



1.3.4. Government corruption

Corruption is 'rampant' (or 'systemic') in Venezuela,[141](#) affecting all levels of government.[142](#) Transparency International reported that the progressive erosion of democratic checks and balances has left Venezuela among the world's most corrupt countries.[143](#) In its 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI),[144](#) Venezuela ranked 180 out of 182 countries in perceived public-sector corruption, ahead only of Somalia (181st) and South Sudan (182nd).[145](#) A survey conducted by AtlasIntel and Bloomberg found that corruption is viewed as the country's most serious problem (59 % of respondents), followed by the undermining of democracy (37.3 %), poverty and unemployment (27.2 %), and issues within the justice system (23.8 %).[146](#) Criminality (6.4 %), authoritarianism (5.2 %), and migration (4 %) were among the least frequently cited concerns.[147](#)

Sources indicated that economic policies such as currency and price controls created strong incentives for black-market activity and collusion between state officials and organised crime.[148](#) Corruption is also widespread within the security and armed forces.[149](#) Customs operations in border regions, for example, are described as a 'significant source of corruption', involving military officials, including generals, who compete among themselves for control of lucrative illicit schemes.[150](#) These schemes typically involved clearing only a portion of imported goods through official channels while charging a 'fee' on the undeclared remainder.[151](#) Widespread corruption has also undermined the state's capacity to deliver essential goods and services to the population.[152](#) Transparencia Venezuela reported that extortion tied to paperwork, documents, and basic administrative services has become a normalised part of daily life in Venezuela; citizens routinely face demands for payment from public officials for administrative procedures, registry and notary-related documents, and essential services such as healthcare.[153](#) Examples of extortion reported by Transparencia Venezuela included the payment of 1 000 USD to repair an energy distribution transformer, processing of an application in exchange for food or lunches, payments ranging from 100 to 300 USD to book appointments with medical specialists and, in the case for some women, performing of sexual acts in exchange for not being fined, punished, or neglected in specific situations.[154](#)

Cases of corruption are rarely prosecuted or punished in Venezuela, particularly when they involve individuals aligned with the ruling coalition or party.[155](#) Enforcement of anti-corruption regulations is minimal.[156](#) Anti-corruption efforts are often 'performative,' aimed at projecting a positive image,[157](#) or to eliminate internal rivals, protect loyalists, and consolidate power within the ruling party.[158](#) High-level corruption cases, especially those tied to PDVSA, rarely resulted in meaningful prosecution, with investigations typically limited to lower-ranking officials.[159](#)

Between 2023 and 2024, the government detained over 40 public officials, including high-ranking officials, businesspeople, mayors, regional officials, and military officers, on corruption

charges.¹⁶⁰ Former minister and vice-president Tareck El Aissami, for example, was arrested in April 2024 and accused of orchestrating a large-scale corruption scheme within PDVSA;¹⁶¹ his detention was widely described as part of an internal purge within the ruling party.¹⁶² In September 2025, more than 14 members of the judiciary were arrested for alleged corruption, though observers indicated that these arrests were also part of a broader purge of the judicial system carried out by the Maduro government.¹⁶³ Additional information on these cases could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report.

The Anti-Corruption Law established the National Anti-Corruption Corps (CNCC, Cuerpo Nacional Contra la Corrupción), an entity that reports directly to the President; however, no public information about the CNCC has been released since 2015.¹⁶⁴ The Office of the Comptroller General (CGR, Contraloría General de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela), which manages the electronic system for senior officials' asset declarations, is also responsible for investigating corruption.¹⁶⁵ The CGR, however, lacks independence¹⁶⁶ and, according to the UNCAC Coalition,¹⁶⁷ it has not published audit statements, reports, or sanction lists since 2018.¹⁶⁸ The National Assembly, dominated by the ruling coalition, has not provided meaningful oversight or acted as an independent check on executive power.¹⁶⁹

Independent journalists,¹⁷⁰ opposition politicians, and activists who exposed corruption are routinely harassed, detained,¹⁷¹ or pushed into exile.¹⁷² Investigative reporting on government abuses often triggers state retaliation, including censorship, legal intimidation, and the closure of media outlets.¹⁷³

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Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2026, Venezuela, March 2026, [url](#); Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report — Venezuela, 2026, [url](#), p. 12

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Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report — Venezuela, 2026, [url](#), p. 12; Dialogue (The), Navigating Corruption: Implications for Venezuela's Future, 18 June 2024, [url](#)

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Transparency International, Prioritize rebuilding democracy in Venezuela to fight entrenched corruption, 8 January 2026, [url](#)

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Transparency International indicated that the CPI is calculated based on 'at least 3 data sources drawn from 13 different corruption surveys and assessments. These data sources are collected by a variety of reputable institutions, including the World Bank and the World Economic Forum. CPI scores do not reflect the views of Transparency International or our staff.' Transparency International, The ABCs of the CPI: How the Corruption Perceptions Index is calculated, 11 February 2025, [url](#)

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Transparency International, 2025 Corruption Perception Index: Venezuela, 10 February 2026, [url](#)

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AtlasIntel and Bloomberg, Latam Pulse Venezuela, March 2026, [url](#), p. 24

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AtlasIntel and Bloomberg, Latam Pulse Venezuela, March 2026, [url](#), p. 24

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Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report — Venezuela, 2026, [url](#), p. 12. See also: Agencia EFE, Detienen a Tareck El Aissami, el 'exzar' del petróleo de Venezuela y fiel aliado de Maduro, 10 April 2024, [url](#)

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Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report — Venezuela, 2026, [url](#), p. 12; InSight Crime, Are Arrests of Venezuela Officials Simply For Show?, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

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