



## **BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA**

Venezuela was one of three countries that emerged from the collapse of Gran Colombia in 1830 (the others being Ecuador and New Granada, which became Colombia). For most of the first half of the 20th century, Venezuela was ruled by generally benevolent military strongmen, who promoted the oil industry and allowed for some social reforms. Democratically elected governments have held sway since 1959. Under Hugo CHAVEZ, president from 1999 to 2013, and his hand-picked successor, President Nicolas MADURO, the executive branch has exercised increasingly authoritarian control over other branches of government. At the same time, democratic institutions have deteriorated, threats to freedom of expression have increased, and political polarization has grown. The ruling party's economic policies have expanded the state's role in the economy through expropriations of major enterprises, strict currency exchange and price controls that discourage private sector investment and production, and overdependence on the petroleum industry for revenues, among others. Current concerns include: an increasingly politicized military, rampant violent crime, high inflation, and widespread shortages of basic consumer goods, medicine, and medical supplies. Venezuela assumed a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2015-16 term.

### Physical Geography

**Official name:** Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

**Region:** South America

**Size in Squared Kilometers:** 912,050 sq km

**Neighbors:** Brazil, Colombia, Guyana

**Physical Features:** Most observers describe Venezuela in terms of four fairly well-defined regions: the Maracaibo lowlands in the northwest, the northern mountains extending in a broad east-west arc from the Colombian border along the Caribbean Sea, the wide Orinoco plains (llanos) in central Venezuela, and rank highly dissected Guiana highlands in the southeast.

**Climate:** tropical; hot, humid; more moderate in highlands

---

---

### Cultural Geography

Population : **29,275,460 (July 2015 est.)**

Ethnic groups: **Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arab, German, African, indigenous people**

Official language: **Spanish**

Other Spoken Languages: **numerous indigenous dialects**

Capital: **Caracas**

Other Major Cities: **Maracaibo, Valencia, Barquisimeto, Maracay, Ciudad, San Cristóbal**

Quality of life: **Average**

### Political Geography

Founded: **5 July 1811**

Type of government : **federal presidential republic**

Country's leaders:

President: **Nicolás Maduro**

Country's military: **113,558 Active Personnel**

Allies: **China, Russia, Cuba, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Canada, France, India, Iran, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Serbia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Vietnam**

Enemies: **Guyana, Colombia, Brazil, USA**

### Economic Geography

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): **\$515.7 billion (2015 est.)**

Natural Resources: **corn, sorghum, sugarcane, rice, bananas, vegetables, coffee; beef, pork, milk, eggs; fish, livestock, iron and steel , oil**

Currency: **Venezuelan bolívar**

Major Exports and Imports:

Exports: **petroleum and petroleum products, bauxite and aluminum, minerals, chemicals, agricultural products**

---

---

**Imports:** agricultural products, livestock, raw materials, machinery and equipment, transport equipment, construction materials, medical equipment, petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, iron and steel products

**Biggest Trading Partners:**

**Export partners:** US 26.6%, India 13.7%, China 11.7%, Cuba 6.4%

**Import partners:** US 18.4%, China 15.3%, Brazil 9.7%, Colombia 5.9%, Mexico 4.2% (2015)

---