



Freedom in the World 2020

Slovenia

FREE

94
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	39 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	55 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

94 /100 Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)



Overview

Slovenia is a parliamentary republic with a freely elected government. Political rights and civil liberties are generally respected. Corruption remains an issue,

though media are proactive in exposing it. The judiciary, while somewhat distrusted, has established a record of independent rulings, and the rule of law is generally respected. Cases of harassment against LGBT+ people and members of religious and other minority groups continue to occur, but are generally investigated when reported.

Key Developments in 2019

- In October, the Constitutional Court struck down controversial 2017 amendments to the Aliens Act that had limited the rights of migrants seeking asylum. Earlier, in August, the court widened the legal definition of hate speech.
- Elections to the European Parliament (EP) took place in May. Fears of a surge in popularity of the far right did not materialize, as the votes for eight members of the EP coalesced around the three established party groups.
- In January, the government initiated procedures to constitutionally guarantee the right of people with hearing disabilities to use Slovenian Sign Language.

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 prime minister heads the executive branch and is appointed by the National Assembly (Državni Zbor) for a four-year term. The president holds the mostly ceremonial position of head of state, and is directly elected for up to two five-year terms.

Parliamentary elections were held in June 2018, and after extended negotiations, a minority center-left coalition government took office that September. Prime

Minister Marjan Šarec—formerly a two-term mayor of Kamnik, and before that, a comedian—heads the new administration. Slovenian president Borut Pahor was reelected for a second term in 2017.

A2 0-4 pts

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

4/4

The legislature is composed of the 40-seat National Council and the 90-seat National Assembly. Councilors are indirectly elected to five-year terms by an electoral college. Of the 90 National Assembly members elected to four-year terms, 88 are elected by proportional representation vote. Two additional seats are reserved for lawmakers representing Hungarian and Italian minorities.

Monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) deemed the June 2018 National Assembly elections free and fair. Although the center-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), led by former prime minister Janez Janša, won the most seats with 25, it was the second-place party List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ) that was able to form a center-left minority government. Šarec's party took 13 seats; members of his coalition include the Social Democrats (SD) and the Modern Center Party (SMC), which each took 10 seats, the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS), which took 5 seats, and the Party of Alenka Bratušek (SAB) which also took 5 seats. The coalition is supported by the left-most party, Levica, which won 9 seats.

A3 0-4 pts

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

4/4

The National Election Commission is an independent and impartial body that supervises free and fair elections, and ensures electoral laws are properly implemented.

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?	4/4
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The constitutional right to organize in different political parties is upheld in practice. In May 2019, 14 parties and candidate lists participated in the EP elections. At 28.89 percent, the turnout was the third-lowest in the European Union (EU). Fears of a surge in popularity of the far right did not materialize, as the votes for eight members of the EP coalesced around three main party groups: the European People's Party (EPP), which took 4 seats; the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), which took 2; and Renew, which also took 2.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?	4/4
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Political power frequently rotates between parties.

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?	4/4
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People's political choices are free from domination by powerful groups that are not democratically accountable.

B4 0-4 pts

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

4/4

Citizens enjoy full political rights and electoral opportunities. Hungarian and Italian minorities each elect their own lawmaker to the National Assembly. Roma councilors sit on 20 municipal councils, but are not represented in the national legislature.

Women's political interests are relatively well represented. A 35 percent gender quota is mandated by law, and parties that fail to adhere to it have had their lists rejected. However, gender quotas are enforced on the precinct level, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have long complained that women candidates are allotted precincts with lower chances of being elected. Only 24 percent of lawmakers elected in 2018 are women, a decline from the last term.

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?

4/4

Elected officials are free to set and implement government policy without undue interference.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

3/4

Corruption in Slovenia primarily takes the form of conflicts of interest between government officials and private businesses. The Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (KPK) was mired in controversy in recent years, which saw the fining of its president in March 2018 for misuse of personal data. More recently, it has functioned without major incident.

While whistleblower protection is regulated in anticorruption and other laws, NGOs have repeatedly called for comprehensive stand-alone legislation to better protect them, as enshrined in a new EU directive on the issue. In its absence, in 2019 an investigative journalism outlet launched a portal through which whistleblowers may submit information, claiming to guarantee the highest possible level of security. Media are increasingly proactive in exposing corruption.

Corruption and irregularities in the health sector remained in the public focus in 2019, and were additionally the subject of parliamentary oversight.

Several instances of improper political pressure have been uncovered in recent years, with consequences for those involved. Parliament has yet to adopt an ethics code for lawmakers.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	4/4
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The government generally operates with openness and transparency. In January 2018, amendments to the Access to Public Information Act distributed the fees incurred by public information requests more evenly among the parties involved, thus lessening the financial burden on journalists and other information requesters.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	3/4
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Freedom of speech and of the press are constitutionally guaranteed, but defamation remains a criminal offense. In a positive development, in 2018 the Supreme Court ruled that journalists cannot legally be compelled to reveal their sources unless there is a clearly demonstratable public good in doing so.

Media ownership is sometimes opaque, and journalists are subject to pressure and occasional harassment due to their coverage. State-owned enterprises continue to hold a stake in several media outlets, leaving them vulnerable to government intervention. Media published by municipalities have been abused as propaganda tools favoring incumbent mayors. Public broadcaster RTVSLO frequently faces pressure from political actors. Some private outlets have been accused of running stories promoting their owners' business interests. Journalists can also face direct pressure from powerful business interests. In March 2019, a Maribor real estate developer verbally harassed a journalist with *Večer* after she published a story that included details on his business operations, insulting her and attempting to follow her into her office. Separately, four former *Dnevnik* journalists were put on trial for misuse of personal data in May, for publishing transcripts of a phone call about the sale of the Mercator retail chain in 2012. The journalists maintain that publishing of the information was in the public interest, and the case was ongoing at year's end. And, after the *Mladina* weekly published an unflattering cover featuring Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian embassy demanded that the Slovenian government discipline the magazine; the government responded that it does not interfere in the media.

Journalists also face economic threats to their livelihoods, be it by cost-cutting across newsrooms, or outright terminations. These fears have been exacerbated by ownership shifts at various outlets.

D2 0-4 pts

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

3/4

The Slovenian constitution guarantees religious freedom and contains provisions prohibiting enticement of religious intolerance or discrimination. However, there are occasional instances of vandalism of religious buildings, and hate speech by high-profile figures.

Construction of a long-delayed mosque in Ljubljana was recently completed, and religious services are expected to commence in early 2020.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	4/4
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Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	4/4
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Individuals are generally free to express their personal beliefs without fear of reprisal. Defamation remains a criminal offense, though officials may no longer press charges through the state prosecutor. Debates on issues such as migration are frequently combative.

In 2019, the Supreme Court widened the definition of hate speech. Right groups and journalists' organizations applauded the move, though critics claim the new definition can potentially muzzle free speech.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	4/4
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The rights to peaceful assembly and association are guaranteed by the constitution and respected in practice. Assemblies must be registered with the authorities in advance, and in some instances permits are required.

E2 0-4 pts

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

4/4

Numerous NGOs operate freely and play a role in policymaking.

E3 0-4 pts

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

4/4

Workers may establish and join trade unions, strike, and bargain collectively. Union membership is declining, though the number of unions is also increasing.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

4/4

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. Its efficiency has increased, but a significant portion of the general public still has a negative perception of the courts.

A quarrel between two Constitutional Court justices spilled into public domain in 2019, when one justice, in a dissenting opinion, accused another of attempting to pressure him into ruling a particular way and of lying to cover up a conflict of interest. Separately, the court blocked a parliamentary investigation into judges handling cases against former Maribor mayor Franc Kangler, citing judicial independence. This led an opposition lawmaker to liken the judiciary to the mafia; he was later reported by the state prosecutor for defamation.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

4/4

The rule of law is respected in civil and criminal matters. Programs aimed at reducing court backlogs have seen some success in recent years.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	4/4
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People in Slovenia are generally free from threats of physical force. Prison conditions meet international standards, though overcrowding has been reported.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	3/4
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In October 2019, the constitutional court ruled that the 2017 amendments to the Aliens Act limiting the rights of migrants to claim asylum were unconstitutional.

While their legal status and ability to claim compensation have been resolved to a large extent, some individual cases of “The Erased”—a group of more than 25,000 non-Slovene citizens purged from official records in 1992—relating to restitution and reestablishing legal rights remain pending. Roma face widespread poverty and societal marginalization. While there are legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, discrimination against LGBT+ people is still present. However, recent research suggests that the social gap experienced by LGBT+ persons is closing.

Investigations into cases of discrimination and mistreatment of members of minority groups often follow reported incidents, with several open at year’s end. Events being investigated include an incident in September 2019 in which a bouncer in a Ljubljana club hurled anti-Semitic slurs and used a Nazi salute against a guest; one in November in which unidentified assailants attacked and damaged an LGBT+ club in Ljubljana; and an incident the same month in which a bouncer in a Maribor club verbally abused and manhandled an LGBT+ person.

Despite legal protections people with disabilities still often face workplace discrimination. In January, the government initiated procedures to constitutionally

guarantee the right of people with hearing disabilities to use Slovenian Sign Language.

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?	4/4
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Citizens enjoy the right to change their residence, employment, and place of education.

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?	4/4
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Individuals may exercise the right to own property and establish private business in practice.

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
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Individuals generally enjoy personal social freedoms. People entering same-sex partnerships enjoy most of the rights conferred by marriage but cannot adopt children or undergo in-vitro fertilization procedures. Marriage is still legally defined as a union between a man and a woman. Domestic violence is illegal, but remains a concern in practice. Up to 1,300 cases are reported annually, though nearly all reported cases are investigated.

G4 0-4 pts**Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?****3/4**

Authorities actively prosecute suspected human traffickers and work to identify victims.

Many people at the beginning of their careers or nearing retirement are employed under precarious conditions. Additional legal protections against labor exploitation were enacted in recent years, but the scope of the problem is still being investigated.

Labor unions cite extended work hours and workplace quality as pressing issues, while experts say that the main problem is lack of oversight.

**On Slovenia**

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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

94/100 Free

Other Years

2019

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