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FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2024

Ukraine

PARTLY FREE

49
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	21 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	28 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS**50 /100 Partly Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



Note

The Russian regime's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 led to significant deterioration in the political rights and civil liberties enjoyed by Ukrainians. The numerical scores and status listed here do not reflect conditions in the previously occupied Ukrainian territories of Crimea and Eastern Donbas, which are examined in separate reports. *Freedom in the World* reports assess the level of political rights and civil liberties in a given geographical area, regardless of whether they are affected by the state, nonstate actors, or foreign powers. Disputed or occupied territories are sometimes assessed separately if they meet certain criteria, including boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report [methodology](#) and [FAQ](#).

Overview

The Russian armed forces launched an all-out invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, inflicting massive civilian and military casualties and destroying civilian infrastructure. Millions of Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes, and Russian troops have engaged in extrajudicial executions, torture, and sexual violence against local residents. In areas subjected to longer periods of occupation, Russian authorities have used intimidation, arbitrary detention, and torture to assert control over political expression, the education system, and many other aspects of civilian life. The current Ukrainian administration has enacted a number of positive reforms as part of a drive to strengthen democratic institutions, but the country still struggles with corruption in the government, the judiciary, and other sectors.

Key Developments in 2023

- Fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces was concentrated in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, and the front line remained mostly unchanged through months of grueling battles and heavy casualties on both sides. Russian forces carried out indiscriminate missile strikes against civilian and military targets in all regions of Ukraine, and at year's end, they occupied about 18 percent of the country's territory.
- In September, Russian authorities staged illegal regional elections in occupied areas. Ukrainian officials, foreign governments, and international organizations condemned the exercises, which featured voter intimidation

by the Russian military and a slate of exclusively Russian or pro-Russian candidates who supported the occupation.

- In November, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced that the parliamentary elections due in late 2023 would be postponed while the country remained under martial law and in a state of war. The decision drew some criticism, but opinion polls showed public support for the move; experts pointed out that elections would entail significant security risks and could not be conducted in occupied areas, and that refugees abroad, active-duty soldiers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) were likely to be excluded from such voting in practice.
- In December, the leaders of the European Union (EU) approved the decision of the European Commission to start EU accession negotiations with Ukraine. The move came after years of work by the Ukrainian government and civil society in fulfilling the eligibility requirements, including an anticorruption crackdown and several key judicial reforms in 2023.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

4/4

The president is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. In the 2019 election, held in two rounds in March and April, Zelenskyy defeated incumbent president Petro Poroshenko with 73.2 percent of the second-round vote, winning a majority of votes in all but one region. International observers deemed the election competitive and credible, although polling could not take place in Crimea and Eastern Donbas.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

3/4

The 450 members of the unicameral Supreme Council (Verkhovna Rada) are elected to five-year terms through a mixed system in which half are chosen by closed-list proportional representation and the other half in single-member districts.

In early elections held in July 2019, President Zelenskyy's Servant of the People party won 254 seats, giving it an outright majority—the first time any party had crossed that threshold since independence. The Poroshenko bloc, which had rebranded as European Solidarity, took 25 seats. The Opposition Platform–For Life (OPZZh) grouping took 43 seats, Fatherland won 26, and the Voice Party won 20.

The elections were deemed generally competitive and credible, despite some problems. Because voting was impossible in Crimea and Eastern Donbas, the elections filled only 424 of the 450 seats. In addition, approximately one million Ukrainian citizens were unable to vote for lack of a registered address. An Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) election-monitoring mission cited irregularities including “widespread vote buying, misuse of incumbency, and the practice of exploiting all possible legislative loopholes” that contributed to inequalities among competitors.

Local-level elections took place in October 2020. A plurality of elected local councilors nationwide were independent candidates. Servant of the People was largely unsuccessful when contesting the mayoralties of larger cities, but it maintained representation on most city councils. Despite the generally professional administration of the elections by the Central Election Commission (TVK) during the COVID-19 pandemic, OSCE observers again expressed concern about widespread vote-buying allegations and abuse of state resources, among other issues.

In November 2023, Zelenskyy announced that the parliamentary elections originally due that year would not be held while the country remained under martial law and in a state of war. While the decision drew some criticism, a poll by the International Republican Institute found that nearly two-thirds of respondents supported postponing elections until after the war's end. Experts pointed out that elections held under current conditions would pose significant security risks for citizens and could not be conducted in occupied areas, and that millions of

Ukrainian refugees abroad, IDPs, and soldiers on the front line would likely be excluded in practice.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

2/4

The TVK generally administers elections professionally. However, the mixed electoral system for the parliament that governed past polls, including the most recent parliamentary elections in 2019, was criticized as prone to manipulation and vote buying. In December 2019, the parliament adopted an electoral code that partially implemented a proportional-representation voting system, with open party lists for both parliamentary and local elections. Zelenskyy enacted it at the end of that year. The 2020 local elections were held under the new code, with some additional modifications allowing IDPs to participate.

Martial law prohibits calling and holding elections or referendums at both the national and local levels as long as it remains in effect. Following the postponement of the parliamentary elections originally set for October 2023, the presidential election due in March 2024 was expected to be postponed as well.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

2/4

Prior to the 2022 invasion, with the exception of a ban on the Communist Party, there were no formal barriers to the creation and operation of political parties in Ukraine. However, in May 2022, Zelenskyy signed a law banning political parties that justify, recognize as legitimate, or deny Russian aggression against Ukraine.

More than a dozen parties were subsequently identified as “pro-Russian” and banned, including the largest opposition party, the OPZZh. Some members of the banned parties found ways to stay in office, including by forming new parties.

In occupied parts of Ukraine, the Russian military has used intimidation, arbitrary detention, and torture to assert control over political expression and activities, and to force local civilians to submit to Russian rule.

A Ukrainian law that took effect in 2016 provides parliamentary parties with state funding, but favors established groups: parties must win at least 5 percent of the vote to receive funding. New party registration fees are extremely high relative to average income and cost of living. Parties can only register with the Ministry of Justice if they can demonstrate a significant support base (10,000 signatures) in two-thirds of Ukraine’s oblasts (regions). Massive war-induced population displacement and human losses since February 2022 present additional challenges to future party formation. Independent candidates cannot run for local council positions in towns with over 10,000 inhabitants.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

3/4

Zelensky’s ruling party currently holds most political power. However, Ukrainian politics have long featured dynamic competition. Opposition groups are represented in the parliament, and their political activities are generally not impeded by administrative restrictions or legal harassment.

Under a 2022 presidential decree, Ukraine’s main news channels broadcast only government-approved content and give airtime predominantly to ruling-party representatives, limiting opposition parties’ avenues for exposure. Many have turned to other channels of influence, such as social media platforms, to reach constituents. The postponement of the parliamentary elections due in 2023 also limited the opposition’s ability to compete for power.

Independent political activity in Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine is likely to be met with violence and imprisonment. In September 2023, as regional elections took place across Russia, Russian authorities also staged illegal elections in

occupied portions of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions (as well as in Luhansk and Donetsk, which are examined in a separate report). Russian authorities reported that Russia's ruling party, United Russia, received 75 to 80 percent of the votes for the legislative assemblies in those regions. Ukrainian officials, foreign governments, and international organizations condemned the exercises as gross violations of international law and called the results fabricated. The process featured voter intimidation by Russian military personnel, who escorted poll workers on unscheduled home visits to prospective voters and were stationed at polling locations. All candidates were Russian or pro-Russian figures who supported the occupation; genuine opposition candidates were barred from running. Experts have estimated that less than 30 percent of the pre-2022 population has remained in these occupied territories, further undermining any claim that the elections were representative.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because Russian occupation authorities organized illegal regional elections in areas they controlled, featuring voter intimidation and a slate of exclusively pro-occupation candidates.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

2 / 4

Powerful Ukrainian business magnates, commonly referred to as oligarchs, exert significant influence over politics both directly and indirectly, including through financial support for political parties and lobbying for the appointment of loyalists to key institutional positions. However, individuals defined as oligarchs under a 2021 law have been prohibited from funding political parties.

Covert Russian influence remains a concern. At least two Ukrainian lawmakers who were arrested on treason charges for allegedly collaborating with Moscow during 2023 still held seats in the Ukrainian parliament at year's end; they would lose their seats if convicted of crimes.

The Russian government largely relies on armed force to control political affairs in occupied areas.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

3/4

There are no formal restrictions on the participation of women and members of ethnic, racial, or other minority groups in political life. However, their voting and representation are hindered by factors including discrimination that discourages political participation and, for many Roma, a lack of identity documents. Societal discrimination against LGBT+ people affects their ability to engage in political and electoral processes.

The severe violence and repression that has accompanied the Russian invasion also precludes meaningful political participation for many individuals from a variety of demographic groups.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

2/4

Elected officials craft and implement policies and legislation, though many initiatives stall due to opposition from powerful business groups and other special interests. The main obstacle to effective governance in government-controlled parts of Ukraine is corruption.

The elected government is unable to exercise full control over Ukrainian territories that are under Russian occupation, which in 2023 amounted to about 18 percent of the country.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1/4

Corruption remains a serious problem, and political will to fight it has been inconsistent. Anticorruption agencies have repeatedly been ensnared in politically fraught conflicts with other state entities and elected officials.

Despite the severe disruption to governance caused by the 2022 full-scale invasion, authorities have been able to push through improvements to the country’s anticorruption apparatus and open significant investigations. In 2022, after a long delay, experienced investigator Oleksandr Klymenko was appointed as the head of the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office (SAPO), and he has since won praise for opening and reopening credible cases. President Zelenskyy oversaw a corruption crackdown in 2023, in part to reassure allies in the United States and EU that the country was making good on a promise to tackle the issue. The head of Ukraine’s Supreme Court was detained in a major bribery investigation and remained in custody at year’s end. In August, anticorruption agencies uncovered a corruption scheme involving embezzlement of aid funds, and pointed to involvement by the first deputy minister of agrarian policy and food and the former deputy minister of economy; an associated investigation was ongoing. In September, in response to allegations of misappropriation of defense funds, the Zelenskyy administration dismissed Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov and all six of his deputies. And in December, Zelenskyy signed several laws to strengthen the independence of the SAPO, increase the staff of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU), and expand the powers of the National Agency for Corruption Prevention (NACP).

In October, the parliament adopted legislation that would increase the duration of financial monitoring for designated “politically exposed persons” from three years to life. Critics have cautioned that the potential for lifetime monitoring—applicable to a range of individuals including elected officials, auditors, central bank personnel, diplomats, and senior figures at state-owned companies—may deter qualified people from entering public service.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	1 / 4
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Poor government transparency has long helped to facilitate corruption, and transparency has declined as a result of the ongoing war and martial law. Parliamentary committee meetings are no longer open to the public as ordinarily required by law; meeting locations, times, and agendas are no longer disclosed in advance, ostensibly for security reasons. President Zelenskyy's "United 24" initiative, launched in 2022, coordinates charitable donations in support of Ukraine, but critics say it further centralizes authority, as the distribution of funds is believed to be the responsibility of the cabinet.

In October 2023, Zelenskyy signed a law to resume asset declarations for officials and make them publicly accessible. Public asset-declaration requirements had been suspended in 2022, after the full-scale invasion.

Add Q

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group?

-2

Since 2022, Russian authorities have openly admitted that their military aim was to extinguish Ukrainian statehood and bring much, if not all, of the country under Moscow's rule. The retreat of Russian troops from towns in the Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Kherson Oblasts, among other areas, revealed mounting evidence of Russian war crimes, including targeted executions, rape, and torture of Ukrainian civilians.

Russian forces have systematically destroyed symbols of Ukrainian identity and heritage throughout the occupied regions of eastern and southern Ukraine, including historical monuments, museums, churches, and Ukrainian-language signage. Russian occupation authorities have also destroyed Ukrainian books and ordered teachers to inculcate the Kremlin's version of history, deny the existence of the Ukrainian nation, and cultivate Russian patriotism among Ukrainian schoolchildren.

Ukrainian officials estimated that 1.2 million Ukrainians were forcibly taken to Russia in 2022 alone. Russian authorities have separated Ukrainian children from their parents and abducted children from Ukrainian orphanages, hospitals, and other institutions, forcibly deporting them to Russia. In May 2022, Russian

president Vladimir Putin signed a law that made it easier for Russians to adopt Ukrainian children; Russia otherwise bans foreign adoptions. An April 2023 Council of Europe resolution stated that Moscow's transfers of Ukrainian children amounted to genocide, noting that Russian authorities planned and organized the transfers systematically and as state policy, with the aim of "annihilating every link to and feature of [the children's] Ukrainian identity." Russia's national commissioner for children's rights claimed in July 2023 that 700,000 Ukrainian children had been taken to Russia since February 2022.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	2/4
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The constitution guarantees freedoms of speech and expression, and libel is not a criminal offense. Prior to 2022, the media landscape featured considerable pluralism and open criticism of the government and powerful figures. However, a number of Russian outlets were banned, and business magnates owned and influenced many outlets. At the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022, the Ukrainian government consolidated all television channels under a single government-controlled information platform, United News, that is broadcast around the clock on all channels in Ukraine. In late December 2022, Zelenskyy signed into law a controversial bill that expanded the government's control over print and online media, ostensibly to prevent the potential spread of Russian propaganda. Among other provisions, the law allows authorities to close news sites that are not officially registered as media without a court order.

In 2023, a number of Russian news outlets and their journalists remained banned, and access to multiple Russian news channels, websites, and social media platforms was prohibited.

Journalists in Ukraine have been targeted by invading Russian forces and continue to face life-threatening risks while carrying out their basic duties. Between February and December 2023, Ukraine's Institute of Mass Information reported more than 500 direct attacks on media professionals in Ukraine, including kidnapping, gunfire, death threats, shelling of editorial offices and television towers, cyberattacks on media outlets, signal jamming, and other crimes. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 15 journalists have been killed in Ukraine while covering the conflict since 2022.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

3/4

The constitution and a 1991 law define religious rights in Ukraine, and these are generally respected. However, smaller religious groups continue to report some discrimination.

In 2022, the leaders of Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC)—the Ukrainian branch of the Russian Orthodox Church—made a formal break with the patriarchate in Moscow over the latter's endorsement of Russian aggression in Ukraine. (The separate Orthodox Church of Ukraine, or OCU, is headed by the Kyiv Patriarchate and has long been independent of official Russian influence.) Ukrainian officials have nevertheless arrested UOC clergy members, alleging that they had aided the Russian military. Ukraine's parliament advanced legislation at the end of 2023 that would ban the UOC based on allegations of continued collaboration with the Russian authorities. Polling by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology showed that as many of two-thirds of Ukrainian respondents supported such a ban; critics warned that the law could curb religious freedom.

Russian or Russian-backed authorities have been conducting systematic religious persecution in occupied parts of Ukraine since 2014. According to an April 2023 report by the US-based Institute for the Study of War, Russian authorities had "closed, nationalized, or forcefully converted at least 26 places of worship to the Kremlin-controlled Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, killed or seized at least 29 clergy or religious leaders, and looted, desecrated, or

deliberately destroyed at least 13 places of worship in occupied Ukraine” since February 2022.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?

2/4

Academic freedom was generally respected in government-controlled areas before the full-scale 2022 invasion.

Two laws passed since 2017 have faced criticism for mandating the use of Ukrainian as the primary language of instruction in publicly funded secondary schools. In response to arguments that the laws discriminated against ethnic Hungarian and Romanian national minority groups, as well as recommended revisions from the Venice Commission, the Ukrainian government in December 2023 introduced amendments that would lift some restrictions on the use of minority languages in schools and public spaces once martial law ends in Ukraine. The amendments faced pushback from domestic groups concerned about the “Russification” of broadcasting, publishing, advertising, and other sectors, but the revised version of the law was adopted, paving the way for the EU’s decision to open accession talks.

In Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, occupation authorities have forced Ukrainian teachers to follow the Russian school curriculum, and teachers reported being intimidated, threatened, sent to Russia for “retraining,” and in some cases tortured for refusing to comply. Russian authorities have destroyed Ukrainian books and ordered teachers to adhere to the Kremlin’s version of history, deny the existence of the Ukrainian nation, and cultivate Russian patriotism among Ukrainian schoolchildren. Parents who refuse to send their children to schools in Russian-occupied areas have been threatened with fines and revocation of parental rights.

In areas that were successfully liberated by Ukrainian forces, Ukrainian teachers who had worked under Russian control have faced criminal collaboration investigations.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?

2/4

Ukrainians in government-controlled areas generally enjoy open and free private discussion, although the polarizing effects of years of war have weighed on political expression. Heated exchanges in the media and instances of violence against those expressing views considered controversial are not uncommon, likely contributing to self-censorship among ordinary people.

A week after Moscow launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukrainian lawmakers, in the absence of meaningful public comment, amended the criminal code to expand grounds for collaborationism charges to include public denial of Russian aggression, glorification of Russia, and insulting the honor and dignity of Ukrainian soldiers. Violations are punishable by fines, imprisonment, and restrictions on the ability to “hold certain positions or engage in certain activities” for a period of up to three years. More than 2,000 cases had been filed by the end of 2022.

Russian occupying authorities respond to perceived dissent with repression and violence, including arbitrary detention, assault, and sexual violence, severely limiting free expression in areas they control.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?

3/4

The constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly but requires organizers to give the authorities advance notice of demonstrations. Ukraine lacks a law governing the conduct of demonstrations and specifically providing for freedom of assembly.

Martial law enacted after the full-scale invasion restricted the constitutional guarantee of freedom of assembly. Most public protests that took place across Ukraine in 2022 were mounted in opposition to the invasion. In 2023, protests aimed at influencing local and national policy took place more frequently. Some included calls for local authorities to prioritize military spending over local infrastructure projects, and another series of demonstrations called for the demobilization of military personnel who had been exhausted by prolonged combat deployments.

There is no freedom of assembly in Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine. Ukrainian citizens suspected of organizing anti-Russian movements are subject to arbitrary detention, torture, and disappearance.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?

2 / 4

Numerous civic groups influence decision-making at various levels of government. Ukraine's civil society has mobilized significant resources to support Ukraine's defense and humanitarian needs since 2022.

Civil society organizations are required to disclose their ultimate beneficiaries and ownership structure under money-laundering legislation; leaders of many groups have characterized this as interference in their work. Some civil society activists face intimidation and threats, and law enforcement agencies fail to bring all perpetrators to justice.

In Russian-controlled territories of Ukraine, the only organizations allowed to operate are those funded directly by the Russian government and whose activities are centered on cultivating Russian patriotism among Ukrainian youth.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

2 / 4

Trade unions function in the country, but strikes and worker protests are infrequent, as the largest trade union, stemming from the Soviet-era labor federation, lacks independence from the government and employers. Factory owners still pressure their workers to vote according to the owners' preferences.

In 2022, a new labor code applicable under martial law took effect. The code effectively stripped employees of companies with fewer than 250 employees of any legal protection—making pay structure, working hours, and the conditions or terms of contract termination subject to the employer's discretion. It was estimated that more than 70 percent of the Ukrainian workforce was affected by this change.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	1/4
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Ukraine has long suffered from corrupt and politicized courts, and reform initiatives meant to address the issue have often stalled or fallen short of expectations. However, despite the ongoing war, authorities have implemented some recent improvements. The reestablishment of the High Council of Justice and the High Qualification Commission of Judges in 2023 paved the way to start the process of filling more than 2,000 judicial vacancies and vetting some 1,900 sitting judges, all of which had been on hold due to political gridlock since 2019. The 2023 adoption of a merit-based procedure for the appointment of Constitutional Court judges was another long-awaited achievement. In August and September, Ukraine enacted laws improving disciplinary proceedings against judges as well as the selection processes for officials overseeing those procedures. Such reforms were positively assessed by international experts and played a significant role in the EU's decision to open accession negotiations with Ukraine.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	1/4
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Although due process guarantees exist, in practice individuals with financial resources and political influence can often escape prosecution for wrongdoing. Judges have stymied corruption investigations into high-profile officials, including within the judiciary.

Wartime collaboration was added to Ukraine's criminal code a few days after the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022. The law did not introduce a clear definition of what constituted collaboration, and charges and penalties have varied considerably from region to region. Critics also say the law is too harsh in its punishment of people in occupied territories, who may have engaged in banned activities due to Russian military coercion. Domestic and international observers have also expressed concern about whether the more than 2,000 accused individuals will receive proper due process in the midst of a war.

Despite these and other significant challenges, the Ukrainian courts have showed resilience during the conflict, with most maintaining very high clearance rates, according to a recent report from the European Commission.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?

0 / 4

All regions of Ukraine have been subjected to indiscriminate Russian missile or artillery strikes against both civilian and military targets. Invading Russian troops have engaged in a range of human rights violations affecting both civilians and combatants, including arbitrary detention and forced disappearance, torture, conflict-related sexual violence, and other apparent war crimes.

Long-distance strikes on civilian infrastructure across the country by Russian forces have at times left millions of Ukrainians without power, heating, water, and adequate housing. Civilians who have remained in areas near the front line, mainly in Donetsk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv Oblasts, face daily attacks using explosive weapons with wide-area effects.

Russian occupying authorities have conducted systematic political “filtration” of Ukrainian citizens who refuse to cooperate with them or are suspected of

participating in armed resistance. At filtration camps, Ukrainian citizens may be strip-searched for “nationalistic” tattoos, have their photographs and fingerprints taken, and have their documents and phones confiscated. Those who “fail” ideological screening have been placed in detention camps.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported in July 2023 that it had documented 996 cases of civilians being arbitrarily detained in Russian-occupied areas since February 2022, and that 80 had died in detention or were found dead with signs of violence on their bodies. Of the OHCHR’s documented cases, 468 individuals remained in arbitrary or incommunicado detention at the time of publication.

The trafficking of weapons and ammunition from the front line has contributed to the proliferation of arms throughout Ukraine since 2014.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

2 / 4

Gender discrimination is explicitly banned under the constitution, and a 2012 law introduced a nonexclusive list of grounds on which discrimination is prohibited. However, these protections are inconsistently enforced. Members of the Romany minority and LGBT+ people experience significant discrimination in practice, and they generally only receive police protection or justice for attacks against them when there is intense pressure from civil society or international observers.

Rights groups have reported that employers openly discriminate on the basis of gender and age. Women serving in the military have faced discrimination while in uniform, though formal barriers that prevented women from performing certain military roles have been gradually lifted since 2022.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

1/4

The full-scale invasion has caused significant displacement, with about a third of Ukrainians being forced from their homes and seeking refuge elsewhere in Ukraine or abroad during 2022. In addition to the disruption to employment and education caused by the Russian invasion, the danger of land mines and unexploded ordnance prevents refugees and IDPs from returning home and impairs agricultural activity. The only way for Ukrainians residing in occupied territories to cross into government-controlled territory is to travel to Russia first and then attempt to enter Ukraine via a limited number of humanitarian corridors.

Russian and Russian-affiliated authorities have forcibly transferred Ukrainian civilians, including children, to either Russia or Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, in violation of international law.

Ukrainian mobilization laws enacted in March 2022 prohibit most men aged 18 to 60 from leaving the country. Apart from the mobilization rules, freedom of movement is generally not restricted in areas under government control.

Russian authorities have been distributing Russian passports to residents of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics since 2019, and more recently in occupied Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts. Those who refuse to renounce Ukrainian citizenship face prison or deportation.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

2/4

The government has taken steps to scale back regulation of private businesses in recent years, though the business environment is affected by widespread corruption. A reform law allowing the sale of agricultural land went into effect in 2021, ending a moratorium. Under the law, only individual Ukrainian citizens can buy and sell farmland; organizations will be able to acquire such land beginning in 2024, so long as participating members are all Ukrainian citizens.

In Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine, the property rights and economic freedoms of Ukrainian citizens are not upheld. Those who refuse to accept Russian citizenship can face property confiscation in addition to other penalties.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

3/4

The government generally does not restrict personal social freedoms, though same-sex marriage remains unrecognized in Ukraine. Ongoing Russian military aggression has added urgency to calls for the legalization of same-sex marriage, which would afford same-sex partners of wounded and deceased soldiers the same rights and benefits as those granted to heterosexual spouses.

Domestic violence is widespread, and police responses to the few victims who report such abuse are inadequate.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

2/4

The trafficking of women domestically and abroad for the purpose of prostitution continues. IDPs are especially vulnerable to exploitation for sex trafficking and forced labor.

The new labor code adopted in 2022 threatened to increase exploitative conditions for Ukrainians working at companies with fewer than 250 employees, as it withdrew legal protections and made their pay structure, working hours, and conditions or terms of contract termination subject to the employer's discretion.

In occupied territories of Ukraine, Russian military forces have pressured Ukrainian civilians to enlist in the Russian armed forces, and in some cases have forcibly conscripted them. Those who refuse to join have been placed in detention facilities.



On Ukraine

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Country Facts

Population

38,000,000

Global Freedom Score

49/100 **Partly Free**

Internet Freedom Score

59/100 **Partly Free**

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2023

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info@freedomhouse.org

1850 M St. NW Floor 11
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-5101

PRESS & MEDIA
press@freedomhouse.org

@2025 FreedomHouse