-17) In 2015, Venezuela had the world's highest inflation rate with the rate surpassing 100%, becoming the highest in the country's history.[[18]](#cite_note-18) Economic problems, as well as crime and corruption, were some of the main causes of the [2014–16 Venezuelan protests](/wiki/2014–16_Venezuelan_protests),[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20) which left more than 50 protesters killed.

Venezuela is considered a [major renowned player](/wiki/Venezuela_at_major_beauty_pageants) in [beauty pageants](/wiki/Beauty_pageants) and [cosmetics](/wiki/Cosmetics) industry, a popular [pastime](/wiki/Pastime) of many Venezuelans, raking in with 22 victorious pageant titles to date.

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

According to the most popular and accepted version, in 1499, an expedition led by [Alonso de Ojeda](/wiki/Alonso_de_Ojeda) visited the Venezuelan coast. The stilt houses in the area of [Lake Maracaibo](/wiki/Lake_Maracaibo) reminded the navigator, [Amerigo Vespucci](/wiki/Amerigo_Vespucci), of the city of [Venice](/wiki/Venice), so he named the region *Veneziola*.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The name acquired its current spelling as a result of Spanish influence,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) where the [suffix](/wiki/Suffix) *-uela* is used as a [diminutive](/wiki/Diminutive) term (e.g., *plaza / plazuela*, *cazo / cazuela*); thus, the term's original sense would have been that of a "little Venice".[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The German language 16th century-term for the area, [*Klein-Venedig*](/wiki/Klein-Venedig), also means little Venice (literally "small Venice").

However, [Martín Fernández de Enciso](/wiki/Martín_Fernández_de_Enciso), a member of the Vespucci and Ojeda crew, gave a different account. In his work *Summa de geografía*, he states that they found indigenous people who called themselves the *Veneciuela.* Thus, the name "Venezuela" may have evolved from the native word.[[21]](#cite_note-21)[Template:Clear left](/wiki/Template:Clear_left)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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### Pre-Columbian history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

Evidence exists of human habitation in the area now known as Venezuela from about 15,000 years ago; [leaf](/wiki/Leaf)-shaped tools from this period, together with chopping and [planoconvex](/wiki/Plane_(tool)) scraping implements, have been found exposed on the high riverine terraces of the Rio Pedregal in western Venezuela.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) [Late Pleistocene](/wiki/Late_Pleistocene) hunting artifacts, including spear tips, have been found at a similar series of sites in northwestern Venezuela known as *El Jobo";* according to [radiocarbon dating](/wiki/Radiocarbon_dating), these date from 13,000 to 7,000 BC.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

It is not known how many people lived in Venezuela before the [Spanish conquest](/wiki/Spanish_colonization_of_the_Americas); it has been estimated at around one million.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In addition to [indigenous peoples](/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Venezuela) known today, the population included historic groups such as the [Kalina](/wiki/Kalina_people) (Caribs), [Auaké](/wiki/Auaké), [Caquetio](/wiki/Caquetio), [Mariche](/wiki/Mariche), and [Timoto-cuicas](/wiki/Timoto-cuicas). After the conquest, the population dropped markedly, mainly through the spread of new infectious diseases from Europe.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Two main north-south axes of pre-Columbian population were present, who cultivated [maize](/wiki/Maize) in the west and [manioc](/wiki/Manioc) in the east.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Large parts of the *llanos* were cultivated through a combination of [slash and burn](/wiki/Slash_and_burn) and permanent settled agriculture.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

### Colonization[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Musterung-Welser-Armada.png) [Welser](/wiki/Welser) Armada exploring Venezuela In 1498, during his third voyage to the Americas, [Christopher Columbus](/wiki/Christopher_Columbus) sailed near the [Orinoco Delta](/wiki/Orinoco_Delta) and landed in the [Gulf of Paria](/wiki/Gulf_of_Paria).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Amazed by the great offshore current of freshwater which deflected his course eastward, Columbus expressed in a letter to Isabella and Ferdinand that he must have reached Heaven on Earth (terrestrial paradise): [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

His certainty of having attained Paradise made him name this region 'Land of Grace', a phrase that has become the country's nickname.

Spain's colonization of mainland Venezuela started in 1522, establishing its first permanent South American settlement in the [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) city of [Cumaná](/wiki/Cumaná). In the 16th century, Venezuela was contracted as a concession by the King of Spain to the German [Welser](/wiki/Welser) banking family ([Klein-Venedig](/wiki/Klein-Venedig), 1528–1546). Native [*caciques*](/wiki/Cacique) (leaders) such as [Guaicaipuro](/wiki/Guaicaipuro) (*circa* 1530–1568) and [Tamanaco](/wiki/Tamanaco) (died 1573) attempted to resist Spanish incursions, but the newcomers ultimately subdued them; Tamanaco was put to death by order of Caracas' founder, [Diego de Losada](/wiki/Diego_de_Losada).[[22]](#cite_note-22) In the 16th century, during the [Spanish colonization](/wiki/Spanish_colonization_of_the_Americas), [indigenous peoples](/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Venezuela), such as many of the [Mariches](/wiki/Mariches), themselves descendants of the [Kalina](/wiki/Kalina_people), converted to [Roman Catholicism](/wiki/Roman_Catholicism). Some of the resisting tribes or leaders are commemorated in place names, including [Caracas](/wiki/Caracas), [Chacao](/wiki/Chacao_Municipality), and [Los Teques](/wiki/Los_Teques). The early colonial settlements focused on the northern coast,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) but in the mid-18th century, the Spanish pushed farther inland along the [Orinoco River](/wiki/Orinoco_River). Here, the [Ye'kuana](/wiki/Ye'kuana) (then known as the Makiritare) organized serious resistance in 1775 and 1776.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Spain's eastern Venezuelan settlements were incorporated into [New Andalusia Province](/wiki/New_Andalusia_Province). Administered by the [Royal Audiencia of Santo Domingo](/wiki/Royal_Audiencia_of_Santo_Domingo) from the early 16th century, most of Venezuela became part of the [Viceroyalty of New Granada](/wiki/Viceroyalty_of_New_Granada) in the early 18th century, and was then reorganized as an autonomous [Captaincy General](/wiki/Captaincy_General_of_Venezuela) starting in 1777. The town of Caracas, founded in the central coastal region in 1567, was well-placed to become a key location, being near the coastal port of [La Guaira](/wiki/La_Guaira) whilst itself being located in a valley in a mountain range, providing defensive strength against [pirates](/wiki/Pirate) and a more fertile and healthy climate.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

### Independence and 19th century[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|The signing of Venezuela's independence, by](/wiki/File:Firma_del_acta_de_independencia_de_Venezuela.jpg) [Martín Tovar y Tovar](/wiki/Martín_Tovar_y_Tovar) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:BatallaCarabobo01.JPG) [Battle of Carabobo](/wiki/Battle_of_Carabobo), during the [Venezuelan War of Independence](/wiki/Venezuelan_War_of_Independence)

After a series of unsuccessful uprisings, Venezuela, under the leadership of [Francisco de Miranda](/wiki/Francisco_de_Miranda), a Venezuelan marshal who had fought in the [American Revolution](/wiki/American_Revolution) and the [French Revolution](/wiki/French_Revolution), [declared independence](/wiki/Venezuelan_Declaration_of_Independence) on 5 July 1811.[[23]](#cite_note-23) This began the [Venezuelan War of Independence](/wiki/Venezuelan_War_of_Independence). However, a devastating [earthquake that struck Caracas in 1812](/wiki/1812_Caracas_earthquake), together with the rebellion of the Venezuelan [*llaneros*](/wiki/Llanero), helped bring down the [first Venezuelan republic](/wiki/First_Republic_of_Venezuela).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) A [second Venezuelan republic](/wiki/Second_Republic_of_Venezuela), proclaimed on 7 August 1813, lasted several months before being crushed, as well.[[24]](#cite_note-24) [Sovereignty](/wiki/Sovereignty) was only attained after [Simón Bolívar](/wiki/Simón_Bolívar), aided by [José Antonio Páez](/wiki/José_Antonio_Páez) and [Antonio José de Sucre](/wiki/Antonio_José_de_Sucre), won the [Battle of Carabobo](/wiki/Battle_of_Carabobo) on 24 June 1821.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) On 24 July 1823, [José Prudencio Padilla](/wiki/José_Prudencio_Padilla) and [Rafael Urdaneta](/wiki/Rafael_Urdaneta) helped seal Venezuelan independence with their victory in the [Battle of Lake Maracaibo](/wiki/Battle_of_Lake_Maracaibo).[[25]](#cite_note-25) New Granada's congress gave Bolívar control of the Granadian army; leading it, he liberated several countries and founded [Gran Colombia](/wiki/Gran_Colombia).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Sucre, who won many battles for Bolívar, went on to liberate Ecuador and later become the second president of [Bolivia](/wiki/Bolivia). Venezuela remained part of Gran Colombia until 1830, when a rebellion led by Páez allowed the proclamation of a newly independent Venezuela; Páez became the first president of the new republic.[[26]](#cite_note-26) Between one-quarter and one-third of Venezuela's population was lost during these two decades of warfare which by 1830 was estimated at about 800,000.[[27]](#cite_note-27)[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Abolicion_de_la_esclavitud_en_Venezuela.jpg)[José Gregorio Monagas](/wiki/José_Gregorio_Monagas) abolished slavery in 1854. [thumb|](/wiki/File:Bolivar_Arturo_Michelena.jpg)[Simón Bolívar](/wiki/Simón_Bolívar), *El Libertador*, Hero of the [Venezuelan War of Independence](/wiki/Venezuelan_War_of_Independence)

The colors of the [Venezuelan flag](/wiki/Flag_of_Venezuela) are yellow, blue, and red: the yellow stands for land wealth, the blue for the sea that separates Venezuela from Spain, and the red for the blood shed by the heroes of independence.[[28]](#cite_note-28) [Slavery](/wiki/Slavery) in Venezuela was abolished in 1854.[[27]](#cite_note-27) Much of Venezuela's 19th-century history was characterized by political turmoil and [dictatorial](/wiki/Dictator) rule,[[29]](#cite_note-29) including the Independence leader [José Antonio Páez](/wiki/José_Antonio_Páez), who gained the presidency three times and served a total of 11 years between 1830 and 1863. This culminated in the [Federal War](/wiki/Federal_War) (1859–1863), a civil war in which hundreds of thousands died, in a country with a population of not much more than a million people. In the latter half of the century, [Antonio Guzmán Blanco](/wiki/Antonio_Guzmán_Blanco), another *caudillo*, served a total of 13 years between 1870 and 1887, with three other presidents interspersed.

In 1895, a longstanding dispute with Great Britain about the territory of [Guayana Esequiba](/wiki/Guayana_Esequiba), which Britain claimed as part of [British Guiana](/wiki/British_Guiana) and Venezuela saw as Venezuelan territory, erupted into the [Venezuela Crisis of 1895](/wiki/Venezuela_Crisis_of_1895). The dispute became a diplomatic crisis when Venezuela's lobbyist [William L. Scruggs](/wiki/William_Lindsay_Scruggs) sought to argue that British behavior over the issue violated the United States' [Monroe Doctrine](/wiki/Monroe_Doctrine) of 1823, and used his influence in Washington, D.C., to pursue the matter. Then, US President [Grover Cleveland](/wiki/Grover_Cleveland) adopted a broad interpretation of the doctrine that did not just simply forbid new European colonies, but declared an American interest in any matter within the hemisphere.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Britain ultimately accepted arbitration, but in negotiations over its terms was able to persuade the US on many of the details. A tribunal convened in Paris in 1898 to decide the issue, and in 1899 awarded the bulk of the disputed territory to British Guiana.[[30]](#cite_note-30) In 1899, [Cipriano Castro](/wiki/Cipriano_Castro), assisted by his friend [Juan Vicente Gómez](/wiki/Juan_Vicente_Gómez), seized power in Caracas, marching an army from his base in the Andean state of [Táchira](/wiki/Táchira). Castro defaulted on Venezuela's considerable foreign debts, and declined to pay compensation to foreigners caught up in Venezuela's civil wars. This led to the [Venezuela Crisis of 1902–1903](/wiki/Venezuela_Crisis_of_1902–1903), in which Britain, Germany, and Italy imposed a naval blockade of several months, before international arbitration at the new [Permanent Court of Arbitration](/wiki/Permanent_Court_of_Arbitration) in [The Hague](/wiki/The_Hague) was agreed. In 1908, [another dispute](/wiki/Dutch-Venezuela_War) broke out with the Netherlands, which was resolved when Castro left for medical treatment in Germany and was promptly overthrown by Juan Vicente Gómez.

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### 20th century[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

The discovery of massive [oil deposits](/wiki/Oil_field) in [Lake Maracaibo](/wiki/Lake_Maracaibo) during World War I proved to be pivotal for Venezuela, and transformed the basis of its economy from a heavy dependence on agricultural exports. It prompted an economic boom that lasted into the 1980s; by 1935, Venezuela's per capita [gross domestic product](/wiki/Gross_domestic_product) was Latin America's highest.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Gómez benefited handsomely from this, as corruption thrived, but at the same time, the new source of income helped him centralize the Venezuelan state and develop its authority.

He remained the most powerful man in Venezuela until his death in 1935, although at times he ceded the presidency to others. The *gomecista* dictatorship system largely continued under [Eleazar López Contreras](/wiki/Eleazar_López_Contreras), but from 1941, under [Isaías Medina Angarita](/wiki/Isaías_Medina_Angarita), was relaxed, with the latter granting a range of reforms, including the legalization of all political parties. After [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), [immigration](/wiki/Immigration) from Southern Europe (mainly from Spain, [Italy](/wiki/Italo-venezuelans), Portugal, and France) and poorer Latin American countries markedly diversified Venezuelan society. [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Rómulo_Betancourt,_1961.jpg)[Rómulo Betancourt](/wiki/Rómulo_Betancourt) (President 1945–1948/1959-1964), one of the major democracy activists of Venezuela In 1945, a civilian-military coup overthrew Medina Angarita and ushered in [a three-year period of democratic rule](/wiki/El_Trienio_Adeco) under the mass membership [Democratic Action](/wiki/Democratic_Action), initially under [Rómulo Betancourt](/wiki/Rómulo_Betancourt), until [Rómulo Gallegos](/wiki/Rómulo_Gallegos) won the [Venezuelan presidential election, 1947](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_1947) (generally believed to be the first free and fair elections in Venezuela). Gallegos governed until overthrown by a military junta led by [Marcos Pérez Jiménez](/wiki/Marcos_Pérez_Jiménez) and Gallegos' Defense Minister [Carlos Delgado Chalbaud](/wiki/Carlos_Delgado_Chalbaud) in the [1948 Venezuelan *coup d'état*](/wiki/1948_Venezuelan_coup_d'état).

Pérez Jiménez was the most powerful man in the junta (though Chalbaud was its titular president), and was suspected of being behind the death in office of Chalbaud, who died in a bungled kidnapping in 1950. When the junta unexpectedly lost the [election it held in 1952](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_1952), it ignored the results and Pérez Jiménez was installed as President, where he remained until 1958.

The military dictator Pérez Jiménez was forced out on 23 January 1958.[[31]](#cite_note-31) In an effort to consolidate the young democracy, the major political parties (with the notable exception of the [Communist Party of Venezuela](/wiki/Communist_Party_of_Venezuela)) signed the [Punto Fijo Pact](/wiki/Punto_Fijo_Pact). Democratic Action and [COPEI](/wiki/COPEI) would dominate the political landscape for four decades.

In the 1960s, substantial guerilla movements occurred, including the [Armed Forces of National Liberation](/wiki/Armed_Forces_of_National_Liberation_(Venezuela)) and the [Revolutionary Left Movement](/wiki/Revolutionary_Left_Movement_(Venezuela)), which had split from Democratic Action in 1960. Most of these movements lay down their arms under [Rafael Caldera's](/wiki/Rafael_Caldera) presidency (1969–74); Caldera had won the [1968 election](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_1968) for COPEI, being the first time a party other than Democratic Action took the presidency through a democratic election.

The election of [Carlos Andrés Pérez](/wiki/Carlos_Andrés_Pérez) [in 1973](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_1973) coincided with the [1973 oil crisis](/wiki/1973_oil_crisis), in which Venezuela's income exploded as [oil prices](/wiki/Oil_prices) soared; oil industries were nationalized in 1976. This led to massive increases in public spending, but also increases in external debts, which continued into the 1980s when the [collapse of oil prices during the 1980s](/wiki/1980s_oil_glut) crippled the Venezuelan economy. As the government started to devalue the currency in February 1983 to face its financial obligations, Venezuelans' real standards of living fell dramatically. A number of failed economic policies and increasing corruption in government led to rising poverty and crime, worsening social indicators, and increased political instability.[[32]](#cite_note-32) Economic crises in the 1980s and 1990s led to a political crisis in which hundreds died in the [Caracazo](/wiki/Caracazo) riots of 1989, [two attempted coups d'état in 1992](/wiki/1992_Venezuelan_coup_d'état_attempts),[[33]](#cite_note-33) and the impeachment of President Carlos Andrés Pérez (re-elected in 1988) for corruption in 1993. Coup leader [Hugo Chávez](/wiki/Hugo_Chávez) was pardoned in March 1994 by president [Rafael Caldera](/wiki/Rafael_Caldera#Amnesty_to_the_1992_coup_participants), with a clean slate and his political rights reinstated.

### Bolivarian Revolution[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The Bolivarian Revolution refers to a [leftist](/wiki/Left-wing_politics) [social movement](/wiki/Social_movement) and political process in Venezuela led by late Venezuelan president [Hugo Chávez](/wiki/Hugo_Chávez), the founder of the [Fifth Republic Movement](/wiki/Fifth_Republic_Movement) and later the [United Socialist Party of Venezuela](/wiki/United_Socialist_Party_of_Venezuela). The "Bolivarian Revolution" is named after [Simón Bolívar](/wiki/Simón_Bolívar), an early 19th-century Venezuelan and [Latin American](/wiki/Latin_America) revolutionary leader, prominent in the [Spanish American wars of independence](/wiki/Spanish_American_wars_of_independence) in achieving the independence of most of northern South America from Spanish rule. According to Chávez and other supporters, the "Bolivarian Revolution" seeks to build a mass movement to implement [Bolivarianism](/wiki/Bolivarianism)—[popular democracy](/wiki/Popular_democracy), economic independence, equitable distribution of revenues, and an end to [political corruption](/wiki/Political_corruption)—in Venezuela. They interpret Bolívar's ideas from a [socialist](/wiki/Socialism) perspective.

#### Hugo Chavez[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Chavez-WSF2005.jpg)[Hugo Chávez](/wiki/Hugo_Chávez), president from 1999 until his death in 2013. A collapse in confidence in the existing parties led to Chávez [being elected president in 1998](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_1998), and the subsequent launch of a "[Bolivarian Revolution](/wiki/Bolivarian_Revolution)", beginning with a [1999 Constituent Assembly](/wiki/1999_Constituent_Assembly_of_Venezuela) to write a new [Constitution of Venezuela](/wiki/Constitution_of_Venezuela). Chávez also initiated [Bolivarian missions](/wiki/Bolivarian_missions), programs aimed at helping the poor.

In April 2002, Chávez was briefly ousted from power in the [2002 Venezuelan coup d'état attempt](/wiki/2002_Venezuelan_coup_d'état_attempt) following popular demonstrations by his opponents,[[34]](#cite_note-34) but he was returned to power after two days as a result of demonstrations by poor Chávez supporters in Caracas and actions by the military.[Template:SfnTemplate:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Chávez also remained in power after an all-out national strike that lasted [from December 2002 to February 2003](/wiki/Venezuelan_general_strike_of_2002–2003), including a strike/lockout in the state oil company [PDVSA](/wiki/PDVSA). The strike produced severe economic dislocation, with the country's GDP falling 27% during the first four months of 2003, and costing the oil industry $13.3 billion.[[35]](#cite_note-35) Capital flight before and during the strike led to the reimposition of currency controls (which had been abolished in 1989), managed by the [CADIVI](/wiki/CADIVI) agency. In the subsequent decade, the government was forced into several currency devaluations.[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[37]](#cite_note-37)[[38]](#cite_note-38)[[39]](#cite_note-39)[[40]](#cite_note-40) These devaluations have done little to improve the situation of the Venezuelan people who rely on imported products or locally produced products that depend on imported inputs while dollar-denominated oil sales account for the vast majority of Venezuela's exports.[[41]](#cite_note-41) The profits of the oil industry have been lost to "social engineering" and corruption, instead of investments needed to maintain oil production.[[42]](#cite_note-42) Chávez survived several further political tests, including an [August 2004 recall referendum](/wiki/Venezuelan_recall_referendum,_2004). He was elected for another term [in December 2006](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_2006) and re-elected for a third term in October 2012. However, he was never sworn in for his third period, due to medical complications. Chávez died on 5 March 2013 after a nearly two-year fight with cancer.[[43]](#cite_note-43) The presidential election that took place on Sunday, 14 April 2013, was the first since Chávez took office in 1999 in which his name did not appear on the ballot.[[44]](#cite_note-44)

#### Nicolas Maduro[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [150px|thumbnail|right|](/wiki/File:Nicolás_Maduro_crop_2015.jpeg)[Nicolas Maduro](/wiki/Nicolas_Maduro), the current president. [Nicolás Maduro](/wiki/Nicolás_Maduro) has been the [President of Venezuela](/wiki/President_of_Venezuela) since 14 April 2013, after winning the second presidential election after Chávez's death, with 50.61% of the votes against the opposition's candidate [Henrique Capriles Radonski](/wiki/Henrique_Capriles_Radonski) who had 49.12% of the votes. The [Democratic Unity Roundtable](/wiki/Democratic_Unity_Roundtable) contested his appointment as a violation of the constitution. However, the Supreme Court of Venezuela ruled that under Venezuela's Constitution, Nicolás Maduro is the legitimate president and was invested as such by the Venezuelan [National Assembly](/wiki/National_Assembly_(Venezuela)) (Asamblea Nacional).[[45]](#cite_note-45)[[46]](#cite_note-46)[[47]](#cite_note-47) Beginning in February 2014, [hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans have protested](/wiki/2014–16_Venezuelan_protests) over high levels of criminal violence, corruption, hyperinflation, and chronic scarcity of basic goods due to policies of the federal government.[[48]](#cite_note-48)[[49]](#cite_note-49)[[50]](#cite_note-50)[[51]](#cite_note-51)[[52]](#cite_note-52) Demonstrations and riots have left over 40 fatalities in the unrest between both Chavistas and opposition protesters,[[53]](#cite_note-53) and has led to the arrest of opposition leaders such as [Leopoldo López](/wiki/Leopoldo_López)[[53]](#cite_note-53)[[54]](#cite_note-54) and [Antonio Ledezma](/wiki/Antonio_Ledezma).[[55]](#cite_note-55)[[56]](#cite_note-56)[[57]](#cite_note-57)[[58]](#cite_note-58) Human rights groups have strongly condemned the arrest of Leopoldo López.[[59]](#cite_note-59) In the [2015 Venezuelan parliamentary election](/wiki/2015_Venezuelan_parliamentary_election), the opposition gained a majority.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[thumb|250px|left|Topographic map of Venezuela.](/wiki/File:Map_of_Venezuela_Demis_Shaded.png) [thumb|left|Venezuela map of Köppen climate classification.](/wiki/File:Venezuela_map_of_Köppen_climate_classification.svg) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Venezuela is located in the north of South America; geologically, its mainland rests on the [South American Plate](/wiki/South_American_Plate). It has a total area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) and a land area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), making it the [33rd largest country in the world](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_total_area). The territory it controls lies between latitudes [0°](/wiki/Equator) and [13°N](/wiki/13th_parallel_north), and longitudes [59°](/wiki/59th_meridian_west) and [74°W](/wiki/74th_meridian_west).

Shaped roughly like a triangle, the country has a [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) coastline in the north, which includes numerous islands in the Caribbean, and in the northeast borders the northern Atlantic Ocean. Most observers describe Venezuela in terms of four fairly well-defined [topographical](/wiki/Topography) regions: the [Maracaibo lowlands](/wiki/Maracaibo_Basin) in the northwest, the northern mountains extending in a broad east-west arc from the Colombian border along the northern Caribbean coast, the wide plains in central Venezuela, and the [Guiana Highlands](/wiki/Guiana_Highlands) in the southeast.

The northern mountains are the extreme northeastern extensions of South America's [Andes](/wiki/Andes) mountain range. [Pico Bolívar](/wiki/Pico_Bolívar), the nation's highest point at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), lies in this region. To the south, the dissected [Guiana Highlands](/wiki/Guayana_Region) contain the northern fringes of the [Amazon Basin](/wiki/Amazon_Basin) and [Angel Falls](/wiki/Angel_Falls), the world's highest waterfall, as well as [*tepuis*](/wiki/Tepui), large table-like mountains. The country's center is characterized by the [*llanos*](/wiki/Los_Llanos,_Venezuela), which are extensive plains that stretch from the Colombian border in the far west to the Orinoco River [delta](/wiki/River_delta) in the east. The Orinoco, with its rich [alluvial soils](/wiki/Alluvium), binds the largest and most important [river system](/wiki/Drainage_system_(geomorphology)) of the country; it originates in one of the largest [watersheds](/wiki/Drainage_basin) in Latin America. The [Caroní](/wiki/Caroní_River_(Venezuela)) and the [Apure](/wiki/Apure_River) are other major rivers.

Venezuela borders [Colombia](/wiki/Colombia) to the west, [Guyana](/wiki/Guyana) to the east, and Brazil to the south. Caribbean islands such as [Trinidad and Tobago](/wiki/Trinidad_and_Tobago), [Grenada](/wiki/Grenada), [Curaçao](/wiki/Curaçao), [Aruba](/wiki/Aruba), and the [Leeward Antilles](/wiki/Leeward_Antilles) lie near the Venezuelan coast. Venezuela has territorial disputes with Guyana (formerly United Kingdom), largely concerning the [Essequibo](/wiki/Guayana_Esequiba) area, and with Colombia concerning the [Gulf of Venezuela](/wiki/Gulf_of_Venezuela). In 1895, after years of diplomatic attempts to solve the border dispute, from Venezuela, the dispute over the [Essequibo River](/wiki/Essequibo_River) border flared up, it was submitted to a "neutral" commission (composed of British, American, and Russian representatives and without a direct Venezuelan representative), which in 1899 decided mostly against Venezuela's claim.[[60]](#cite_note-60) Venezuela's most significant natural resources are [petroleum](/wiki/Petroleum) and [natural gas](/wiki/Natural_gas), [iron ore](/wiki/Iron_ore), [gold](/wiki/Gold), and other minerals. It also has large areas of [arable land](/wiki/Arable_land) and water.

[thumb|1000px|center|View of the](/wiki/File:Kukenan_Roraima_GS.jpg) [tepuis](/wiki/Tepui), [Roraima](/wiki/Mount_Roraima) and [Kukenan](/wiki/Kukenán-tepui), in the [Gran Sabana](/wiki/Gran_Sabana). [Canaima National Park](/wiki/Canaima_National_Park)

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|](/wiki/File:Playa_El_Agua.JPG)[Margarita Island](/wiki/Margarita_Island). [thumb|](/wiki/File:Gran_roque.jpg)[Federal Dependencies of Venezuela](/wiki/Federal_Dependencies_of_Venezuela). [thumb|](/wiki/File:CarreteraPicoElAguila.jpg)[TransAndean Highway](/wiki/TransAndean_Highway) at [Sierra Nevada de Mérida](/wiki/Sierra_Nevada_de_Mérida). [thumb|left|150px|The](/wiki/File:Ipê_(Avaré)_REFON.jpg) [*araguaney*](/wiki/Tabebuia) (*Tabebuia chrysantha*), Venezuela's national tree.

Venezuela is entirely located in the tropics over the Equator to around 12° N. Its climate varies from humid low-elevation plains, where average annual temperatures range as high as [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), to glaciers and highlands (the [*páramos*](/wiki/Páramo)) with an average yearly temperature of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Annual rainfall varies from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in the semiarid portions of the northwest to over [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in the Orinoco Delta of the far east and the Amazonian Jungle in the south. The precipitation level is lower in the period from November to April and later in the year from August to October. These periods are referred to as hot-humid and cold-dry seasons. Another characteristic of the climate is this variation throughout the country by the existence of a mountain range called "Cordillera de la Costa" which crosses the country from east to west. The majority of the population lives in these mountains.[[29]](#cite_note-29) The country falls into four horizontal temperature zones based primarily on elevation, having tropical, dry, temperate with dry winters, and polar ([alpine tundra](/wiki/Alpine_tundra)) climates, amongst others.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)[[61]](#cite_note-61)[[62]](#cite_note-62) In the tropical zone—below [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)—temperatures are hot, with yearly averages ranging between [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). The temperate zone ranges between [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) with averages from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert); many of Venezuela's cities, including the capital, lie in this region. Colder conditions with temperatures from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) are found in the cool zone between [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), especially in the Venezuelan Andes, where pastureland and permanent snowfield with yearly averages below [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) cover land above [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in the *páramos*.

The highest temperature recorded was [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in [Machiques](/wiki/Machiques),[[63]](#cite_note-63) and the lowest temperature recorded was [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), it has been reported from an uninhabited high altitude at [Páramo de Piedras Blancas](/wiki/Pico_Piedras_Blancas) ([Mérida state](/wiki/Mérida_state)),[[64]](#cite_note-64) even though no official reports exist, lower temperatures in the mountains of the [Sierra Nevada de Mérida](/wiki/Sierra_Nevada_de_Mérida) are known.

### Biodiversity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb||](/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Rainbirder_-_White-tailed_Sabrewing_(Campylopterus_ensipennis).jpg)[Campylopterus ensipennis](/wiki/White-tailed_sabrewing), endemic bird of Venezuela.

Venezuela lies within the [Neotropic ecozone](/wiki/Neotropic_ecozone); large portions of the country were originally covered by [moist broadleaf forests](/wiki/Tropical_and_subtropical_moist_broadleaf_forests). One of 17 [megadiverse countries](/wiki/Megadiverse_countries),[[65]](#cite_note-65) Venezuela's [habitats](/wiki/Habitat) range from the Andes Mountains in the west to the [Amazon Basin](/wiki/Amazon_Basin) rainforest in the south, via extensive *llanos* plains and Caribbean coast in the center and the [Orinoco River Delta](/wiki/Orinoco_Delta) in the east. They include [xeric scrublands](/wiki/Deserts_and_xeric_shrublands) in the extreme northwest and coastal [mangrove](/wiki/Mangrove) forests in the northeast.[[29]](#cite_note-29) Its [cloud forests](/wiki/Cloud_forest) and lowland [rainforests](/wiki/Rainforest) are particularly rich.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

[Animals](/wiki/Fauna_of_Venezuela) of Venezuela are diverse and include [manatees](/wiki/Manatee), [three-toed sloth](/wiki/Three-toed_sloth), [two-toed sloth](/wiki/Two-toed_sloth), [Amazon river dolphins](/wiki/Amazon_river_dolphin), and [Orinoco crocodiles](/wiki/Orinoco_Crocodile), which have been reported to reach up to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in length. Venezuela hosts a total of 1,417 bird species, 48 of which are endemic.[[66]](#cite_note-66) Important birds include [ibises](/wiki/Ibis), [ospreys](/wiki/Osprey), [kingfishers](/wiki/Kingfisher),[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) and the yellow-orange [Venezuelan troupial](/wiki/Venezuelan_troupial), the national bird. Notable [mammals](/wiki/Mammal) include the [giant anteater](/wiki/Giant_anteater), [jaguar](/wiki/Jaguar), and the [capybara](/wiki/Capybara), the world's largest [rodent](/wiki/Rodent). More than half of Venezuelan avian and mammalian species are found in the [Amazonian forests](/wiki/Amazon_Rainforest) south of the Orinoco.[[67]](#cite_note-67) For the fungi, an account was provided by R.W.G. Dennis[[68]](#cite_note-68) which has been digitized and the records made available on-line as part of the Cybertruffle Robigalia database.[[69]](#cite_note-69) That database includes nearly 3,900 species of fungi recorded from Venezuela, but is far from complete, and the true total number of fungal species already known from Venezuela is likely higher, given the generally accepted estimate that only about 7% of all fungi worldwide have so far been discovered.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Among plants of Venezuela, over 25,000 species of [orchids](/wiki/Orchidaceae) are found in the country's cloud forest and lowland rainforest ecosystems.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) These include the *flor de mayo* orchid ([*Cattleya mossiae*](/wiki/Cattleya_mossiae)), the national flower. Venezuela's national tree is the [araguaney](/wiki/Tabebuia_chrysantha), whose characteristic lushness after the rainy season led novelist [Rómulo Gallegos](/wiki/Rómulo_Gallegos) to name it "*[l]a primavera de oro de los araguaneyes*" (the golden spring of the araguaneyes).

Venezuela is among the top 20 countries in terms of [endemism](/wiki/Endemism).[[70]](#cite_note-70) Among its animals, 23% of [reptilian](/wiki/Reptile) and 50% of [amphibian](/wiki/Amphibian) species are endemic.[[70]](#cite_note-70) Although the available information is still very small, a first effort has been made to estimate the number of fungal species endemic to Venezuela: 1334 species of fungi have been tentatively identified as possible endemics of the country.[[71]](#cite_note-71) Some 38% of the over 21,000 plant species known from Venezuela are unique to the country.[[70]](#cite_note-70) [thumb|Choroní Beach in the](/wiki/File:Beach_choroni_venezuela.jpg) [Henri Pittier National Park](/wiki/Henri_Pittier_National_Park).

### Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) Venezuela is one of the 10 most biodiverse countries on the planet, yet it is one of the leaders of deforestation due to economic and political factors. Each year, roughly 287,600 hectares of forest are permanently destroyed and other areas are degraded by mining, oil extraction, and logging. Between 1990 and 2005, Venezuela officially lost 8.3% of its forest cover, which is about 4.3 million ha. In response, federal protections for critical habitat were implemented; for example, 20% to 33% of forested land is protected.[[67]](#cite_note-67) The country's [biosphere reserve](/wiki/Biosphere_reserve) is part of the [World Network of Biosphere Reserves](/wiki/World_Network_of_Biosphere_Reserves); five [wetlands](/wiki/Wetlands) are registered under the [Ramsar Convention](/wiki/Ramsar_Convention).[[72]](#cite_note-72) In 2003, 70% of the nation's land was under conservation management in over 200 protected areas, including 43 national parks.[[73]](#cite_note-73) [Venezuela's 43 national parks](/wiki/List_of_national_parks_of_Venezuela) include [Canaima National Park](/wiki/Canaima_National_Park), [Morrocoy National Park](/wiki/Morrocoy_National_Park), and [Mochima National Park](/wiki/Mochima_National_Park). In the far south is a reserve for the country's Yanomami tribes. Covering [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), the area is off-limits to farmers, miners, and all non-Yanomami settlers.

Venezuela was one of the few countries that didn't enter an [INDC](/wiki/Intended_Nationally_Determined_Contributions) at [COP21](/wiki/COP21).[[74]](#cite_note-74)[[75]](#cite_note-75)

## Government and politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Following the fall of [Marcos Pérez Jiménez](/wiki/Marcos_Pérez_Jiménez) in 1958, Venezuelan politics were dominated by the [Third Way](/wiki/Third_Way) [Christian democratic](/wiki/Christian_democracy) [COPEI](/wiki/COPEI) and the center-left [social democratic](/wiki/Social_democracy) [Democratic Action](/wiki/Democratic_Action) (AD) parties; this [two-party system](/wiki/Two-party_system) was formalized by the [*puntofijismo*](/wiki/Puntofijismo) arrangement. Economic crises in the 1980s and 1990s led to a political crisis which resulted in hundreds dead in the [Caracazo](/wiki/Caracazo) riots of 1989, [two attempted coups in 1992](/wiki/1992_Venezuelan_coup_d'état_attempts), and impeachment of President [Carlos Andrés Pérez](/wiki/Carlos_Andrés_Pérez) for corruption in 1993. A collapse in confidence in the existing parties saw the [1998 election](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_1998) of [Hugo Chávez](/wiki/Hugo_Chávez), who had led the first of the 1992 coup attempts, and the launch of a "[Bolivarian Revolution](/wiki/Bolivarian_Revolution)", beginning with a [1999 Constituent Assembly](/wiki/1999_Constituent_Assembly_of_Venezuela) to write a new [Constitution of Venezuela](/wiki/Constitution_of_Venezuela).

The opposition's attempts to unseat Chávez included the 2002 Venezuelan *coup d'état* attempt, the Venezuelan general strike of 2002–2003, and the Venezuelan recall referendum, 2004, all of which failed. Chávez was re-elected in December 2006, but suffered a significant defeat in 2007 with the narrow rejection of the [Venezuelan constitutional referendum, 2007](/wiki/Venezuelan_constitutional_referendum,_2007), which had offered two packages of constitutional reforms aimed at deepening the Bolivarian Revolution.

Two major blocs of [political parties](/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Venezuela) are in Venezuela: the incumbent leftist bloc [United Socialist Party of Venezuela](/wiki/United_Socialist_Party_of_Venezuela) (PSUV), its major allies [Fatherland for All](/wiki/Fatherland_for_All) (PPT) and the [Communist Party of Venezuela](/wiki/Communist_Party_of_Venezuela) (PCV), and the opposition bloc grouped into the electoral coalition [Mesa de la Unidad Democrática](/wiki/Mesa_de_la_Unidad_Democrática). This includes [A New Era](/wiki/A_New_Era) (UNT) together with allied parties [Project Venezuela](/wiki/Project_Venezuela), [Justice First](/wiki/Justice_First), [Movement for Socialism](/wiki/Movement_for_Socialism_(Venezuela)) (MAS) and others. [Hugo Chávez](/wiki/Hugo_Chávez), the central figure of the Venezuelan political landscape since [his election to the Presidency in 1998](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_1998) as a political outsider, died in office in early 2013, and was succeeded by [Nicolás Maduro](/wiki/Nicolás_Maduro) (initially as interim President, before narrowly winning the [Venezuelan presidential election, 2013](/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_election,_2013)).

[thumb|right|upright|](/wiki/File:PalacioLegislativo2_fixed.jpg)[National Assembly of Venezuela](/wiki/National_Assembly_of_Venezuela) building The Venezuelan president is elected by a vote, with direct and [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage), and is both [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state) and [head of government](/wiki/Head_of_government). The term of office is six years, and (as of 15 February 2009) a president may be re-elected an unlimited number of times. The president appoints the vice president and decides the size and composition of the [cabinet](/wiki/Cabinet_(government)) and makes appointments to it with the involvement of the legislature. The president can ask the legislature to reconsider portions of laws he finds objectionable, but a simple parliamentary majority can override these objections.

The president may ask the National Assembly to pass an [enabling act](/wiki/Enabling_act#In_Venezuela) granting the ability to [rule by decree](/wiki/Rule_by_decree) in specified policy areas; this requires a two-thirds majority in the Assembly. Since 1959, six Venezuelan presidents have been granted such powers.

The [unicameral](/wiki/Unicameral) Venezuelan [parliament](/wiki/Parliament) is the [*Asamblea Nacional*](/wiki/National_Assembly_of_Venezuela) ("National Assembly"). The number of members is variable – each state and the Capital district elect three representatives plus the result of dividing the state population by 1.1% of the total population of the country.[[76]](#cite_note-76) Three seats are reserved for representatives of Venezuela's indigenous peoples. For the 2011–2016 period the number of seats is 165.[[77]](#cite_note-77) All deputies serve five-year terms.

The voting age in Venezuela is 18 and older. Voting is not [compulsory](/wiki/Compulsory_voting).[[78]](#cite_note-78) The [legal system of Venezuela](/wiki/Law_of_Venezuela) belongs to the [Continental Law](/wiki/Civil_law_(legal_system)) tradition. The highest [judicial](/wiki/Judiciary) body is the [Supreme Tribunal of Justice](/wiki/Supreme_Tribunal_of_Justice_(Venezuela)) or *Tribunal Supremo de Justicia*, whose magistrates are elected by parliament for a single two-year term. The [National Electoral Council](/wiki/National_Electoral_Council_(Venezuela)) (*Consejo Nacional Electoral*, or *CNE*) is in charge of electoral processes; it is formed by five main directors elected by the National Assembly. Supreme Court president Luisa Estela Morales said in December 2009 that Venezuela had moved away from "a rigid division of powers" toward a system characterized by "intense coordination" between the branches of government. Morales clarified that each power must be independent adding that "one thing is separation of powers and another one is division".[[79]](#cite_note-79)

### Suspension of constitutional rights[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Parliamentary Elections](/wiki/Venezuelan_parliamentary_election,_2015) were held in Venezuela on 6 December 2015 to elect the 164 [deputies](/wiki/Deputies) and three indigenous representatives of the [National Assembly](/wiki/National_Assembly_(Venezuela)). In 2014, a series of protest and demonstrations began in Venezuela, attributed to inflation, [violence](/wiki/Violence) and [shortages in Venezuela](/wiki/Shortages_in_Venezuela). The government has accused the protest of being motivated by '[fascists'](/wiki/Fascists) opposition leaders, capitalism and foreign influence,<ref name=Milne>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> despite of it had been largely peaceful.<ref name=SVCOprotestINFO>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

President Maduro acknowledged [PSUV](/wiki/PSUV) defeat, but attributed the opposition's victory to an intensification of the "economic war". Despite of that, Maduro said "I will stop by hook or by crook the opposition coming to power, whatever the costs, in any way".[[80]](#cite_note-80) In the following months, Maduro fulfilled his promise of avoiding the elected democratically and constitutionally National Assembly to legislate. First step taken by [PSUV](/wiki/PSUV) and government where the substitution of the entire [Supreme Court](/wiki/Supreme_Court) a day after the [Parliamentary Elections](/wiki/Venezuelan_parliamentary_election,_2015)[[81]](#cite_note-81) contrary to the Constitution of Venezuela, acclaimed as a fraud by the majority of the Venezuelan and international press.[[82]](#cite_note-82)[[83]](#cite_note-83)[[84]](#cite_note-84)[[85]](#cite_note-85) The [PSUV](/wiki/PSUV) government used this violation to suspend several elected opponents,[[86]](#cite_note-86) ignoring again the Constitution of Venezuela. Maduro said that the "the Amnesty law (approved by the Parliament) will not be executed" and asked the [Supreme Court](/wiki/Supreme_Court) to declare it unconstitutional before the law where knew.[[87]](#cite_note-87) In January, 16th 2016, Maduro approved an unconstitutional economic emergency decree,[[88]](#cite_note-88) relegating to his own figure the legislative and executive powers, while also holding judiciary power through the fraudulent designation of judges the day after the election on 6 December 2015.[[81]](#cite_note-81)[[82]](#cite_note-82)[[83]](#cite_note-83)[[84]](#cite_note-84)[[85]](#cite_note-85) From these events, Maduro effectively controls the three democratic powers. In 14 May 2016, constitutional guarantees were in fact suspended when Maduro decreed the extension of the economic emergency decree for another 60 days and declares a State of emergency,[[89]](#cite_note-89) which is a clear violation of the Constitution of Venezuela[[90]](#cite_note-90) in the Article 338th: "The approval of the extension of States of emergency corresponds to the National Assembly.". Thus, constitutional rights in Venezuela are considered suspended in fact by a large number of publications [[91]](#cite_note-91)[[92]](#cite_note-92)[[93]](#cite_note-93) and public figures.[[94]](#cite_note-94)[[95]](#cite_note-95)[[96]](#cite_note-96)[[97]](#cite_note-97) On 14 May 2016, the [Organization of American States](/wiki/Organization_of_American_States) manifest to be studying to Apply the [Inter-American Democratic Charter](/wiki/Inter-American_Democratic_Charter)[[98]](#cite_note-98) with sanctions for non-compliance to its own Constitution to Venezuela.

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Throughout most of the 20th century, Venezuela maintained friendly relations with most Latin American and Western nations. Relations between Venezuela and the United States government worsened in 2002, after the [2002 Venezuelan coup d'état attempt](/wiki/2002_Venezuelan_coup_d'état_attempt) during which the U.S. government recognized the short-lived interim presidency of [Pedro Carmona](/wiki/Pedro_Carmona). In 2015, Venezuela was declared a national security threat by U.S. President Barack Obama.[[99]](#cite_note-99)[[100]](#cite_note-100)[[101]](#cite_note-101) Correspondingly, ties to various Latin American and Middle Eastern countries not allied to the U.S. have strengthened. For example, Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki declared in 2015 that Venezuela was his country's "most important ally".[[102]](#cite_note-102) Venezuela seeks alternative [hemispheric](/wiki/Western_Hemisphere) integration via such proposals as the [Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas](/wiki/Bolivarian_Alternative_for_the_Americas) trade proposal and the newly launched pan-Latin American [television network](/wiki/Television_network) [teleSUR](/wiki/TeleSUR). Venezuela is one of the six nations in the world—along with Russia, Nicaragua, Nauru, Vanuatu, and Tuvalu—to have recognized the independence of [Abkhazia and South Ossetia](/wiki/International_recognition_of_Abkhazia_and_South_Ossetia). Venezuela was a proponent of [OAS's](/wiki/Organization_of_American_States) decision to adopt its Anti-Corruption Convention, and is actively working in the [Mercosur](/wiki/Mercosur) trade bloc to push increased trade and energy integration. Globally, it seeks a "[multi-polar](/wiki/Polarity_in_international_relations)" world based on strengthened ties among undeveloped countries.

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumbnail|A](/wiki/File:Venezuelan_Air_Force_Sukhoi_SU-30MK2_AADPR-2.jpg) [Sukhoi SU-30MKV](/wiki/Sukhoi_Su-30) of the Venezuelan air force. The Bolivarian National Armed Forces of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana, FANB) are the overall unified military forces of Venezuela. It includes over 320,150 men and women, under Article 328 of the Constitution, in 5 components of Ground, Sea and Air. The components of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces are: the [Venezuelan Army](/wiki/Venezuelan_Army), the [Venezuelan Navy](/wiki/Venezuelan_Navy), the [Venezuelan Air Force](/wiki/Venezuelan_Air_Force), the [Venezuelan National Guard](/wiki/Venezuelan_National_Guard), and the [Venezuelan National Militia](/wiki/Venezuelan_National_Militia).

[Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), a further 600,000 soldiers were incorporated into a new branch, known as the Armed Reserve. The [President of Venezuela](/wiki/President_of_Venezuela) is the [commander-in-chief](/wiki/Commander-in-chief) of the national armed forces. The main roles of the armed forces are to defend the sovereign national territory of Venezuela, airspace, and islands, fight against drug trafficking, to search and rescue and, in the case of a natural disaster, civil protection. All male citizens of Venezuela have a constitutional duty to register for the military service at the age of 18, which is the [age of majority](/wiki/Age_of_majority) in Venezuela.

### Law and crime[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image)

Venezuela was the most murderous place on Earth in 2015.[[103]](#cite_note-103) In Venezuela, a person is murdered every 21 minutes.[[104]](#cite_note-104) Violent crimes have been so prevalent in Venezuela that the government no longer produces the crime data.[[105]](#cite_note-105) In 2013, the homicide rate was approximately 79 per 100,000, one of the world's highest, having quadrupled in the past 15 years with over 200,000 people murdered.[[106]](#cite_note-106) By 2015 it had risen to 90 per 100,000.[[103]](#cite_note-103) The country's body count of the previous decade mimics that of the [Iraq War](/wiki/Iraq_War) and in some instances had more civilian deaths even though the country is at [peacetime](/wiki/Peacetime).[[107]](#cite_note-107) The capital Caracas has one of the greatest homicide rates of any large city in the world, with 122 homicides per 100,000 residents.[[108]](#cite_note-108) In 2008, polls indicated that crime was the number one concern of voters.[[109]](#cite_note-109) Attempts at fighting crime such as Operation Liberation of the People have been done to crack down on gang-controlled areas.[[110]](#cite_note-110) Venezuela is especially dangerous toward foreign travelers and investors who are visiting. The [United States State Department](/wiki/United_States_State_Department) and the [Government of Canada](/wiki/Government_of_Canada) have warned foreign visitors that they may be subjected to robbery, kidnapping for a ransom or sale to terrorist organizations[[111]](#cite_note-111) and murder, and that their own diplomatic travelers are required to travel in [armored vehicles](/wiki/Armored_vehicles).[[112]](#cite_note-112)[[113]](#cite_note-113) The United Kingdom's [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](/wiki/Foreign_and_Commonwealth_Office) has advised against all travel to Venezuela.[[114]](#cite_note-114) Visitors have been murdered during robberies and criminals do not discriminate among their victims. Recently, former Miss Venezuela 2004 winner [Monica Spear](/wiki/Monica_Spear) and her husband were murdered with her 5-year-old daughter being shot while visiting, and an elderly German tourist was murdered only a few weeks later.[[115]](#cite_note-115)[[116]](#cite_note-116) There are approximately 33 prisons holding about 50,000 inmates.[[117]](#cite_note-117) They include; El Rodeo outside of Caracas, Yare Prison in the northern state of Miranda, and several others. Venezuela's [prison](/wiki/Prison) system is heavily overcrowded; its facilities have capacity for only 14,000 prisoners.[[118]](#cite_note-118)

#### Corruption[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Corruption in Venezuela](/wiki/Corruption_in_Venezuela) is high by world standards, and was so for much of the 20th century. The discovery of oil had worsened [political corruption](/wiki/Political_corruption),[[119]](#cite_note-119) and by the late 1970s, [Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso's](/wiki/Juan_Pablo_Pérez_Alfonso) description of oil as "the Devil's excrement" had become a common expression in Venezuela.[[120]](#cite_note-120) Venezuela has been ranked one of the most corrupt countries on the [Corruption Perceptions Index](/wiki/Corruption_Perceptions_Index) since the survey started in 1995. The 2010 ranking placed Venezuela at number 164, out of 178 ranked countries.[[121]](#cite_note-121) Similarly, the [World Justice Project](/wiki/World_Justice_Project) ranked Venezuela 99th out of 99 countries surveyed in its 2014 Rule of Law Index.[[122]](#cite_note-122) This corruption is shown with Venezuela's significant involvement in [drug trafficking](/wiki/Illegal_drug_trade_in_Venezuela), with [Colombian cocaine](/wiki/Colombian_cocaine) and other drugs transiting Venezuela towards the United States and Europe. Venezuela ranks fourth in the world for cocaine seizures, behind Colombia, the United States, and [Panama](/wiki/Panama).[[123]](#cite_note-123) In 2006 the government's agency for combating the [Illegal drug trade in Venezuela](/wiki/Illegal_drug_trade_in_Venezuela), [*ONA*](/wiki/National_Anti-Drug_Office), was incorporated into the office of the Vice-President of the country. However, many major government and military officials have been known for their involvement with drug trafficking; especially with the October 2013 incident of men from the [Venezuelan National Guard](/wiki/Venezuelan_National_Guard) placing 1.3 tons of [cocaine](/wiki/Cocaine) on a Paris flight knowing they will not face charges.[[124]](#cite_note-124)

## States and regions of Venezuela[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Political subdivisions of Venezuela](/wiki/Template:Political_subdivisions_of_Venezuela) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Venezuela is divided into 23 states (*estados*), a [capital district](/wiki/Venezuelan_Capital_District) (*distrito capital*) corresponding to the city of Caracas, and the [Federal Dependencies](/wiki/Federal_Dependencies_of_Venezuela) (*Dependencias Federales*, a special territory). Venezuela is further subdivided into 335 [municipalities](/wiki/Municipality) (*municipios*); these are subdivided into over one thousand [parishes](/wiki/Parish) (*parroquias*). The states are grouped into nine administrative regions (*regiones administrativas*), which were established in 1969 by presidential decree.

The country can be further divided into ten geographical areas, some corresponding to climatic and biogeographical regions. In the north are the [Venezuelan Andes](/wiki/Venezuelan_Andes) and the [Coro region](/wiki/Coro_region), a mountainous tract in the northwest, holds several [sierras](/wiki/Mountain_range) and valleys. East of it are lowlands abutting [Lake Maracaibo](/wiki/Lake_Maracaibo) and the [Gulf of Venezuela](/wiki/Gulf_of_Venezuela).

The [Central Range](/wiki/Cordillera_de_la_Costa_Central) runs parallel to the coast and includes the hills surrounding [Caracas](/wiki/Caracas); the Eastern Range, separated from the Central Range by the [Gulf of Cariaco](/wiki/Gulf_of_Cariaco), covers all of [Sucre](/wiki/Sucre_(state)) and northern [Monagas](/wiki/Monagas). The [Insular Region](/wiki/Insular_Region_(Venezuela)) includes all of Venezuela's island possessions: [Nueva Esparta](/wiki/Nueva_Esparta) and the various [Federal Dependencies](/wiki/Federal_Dependencies). The [Orinoco Delta](/wiki/Orinoco_Delta), which forms a triangle covering [Delta Amacuro](/wiki/Delta_Amacuro), projects northeast into the Atlantic Ocean. [Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

### Largest cities[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Largest cities of Venezuela](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Venezuela)

### Largest metropolitan areas[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Graphical depiction of Venezuela's product exports in 28 color-coded categories.](/wiki/File:Venezuela_Export_Treemap.png) The [Central Bank of Venezuela](/wiki/Central_Bank_of_Venezuela) is responsible for developing [monetary policy](/wiki/Monetary_policy) for the [Venezuelan bolívar](/wiki/Venezuelan_bolívar) which is used as currency. The currency is primarily printed on [paper](/wiki/Paper) and distributed throughout the country. The President of the Central Bank of Venezuela is presently [Eudomar Tovar](/wiki/Eudomar_Tovar), who also serves as the country's representative in the [International Monetary Fund](/wiki/International_Monetary_Fund). According to the Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal, Venezuela has the weakest property rights in the world, scoring only 5.0 on a scale of 100; expropriation without compensation is not uncommon. Venezuela has a Market-based [mixed economy](/wiki/Mixed_economy) dominated by the [petroleum](/wiki/Petroleum) sector, which accounts for roughly a third of [GDP](/wiki/Gross_domestic_product), around 80% of exports, and more than half of government revenues. Per capita GDP for 2009 was US$13,000, ranking 85th in the world.[[31]](#cite_note-31) Venezuela has the [least expensive petrol](/wiki/Gasoline_usage_and_pricing) in the world because the consumer price of petrol is heavily subsidized.

More than 60% of Venezuela's international reserves is in gold, eight times more than the average for the region. Most of Venezuela's gold held abroad is located in London. On 25 November 2011, the first of US$11 billion of repatriated gold bullion arrived in Caracas; Chávez called the repatriation of gold a "sovereign" step that will help protect the country's foreign reserves from the turmoil in the U.S. and Europe.[[125]](#cite_note-125) However government policies quickly spent down this returned gold and in 2013 the government was forced to add the dollar reserves of state owned companies to those of the national bank in order to reassure the international bond market.[[126]](#cite_note-126) Manufacturing contributed 17% of GDP in 2006. Venezuela manufactures and exports heavy industry products such as [steel](/wiki/Steel), [aluminium](/wiki/Aluminium) and [cement](/wiki/Cement), with production concentrated around [Ciudad Guayana](/wiki/Ciudad_Guayana), near the [Guri Dam](/wiki/Guri_Dam), one of the largest in the world and the provider of about three-quarters of Venezuela's electricity. Other notable manufacturing includes [electronics](/wiki/Electronics) and [automobiles](/wiki/Automobiles), as well as [beverages](/wiki/Beverage), and [foodstuffs](/wiki/Foodstuff). [Agriculture in Venezuela](/wiki/Agriculture_in_Venezuela) accounts for approximately 3% of GDP, 10% of the labor force, and at least a quarter of Venezuela's land area. Venezuela exports [rice](/wiki/Rice), [corn](/wiki/Maize), [fish](/wiki/Fish), tropical [fruit](/wiki/Fruit), [coffee](/wiki/Coffee), [beef](/wiki/Beef), and [pork](/wiki/Pork). The country is not self-sufficient in most areas of [agriculture](/wiki/Agriculture). In 2012, total food consumption was over 26 million metric tonnes, a 94.8% increase from 2003.[[127]](#cite_note-127) Since the discovery of oil in the early 20th century, Venezuela has been one of the world's leading exporters of oil, and it is a founding member of [OPEC](/wiki/OPEC). Previously an underdeveloped exporter of agricultural commodities such as [coffee](/wiki/Coffee) and [cocoa](/wiki/Cocoa_bean), oil quickly came to dominate exports and government revenues. The [1980s oil glut](/wiki/1980s_oil_glut) led to an [external debt crisis](/wiki/Latin_American_debt_crisis) and a long-running economic crisis, which saw [inflation](/wiki/Inflation) peak at [100% in 1996](/wiki/Economy_of_Venezuela#1960s_–_1990s) and poverty rates rise to 66% in 1995[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) as (by 1998) [per capita](/wiki/Per_capita) GDP fell to the same level as 1963, down a third from its 1978 peak.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The 1990s also saw Venezuela experience a [major banking crisis in 1994](/wiki/Venezuelan_banking_crisis_of_1994). [thumb|Aerial view of Caracas from](/wiki/File:Vista_PlazaVenezuela2.jpg) [Plaza Venezuela](/wiki/Plaza_Venezuela)

The recovery of [oil prices](/wiki/Price_of_petroleum) after 2001 boosted the Venezuelan economy and facilitated social spending. With social programs such as the [Bolivarian Missions](/wiki/Bolivarian_Missions), Venezuela initially made progress in social development in the 2000s, particularly in areas such as health, education, and poverty. Many of the social policies pursued by Chávez and his administration were jump-started by the [Millennium Development Goals](/wiki/Millennium_Development_Goals), eight goals that Venezuela and 188 other nations agreed to in September 2000.[[128]](#cite_note-128) The sustainability of the Bolivarian Missions has been questioned due to the Bolivarian state's overspending on public works and because the Chávez government did not save funds for future economic hardships like other OPEC nations; with economic issues and poverty rising as a result of their policies in the 2010s.[[9]](#cite_note-9)[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[11]](#cite_note-11)[[129]](#cite_note-129)[[130]](#cite_note-130) In 2003 the government of Hugo Chávez implemented currency controls after capital flight led to a devaluation of the currency. This led to the development of a parallel market of dollars in the subsequent years. The fallout of the [2008 global financial crisis](/wiki/Financial_crisis_of_2007–2010) saw a renewed economic downturn. Despite controversial data shared by the Venezuelan government showing that the country had halved malnutrition following one of the UN's Millennium Development Goals,[[16]](#cite_note-16)[[131]](#cite_note-131) shortages of staple goods began to occur in Venezuela and malnutrition began to increase.[[16]](#cite_note-16) In early 2013, Venezuela devalued its currency due to growing shortages in the country.[[132]](#cite_note-132)[[133]](#cite_note-133)[[134]](#cite_note-134) The shortages included, and may still include, necessities such as toilet paper, milk, and flour,[[135]](#cite_note-135) Fears rose so high due to the toilet paper shortage that the government occupied a toilet paper factory, and continued further plans to nationalize other industrial aspects like food distribution.[[136]](#cite_note-136)[[137]](#cite_note-137) Venezuela's bond ratings have also decreased multiple times in 2013 due to decisions by the president [Nicolás Maduro](/wiki/Nicolás_Maduro). One of his decisions was to force stores and their warehouses to sell all of their products, which led to even more shortages in the future.[[138]](#cite_note-138) Venezuela's outlook has also been deemed negative by most bond-rating services.[[139]](#cite_note-139)

### Shortages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Empty shelves in a store in Venezuela due to shortages.](/wiki/File:Escasez_en_Venezuela,_Central_Madeirense_8.JPG) [Shortages](/wiki/Shortages) in Venezuela have been prevalent following the enactment of price controls and other policies during the [economic policy of the Hugo Chávez government](/wiki/Economic_policy_of_the_Hugo_Chávez_government).[[140]](#cite_note-140)[[141]](#cite_note-141) Under the [economic policy of the Nicolás Maduro government](/wiki/Economic_policy_of_the_Nicolás_Maduro_government), greater shortages occurred due to the Venezuelan government's policy of withholding United States dollars from importers with price controls.[[142]](#cite_note-142) Shortages occur in regulated products, such as milk, various types of meat, chicken, coffee, rice, oil, precooked flour, butter prices, luxuries such as breast implants, and goods including basic necessities like toilet paper, personal hygiene products, and even medicine.[[140]](#cite_note-140)[[143]](#cite_note-143)[[144]](#cite_note-144) As a result of the shortages, Venezuelans must search for food, wait in lines for hours and sometimes settle without having certain products.[[145]](#cite_note-145)[[146]](#cite_note-146) A drought, combined with a lack of planning and maintenance, has caused a hydroelectricity shortage. To deal with lack of power supply, in April 2016 the Maduro government announced rolling blackouts[[147]](#cite_note-147) and reduced the government workweek to only Monday and Tuesday.[[148]](#cite_note-148)

### Petroleum and other resources[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) Venezuela has the largest oil reserves, and the eighth largest natural gas reserves in the world, and consistently ranks among the top ten world crude oil producers.[[149]](#cite_note-149) Compared to the preceding year another 40.4% in crude oil reserves were proven in 2010, allowing Venezuela to surpass Saudi Arabia as the country with the largest reserves of this type.[[150]](#cite_note-150) The country's main petroleum deposits are located around and beneath [Lake Maracaibo](/wiki/Lake_Maracaibo), the [Gulf of Venezuela](/wiki/Gulf_of_Venezuela) (both in [Zulia](/wiki/Zulia_State)), and in the Orinoco River basin ([eastern Venezuela](/wiki/Orinoco#Eastern_Venezuelan_Basin)), where the country's largest reserve is located. Besides the largest [conventional oil](/wiki/Petroleum) reserves and the second-largest [natural gas](/wiki/Natural_gas) reserves in the Western Hemisphere,[[151]](#cite_note-151) Venezuela has non-conventional oil deposits ([extra-heavy crude oil](/wiki/Heavy_crude_oil), [bitumen](/wiki/Bitumen) and [tar sands](/wiki/Tar_sands)) approximately equal to the world's reserves of conventional oil.[[152]](#cite_note-152) The [electricity sector in Venezuela](/wiki/Electricity_sector_in_Venezuela) is one of the few to rely primarily on [hydropower](/wiki/Hydropower), and includes the [Guri Dam](/wiki/Guri_Dam), one of the largest in the world.

In the first half of the 20th century, US oil companies were heavily involved in Venezuela, initially interested only in purchasing concessions.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In 1943 a new government introduced a 50/50 split in profits between the government and the oil industry. In 1960, with a newly installed democratic government, Hydrocarbons Minister [Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso](/wiki/Juan_Pablo_Pérez_Alfonso) led the creation of [OPEC](/wiki/OPEC), the consortium of oil-producing countries aiming to support the price of oil.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

In 1973, Venezuela voted to nationalize its oil industry outright, effective 1 January 1976, with [Petróleos de Venezuela](/wiki/Petróleos_de_Venezuela) (PDVSA) taking over and presiding over a number of holding companies; in subsequent years, Venezuela built a vast refining and marketing system in the U.S. and Europe.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In the 1990s PDVSA became more independent from the government and presided over an *apertura* (opening) in which it invited in foreign investment. Under [Hugo Chávez](/wiki/Hugo_Chávez) a 2001 law placed limits on foreign investment.

The state oil company PDVSA played a key role in the [December 2002 – February 2003 national strike](/wiki/Venezuelan_general_strike_of_2002–2003) which sought President Chávez' resignation. Managers and skilled highly paid technicians of PDVSA shut down the plants and left their posts, and by some reports sabotaged equipment, and petroleum production and refining by PDVSA almost ceased. Activities eventually were slowly restarted by returning and substitute oil workers. As a result of the strike, around 40% of the company's workforce (around 18,000 workers) were dismissed for "dereliction of duty" during the strike.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)[[153]](#cite_note-153)

### Transport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumbnail|](/wiki/File:MetrodeCaracas.jpg)[Caracas Metro](/wiki/Caracas_Metro) Venezuela is connected to the world primarily via air ([Venezuela's airports](/wiki/List_of_airports_in_Venezuela) include the [Simón Bolívar International Airport](/wiki/Simón_Bolívar_International_Airport_(Venezuela)) in Maiquetía, near Caracas and [La Chinita International Airport](/wiki/La_Chinita_International_Airport) near [Maracaibo](/wiki/Maracaibo)) and sea (with major sea ports at [La Guaira](/wiki/La_Guaira), Maracaibo and [Puerto Cabello](/wiki/Puerto_Cabello)). In the south and east the Amazon rainforest region has limited cross-border transport; in the west, there is a mountainous border of over [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) shared with [Colombia](/wiki/Colombia). The [Orinoco](/wiki/Orinoco) River is navigable by oceangoing vessels up to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) inland, and connects the major industrial city of [Ciudad Guayana](/wiki/Ciudad_Guayana) to the Atlantic Ocean.

Venezuela has a limited [national railway system](/wiki/Instituto_de_Ferrocarriles_del_Estado), which has no active rail connections to other countries. The government of Hugo Chávez tried to invest in expanding it, but Venezuela's rail project is on hold due to Venezuela not being able to pay the $7.5 billion and owing [China Railway](/wiki/China_Railway) nearly $500 million.[[154]](#cite_note-154)Several major cities have metro systems; the [Caracas Metro](/wiki/Caracas_Metro) has been operating since 1983. The [Maracaibo Metro](/wiki/Maracaibo_Metro) and [Valencia Metro](/wiki/Valencia_Metro_(Venezuela)) were opened more recently. Venezuela has a road network of nearly [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in length, placing the country [around 45th in the world](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_road_network_size);[[155]](#cite_note-155) around a third of roads are paved.

### Water supply and sanitation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Water supply](/wiki/Water_supply) and [sanitation](/wiki/Sanitation) in Venezuela has been extended to an increasing number of people during the 2000s, although many poor remain without access to piped water. Service quality for those with access is mixed, with water often being supplied only on an intermittent basis and most wastewater not being treated. [Non-revenue water](/wiki/Non-revenue_water) is estimated to be high at 62%, compared to the regional average of 40%. Tap water is relatively inexpensive, because of a national tariff freeze imposed in 2003 and a policy not to recover capital costs. Investments are financed primarily by the national government, with little reliance on external financing. The sector remains centralized despite a decentralization process initiated in the 1990s that has now been stalled. Within the executive, sector policies are determined by the Ministry of Environment. The national water company HIDROVEN serves about 80% of the population. The remainder is being served by five state water companies, the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana (CVG), a few municipalities and community-based organizations. Since the early 2000s the government encouraged the creation of about 7,500 *Mesas Tecnicas del Agua*, which have both a technical function and a political mobilization function.[[156]](#cite_note-156) Major investment projects include the restoration of the polluted [Valencia Lake](/wiki/Valencia_Lake) and of the Guaire river basin in [Caracas](/wiki/Caracas) (2005–2013).[[157]](#cite_note-157)

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Historical populations](/wiki/Template:Historical_populations) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) Venezuela is among the most urbanized countries in Latin America;[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[4]](#cite_note-4) the vast majority of Venezuelans live in the cities of the north, especially in the capital [Caracas](/wiki/Caracas), which is also the largest city. About 93% of the population lives in urban areas in northern Venezuela; 73% live less than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) from the coastline.[[158]](#cite_note-158) According to a study by sociologists of the [Central University of Venezuela](/wiki/Central_University_of_Venezuela), over 1.5 million Venezuelans, or about 4% to 6% of the country's population, left Venezuela following the Bolivarian Revolution.[[159]](#cite_note-159)[[160]](#cite_note-160) Though almost half of Venezuela's land area lies south of the Orinoco, only 5% of Venezuelans live there. The largest and most important city south of the Orinoco is [Ciudad Guayana](/wiki/Ciudad_Guayana), which is the sixth most populous [conurbation](/wiki/Conurbation).[[161]](#cite_note-161) Other major cities include [Barquisimeto](/wiki/Barquisimeto), [Valencia](/wiki/Valencia,_Carabobo), [Maracay](/wiki/Maracay), [Maracaibo](/wiki/Maracaibo), [Mérida](/wiki/Mérida,_Mérida), [San Cristóbal](/wiki/San_Cristóbal,_Táchira) and [Barcelona](/wiki/Barcelona,_Venezuela)–[Puerto la Cruz](/wiki/Puerto_la_Cruz).

### Ethnic groups[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box) The people of Venezuela come from a variety of ancestries. It is estimated that the majority of the population is of [mestizo](/wiki/Mestizos_in_Venezuela), or mixed, ethnic ancestry. Nevertheless, in the 2011 census, which Venezuelans were asked to identify themselves according to their customs and ancestry, the term *mestizo* was excluded from the answers. The majority claimed to be [mestizo](/wiki/Mestizo) or [white](/wiki/Venezuelan_of_European_descent) — 51.6% and 43.6%, respectively.[[162]](#cite_note-162) Practically half of the population claimed to be [*moreno*](/wiki/Wikt:moreno), a term used throughout Ibero-America that in this case means "dark-skinned" or "brown-skinned", as opposed to having a [lighter skin](/wiki/Light_skin) (this term connotes [skin color or tone](/wiki/Human_skin_colour), rather than [facial features](/wiki/Facial_feature) or descent).

Ethnic minorities in Venezuela consist of groups that descend mainly from African or indigenous peoples; 2.8% identified themselves as "[black](/wiki/Afro-Venezuelan)" and 0.7% as *afrodescendiente* (Afro-descendant), 2.6% claimed to belong to [indigenous peoples](/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Venezuela), and 1.2% answered "other races".[[162][162]](#cite_note-162) Among indigenous people, 58% were [Wayúu](/wiki/Wayúu), 7% [Warao](/wiki/Warao_people), 5% [Kariña](/wiki/Kariña), 4% [Pemón](/wiki/Pemon), 3% [Piaroa](/wiki/Piaroa), 3% [Jivi](/wiki/Jivi), 3% [Añu](/wiki/Añu), 3% [Cumanágoto](/wiki/Cumanágoto), 2% [Yukpa](/wiki/Yukpa), 2% [Chaima](/wiki/Chaima) and 1% [Yanomami](/wiki/Yanomami); the remaining 9% consisted of other indigenous nations.[[163]](#cite_note-163) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Besucher.JPG)[Yanomami](/wiki/Yanomami) tribe living in the [Amazon rainforest](/wiki/Amazon_rainforest) [thumb|](/wiki/File:24_June_2014_Venezuelan_protest.jpg)[Venezuelans](/wiki/Venezuelans) in Caracas According to an autosomal DNA genetic study conducted in 2008 by the [University of Brasília](/wiki/University_of_Brasília) (UNB), the composition of Venezuela's population is 60.60% of European contribution, 23% of indigenous contribution, and 16.30% of African contribution.[[164]](#cite_note-164) During the colonial period and until after the Second World War, many of the European immigrants to Venezuela came from the [Canary Islands](/wiki/Canary_Islands),[[165]](#cite_note-165) which had a significant cultural impact on the cuisine and customs of Venezuela.[[166]](#cite_note-166)[[167]](#cite_note-167)[[168]](#cite_note-168) These influences on Venezuela has led to the nation being called the 8th island of the Canaries.[[169]](#cite_note-169)[[170]](#cite_note-170) With the start of oil exploitation in the early 20th century, companies from the United States began establishing operations in Venezuela, bringing with them US citizens. Later, during and after the war, new waves of immigrants from other parts of Europe, the Middle East, and China began; many were encouraged by government-established [immigration programs](/wiki/Immigration_to_Venezuela) and lenient immigration policies.[[171]](#cite_note-171) During the 20th century, Venezuela, along with the rest of Latin America, [received millions of immigrants](/wiki/Immigration_to_Venezuela) from Europe.[[172]](#cite_note-172)[[173]](#cite_note-173) This was especially true post-World War II, as a consequence of war-ridden Europe.[[172]](#cite_note-172)[[173]](#cite_note-173)[[174]](#cite_note-174) During the 1970s, while experiencing an oil-export boom, Venezuela received millions of immigrants from Ecuador, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic.[[174]](#cite_note-174) Due to the belief that this immigration influx depressed wages, some Venezuelans opposed European immigration.[[174]](#cite_note-174) The Venezuelan government, however, were actively recruiting immigrants from Eastern Europe to fill a need for engineers.[[172]](#cite_note-172) Millions of Colombians, as well as Middle Eastern and Haitian populations would continue immigrating to Venezuela into the early 21st century.[[171]](#cite_note-171) According to the *World Refugee Survey 2008*, published by the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Venezuela hosted a population of [refugee](/wiki/Refugee) and asylum seekers from Colombia numbering 252,200 in 2007, and 10,600 new asylum seekers entered Venezuela in 2007.[[175]](#cite_note-175) Between 500,000 and one million [illegal immigrants](/wiki/Illegal_immigrant) are estimated to be living in the country.[[176]](#cite_note-176) The total indigenous population of the country is estimated at about 500 thousand people (2.8% of the total), distributed among 40 indigenous peoples.[[177]](#cite_note-177) The [Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Venezuela) recognizes the multi-ethnic, pluri-cultural, and multilingual character of the country and includes a chapter devoted to indigenous peoples' rights, which opened up spaces for their political inclusion at national and local level in 1999. Most indigenous peoples are concentrated in eight states along Venezuela's borders with Brazil, Guyana, and Colombia, and the majority groups are the [Wayuu (west)](/wiki/Wayuu_people), the [Warao (east)](/wiki/Warao_people), the [Yanomami](/wiki/Yanomami) (south), and the [Pemon](/wiki/Pemon) (southeast).

<gallery mode=packed heights=150px> |Map of proportion in percentage of the [mestizo](/wiki/Mestizo_Venezuelan) population in Venezuela. Data from the 2011 Census. |Map of proportion in percentage of the [white](/wiki/White_Venezuelan) population in Venezuela. Data from the 2011 Census. |Map of proportion in percentage of the [black](/wiki/Black_Venezuelan) population in Venezuela. Data from the 2011 Census. |Map of proportion in percentage of the [indigenous peoples](/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Venezuela) population in Venezuela. Data from the 2011 Census. </gallery>

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Although the country is mostly monolingual Spanish, many languages are spoken in Venezuela. In addition to Spanish, the Constitution recognizes more than thirty indigenous languages, including Wayuu, Warao, Pemón, and many others for the official use of the indigenous peoples, mostly with few speakers – less than 1% of the total population. Immigrants, in addition to Spanish, speak their own languages. Arabic is spoken by Lebanese and Syrian colonies on Isla de Margarita, Maracaibo, Punto Fijo, Puerto la Cruz, El Tigre, Maracay, and Caracas. Portuguese is spoken not only by the Portuguese community in Santa Elena de Uairén but also by much of the population due to its proximity to Brazil. The German community speaks their native language, while the Colonia Tovar speaks mostly an [Alemannic](/wiki/Alemannic_German) dialect of German called *coloniero*. English is the most widely used foreign language in demand and is spoken by many professionals, academics, and members of the upper and middle classes as a result of oil exploration by foreign companies, in addition to its acceptance as a lingua franca. Culturally, English is common in southern towns like El Callao, for the English-speaking native influence evident in folk songs and calypso Venezuelan and French with English voices. Italian instruction is guaranteed by the presence of a constant number of schools and private institutions because the Italian government considered mandatory language teaching at school level. Other languages spoken by large communities in the country are Chinese and Galician, among others.

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Pie chart](/wiki/Template:Pie_chart)

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

According to the 2011 census, 88 percent of the population is Christian, primarily [Roman Catholic](/wiki/Roman_Catholic) (71%), and the remaining 17 percent [Protestant](/wiki/Protestant) (primarily [Evangelicalism](/wiki/Evangelicalism)). The [Venezuelans](/wiki/Venezuelans) without religion are 8% ([atheist](/wiki/Atheist) 2% and [agnostic](/wiki/Agnostic) or indifferent 6%), almost 3% of the population follow other religions (1% of them are of [santeria](/wiki/Santeria)).[[178]](#cite_note-178)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|The *joropo*, as depicted in a 1912 drawing by](/wiki/File:Joropo_foto.jpg) [Eloy Palacios](/wiki/Eloy_Palacios). The culture of Venezuela is a melting pot, which includes mainly three different families: The indigenous, African, and Spanish. The first two cultures were in turn differentiated according to the tribes. Acculturation and assimilation, typical of a cultural syncretism, caused an arrival at the current Venezuelan culture, similar in many respects to the rest of Latin America, although the natural environment means that there are important differences.

The indigenous influence is limited to a few words of vocabulary and gastronomy and many place names. The African influence in the same way, in addition to musical instruments like the drum. The Spanish influence was predominant (due to the colonization process and the socioeconomic structure it created) and in particular came from the regions of Andalusia and Extremadura, the places of origin of most settlers in the Caribbean during the colonial era. An example of this includes buildings, music, the Catholic religion, and language.

Spanish influences are evident in bullfights and certain features of gastronomy. Venezuela was also enriched by other streams of Indian and European origin in the 19th century, especially from France. In the latest stage in the major cities and regions oil of U.S. origin and manifestations of the new immigration of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, increasing the already complex cultural mosaic. For example, from United States comes the influence of taste for baseball, US-style fast food, and current architectural constructions.

### Art[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[thumb|left|upright|*Young Mother* by Venezuela-born](/wiki/File:La_Joven_Madre_1889_by_Arturo_Michelena.jpg) [Arturo Michelena](/wiki/Arturo_Michelena), 1889 [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Venezuelan art](/wiki/Art_of_Venezuela) was initially dominated by religious motifs. However, in the late 19th century, artists began emphasizing historical and heroic representations of the country's struggle for independence.[Template:SfnTemplate:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) This move was led by [Martín Tovar y Tovar](/wiki/Martín_Tovar_y_Tovar).[Template:SfnTemplate:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) [Modernism](/wiki/Modernism) took over in the 20th century.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Notable [Venezuelan artists](/wiki/Venezuelan_Artists) include [Arturo Michelena](/wiki/Arturo_Michelena), [Cristóbal Rojas](/wiki/Cristóbal_Rojas_(artist)), [Armando Reverón](/wiki/Armando_Reverón), [Manuel Cabré](/wiki/Manuel_Cabré); the [kinetic artists](/wiki/Kinetic_art) [Jesús Soto](/wiki/Jesús-Rafael_Soto), [Gego](/wiki/Gego) and [Carlos Cruz-Díez](/wiki/Carlos_Cruz-Díez);[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) and contemporary artists as [Marisol](/wiki/Marisol_Escobar) and [Yucef Merhi](/wiki/Yucef_Merhi).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)[[179]](#cite_note-179)

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Venezuelan literature](/wiki/Venezuelan_literature) originated soon after the Spanish conquest of the mostly pre-literate indigenous societies.[[180]](#cite_note-180) It was originally dominated by [Spanish influences](/wiki/Spanish_culture). Following the rise of political literature during the [Venezuelan War of Independence](/wiki/Venezuelan_War_of_Independence), Venezuelan [Romanticism](/wiki/Romanticism), notably expounded by [Juan Vicente González](/wiki/Juan_Vicente_González), emerged as the first important genre in the region. Although mainly focused on [narrative](/wiki/Narrative) writing, Venezuelan literature was advanced by poets such as [Andrés Eloy Blanco](/wiki/Andrés_Eloy_Blanco) and [Fermín Toro](/wiki/Fermín_Toro).

Major writers and novelists include [Rómulo Gallegos](/wiki/Rómulo_Gallegos), [Teresa de la Parra](/wiki/Teresa_de_la_Parra), [Arturo Uslar Pietri](/wiki/Arturo_Uslar_Pietri), [Adriano González León](/wiki/Adriano_González_León), [Miguel Otero Silva](/wiki/Miguel_Otero_Silva), and [Mariano Picón Salas](/wiki/Mariano_Picón_Salas). The great poet and humanist [Andrés Bello](/wiki/Andrés_Bello) was also an educator and intellectual (He was also a childhood tutor and mentor of Simón Bolívar). Others, such as [Laureano Vallenilla Lanz](/wiki/Laureano_Vallenilla_Lanz) and [José Gil Fortoul](/wiki/José_Gil_Fortoul), contributed to Venezuelan [Positivism](/wiki/Positivism).

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[thumb|Cover of](/wiki/File:Alma_llanera.jpg) [Alma Llanera](/wiki/Alma_Llanera) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Indigenous [musical styles of Venezuela](/wiki/Music_of_Venezuela) are exemplified by the groups [*Un Sólo Pueblo*](/wiki/Un_Sólo_Pueblo) and [*Serenata Guayanesa*](/wiki/Serenata_Guayanesa). The national musical instrument is the [cuatro](/wiki/Cuatro_(instrument)). Typical musical styles and pieces mainly emerged in and around the *llanos* region, including [*Alma Llanera*](/wiki/Alma_Llanera) (by [Pedro Elías Gutiérrez](/wiki/Pedro_Elías_Gutiérrez) and [Rafael Bolívar Coronado](/wiki/Rafael_Bolívar_Coronado)), *Florentino y el diablo* (by [Alberto Arvelo Torrealba](/wiki/Alberto_Arvelo_Torrealba)), *Concierto en la llanura* by [Juan Vicente Torrealba](/wiki/Juan_Vicente_Torrealba), and [*Caballo Viejo*](/wiki/Caballo_Viejo) (by [Simón Díaz](/wiki/Simón_Díaz)).

The Zulian [*gaita*](/wiki/Gaita_Zuliana) is also a very popular style, generally performed during Christmas. The national dance is the [*joropo*](/wiki/Joropo).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Venezuela has always been a melting pot of cultures and this can be seen in the richness and variety of its musical styles and dances: [calipso](/wiki/Calypso_music), [bambuco](/wiki/Bambuco), [fulía](/wiki/Fulía), cantos de pilado de maíz, cantos de lavanderas, [sebucán](/wiki/Sebucán), and [maremare](/wiki/Maremare).[[181]](#cite_note-181) [Teresa Carreño](/wiki/Teresa_Carreño) was a world-famous 19th century piano virtuoso. In the last years, Classical Music has had great performances. The [Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra](/wiki/Simón_Bolívar_Youth_Orchestra), under the baton of its principal conductor [Gustavo Dudamel](/wiki/Gustavo_Dudamel) and José Antonio Abreu, has hosted a number of excellent presentations in many European concert halls, notably at the 2007 London [Proms](/wiki/The_Proms), and has received several honors. The orchestra is the pinnacle of [El Sistema](/wiki/El_Sistema), a publicly financed voluntary sector music education program now being emulated in other countries.

In the early 21st century, a movement known as "Movida Acústica Urbana" featured musicians trying to save some national traditions, creating their own songs but using traditional instruments.[[182]](#cite_note-182)[[183]](#cite_note-183) Some groups in this tradition are Tambor Urbano,[[184]](#cite_note-184) Los Sinverguenzas, the C4Trio, and Orozco Jam.[[185]](#cite_note-185) Afro-Venezuelan musical traditions are most intimately related to the festivals of the "**black folk saints**" **San Juan** and **San Benito**. Specific songs are related to the different stages of the festival and of the procession, when the saints start their yearly *paseo* – stroll – through the community to dance with their people.

### Sport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|220px|right|](/wiki/File:Estadio_de_Béisbol_de_la_UCV_Caracas_4.jpg)[Estadio Universitario de Caracas](/wiki/Estadio_Universitario_de_Caracas) [thumbnail|right|220px|Cachamay Stadium](/wiki/File:Cte_cachamay_aereo.jpg) The origins of baseball in Venezuela is unclear, although it is known that the sport was being played in the nation by the late 19th century.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In the early 20th century, North American immigrants who came to Venezuela to work in the nation's oil industry helped to popularize the sport in Venezuela.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) During the 1930s, baseball's popularity continued to rise in the country, leading to the foundation of the [Venezuelan Professional Baseball League](/wiki/Venezuelan_Professional_Baseball_League) in 1945, and the sport would soon become the nation's most popular.[Template:SfnTemplate:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

The immense popularity of baseball in the country makes Venezuela a rarity among its South American neighbors—[association football](/wiki/Association_football) is the dominant sport in the continent.[Template:SfnTemplate:SfnTemplate:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) However, football, as well as [basketball](/wiki/Basketball), are among the more popular sports played in Venezuela.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Venezuela hosted the [2012 Basketball World Olympic Qualifying Tournament](/wiki/2012_FIBA_World_Olympic_Qualifying_Tournament_for_Men) and the [2013 FIBA Basketball Americas Championship](/wiki/FIBA_Americas_Championship), which took place in [Poliedro de Caracas](/wiki/Poliedro_de_Caracas).

Although not as popular in Venezuela as the rest of South America, football, spearheaded by the [Venezuela national football team](/wiki/Venezuela_national_football_team) is gaining popularity as well. The sport is also noted for having an increased focus during the World Cup.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) According to the [CONMEBOL](/wiki/CONMEBOL) alphabetical rotation policy established in 2011, Venezuela is scheduled to host the [Copa América](/wiki/Copa_América) every 40 years.[[186]](#cite_note-186) Venezuela is also home to [Formula 1](/wiki/Formula_1) driver, [Pastor Maldonado](/wiki/Pastor_Maldonado).[[187]](#cite_note-187) At the [2012 Spanish Grand Prix](/wiki/2012_Spanish_Grand_Prix), he claimed his first pole and victory and became the first and only Venezuelan to have done so in the history of Formula 1.[[187]](#cite_note-187) Maldonado has increased the reception of Formula 1 in Venezuela, helping to popularize the sport in the nation.[[188]](#cite_note-188) In the [2012 Summer Olympics](/wiki/2012_Summer_Olympics), Venezuelan [Rubén Limardo](/wiki/Rubén_Limardo) won a gold medal in [fencing](/wiki/Fencing_at_the_2012_Summer_Olympics).[[189]](#cite_note-189)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The Venezuelan cuisine, one of the most varied in the region, reflects the climatic contrasts and cultures coexisting in Venezuela. Among them are [hallaca](/wiki/Hallaca), [pabellón criollo](/wiki/Pabellón_criollo), [arepas](/wiki/Arepas), [pisca andina](/wiki/Pisca_andina), [tarkarí de chivo](/wiki/Tarkarí_de_chivo), [jalea de mango](/wiki/Jalea_de_mango), and [fried camiguanas](/wiki/Fried_camiguanas).

### Other[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

[thumb|150px|right|](/wiki/File:Miss_Universe_Dayana_Mendoza_en_Nicaragua_11.jpg)[Dayana Mendoza](/wiki/Dayana_Mendoza), [Miss Universe 2008](/wiki/Miss_Universe_2008) Internationally, Venezuela has been well documented for its successes in beauty pageants.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) [Miss Venezuela](/wiki/Miss_Venezuela) is a closely followed event throughout the country, and Venezuela has received 6 [Miss World](/wiki/Miss_World), 7 [Miss Universe](/wiki/Miss_Universe), 7 [Miss International](/wiki/Miss_International) and 2 [Miss Earth](/wiki/Miss_Earth) titles.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Venezuela ranks first in the Global Beauties webpage list as the country with more international pageants titles won. It also has a Guinness World Record, after [Dayana Mendoza](/wiki/Dayana_Mendoza), [Miss Universe 2008](/wiki/Miss_Universe_2008) from Venezuela crowned [Stefania Fernandez](/wiki/Stefania_Fernandez), also from Venezuela as [Miss Universe 2009](/wiki/Miss_Universe_2009), marking the first time over 50 years in the competition that a country wins the title in two consecutive years.[[190]](#cite_note-190) Venezuela is the most successful country in Miss World and Miss International and is second in the Miss Universe pageant only surpassed by USA. [Carlos Raúl Villanueva](/wiki/Carlos_Raúl_Villanueva) was the most important Venezuelan architect of the modern era; he designed the [Central University of Venezuela](/wiki/Central_University_of_Venezuela), (a [World Heritage Site](/wiki/World_Heritage_Site)) and its Aula Magna. Other notable architectural works include the Capitolio, the [Baralt Theatre](/wiki/Baralt_Theatre), the [Teresa Carreño Cultural Complex](/wiki/Teresa_Carreño_Cultural_Complex), and the [General Rafael Urdaneta Bridge](/wiki/General_Rafael_Urdaneta_Bridge).[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Biblioteca_de_la_Universidad_Central_de_Venezuela.jpg)[Central University of Venezuela](/wiki/Central_University_of_Venezuela) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The literacy rate for the adult population was already 91.1 by 1998.[[191]](#cite_note-191)In 2008, 95.2% of the adult population was literate.[[192]](#cite_note-192) Net [primary school](/wiki/Primary_school) enrollment rate was at 91% in 2005.[[192]](#cite_note-192) Net secondary enrollment rate was at 63% in 2005.[[192]](#cite_note-192) Venezuela has a number of universities, of which the most prestigious are the [Central University of Venezuela](/wiki/Central_University_of_Venezuela) (UCV), founded in Caracas in 1721, the [University of Zulia](/wiki/University_of_Zulia) (LUZ) founded in 1891, the [University of the Andes](/wiki/University_of_the_Andes_(Venezuela)) (ULA), founded in Mérida State in 1810, the [Simón Bolívar University](/wiki/Simón_Bolívar_University) (USB), founded in Miranda State in 1967 and the [University of the East](/wiki/Universidad_de_Oriente) (UDO), founded in Sucre State in 1958.

Currently, large numbers of Venezuelan graduates seek for a future elsewhere due to the country's troubled economy and heavy crime rate. In a study titled *Venezolana Community Abroad. A New Method of Exile* by Thomas Paez, Mercedes Vivas and Juan Rafael Pulido of the [Central University of Venezuela](/wiki/Central_University_of_Venezuela), over 1.35 million Venezuelan [college graduates](/wiki/College_graduate) had left the country since the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution.[[159]](#cite_note-159)[[160]](#cite_note-160) It is believed nearly 12% of Venezuelans live abroad with Ireland becoming a popular destination for students.[[193]](#cite_note-193) According to Claudio Bifano, president of the Venezuelan Academy of Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences, more than half of medical graduates in 2013 had left Venezuela.[[194]](#cite_note-194)

## Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Venezuela has a national [universal health care](/wiki/Universal_health_care) system. The current government has created a program to expand access to health care known as [Misión Barrio Adentro](/wiki/Mission_Barrio_Adentro),[[195]](#cite_note-195)[[196]](#cite_note-196) although its efficiency and work conditions have been criticized.[[197]](#cite_note-197)[[198]](#cite_note-198)[[199]](#cite_note-199) It has reported that many of the clinics were closed and as of December 2014, it was estimated that 80% of Barrio Adentro establishments were abandoned in Venezuela.[[200]](#cite_note-200)[[201]](#cite_note-201) [Infant mortality](/wiki/Infant_mortality) in Venezuela was 19 deaths per 1,000 births for 2014, lower than the South American average (by comparison, the U.S. figure was 6 deaths per 1,000 births in 2013).[[202]](#cite_note-202) Child [malnutrition](/wiki/Malnutrition) (defined as stunting or wasting in children under age five) was 17%; Delta Amacuro and Amazonas had the nation's highest rates.[[203]](#cite_note-203) According to the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations), 32% of Venezuelans lacked adequate sanitation, primarily those living in rural areas.[[204]](#cite_note-204) Diseases ranging from [typhoid](/wiki/Typhoid), [yellow fever](/wiki/Yellow_fever), [cholera](/wiki/Cholera), [hepatitis A](/wiki/Hepatitis_A), [hepatitis B](/wiki/Hepatitis_B), and [hepatitis D](/wiki/Hepatitis_D) were present in the country.[[205]](#cite_note-205) [Obesity](/wiki/Obesity) was prevalent in approximately 30% of the adult population in Venezuela.[[202]](#cite_note-202) Venezuela had a total of 150 [plants for sewage treatment](/wiki/Water_supply_and_sanitation_in_Venezuela). However, 13% of the population lacked access to drinking water, but this number had been dropping.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

During the economic crisis observed under President Maduro's presidency, medical professionals were forced to perform outdated treatments on patients.[[206]](#cite_note-206)

## International Relations and Relationships[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

### Trinidad and Tobago[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

To the people of Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela has been a neighbour and both countries have had a longstanding diplomatic relationship whereby an embassy was established as far back as 1987 if not earlier. Located on Victoria Avenue in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the modest building has served as a home office to the visitors to the country of Trinidad and Tobago, where information on the country of Venezuela was sought by many a student and school teacher who needed to boost their knowledge of the culture and the language of Spain and Venezuela.

### United States of America[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=43)]

According to Business Insider's edition of July 2015, Venezuela was seeking to re establish diplomatic ties with the United States of America,"Maduro made the first move in March (2015) – around three months after Washington and Havana announced on 17 Dec they were seeking to restore diplomatic ties – by requesting a "direct channel of communication" with U.S. President Barack Obama and the State Department, said the official.[[207]](#cite_note-207)