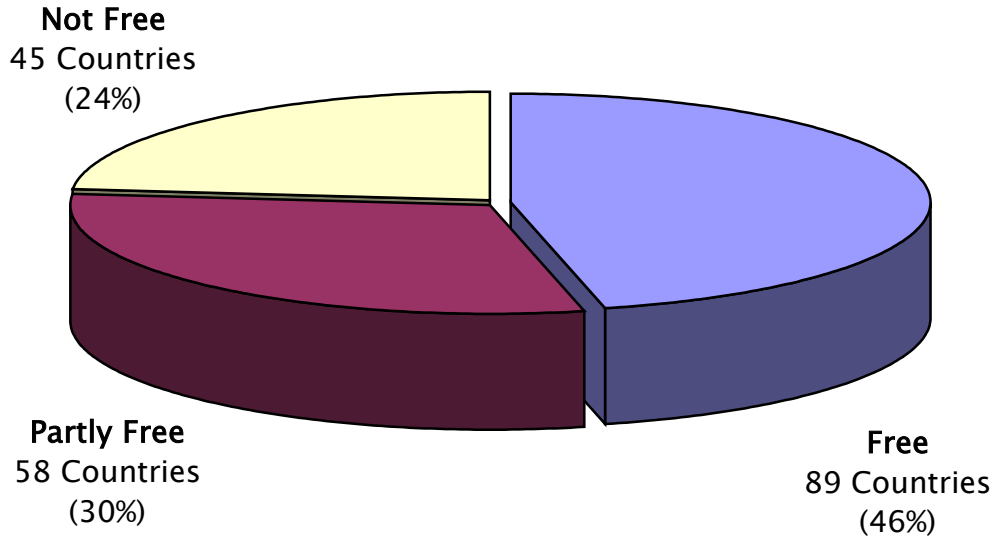




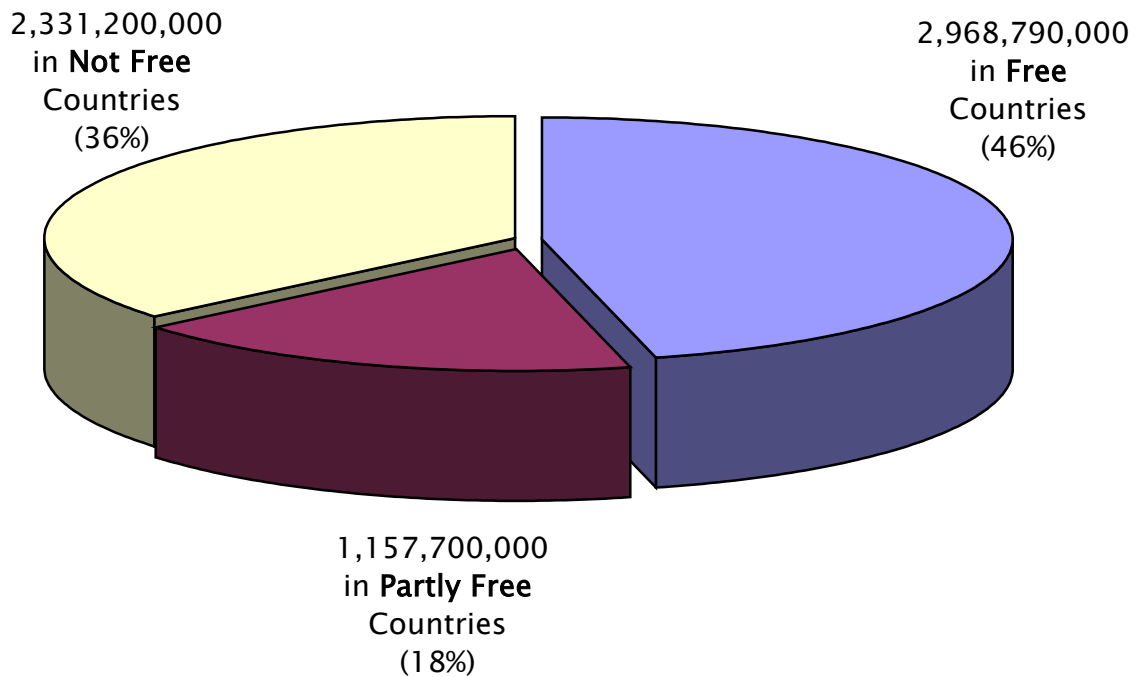
SELECTED DATA FROM FREEDOM HOUSE'S ANNUAL GLOBAL SURVEY OF
POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES



Freedom in the World



Freedom and World Population

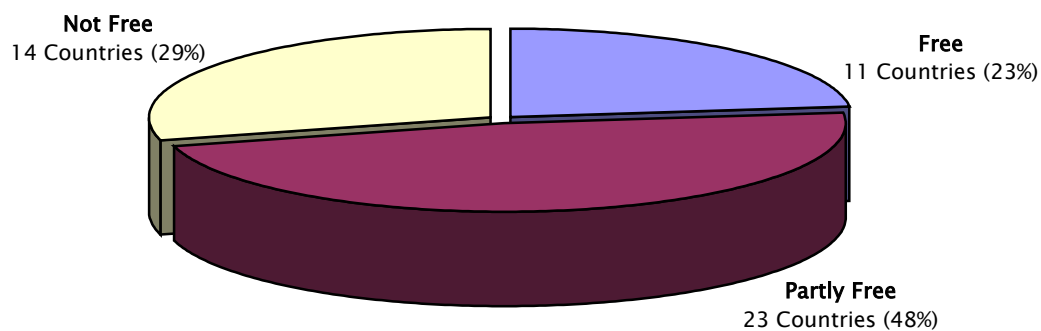


Global Trends in Freedom

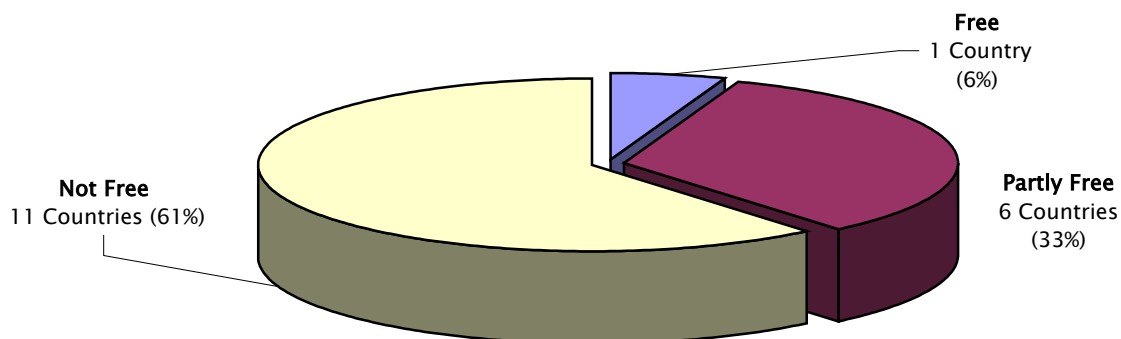
Year Under Review	Free Countries	Partly Free Countries	Not Free Countries
1975	40 (25%)	53 (34%)	65 (41%)
1985	56 (34%)	56 (34%)	55 (33%)
1995	76 (40%)	62 (32%)	53 (28%)
2005	89 (46%)	58 (30%)	45 (24%)

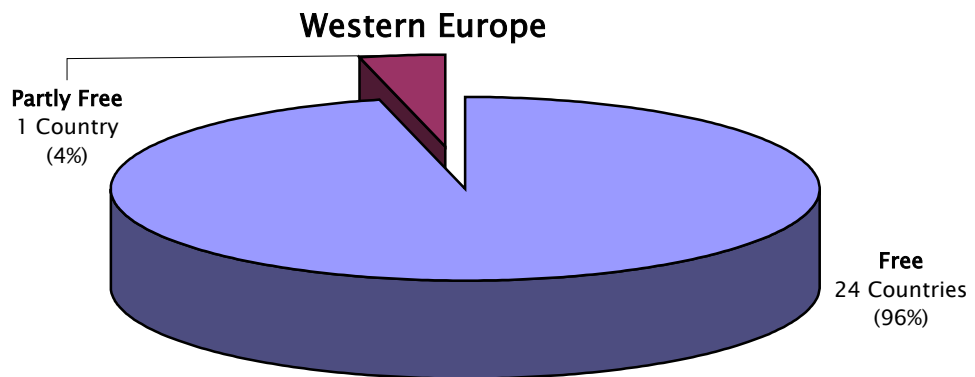
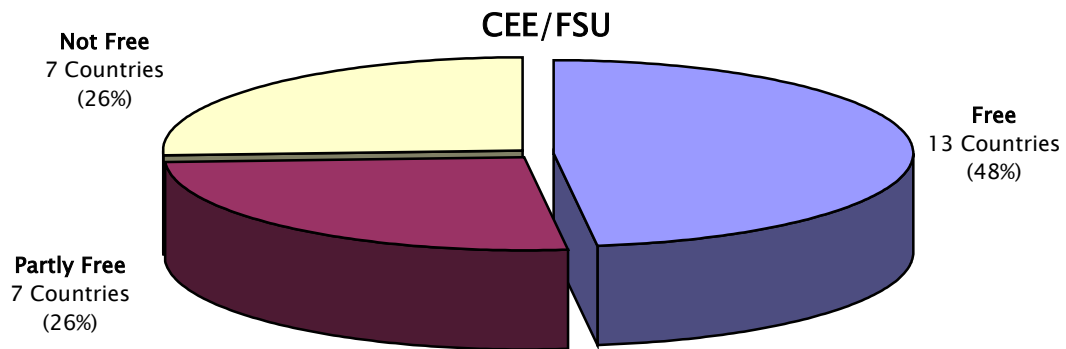
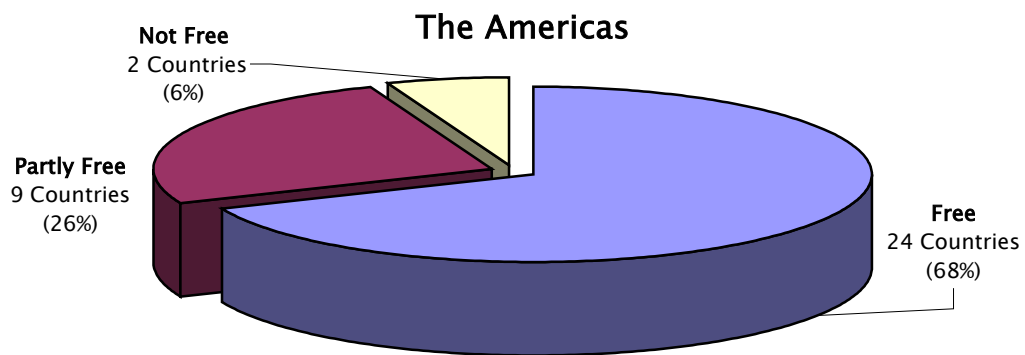
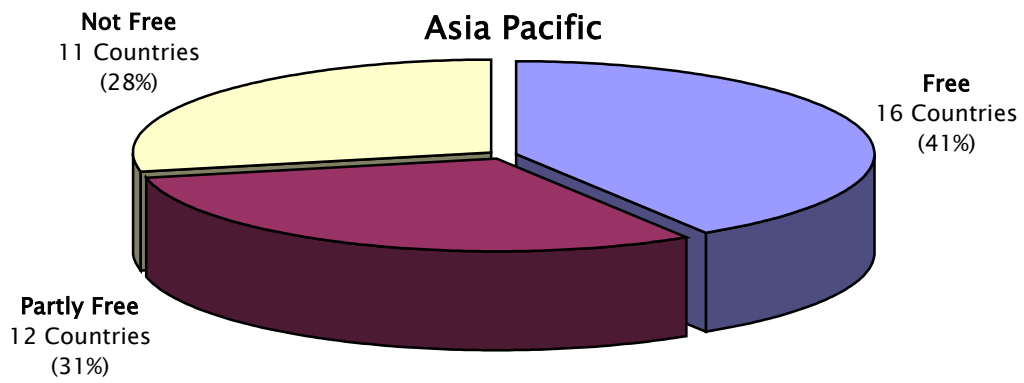
Freedom by Region

Sub-Saharan Africa



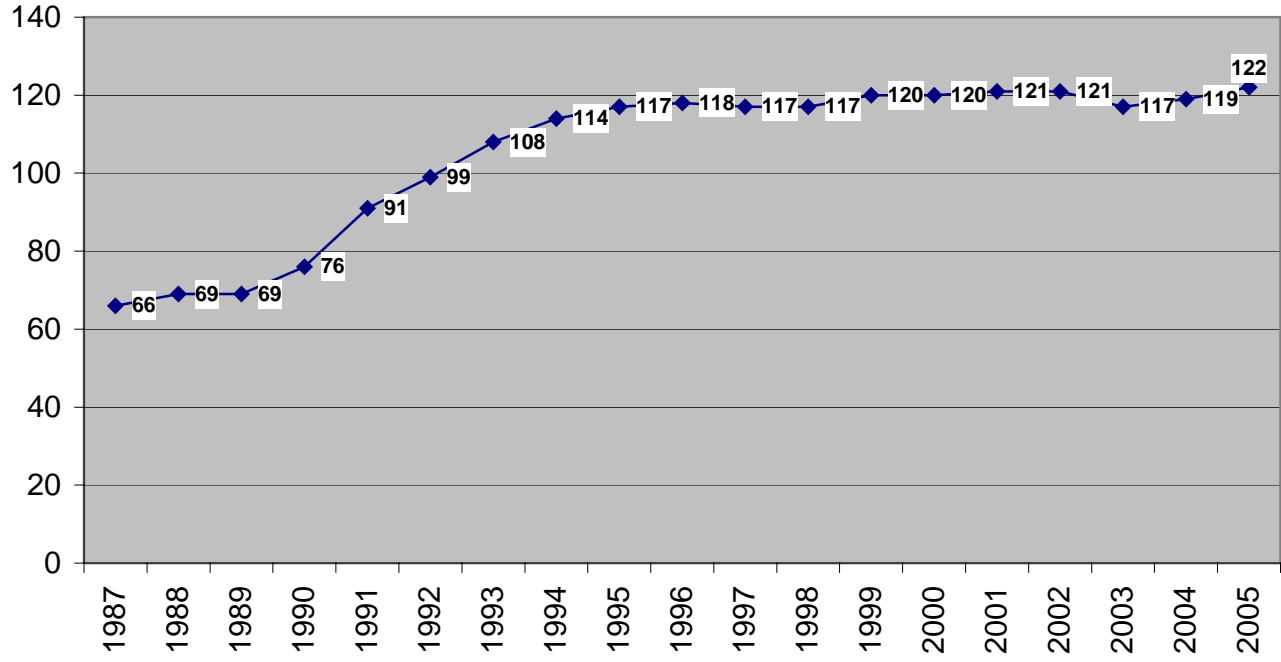
Middle East & North Africa



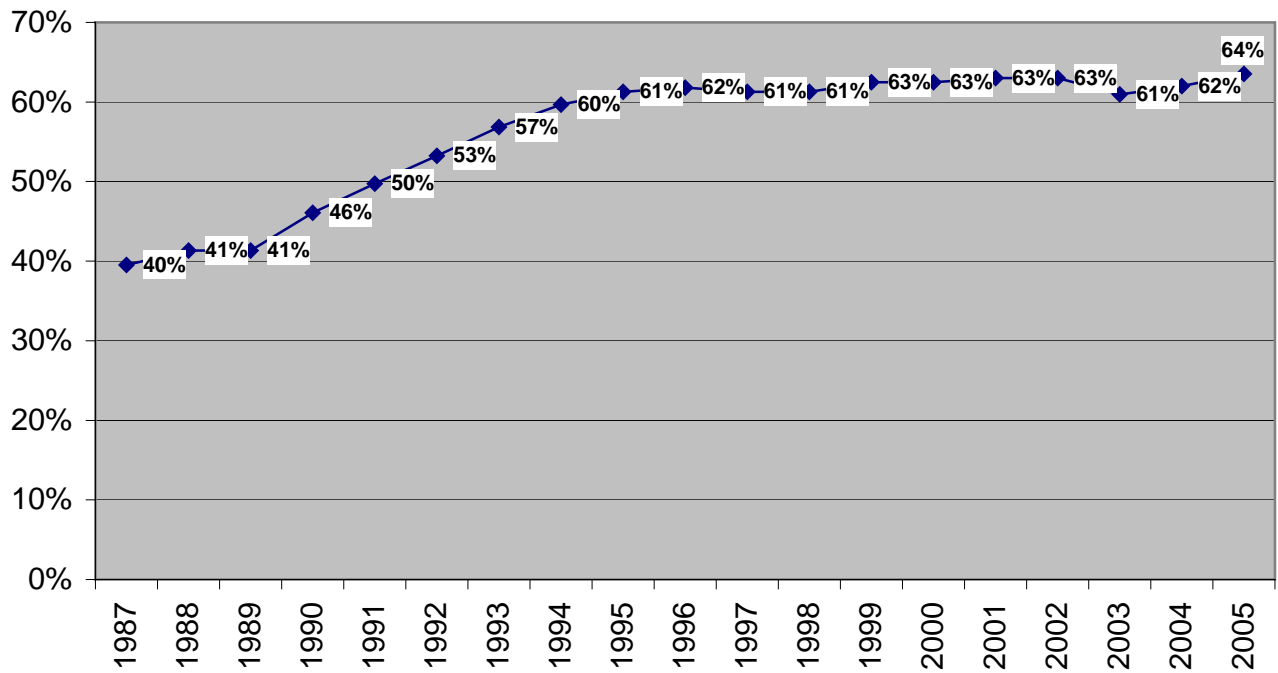


Tracking Electoral Democracy

Number of Electoral Democracies

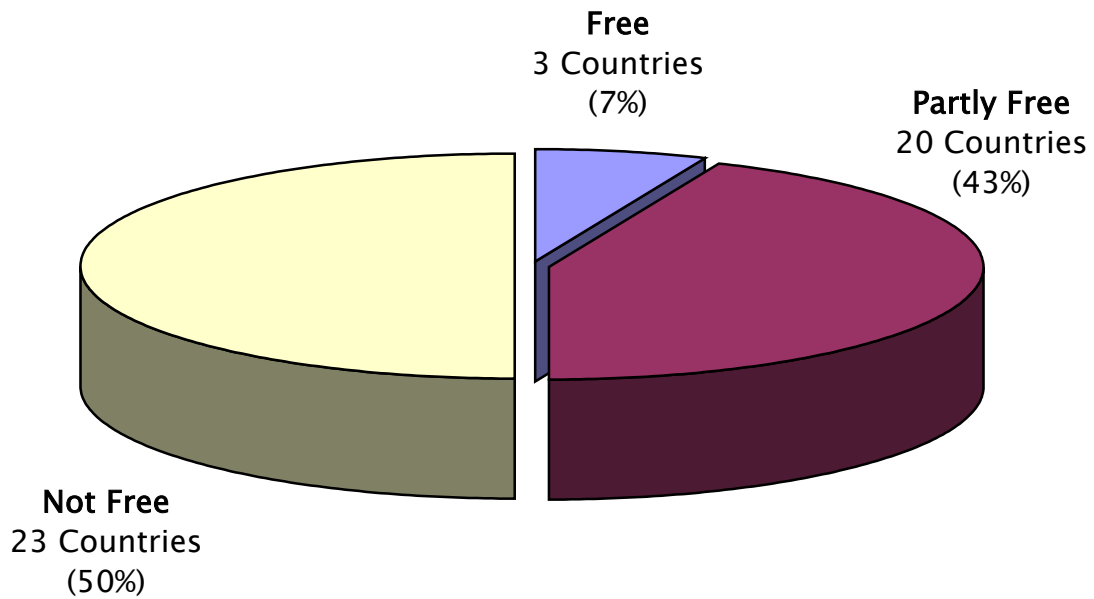


Percentage of Electoral Democracies



Freedom in Muslim Majority Countries

Freedom in the World 2006



Freedom in the World 1995-1996

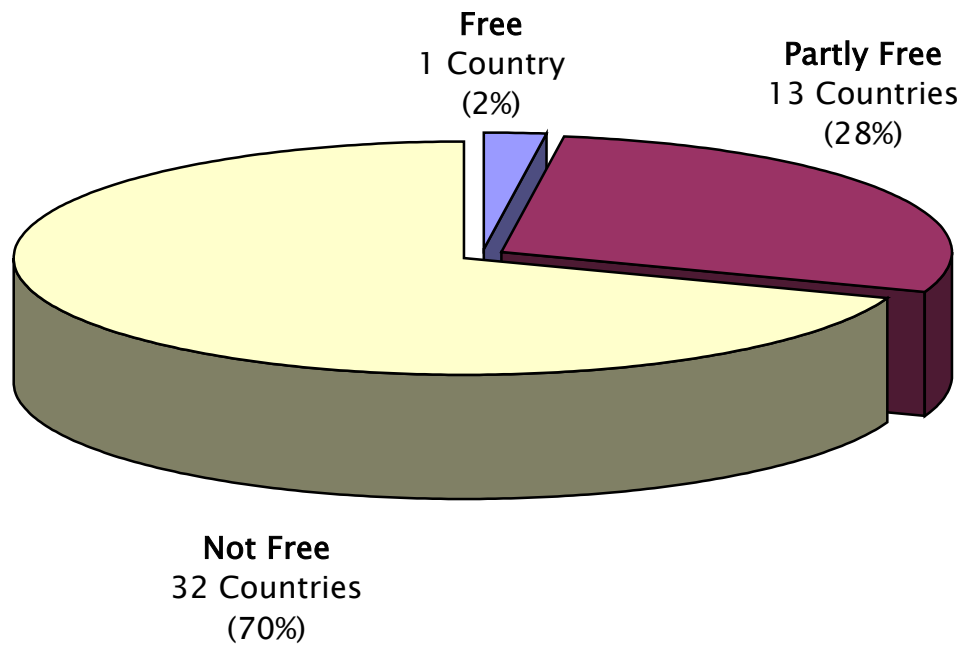


Table of Independent Countries: Comparative Measures of Freedom

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Afghanistan	5	5▲	Partly Free
Albania *	3	3	Partly Free
Algeria	6	5	Not Free
Andorra *	1	1	Free
Angola	6	5	Not Free
Antigua and Barbuda *	2	2	Free
Argentina *	2	2	Free
Armenia	5	4	Partly Free
Australia *	1	1	Free
Austria *	1	1	Free
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free
Bahamas *	1	1	Free
Bahrain	5	5	Partly Free
Bangladesh *	4	4	Partly Free
Barbados *	1	1	Free
Belarus	7	6	Not Free
Belgium *	1	1	Free
Belize *	1	2	Free
Benin *	2	2	Free
Bhutan	6	5	Not Free
Bolivia *	3	3	Partly Free
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4	3	Partly Free
Botswana *	2	2	Free
Brazil *	2	2▲	Free
Brunei	6	5	Not Free
Bulgaria *	1	2	Free
Burkina Faso	5	3▲	Partly Free
Burma	7	7	Not Free
Burundi *	3▲	5	Partly Free
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free
Canada *	1	1	Free
Cape Verde *	1	1	Free
Central African Republic *	5▲	4▲	Partly Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Chad	6	5	Not Free
Chile *	1	1	Free
China	7	6	Not Free
Colombia *	3▲	3▲	Partly Free
Comoros *	4	4	Partly Free
Congo (Brazzaville)	5	5▼	Partly Free
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free
Costa Rica *	1	1	Free
Cote d'Ivoire	6	6	Not Free
Croatia *	2	2	Free
Cuba	7	7	Not Free
Cyprus*	1	1	Free
Czech Republic *	1	1	Free
Denmark *	1	1	Free
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free
Dominica *	1	1	Free
Dominican Republic *	2	2	Free
East Timor *	3	3	Partly Free
Ecuador *	3	3	Partly Free
Egypt	6	5	Not Free
El Salvador *	2	3	Free
Equatorial Guinea	7	6	Not Free
Eritrea	7	6	Not Free
Estonia *	1	1	Free
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free
Fiji	4	3	Partly Free
Finland *	1	1	Free
France *	1	1	Free
Gabon	6▼	4	Partly Free
The Gambia	5▼	4	Partly Free
Georgia *	3	3▲	Partly Free
Germany *	1	1	Free
Ghana *	1▲	2	Free
Greece *	1	2	Free
Grenada *	1	2	Free
Guatemala *	4	4	Partly Free
Guinea	6	5	Not Free
Guinea-Bissau	3▲	4	Partly Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Guyana *	3▼	3▼	Partly Free
Haiti	7	6	Not Free
Honduras *	3	3	Partly Free
Hungary *	1	1	Free
Iceland *	1	1	Free
India *	2	3	Free
Indonesia *	2▲	3▲	Free
Iran	6	6	Not Free
Iraq	6▲	5	Not Free
Ireland *	1	1	Free
Israel *	1	2▲	Free
Italy *	1	1	Free
Jamaica *	2	3	Free
Japan *	1	2	Free
Jordan	5	4	Partly Free
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
Kenya *	3	3	Partly Free
Kiribati *	1	1	Free
Kuwait	4	5	Partly Free
Kyrgyzstan	5▲	4▲	Partly Free
Laos	7	6	Not Free
Latvia *	1	1▲	Free
Lebanon	5▲	4▲	Partly Free
Lesotho *	2	3	Free
Liberia *	4▲	4	Partly Free
Libya	7	7	Not Free
Liechtenstein *	1	1	Free
Lithuania *	1▲	1▲	Free
Luxembourg *	1	1	Free
Macedonia *	3	3	Partly Free
Madagascar *	3	3	Partly Free
Malawi *	4	4	Partly Free
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free
Maldives	6	5	Not Free
Mali *	2	2	Free
Malta *	1	1	Free
Marshall Islands *	1	1	Free
Mauritania	6	4▲	Partly Free
Mauritius *	1	2	Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Mexico *	2	2	Free
Micronesia *	1	1	Free
Moldova *	3	4	Partly Free
Monaco *	2	1	Free
Mongolia *	2	2	Free
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free
Mozambique *	3	4	Partly Free
Namibia *	2	2▲	Free
Nauru *	1	1	Free
Nepal	6▼	5	Not Free
Netherlands *	1	1	Free
New Zealand *	1	1	Free
Nicaragua *	3	3	Partly Free
Niger *	3	3	Partly Free
Nigeria *	4	4	Partly Free
North Korea	7	7	Not Free
Norway *	1	1	Free
Oman	6	5	Not Free
Pakistan	6	5	Not Free
Palau *	1	1	Free
Panama *	1	2	Free
Papua New Guinea *	3	3	Partly Free
Paraguay *	3	3	Partly Free
Peru *	2	3	Free
Philippines *	3▼	3	Partly Free
Poland *	1	1	Free
Portugal *	1	1	Free
Qatar	6	5	Not Free
Romania *	2▲	2	Free
Russia	6	5	Not Free
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free
Saint Kitts and Nevis *	1	1▲	Free
Saint Lucia *	1	1▲	Free
Saint Vincent and Grenadines *	2	1	Free
Samoa *	2	2	Free
San Marino *	1	1	Free
Sao Tome and Principe *	2	2	Free
Saudi Arabia	7	6▲	Not Free
Senegal *	2	3	Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Serbia and Montenegro *	3	2	Free
Seychelles *	3	3	Partly Free
Sierra Leone *	4	3	Partly Free
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free
Slovakia *	1	1	Free
Slovenia *	1	1	Free
Solomon Islands *	3	3	Partly Free
Somalia	6	7	Not Free
South Africa *	1	2	Free
South Korea *	1	2	Free
Spain *	1	1	Free
Sri Lanka *	3	3	Partly Free
Sudan	7	7	Not Free
Suriname *	2▼	2	Free
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free
Sweden *	1	1	Free
Switzerland *	1	1	Free
Syria	7	7	Not Free
Taiwan *	1▲	1	Free
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free
Thailand *	3▼	3	Partly Free
Togo	6	5	Not Free
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
Trinidad and Tobago *	3	2▲	Free
Tunisia	6	5	Not Free
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
Tuvalu *	1	1	Free
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free
Ukraine *	3▲	2▲	Free
United Arab Emirates	6	6	Not Free
United Kingdom *	1	1	Free
United States *	1	1	Free
Uruguay *	1	1	Free
Uzbekistan	7	7▼	Not Free
Vanuatu *	2	2	Free
Venezuela *	4▼	4	Partly Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Vietnam	7	5▲	Not Free
Yemen	5	5	Partly Free
Zambia	4	4	Partly Free
Zimbabwe	7	6	Not Free

PR and CL stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating.

▲ ▼ up or down indicates a change in Political Rights or Civil Liberties since the last survey

* indicates countries which are electoral democracies

The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

NOTE: The ratings in this table reflect global events from December 1, 2004, through November 30, 2005.

Table of Related Territories: Comparative Measures of Freedom

Country and Territory	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
China Hong Kong	5	2	Partly Free
United States Puerto Rico	1	1▲	Free

Table of Disputed Territories: Comparative Measures of Freedom

Country and Territory	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Armenia/Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh	5	5	Partly Free
China Tibet	7	7	Not Free
Cyprus Northern (Turkish) Cyprus	2	2	Free
Georgia Abkhazia	5▲	5	Partly Free
India Kashmir	5	5	Partly Free
Israel Israeli-Occupied Territories	6	5▲	Not Free
Palestinian Authority- Administered Territories	5	5▲	Partly Free
Moldova Transnistria	6	6	Not Free
Morocco Western Sahara	7	6	Not Free
Pakistan Kashmir	7	5	Not Free
Russia Chechnya	7	7	Not Free
Serbia and Montenegro Kosovo	6	5	Not Free

[Print](#)

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS - Russia (2005)

Legal Environment: 14
Political Influences: 31
Economic Pressures: 23
Total Score: 68

Status: Not Free

In 2004, press freedom in Russia remained restricted as the government continued to control mass media and to obstruct the reporting of independent journalists. Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, the Kremlin, having secured the country's main national television networks-Channel One, RTR, and NTV-and most radio stations, limits these rights in practice. Authorities abuse a weak judicial system and use it for arbitrary arrests and lawsuits. Throughout 2004, parliamentarians also considered a proposal, seen by many as a violation of the people's right to information, to adopt media law amendments banning any television or video information on terror acts, except information allowed for publication by law enforcement agencies. The parliament voted against these amendments until the tragic rebel takeover of a school in Beslan, South Ossetia, in September 2004, after which the Duma passed draft antiterrorism legislation permitting the suspension of media outlet activities for up to 60 days under the imposition of an "immediate terror threat regime." Crimes against journalists generally remain unsolved, fostering a climate of impunity. The Moscow Circuit Military Court acquitted all the suspects accused of organizing the murder of a journalist in 1994. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 11 journalists have been murdered in contract-style killings since President Vladimir Putin came to power in 1999.

Authorities exert direct influence on state-owned media, where journalists receive "guidelines" on editorial content prepared by the government. Often, journalists at these outlets are required to obtain approval for reports. Of the national television stations, the government owns two and controls the third, NTV, whose independence dwindled this year with reports and critical shows taken off the air. During the March 2004 presidential election campaign, Russian media coverage was unbalanced and biased, with media outlets giving the majority of airtime and newspaper space to President Putin. National television channels prevented

equal access of the candidates to the media through censorship and the refusal to broadcast political advertising clips from Putin's opponents, while opponents' attempts to file complaints with the Central Election Commission and Supreme Court failed. Believing that the elections were predetermined and the media was nothing but an instrument, many journalists practice self-censorship and keep away from electoral issues. During the Beslan hostage crisis, local and foreign reporters were also detained and arrested arbitrarily to bar them from traveling to Beslan to cover the story. Journalists, particularly those who work outside major urban areas, continue to be fined and punished under the penal code, brought up on libel charges, and fired and harassed for reporting on certain topics, such as Chechnya or government corruption. In 2004, numerous journalists were threatened and attacked, and two journalists were killed. Paul Klebnikov, the Russian-American editor of *Forbes Russia*, was gunned down on July 9 as he left his Moscow office. Payl Peloyan, editor in chief of *Armyanski Pereulok*, a Russian-language arts and literature magazine serving the Armenian community, was stabbed and beaten on the side of a road outside Moscow on July 17.

Most print media are privately owned. Some diversity of viewpoints exists in the Russia media, as oligarchs own various electronic and print media outlets and use them to advance personal interests. The government allows the existence of a few independent, critical media outlets, but these have very limited coverage. The majority of private media remain dependent on the government for access to printing and distribution services and are disadvantaged by subsidies that the state gives to government-controlled media. The state can also penalize government-controlled media for independent editorial judgment by withholding subsidies. The government generally does not restrict Internet use, and President Putin has thus far not supported Duma proposals to regulate the Internet. However, Internet service providers are required to cooperate with security services and allow the tracking of e-mail and Internet activities.



FREEDOM HOUSE

Freedom in the World - Russia (2005)

Political Rights:
6*

Civil Liberties:
5

Status:
Not Free

Population:
144,100,000

GNI /Capita:
\$2,130

Life Expectancy:
65

Religious Groups:
Russian Orthodox,
Muslim, other

Ethnic Groups:
Russian (82
percent), Tatar (4
percent), Ukrainian
(3 percent), other
(11 percent)

Capital:
Moscow

Additional Info:

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[Freedom of the Press 2005](#)

[Nations in Transit 2004](#)

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Ratings Change

Russia's political rights rating declined from 5 to 6, and its status from Partly Free to Not Free, due to the virtual elimination of influential political opposition parties within the country and the further concentration of executive power.

Overview

During 2004, President Vladimir Putin took further steps toward the consolidation of executive authority by increasing pressure on opposition political parties and civil society, strengthening state control over national broadcast media, and pursuing politically-driven prosecutions of independent business leaders and academics. The government also announced constitutional changes that will make governors appointed rather than elected officials, and Putin advanced plans to take over direct control of the hiring and dismissal of judges. In the March 2004 presidential election, Putin easily defeated his closest challenger with more than 70 percent of the vote.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the Russian Federation reemerged as an independent state under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin. In 1993, Yeltsin put down an attempted coup by hard-liners in parliament, and a new constitution creating a bicameral national legislature, the Federal Assembly, was approved. The December 1995 parliamentary elections, in which 43 parties competed, saw strong support for Communists and ultranationalist forces. In the 1996 presidential poll, Yeltsin easily defeated Communist Gennady Zyuganov. The August 1998 collapse of the ruble and Russia's financial market ushered in a new government that returned to greater state spending and economic control. One year later, Putin, then the head of the Federal Security Service, was named prime minister.

Conflict with the separatist region of Chechnya, which included a brutal two-year war, from 1994 to 1996, was reignited in 1999. After a Chechen rebel attack on the neighboring republic of Dagestan in August and deadly apartment house bombings in several Russian cities blamed by the Kremlin on Chechen

militants, Russia responded with an attack on the breakaway region. The second Chechen war dramatically increased Putin's popularity, and after the December 1999 elections to the Duma (lower house of parliament), pro-government forces were able to shape a majority coalition.

An ailing Yeltsin - who was constitutionally barred from a third presidential term - resigned on December 31, 1999. Yeltsin turned over power to Putin, who, in the March 2000 presidential election, secured a 53 percent first-round victory over Communist leader Zyuganov, who received 29 percent. After taking office, Putin

moved to consolidate his power, including implementing legislation removing Russia's 89 governors from positions in the upper house of parliament (the Federation Council) and allowing the president to suspend them from office if they violated federal law. Putin also created seven new "super regions" headed by Kremlin appointees and introduced personnel changes that have considerably altered the composition of the ruling elite through the influx of personnel from the security and military services; they now represent more than 25 percent of the country's ministers, deputy ministers, legislators, governors, and "super governors." Putin also challenged the political clout of some economic magnates through criminal investigations and legal proceedings claimed to be part of an anticorruption campaign, but which critics say are selective political persecutions.

The December 2003 Duma election was marred by extensive bias in media coverage. In the run up to the vote, opposition political parties widely criticized the distorted and unbalanced coverage of their campaigns and the limits placed on their ability to reach voters through the airwaves. Questions of vote manipulation were raised when two liberal opposition parties fell just short of the 5 percent threshold required for representation, despite exit polls that showed they had surpassed it. The Kremlin-controlled Unity Party captured 306 of the Duma's 450 seats.

With the national broadcast media and most print media uniformly favorable to incumbent President Putin, no challenger was able to mount a respectable challenge in the March 2004 presidential election. Putin, who refused to take part in debates with his challengers, received 71.4 percent of the vote to 13.7 for his closest rival, Communist Nikolai Kharitonov, in a first-round victory; voter turnout was 64.3 percent.

Strife in Chechnya continued throughout the year, with Russian counterinsurgent operations and guerrilla warfare, assassinations, and acts of terrorism by Chechen rebels inside and outside Russian territory. At the same time, the Russian-backed Chechen government, abetted by Russian Federation forces, engaged in widespread acts of brutality, including abductions, the killing of suspected Chechen separatists, and the intimidation of organizations not fully under the control of the Moscow-backed local authorities.

In August, there were major terrorist incidents involving "black widows," female suicide bombers from Chechnya; these terrorists were responsible for explosions at a Moscow metro station and for the destruction of two civilian passenger airplanes. The following month, in the town of Beslan in North Ossetia (an area that adjoins Chechnya), extremist fighters took over a school and held more than a thousand schoolchildren, teachers, and parents hostage. The occupation resulted in the deaths of hundreds, mostly children.

Using the Beslan tragedy as a pretext, Putin publicly put forward a plan, already long discussed in the upper reaches of government, to further centralize control over Russia's oblasts (regions) and affect the hiring and dismissal of judges. Proposed constitutional reforms will make the post of governor appointed by the president rather than elected. In the face of Putin's growing power, most governors publicly endorsed the curtailment of their autonomy despite well-known private unhappiness with the plan. The Duma, where Putin's Unity Party commands more than a two-thirds constitutional majority, is expected to vote in favor of these changes that reduce public voice.

The year saw the ongoing trial of billionaire oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky and

several of his key corporate associates on charges of tax evasion. Efforts were made to sell off and dismantle his Yukos energy company to meet huge tax assessments. The year was also marked by the government's support for the expansion of the economic power of the state-controlled Gazprom concern into a conglomerate with vast, varied interests including oil, gas, and media interests.

Russia continued its repressive campaign against scholars and academics throughout the year. In April, Igor Sutyagin, head of the Military-Technical and Military-Economic Policy subdivision of the Moscow-based Institute of U.S. and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, was sentenced to 15 years prison on charges of passing state military secrets to British and U.S. intelligence. Sutyagin denied the charges, saying he made use only of declassified source materials in his research. Human rights groups widely condemned the sentence, asserting that it was based on spurious charges intended by the government to limit international cooperation among scholars. In November, physicist Valentin Danilov was sentenced to 14 years in a Siberian prison on charges of passing space secrets to China. Danilov had earlier been found innocent of the charges in jury trial, but the Supreme Court had overturned the verdict and ordered a new trial in June 2004.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Russians cannot change their government democratically, particularly in light of the state's far-reaching control of broadcast media and the growing harassment opposition parties and their financial backers. In the parliamentary elections of December 2003, more than two-thirds of seats in the Duma were won by the Kremlin's Unity Party, while most of the remaining seats were captured by parties promoted by the Kremlin-controlled media. There was significant evidence that there had been an undercount in the vote for liberal opposition parties that kept them from attaining the 5 percent threshold required for parliamentary representation. The leader of the third largest legislative party, Motherland (Rodina), backed President Vladimir Putin in the March 2004 presidential race. The Liberal Democratic Party, the fourth largest group in the Duma, is an ultranationalist faction known for the long-standing ties of its leaders to intelligence circles. The Communists are the sole party in the legislature generally free of Kremlin influence. In the presidential election of March 2004, state dominance of the media was in full display, debate was absent, and Putin won a first-round victory with 71.4 percent of the vote, more than five times that of his closest rival.

The 1993 constitution established a strong presidency with the power to appoint pending parliamentary confirmation, and dismiss the prime minister. The bicameral legislature consists of a lower chamber (the Duma) and an upper chamber (the Federation Council). The power of the president is likely to be strengthened in the coming months, when the president gains control over the appointment of regional governors, who until now have been elected officials.

Corruption throughout the government and business world is pervasive. Tough legislation to combat money laundering entered into force in 2002, leading the Financial Action Task Force of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to remove Russia from its list of noncooperating countries. However, the ongoing trial of Yukos chairman Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his associates, as well as new tax assessments and pressures on other Russian magnates, coming on the heels of the persecution and prosecution of former media owners Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky, reaffirms the view held by many independent

Russian analysts that Putin's anticorruption efforts are selectively applied and have often targeted critics and potential political adversaries. Russia was ranked 90 out of 145 countries surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, the government continues to put pressure on the dwindling number of media outlets still critical of the Kremlin. Since June 2003, when the last independent national television network, TVS, was seized by the government, allegedly to settle the company's debts, all Russian national television networks have been controlled by the government or by economic interests that support the government and uniformly praise the president. The government routinely intimidates media outlets for unsanctioned reporting on issues related to terrorism and the war in Chechnya. While the independent Ekho Moskvy radio station airs a wide range of viewpoints, it is vulnerable because it is owned by the Kremlin-controlled Gazprom conglomerate.

Libel laws are used to intimidate independent media. In August 2004, Alfa Bank, top financial institution owned by Roman Fridman - a magnate with strong Kremlin support - filed a lawsuit against the daily *Kommersant*, one of the country's few independent newspapers. The suit charged the newspaper with damage to the bank's reputation through its coverage of a summertime liquidity crisis. The suit demanded more than \$11 million for libel in a move that the newspaper's owner believed was motivated by the government's vendetta against the newspaper, which is owned by exiled Russian businessman Boris Berezovsky and is sharply critical of Putin and the Kremlin's policies.

With print and broadcast media increasingly under government control, the Internet, where there is wider access to independent information, is used regularly by 4.2 percent of the population. This cohort of regular users is growing by 20 to 40 percent a year, according to a Russian Federation government report.

In the breakaway republic of Chechnya, the military continued to impose severe restrictions on Russian journalists' access to the war zone, issuing accreditation primarily to those of proven loyalty to the government.

Freedom of religion is respected unevenly in this predominantly Orthodox Christian country. A 1997 law on religion requires churches to prove that they have existed for at least 15 years before being permitted to register. As registration is necessary for a religious group to conduct many of its activities, new, independent congregations are consequently restricted in their functions. Regional authorities continue to harass nontraditional groups, with the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons among the frequent targets. In June 2004, Jehovah's Witnesses were banned from organized activity in Moscow. Foreign religious workers are often denied visas to return to Russia. In recent years, several Roman Catholic priests have been deported, barred from entry, or refused visa renewals.

Academic freedom is generally respected, although the academic system is marred by some corruption at the higher levels and by very low levels of pay for educators. The year's prosecutions of scientists and researchers on charges of treason created a chill in some research institutes, engendering a climate that is restrictive of international contacts.

The government provides some space for freedom of assembly and association. However, legislation passed in 2002 gives the authorities the right to suspend

political parties or NGOs whose members are accused of extremism. Critics argue that the law offers an excessively broad definition of extremism, giving the government great latitude to suppress legitimate opposition political activities. In his May 2004 state of the nation speech, Putin launched a stinging attack on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are "receiving funding from influential foreign foundations and serving dubious groups and commercial interests." In 2004, human rights groups were attacked on state-dominated media for working against Russia's interests, and the offices of some rights groups were raided. Officials called for a state investigation of the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, or of the country's most respected rights organizations.

The nongovernmental sector is composed of thousands of diverse groups, with many of them dependent on funding from foreign sources. While there had earlier been trends among Russia's newly wealthy to support the NGO sector through charitable giving, the prosecution and repression of business magnates (including Mikhail Khodorkovsky, patron of the Open Russia charitable fund), who had earlier supported NGOs focused on democratic reform has had a chilling effect on such funding. In 2004, a series of nationwide commemorations of the terrorist attack Beslan was organized nominally under the leadership of youth, civic, and labor groups, although in fact its slogans and agenda were determined by government officials.

While trade union rights are legally protected, they are limited in practice. Although strikes and worker protests occur, anti-union discrimination and reprisals for strikes are not uncommon, and employers often ignore collective bargaining rights. In a rapidly changing economy in transition from the former system of state domination, unions have proved unable to establish a significant presence in much of the private sector. The largest labor federation works in close cooperation with the Kremlin and coordinated a mass rally in Moscow under the direct supervision of the authorities to protest terrorism after the Beslan tragedy.

The judiciary suffers from corruption, inadequate funding, and a lack of qualified personnel. After the judicial reforms of 2002, the government has made progress in implementing due process and holding timely trials. Since January 2003, Russia's reformed criminal procedure code has provided for jury trials throughout the country, but the legislature has voted to postpone introducing jury trials in certain areas by up to four years because of financial and technical difficulties. The new code also gives the right to issue arrest and search warrants to the courts instead of prosecutors, and it abolishes in absentia trials. After the Beslan attack Putin declared his intention to establish full control over an office in the Supreme Court that supervises the hiring and removal of judges. Human Rights Watch called the proposal "another erosion of the independence of the judiciary."

Critics charge that Russia has failed to address ongoing problems, such as the widespread use of torture and ill treatment by law enforcement officials to extract confessions, and that the courts will be unable or unwilling to handle their expanded duties. In June 2004, Vladimir Lukin, the legislature's human rights ombudsman, reported that police are guilty of widespread rights violations. "The most impermissible means of influence are used in temporary holding cells and police offices," Lukin charged. Among the "means" cited in his report were electric shock, choking, and severe beating.

While prisons suffer from overcrowding, inadequate medical attention, and poor sanitary conditions, authorities took steps in 2003 to reduce the prison population including introducing alternative sentences to incarceration. The new criminal

procedure code limits pretrial detention to six months and has reduced overcrowding in pretrial detention centers (known as SIZOs). In the spring of 2004, the penal system saw a wave of hunger strikes against what the rights ombudsman said was a system of prison guard "extortion ... [of] food, money and valuables from prisoners and their families." Putin has disbanded the presidential pardons commission, which was viewed as a safeguard against the harsh penal system and had released about 60,000 inmates since its inception in 1991, and ordered the creation of commissions in each of the country's regions. Human rights groups are frequently denied access to prisoners.

Ethnic minorities, particularly those who appear to be from the Caucasus or Central Asia, are subject to governmental and societal discrimination and harassment. Racially motivated attacks by skinheads and other extremist groups occur occasionally. Fringe anti-Semitic and racist parties organize small public rallies, and periodicals with racist and anti-Semitic content are published but attract a small readership.

The government places some restrictions on freedom of movement and residence. All adults are legally required to carry internal passports while traveling, documents that they also need in order to obtain many government services. Some regional authorities impose residential registration rules that limit the right of citizens to choose their place of residence freely. Police reportedly demand bribes for processing registration applications and during spot checks for registration documents, and these demands often unfairly target the Caucasian and dark-skinned populations.

In recent years, property rights have been legally strengthened. A land code that established the legal framework for buying and selling nonagricultural land was adopted in late 2001. In June 2002, parliament passed a law allowing the sale of agricultural land to Russian citizens; such sales had been severely restricted since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. However, recent prosecutions of economic magnates that have criticized government policies and backed opposition politicians, coupled with large tax liens on select companies, have reinforced perceptions that property rights are being eroded and that the rule of law is subordinated to political considerations.

Widespread corruption remains a serious obstacle to an effective market economy and is an impediment to genuine equality of opportunity. According to a 2002 report by the Moscow-based INDEM Foundation, Russians spend an estimated \$3 billion annually on bribes and kickbacks, ranging from small payments to traffic police to large kickbacks by companies to obtain lucrative state contracts. Members of the old Soviet elite have used insider information to gain control of industrial and business enterprises.

Domestic violence remains a serious problem, while police are often reluctant to intervene in what they regard as internal family matters. Economic hardships contribute to widespread trafficking of women abroad for prostitution. There is credible evidence that women face considerable discrimination in the workplace, including lower pay than their male counterparts for performing similar work.