

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

Russia

12

NOT FREE

/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	4 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	8 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

13 /100

Not Free

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. See the methodology.



A Note on Related Territories

Territories are sometimes assessed separately from related countries if they meet certain criteria, including significantly different conditions for political rights and civil liberties, and boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow annual comparisons.

Related Territories: 2025 Global Freedom Score Overview

 <u>Ukraine</u> 51 / 100 PARTLY FREE	<u>Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine</u> -1 / 100 NOT FREE
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Click on a scorecard to visit each countries Freedom in the World Report.

Overview

Power in Russia's authoritarian political system is concentrated in the hands of President Vladimir Putin. With subservient courts and security forces, a controlled media environment, and a legislature consisting of a ruling party and pliable opposition factions, the Kremlin manipulates elections and suppresses genuine opposition. Rampant corruption facilitates shifting links among state officials and organized crime groups. Since the regime launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, authorities have intensified restrictions on individual rights and liberties in order to stifle domestic dissent.

Key Developments in 2024

- The Russian military's full-scale invasion of Ukraine continued into its third year. In August, Ukrainian forces launched a major incursion into the Kursk Region of Russia and established military control over parts of the area.
- Incumbent President Vladimir Putin was reelected to the presidency in March with nearly 88 percent of the vote. The election featured rampant fraud, and genuine opposition candidates were barred from participating.

- Prominent opposition politician and political prisoner Aleksey Navalny suddenly died in a Siberian penal colony in February. His colleagues and legal team had previously said he faced ill treatment in detention, and in 2023 he had been held incommunicado for several weeks before reappearing in the Siberian facility. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said it was “appalled” by his death and demanded an independent investigation.
- In August, Russia and the United States conducted the largest prisoner exchange since the end of the Cold War, in a deal involving cooperation with several other governments. Those released included journalists and US citizens Evan Gershkovich and Alsu Kurmasheva, former US Marine Paul Whelan, and Russian opposition activists Ilya Yashin and Vladimir Kara-Murza.

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?

0 / 4

The constitution establishes a strong presidency with the power to dismiss and appoint, pending parliamentary confirmation, the prime minister. The president is elected for as many as two consecutive six-year terms. Constitutional amendments approved in 2020 allowed Putin, but not future presidents, to run for an additional two consecutive terms, potentially extending his rule to 2036.

Presidential elections were held in March 2024 and saw incumbent President Putin win 87.3 percent of the vote in what independent media outlet Meduza called “the most fraudulent elections in modern Russian history.” Voter turnout reportedly reached a record 77.4 percent. As with past elections, Putin’s 2024 reelection campaign benefited from advantages including preferential media treatment, numerous abuses of incumbency, voter coercion, and ballot stuffing. Genuine

opposition candidates were barred from running. The election was also administered in the Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine.

A2 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

The Federal Assembly consists of the 450-seat State Duma and an upper chamber, the Federation Council. The Federation Council comprises two representatives from each region—one appointed by the governor and one by the regional legislature, usually with strong federal input—serving six-year terms. Up to 30 additional members can be appointed by the president. Half of the State Duma members are elected by nationwide proportional representation, and the other half are elected in single-member districts, with all serving five-year terms.

In the 2021 Duma elections, United Russia won 324 seats, maintaining its supermajority. The Russian election-monitoring group Golos and independent media reported systemic violations, including vote buying, pressure on voters, and arbitrary restrictions on opposition candidates.

Gubernatorial elections were held in 21 regions in September 2024. Voters in 11 regions also participated in regional legislative elections. United Russia-aligned candidates won all gubernatorial races as well as majorities in all regional legislative elections. The polls featured significant flaws, including the absence of genuine opposition candidates, ballot stuffing, intimidation, and anomalous electronic voting results.

A3 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

Russia's electoral system is designed to maintain the dominance of United Russia. The authorities frequently change electoral laws and the timing of elections in order to secure advantages for their preferred candidates. Opposition candidates have little chance of success in appealing these decisions or in securing a level playing field.

A variety of legal restrictions limit who can run for office. Russian citizens who hold a second citizenship or a foreign residence permit and people who have been found guilty of one of approximately 400 criminal and administrative offenses cannot pursue candidacy. A 2022 law barred people who had been designated as “foreign agents” from serving on electoral commissions, participating in electoral campaigns, or donating to electoral campaigns or political parties. A May 2024 law further deprived people designated as “foreign agents” of the right to run for public office.

In 2023, Putin signed legislation allowing elections to take place in portions of the country that were under martial law, including areas of occupied Ukraine.

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?	1 / 4
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The multiparty system is carefully managed by the Kremlin, which does not tolerate any genuine competition. While some nominal opposition parties maintain legal status and parliamentary representation, these largely serve as Kremlin-approved alternatives that avoid challenging the ruling government. The government has expanded the use of “foreign agent,” “extremism,” and “undesirable organization” laws to effectively criminalize opposition political activity. Prominent opposition leaders have been imprisoned or killed.

Registration requirements for new political parties remain prohibitively complex, while existing independent parties face obstacles including the arbitrary denial of registration for elections, harassment of candidates and supporters, and sudden deregistration on technical grounds.

In 2024, government-approved candidates won all regional-head elections and United Russia candidates won 545 out of 659 open regional legislative positions.

B2 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

Russia has never experienced a democratic transfer of power between rival groups. Then-Prime Minister Putin became acting president when incumbent Boris Yeltsin resigned in late 1999. Putin served two four-year presidential terms from 2000 to 2008, remained the de facto paramount leader when he returned to the premiership from 2008 to 2012, and has served two six-year presidential terms since. Putin's third consecutive presidential term began following his reelection in 2024.

The ruling United Russia party maintains overwhelming advantages in resources, media access, and administrative support, while using state power to suppress competitors. The Justice Ministry has repeatedly refused to register authentic opposition parties.

Opposition politicians and activists are frequently targeted with fabricated criminal cases and other forms of harassment designed to prevent their participation in the political process. Aleksey Navalny, then Putin's most influential rival, was poisoned with a toxic nerve agent in 2020, and evidence later implicated the Federal Security Service (FSB) in the assassination attempt. After recovering in Germany, Navalny was arrested in 2021 upon returning to Russia. In 2022, he received a nine-year prison sentence on embezzlement and contempt-of-court charges, and in 2023, his prison term was extended by 19 years when he was convicted on extremism charges. Navalny was held incommunicado for several weeks in late 2023 before reappearing in a Siberian penal colony, where he died suddenly in February 2024. The OHCHR said it was "appalled" by his death and demanded an independent investigation.

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?

1 / 4

Russia’s numerous security agencies work to maintain tight control over society and prevent any political challenges to the regime. The country’s leadership is also closely intertwined with powerful business magnates who benefit from government patronage in exchange for political loyalty and various forms of service. The Russian Orthodox Church similarly works to buttress the status quo, receiving financial support and a privileged status in return. Many employers—particularly in the public sector—pressure their employees to vote, partly to deliver the government’s desired level of voter turnout. According to election monitoring group Golos, citizens in more than 60 regions reported being coerced into voting in 2024, including those working in the public sector, state-linked corporations, and some private businesses.

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?	1 / 4
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The formation of parties based on ethnicity or religion is not permitted by law. In practice, many regions inhabited by distinct ethnic groups are carefully monitored and controlled by federal authorities. Most republics in the North Caucasus area and some autonomous districts in energy-rich western Siberia do not hold direct gubernatorial elections; instead, their legislatures choose a governor from candidates proposed by the president.

Women are underrepresented in politics and government, holding less than 17 percent of Duma seats and 18 percent of Federation Council seats as of 2024. Few women serve as cabinet members, and many issues of importance to women are not prominent in Russian politics.

In 2023, the Supreme Court ruled that the “international LGBT public movement” was an extremist organization, effectively banning any advocacy on behalf of this community and opening LGBT+ individuals and allies to prosecution.

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?

0 / 4

President Putin dominates the government system, along with powerful allies in the security services and the business sector. These groups effectively control the output of the parliament, which is not freely elected. Legislation passed in 2021 increased political centralization at the expense of regional autonomy. However, the federal authorities have limited ability to impose policy decisions in Chechnya, where Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has been granted unchecked power in exchange for violently suppressing both peaceful dissent and armed insurgency.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1 / 4

Corruption is pervasive in the government and the business world, and a lack of accountability enables officials to engage in malfeasance with impunity. Many analysts have argued that the political system is essentially a kleptocracy, a regime whose defining characteristic is the plunder of public wealth by ruling elites. Elites openly work to fulfill President Putin's policy aims and receive government contracts and protection from prosecution in return for their loyalty. The government targets dissent through numerous vague laws designed to reward such loyalty and punish those who fall out of favor.

In 2024, a number of prominent military officials, most notably then-Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, were removed from their posts or detained for alleged corruption violations. According to a 2024 Transparency International report, Russian military underperformance in Ukraine has revealed extensive defense-sector theft, with billions of rubles siphoned from the defense budget.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

0 / 4

There is little transparency and accountability in the day-to-day workings of the government, particularly at the federal level, where decisions are adopted behind closed doors by a small group of individuals.

Official opacity has increased since the February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Public access to key economic statistics, including data on foreign trade, the budget, and the financial system, has been restricted, making it difficult to assess the state of the Russian economy. Russian authorities are similarly opaque about the war itself, providing infrequent and dubious updates on the number of casualties, and suppressing or distorting information about the military's performance. Soldiers' relatives report receiving misleading or false information about their loved ones. Mediazona reported in 2023 that most court verdicts and statistics related to soldiers who desert or refuse service were no longer published.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	0/4
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Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, vague laws on extremism grant the authorities great discretion to crack down on any speech, organization, or activity that lacks official support. The government controls, directly or through state-owned companies and friendly business magnates, all national television networks and most radio and print outlets, as well as most of the media advertising market.

Laws on extremism, foreign agents, and undesirable organizations have been used to harass media outlets, curtailing their access to funding and forcing many to cease operations in Russia. Under a 2022 legal amendment, anyone “under foreign

influence” or who received any type of foreign support is considered a foreign agent and may face administrative or criminal charges. Roskomnadzor, the federal media and telecommunications agency, can block websites classified as foreign agents at the Justice Ministry’s request. A series of other laws require social media platforms to remove “illegal” content, impose fines on websites that fail to block such content, and allow prison sentences for those accused of online libel, among other provisions. In March 2024, authorities introduced new restrictions on placing advertisements in “foreign agent” media outlets and on advertising on their websites in a bid to deprive these outlets of advertisement-based income.

Since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Roskomnadzor has instructed outlets to use only Defense Ministry updates and to refrain from using words like “war” or “invasion” when discussing what is officially described as a “special military operation.” The government also began restricting access to a wide variety of websites, including those of domestic and foreign news outlets. More than 300 media outlets have been forced to suspend their activities. In July 2024, Russian courts issued eight- and eight-and-a-half-year prison sentences in absentia to journalists and authors Masha Gessen and Mikhail Zygar, respectively, on charges of disseminating “fake news” about Russian military activity in Ukraine.

The crackdown has extended to foreign journalists as well. In 2023, authorities imprisoned Evan Gershkovich, a correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal* and a US citizen, and Alsu Kurmasheva, a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) journalist who holds US and Russian citizenship, on politically motivated charges. Gershkovich and Kurmasheva were released in an August 2024 US–Russia prisoner exchange, the largest such exchange since the Cold War.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	1/4
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Freedom of religion is upheld unevenly. A 1997 law on religion gives the state extensive control and makes it difficult for new or independent groups to operate. The Russian Orthodox Church has a privileged position, working closely with the government on foreign and domestic policy priorities.

The Jehovah's Witnesses were declared an extremist organization in 2017, leading to a protracted campaign against worshippers marked by surveillance, property seizures, arrests, and torture. Between 2017 and 2024, authorities opened at least 762 criminal cases against Jehovah's Witnesses.

Many Muslims have been detained in recent years for alleged membership in banned Islamist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Religious leaders have been pressured to support the war in Ukraine, and those who publicly oppose it have faced dismissal and prosecution.

The Israeli military campaign in the Gaza Strip that began in 2023, launched in response to a massive terrorist attack by the Palestinian militant group Hamas, prompted a series of antisemitic incidents in Russia, particularly in the North Caucasus. In one high-profile case, a mob stormed an airport in Dagestan in search of Jewish Israeli passengers from an arriving flight. The authorities were accused of taking inadequate measures to protect local Jewish communities.

D3 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

The higher education system and the government-controlled Academy of Sciences are hampered by bureaucratic interference, state-imposed international isolation, and pressure to toe the Kremlin line on politically sensitive topics. Several universities have banned student and faculty participation in antigovernment rallies or threatened students with expulsion should they participate. Educators have also been fired for attending or sharing information about protests on social media. Some academics have fled Russia in recent years to avoid persecution for dissenting views. Foreign researchers have been prosecuted for failing to register as foreign agents.

Since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russian schools have been ordered to hold “patriotic education” classes and to use state-sanctioned language and revised textbooks to explain and defend the war. University students are required to take classes on “patriotism and loyalty.” Teachers, students, and their parents have been reported and faced criminal penalties for expressing dissent or

spreading “fake news” about the invasion. In 2023, military education and training components were introduced into schools and institutes of higher education.

D4 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

Pervasive, hyperpatriotic propaganda and political repression have had a cumulative impact on open and free private discussion, which is exacerbated by state control over online and offline expression.

An array of laws impose fines or prison sentences for insulting the state, spreading purportedly false news, committing libel, and using social media to discuss the personal information of judges and law enforcement officials or to share information on corruption. A 2023 law also allows the government to revoke the citizenship of naturalized citizens for such offenses. These laws have been expanded and applied more aggressively since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

According to the human rights group OVD–Info, there were 1,057 defendants in criminal cases related to antiwar activity by September 2024, facing charges such as spreading false news and discrediting the Russian military. Thousands of cases have also been filed under the code of administrative offenses, including nearly 9,500 for discrediting the armed forces as of September 2024. The number of convictions for espionage and treason, often on dubious grounds, rose dramatically in 2024. Fines or jail terms are imposed in the overwhelming majority of these cases.

Authorities use an extensive surveillance system to monitor online and offline expression and identify dissidents. Domestic and foreign businesses are required to store users’ personal data on servers physically located in Russia.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?

0 / 4

The government restricts freedom of assembly. Overwhelming police responses, the excessive use of force, routine arrests, and harsh fines and prison sentences have largely discouraged unsanctioned protests, while pro-Kremlin groups are able to demonstrate freely.

It is all but impossible for the Kremlin's opponents to obtain permission to hold a protest or rally, including those involving solitary demonstrators. At the regional level, extensive location-based restrictions prohibit assemblies in as much as 70 percent of public space. People who are labeled foreign agents are prohibited from organizing public events. In addition, authorities employ an expansive surveillance apparatus to monitor, identify, and arrest demonstrators.

In January 2024, thousands of people gathered in Russia's Bashkortostan region to protest against the sentencing of minority rights activist Fail Alsynov to four years in prison for allegedly "inciting hatred." Russian security forces violently dispersed demonstrators with tear gas, stun grenades, and physical force, injuring over 20 people and detaining dozens more.

The government has cracked down on public assemblies following its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. According to OVD-Info, more than 20,000 arrests were made at antiwar demonstrations between February 2022 and September 2024.

E2 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

The government has relentlessly persecuted nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), particularly those that work on human rights and governance issues. Civic activists are frequently arrested on politically motivated charges.

Authorities impede NGO work in part by requiring groups that receive foreign support and are deemed to engage in broadly defined "political activity" to

register as foreign agents. This designation entails onerous registration and labeling requirements and makes it extremely difficult for NGOs to pursue their objectives in practice. Authorities can also designate individuals as foreign agents, and those who fail to comply with the law risk fines or prison time. By year-end 2024, more than 900 organizations and individuals were listed as foreign agents.

Foreign and international NGOs can also be designated as undesirable organizations and forced to shutter any operations in the country. In August 2024, the State Duma adopted a bill expanding the definition of undesirable organizations to include a broader range of organizations and entities. As of December 2024, at least 187 organizations have been designated as undesirable organizations. Those newly listed include Freedom House, *The Moscow Times*, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Collaboration with undesirable organizations or unregistered foreign NGOs is criminalized.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?	2 / 4
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While trade union rights are legally protected, they are limited in practice. Strikes and worker protests have occurred in prominent industries, including automobile manufacturing, but antiunion discrimination and reprisals are common. Employers often ignore collective bargaining rights. The largest labor federation works in close cooperation with the Kremlin, though independent unions are active in some industrial sectors and regions.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	1 / 4
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The judiciary lacks independence from the executive branch, and judges' career advancement is effectively tied to compliance with Kremlin preferences. The Presidential Personnel Commission and court chairpersons control the

appointment of the country's judges, who tend to be promoted from inside the judicial system rather than gaining independent experience as lawyers. The 2020 constitutional amendments empowered the president to remove judges from the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court, with the support of the Federation Council, further narrowing the judiciary's already negligible autonomy.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

0 / 4

Safeguards against arbitrary arrest and other due process guarantees are regularly violated, particularly for individuals who oppose or are perceived as threatening to the interests of the regime and its allies. Police officers have broad authority to break into homes and vehicles and search personal belongings without a warrant. Lawyers representing defendants in politically sensitive cases are routinely denied access to their clients and increasingly face targeted prosecution due to their work. In 2023, three of Aleksey Navalny's lawyers were arrested and charged with supporting extremism; their trial began in September 2024. Other lawyers have been disbarred, declared foreign agents, and charged with politically motivated crimes.

Police and military officers enforcing conscription and the mobilization of reservists have conducted indiscriminate raids and threatened men with fines, prison sentences, fabricated charges, and loss of employment and social services for themselves and their families. As of 2023, people accused of violating military draft laws are not guaranteed access to a public defender. In addition, judgments in such cases are no longer suspended during appeals, meaning defendants can be forced into service before a final ruling. In October 2024, Putin signed a new law that would allow criminal defendants to halt prosecution and avoid punishment if they agree to join the military and serve in Ukraine.

Many Russians have sought justice from international courts, but a 2015 law authorizes the Russian judiciary to overrule the decisions of such bodies. In 2022, Russia ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe and its European Court of Human Rights, closing a key legal avenue for Russian citizens to seek redress.

Russia has illegally detained Ukrainian civilians in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine and in Russia. These individuals are denied due process and are subject to torture and poor conditions.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the continued deterioration of due process in Russia, including state obstruction and persecution of lawyers involved in rights cases and the arbitrary detention in Russia of Ukrainian civilians.

F3 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

Use of excessive force by police is widespread, and rights groups have reported that law enforcement agents who carry out such abuses have deliberately employed electric shocks, suffocation, and the stretching of a detainee's body to avoid leaving visible injuries. According to an October 2024 report by the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Russia, detained individuals are at risk of death due to the systematic use of torture and ill treatment by authorities.

Russian prisons are overcrowded and unsanitary; inmates lack health-care access and are subject to abuse by guards. Prisoners have also been solicited and coerced into fighting in Ukraine and have suffered immense casualties there. Political prisoners are at risk of severe mistreatment. In February 2024, Aleksey Navalny, who had previously been held incommunicado, died in a Siberian penal colony. His colleagues and legal team had said he was subject to ill treatment in detention, and in 2023 he had been held incommunicado for several weeks before reappearing in the Siberian facility. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said it was "appalled" by his death and demanded an independent investigation.

Kadyrov's regime in Chechnya has been accused of using abductions, torture, extrajudicial killings, and other forms of violence to maintain control. Kadyrov is also suspected of arranging the assassination of opponents in other parts of Russia and abroad.

Ukrainian forces have sometimes mounted attacks within Russia since February 2022, killing and injuring small numbers of military personnel and civilians. In

August 2024, Ukrainian forces entered Russia’s Kursk region and established military control over parts of the region in the largest foreign incursion into Russia since World War II. Russian authorities subsequently declared a state of emergency in the region.

In March 2024, armed men attacked Crocus City Hall, a music venue near Moscow, killing over 140 people and wounding hundreds more. An Afghanistan-based terror group, the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), claimed credit for the attack; Russian authorities later arrested several of the alleged perpetrators, most of whom were from Tajikistan. The suspects were subjected to torture after being detained.

F4 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

Immigrants and members of ethnic minority groups—particularly those from the Caucasus or Central Asia—face governmental and societal discrimination and harassment. Constitutional amendments and other laws establish the primacy of the Russian language within the state, favoring ethnic Russians by implication. After the Crocus City Hall attack in March 2024, which was allegedly perpetrated by Tajikistani citizens, Russian authorities increased raids and checks against Central Asian migrants, and violence by ultranationalists against individuals perceived to be migrants or of “non-Slavic appearance” increased, according to the SOVA Center, a Russian human rights organization. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), court cases against migrants for alleged migration violations soared in the week following the attack.

Members of ethnic and racial minority groups and the home regions of such populations have been disproportionately targeted in the government’s military conscription and mobilization efforts since February 2022. According to reports by the Free Buryatia Foundation, mobilized individuals from ethnic minority regions have also been far more likely than ethnic Russians to die in the Ukraine conflict.

Authorities frequently discriminate against Indigenous groups. In November 2024, over 170 Indigenous groups were accused of advocating for secession and labeled

“terrorist” organizations by Russian authorities. Activists have expressed concern that such designations can be used as a pretext for the persecution of Indigenous rights activists.

LGBT+ people are subject to considerable discrimination. Under a 2013 law that was amended in 2022, the promotion of “nontraditional sexual relations and/or preferences” is banned. Enforcement has reportedly intensified since the amendment, which increased the financial penalties for violations. The Supreme Court’s 2023 decision to designate the “international LGBT public movement” as an extremist organization effectively outlawed many aspects of LGBT+ people’s lives. After the rulings, police raided a number of businesses that served the community, and other venues and organizations were forced to close. In March 2024, Russian authorities also added the “LGBT movement” to the government’s list of extremist and terrorist organizations. In January, independent Russian media outlet Meduza reported that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had begun calling transgender people in for questioning regarding their medical certificates.

Chechnya remains particularly dangerous for LGBT+ people. Authorities in the republic have allegedly engaged in waves of extralegal detention and torture, targeting people based on their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

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
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The government restricts freedom of movement. Adults must carry internal passports while traveling and to obtain many government services. Some regional authorities impose registration rules that limit the right of citizens to choose their place of residence, typically targeting members of ethnic minorities and migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Russians have emigrated in large numbers since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The British government estimated in 2023 that 1.3 million people had left Russia in 2022. Some men fleeing conscription or mobilization are stopped by security personnel at the border. Since 2023, draftees are banned from leaving the country once a summons is issued.

A law that took effect in 2023 requires individuals to submit their passports to authorities within five days of being notified of a travel ban. Those affected may include people who work or worked for the FSB, have access to state secrets, or have been summoned to military service.

Ukrainians have been forcibly transferred to Russia in large numbers. In 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for President Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian commissioner for children's rights; they were accused of the unlawful deportation and transfer of children from occupied Ukraine to Russia, a war crime. While the exact figure is unknown, at the end of 2024 Ukrainian officials said they had identified more than 19,500 Ukrainian children who had been transferred without the consent of their families or guardians; at least 6,000 were relocated to "adoption and reeducation facilities" in Russia and Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine.

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?

1 / 4

State power and private property are intimately connected, with senior officials often using their government positions to amass vast property holdings. State takeovers of key industries and large tax penalties imposed on select companies after dubious legal proceedings have illustrated the precarious nature of property rights under Putin's rule, especially when political interests are involved. Private businesses more broadly are routinely targeted for extortion or expropriation by law enforcement officials and organized criminal groups.

In April 2024, President Putin signed a decree allowing for the confiscation of assets from legal entities and individuals from "unfriendly" countries; assets may also be seized from those charged under extremism and other wartime

censorship laws. A February law also allows authorities to seize assets gained from the dissemination of “false information” about Russian forces and assets used to finance calls endangering Russian security.

Two laws passed in 2022 compel private businesses to supply the military with goods and services and force employees to work overtime to support the war effort. In May 2024, authorities introduced a new law permitting the confiscation of US-owned property as compensation for the seizure of frozen Russian assets in the United States.

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?

1 / 4

Marriage is defined in the constitution as a union between a man and a woman, effectively barring any future law recognizing same-sex marriage.

Domestic violence receives little attention from the authorities. Survivors who kill their abusers in self-defense are commonly imprisoned. A 2017 law decriminalized acts of domestic violence that do not result in permanent physical harm. The measure also removed police officers’ obligation to initiate cases, transferring the responsibility to survivors.

Residents of certain regions, particularly in the North Caucasus, face tighter societal restrictions on personal appearance and relationships, and some so-called honor killings have been reported. In Chechnya, Kadyrov has spoken in favor of polygamy and sought to compel divorced couples to remarry.

Since February 2022, there have been multiple cases in which parents lost custody of their children or were threatened with such separation in reprisal for their antiwar activism.

Legislation enacted in 2023 banned medical gender changes. It also barred individuals from changing their official gender in public records, annulled marriages in which one partner has undergone a gender transition, and prohibited transgender people from adopting or taking guardianship over children. The 2023 Supreme Court decision to designate the “international LGBT public movement”

as extremist also imposed serious practical restrictions on personal autonomy, raising the risk of criminal prosecution for any visible expression of LGBT+ identity. By early 2024, authorities had begun issuing extremism-related charges to LGBT+ individuals and those perceived to be supporting the LGBT+ community.

In recent years, the government has encouraged women to have more children and has taken steps to limit access to abortion. The Health Ministry reportedly developed guidelines for medical workers to advise patients against having abortions, and announced plans to limit the availability of abortion pills and emergency contraceptives. Regional governments have also pressured private clinics to stop offering abortion services. As of September 2024, a special prescription is required to access emergency contraceptives.

G4 0-4 pts

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

1/4

Legal protections against labor exploitation are poorly enforced. Migrant workers are often exposed to unsafe or exploitative working conditions. Both Russians facing economic hardship and migrants to Russia from other countries are vulnerable to sex and labor trafficking. Trafficking victims are routinely detained, deported, or prosecuted for activity in which they were forced to participate. In 2024, the State Duma passed a draft law introducing new restrictions on migrant workers, which include a requirement that migrants obtain a “universal identity document”; only Russian authorities would have access to the data linked to the document, meaning that migrants could be unaware of changes made to their legal status. Activists argue this would make foreign workers more vulnerable to threats of extortion and exploitation.

Coercion and other abuses related to conscription and mobilization have increased as the war in Ukraine has intensified. While some migrant workers have reportedly enlisted in order to receive citizenship under an accelerated process, others have reportedly been manipulated or pressured into taking up arms, as have prison inmates. Authorities have increasingly used raids to round up migrant workers who allegedly received citizenship but failed to register for military

service. Once enlisted, soldiers have reported being obliged to acquire their own supplies and going without promised payments.

According to the 2023 law on conscription and mobilization, individuals who fail to respond to a summons for military service may lose the ability to receive loans, engage in real-estate transactions, hold a driver's license, or register for self-employment, among other restrictions. The government's mobilization decree includes no provision for conscientious objectors to seek alternative civilian service.



On Russia

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Country Facts

Population

144,200,000

Global Freedom Score

12 / 100 Not Free

Internet Freedom Score

20 / 100 Not Free

Other Years

2024

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