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Freedom in the World 2021

Russia

20
/100

NOT FREE

<u>Political Rights</u>	5 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	15 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

20 /100 Not Free

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



Overview

Power in Russia's authoritarian political system is concentrated in the hands of President Vladimir Putin. With loyalist security forces, a

subservient judiciary, a controlled media environment, and a legislature consisting of a ruling party and pliable opposition factions, the Kremlin is able to manipulate elections and suppress genuine dissent. Rampant corruption facilitates shifting links among bureaucrats and organized crime groups.

Key Developments in 2020

- Russia experienced a severe outbreak of COVID-19, with at least 3.1 million people testing positive for the virus and 56,000 deaths, according to the government. However, analysts suggested that authorities had downplayed the true number of coronavirus deaths, pointing to, among other things, official statistics that showed a significant increase in the overall number of deaths in the country during the year.
- In July, authorities staged a highly choreographed referendum on extending presidential term limits, with the affirmative result effectively allowing President Putin to remain in office until 2036. Among other changes, the amendments enable the president, with support from Parliament's upper chamber, to remove judges from the Constitutional and Supreme Courts, further reducing the judiciary's already tenuous independence.
- Unsanctioned protests in Khabarovsk began in July and lasted through the end of the year. Authorities largely ignored the protesters until October, when they started making arrests.
- In December, President Putin expanded the law requiring nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive international funding to register as "foreign agents," placing restrictions on their activities and threatening their employees with fines, raids, and arrests.

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 to a six-year term, and can be reelected to one additional term. Constitutional amendments adopted in 2020 allow Putin, but not future presidents, to run for an additional two terms as president, potentially extending his rule to 2036. Like past elections, President Putin's 2018 reelection campaign benefited from advantages including preferential media treatment, numerous abuses of incumbency, and procedural irregularities during the vote count. His most influential rival, Aleksey Navalny, was disqualified before the campaign began due to a politically motivated criminal conviction, creating what the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) called "a lack of genuine competition." The funding sources for Putin's campaign were also notably opaque.

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 Federation Council. The 2020 constitutional amendments altered the makeup of the Federation Council to include: two representatives from each of Russia's self-declared 85 regions—including the two regions of occupied Crimea (half appointed by governors and half by regional legislatures, usually with strong federal input)—the president who is a lifetime member, and no more than 30 "representatives of the Russian Federation" appointed by the president, of whom no more than seven can be appointed for life. The rest are appointed for six-year terms.

Half of Duma members are elected by nationwide proportional representation and the other half in single-member districts, with all

serving five-year terms. This system was adopted following the 2011 elections, when United Russia garnered just less than 50 percent of the vote under a system that used only nationwide proportional representation. These and other rule changes were designed to benefit United Russia, and were considered to have contributed to the party's 2016 supermajority.

In the 2016 Duma elections, United Russia won 343 seats, securing a supermajority that allows it to change the constitution without the support of other parties. The three main Kremlin-approved “opposition” parties—the Communists, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and A Just Russia—won the bulk of the remainder, taking 42, 39, and 23 seats, respectively. The Central Electoral Commission reported a turnout of 48 percent, the lowest in Russia's post-Soviet history. The OSCE and the election monitoring group Golos cited numerous violations, including ballot stuffing, pressure on voters, and illegal campaigning. Some opposition candidates were simply not permitted to register, so the outcome of many races was clear even before election day.

In the September 2020 local and regional elections, the Kremlin, as usual, eliminated any serious opposition candidates before the election took place, and their candidates won all 18 governors' races and 11 regional legislative elections. In the 22 regional capital city council elections, Navalny's allies were able to win a few seats in Tomsk and Novosibirsk, preventing the Kremlin from maintaining its majorities and demonstrating Navalny's influence even outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	0 / 4
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Russia's electoral system is designed to maintain the dominance of United Russia. The authorities make frequent changes to 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 securing a level playing field. In May 2020, Putin signed a law permitting the use of electronic voting across Russia, raising concerns about the security, anonymization, and secrecy of ballots in future elections. In July, Putin also signed a law for all future elections to have a three-day voting period. Critics claimed that the expanded timeframe increases officials' ability to manipulate election outcomes.

Russia adopted extensive changes to its constitution in 2020 through a "nationwide vote" that was set up to avoid full referendum procedures. Voting was originally set for April 22, but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Central Electoral Commission subsequently adopted a number of provisions that extended the voting period to one week—from June 25 to July 1. Critics charged there was no way to observe or monitor the fairness or integrity of polling. Statisticians claimed it was potentially the most falsified vote in Russian history.

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

The multiparty system is carefully managed by the Kremlin, which tolerates only superficial competition against the dominant United Russia party. Legislation enacted in 2012 liberalized party registration rules, allowing the creation of hundreds of new parties. However, none posed a significant threat to the authorities, and many seemed designed to encourage division and confusion among the opposition. The Justice Ministry has repeatedly refused to register Navalny's political party.

In the 2020 local elections, three new parties met the voting threshold needed to qualify to compete in Russia's 2021 Duma elections: New People, For Truth, and Green Alternative. In practice, each has links to the ruling party, allowing Kremlin-friendly political figures to distance themselves from the increasingly unpopular United Russia while still dominating the vote.

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. Putin, then the prime minister, initially received the presidency on an acting basis from the retiring Boris Yeltsin at the end of 1999. He served two four-year presidential terms from 2000 to 2008, then remained the de facto paramount leader while working as prime minister until he returned to the presidency in 2012, violating the spirit if not the letter of the constitution's two-term limit. A 2008 constitutional amendment extended presidential terms to six years, and a 2020 amendment allowed him to run for an additional two terms, meaning Putin's current term will leave him in office until 2036.

Opposition politicians and activists are frequently targeted with fabricated criminal cases and other forms of administrative harassment that are designed to prevent their participation in the political process. Aleksey Navalny was poisoned with a toxic nerve agent in August 2020 while he was investigating corruption and campaigning in Siberia, with evidence later emerging that the attack was carried out by the Federal Security Service (FSB). He had to be evacuated to Germany to prevent the authorities from intervening with his treatment.

In December 2020, the Federal Prison Service warned Navalny that he had to return to Russia within 24 hours, or his suspended sentence in the Yves Rocher case would be converted into a real term. The next day, state investigators announced the opening of a new case against

Navalny, claiming that he had embezzled money donated to his organization, the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK).

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
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Russia's numerous security agencies work to maintain tight control over society and prevent any political challenges to the incumbent regime. The country's leadership is also closely intertwined with powerful economic oligarchs who benefit from government patronage in exchange for political loyalty and various forms of service. Recent reports from the Riga-based online outlet Meduza revealed that authorities are forcing people in the public sector—teachers, doctors, state employees, and others—to vote, so as to reach the government's desired voter turnout; a high enough turnout apparently enables the Kremlin to more easily manipulate election results. The Russian Orthodox Church similarly works to support the status quo, receiving financial support and a privileged status in return.

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 home to distinct ethnic groups are carefully monitored and controlled by federal authorities. Defenders of minority languages have sought to protect the right to teach them in public schools. Most republics in the restive North Caucasus area and some autonomous districts in energy-rich western Siberia have opted out of direct gubernatorial elections; instead, their legislatures choose a governor from candidates proposed by the president.

Women are underrepresented in politics and government. They hold less than a fifth of seats in the State Duma and the Federation Council. Only 3

of the 31 cabinet members are women, and many issues of importance to women are not prominent in Russian politics.

The July 2020 constitutional amendments contained language defining marriage as between a man and a woman, both reflecting and deepening the systemic challenges LGBT+ people face in gaining political rights and representation.

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

Russia's authoritarian president dominates the political system, along with powerful allies in the security services and in business. These groups effectively control the output of the parliament, which is not freely elected. The 2020 constitutional amendments formalized the power of the president over the legislature and allow Putin to serve as president until 2036, demonstrating his ability to manipulate the system. The federal authorities have limited ability to impose policy decisions in Chechnya, where Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has gained unchecked power in exchange for keeping the republic within the Russian Federation.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1 / 4

Corruption in the government and the business world is pervasive, and a growing lack of accountability enables bureaucrats 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. Some of these elites openly work to fulfill President Putin's policy aims and receive

government contracts and protection from prosecution in return for their loyalty.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

1 / 4

There is little transparency and accountability in the day-to-day workings of the government. Decisions are adopted behind closed doors by a small group of individuals whose identities are often unclear to the public, and are announced to the population after the fact.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?

0 / 4

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 of the national television networks and many radio and print outlets, as well as most of the media advertising market. A handful of independent outlets still operate, most of them online and some headquartered abroad. The few that remain in the country struggle to maintain their independence from state interests. Television remains the most popular source of news, but its influence is declining, particularly among young people who rely more on social media.

Attacks, arrests, office raids, and threats against journalists are common and authorities actively targeted journalists outside of Moscow throughout 2020. Ivan Safronov, who had worked as a *Kommersant* and *Vedomosti* correspondent, was arrested in July, and charged with “spying for the West.” In September, Ingushetia authorities sentenced journalist Rashid Maisigov to three years in a regime colony for drug possession. He had reported on local protests and the persecution of activists.

Roskomnadzor, the federal media and telecommunications censorship agency, ceased its efforts to eradicate the encrypted messaging service Telegram, lifting its two-year-old ban on the platform in June 2020. The reprieve is contingent upon the company’s cooperation in terrorism cases.

D2 0-4 pts

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

1 / 4

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. Antiterror legislation approved in 2016 grants the authorities power to repress religious groups that are deemed extremist. In 2017, the Supreme Court upheld the Justice Ministry’s decision to ban the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who at that time numbered about 170,000 in Russia, as an extremist organization. The decision heralded a protracted campaign against the worshippers, marked by surveillance, property seizures, arrests, and torture. At least 339 members of the religion faced persecution for their faith, according to data released in 2020 by the Memorial Human Rights Center. At the end of the year, 45 Jehovah’s Witnesses were in prison and 35 were in pretrial detention. The authorities raided the homes of at least 440 Jehovah’s Witnesses throughout the year.

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

D3 0-4 pts

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

1 / 4

The higher education system and the government-controlled Academy of Sciences are hampered by bureaucratic interference, state-imposed international isolation, and increasing pressure to toe the Kremlin line on politically sensitive topics, though some academics still express dissenting views. New rules limit the political activity of students after some, like Yegor Zhukov, had been involved in the 2019 Moscow protests. Zhukov was admitted to graduate school in fall 2020, but then quickly had his admission revoked. Memorial Human Rights Center currently lists him as “persecuted without imprisonment.”

In February 2020, the Education and Science Ministry revoked “recommendations” issued in 2019 requiring government-affiliated scientists to seek permission to meet foreign colleagues and report on such meetings to their superiors.

D4 0-4 pts

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

1 / 4

Pervasive, hyperpatriotic propaganda and political repression—particularly since Russian forces’ invasion of Ukraine in 2014—have had a cumulative impact on open and free private discussion, and the chilling effect is exacerbated by growing state efforts to control expression on the internet.

In March 2019, authorities adopted a law imposing fines for insulting officials or state symbols through the use of electronic media. The Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights called the law vague, warning it was subject to abuse.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	1 / 4
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The government restricts freedom of assembly. Overwhelming police responses, the excessive use of force, routine arrests, and harsh fines and prison sentences have discouraged unsanctioned protests, while pro-Kremlin groups are able to demonstrate freely. Despite the risks, thousands of people have turned out for a series of antigovernment demonstrations in recent years.

Obtaining permission to hold a protest or rally by groups opposing the Kremlin is extremely difficult. At the regional level, extensive territorial restrictions prohibit assemblies in as much as 70 percent of public space. While some of these restrictions have been invalidated over the years—in prominent Constitutional Court cases in 2019 and 2020—authorities can ban rallies based on “public interest” grounds. In December 2020, two new laws were adopted by the Duma prohibiting single-person pickets and requiring protest organizers to fill out extensive paperwork.

In May 2020, the parliament increased the penalties under Article 212.1 that regulate public gatherings. The Investigative Committee used the updated code in July to file charges against Yulia Galiamina, a member of the Moscow city council and frequent critic of the Russian president, for participating in several protests. In December, Galiamina was convicted and given a two-year suspended sentence.

Unsanctioned protests in Khabarovsk lasted over 150 days, spurred on after the arrest of Governor Sergei Furgal in July 2020. Although the authorities ignored many of the demonstrations, they began arresting activists in October. Furgal, a member of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s opposition party, had defeated a United Russia candidate in the 2018 elections.

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 continued its relentless campaign against NGOs in 2020. Authorities impede activities in part by requiring groups that receive foreign funding and are deemed to engage in political activity to register as “foreign agents.” This designation, which is interpreted by much of the Russian public as denoting a foreign spying operation, mandates onerous registration requirements, obliges groups to tag their materials with a “foreign agent” label, and generally makes it extremely difficult for them to pursue their objectives. In December 2020, Putin extended the provisions of the foreign agent law to recognize individuals and informal organizations as potential foreign agents.

Political activities addressed in the law include organizing gatherings, observing elections, issuing public statements aimed at changing legislation, distributing opinions about government decisions, and conducting and publishing public opinion polls. The law also expands the definition of “foreign support” beyond financing and makes it the responsibility of individuals to self-declare their status as foreign agents, or risk fines or prison time. New punishments for violations of the law include up to five years of forced labor in a colony.

By the end of 2020, the Justice Ministry had classified 75 groups as “foreign agents.” Among the new designees are No to Violence, which works to recriminalize domestic violence and help its victims. Separately, a total of 29 foreign NGOs have been deemed “undesirable organizations” on the grounds that they threaten national security, including the Jamestown Foundation, Project Harmony, Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting, and groups related to Falun Gong. This designation gives authorities the power to issue a range of sanctions against the groups and individuals who work with them. In December, the Justice Ministry added five individuals to its list of mass media foreign agents, two of whom are

not members of the media: human rights defender Lev Ponomarev and artist Daria Apakhonchich.

Other forms of harassment and intimidation hinder NGO activities. Aleksey Navalny had to close his Anti-Corruption Foundation in July 2020, due to a lawsuit filed by Putin associate Yevgeny Prigozhin. Navalny released videos that revealed Prigozhin's company sold spoiled food to Moscow's schoolchildren.

E3 0-4 pts

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

2 / 4

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

The judiciary lacks independence from the executive branch, and career advancement is effectively tied to compliance with Kremlin preferences. The Presidential Personnel Commission and court chairmen control the appointment and reappointment of the country's judges, who tend to be promoted from inside the judicial system rather than gaining independent experience as lawyers. Amendments to the constitution adopted in 2020 give the president power to remove judges on the Constitutional Court

and the Supreme Court, with the support of the Federation Council, further damaging the already negligible independence of the judiciary.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

1 / 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 political leadership and its allies. Many Russians have consequently sought justice from international courts, but a 2015 law authorizes the Russian judiciary to overrule the decisions of such bodies, and it has since done so on a number of occasions.

Memorial Human Rights Center counted 349 people, including 61 political and 288 religious prisoners in detention at the end of 2020, a marked rise from its 2018 count of 195 prisoners. Those counted included participants of the 2019 Moscow election protests, human rights activists, and advocates for ethnic minority groups.

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 so as to avoid leaving visible injuries. Prisons are overcrowded and unsanitary; inmates lack access to health care and are subject to abuse by guards. In August 2018, *Novaya Gazeta* posted videos of guards engaging in organized beatings of prisoners in Yaroslavl. The authorities arrested at least 12 guards at the prison after a public outcry, but the NGO Public Verdict reported systematic abuse at another prison in the region in December of that year. In July 2019, Public Verdict released another video showing continued abuse at Yaroslavl. In

November 2020, courts convicted 11 prison guards of torture and gave them three- to four- year sentences; the prison directors were acquitted.

Parts of the country, especially the North Caucasus, suffer from high levels of violence; targets include officials, Islamist insurgents, and civilians. Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov is accused of using abductions, torture, extrajudicial killings, and other forms of violence to maintain control. This activity sometimes occurs beyond Russian borders: Kadyrov is suspected of arranging the assassination of asylum seekers and political opponents who have fled the country.

F4 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

Immigrants and ethnic minorities—particularly those who appear to be from the Caucasus or Central Asia—face governmental and societal discrimination and harassment. Constitutional amendments establish the primacy of the Russian language within the state, favoring by implication ethnic Russians.

LGBT+ people are also subject to considerable discrimination, which has worsened in the last decade. Since 2013, a federal law banning the dissemination of information on “nontraditional sexual relationships” has been in force, making public discussion of homosexuality illegal. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled the law discriminatory in 2017, saying it violated freedom of expression. The ECHR also ruled that Russia was violating human rights by prohibiting LGBT+ demonstrations in 2018. Nevertheless, the law remains in force.

Chechnya remains particularly dangerous for LGBT+ people, with authorities launching a crackdown in January 2019 that ensnared nearly 40 people. According to the Russian LGBT Network, an LGBT+ advocacy group, they were identified when police seized the phone of an LGBT+ social media group’s administrator and accessed its contacts. Two detainees reportedly died after they were tortured by police. In May 2019,

Maksim Lapunov became the first survivor of a previous 2017 crackdown to file charges at the ECHR, after efforts to have his case heard in Russia failed.

In March 2020, LGBT+ and feminist activist Yulia Tsvetkova was released from house arrest in Khabarovsk on charges of distributing pornography. She faces a six-year prison sentence if convicted in the ongoing case. In 2019, Tsvetkova was fined 50,000 rubles (\$720) for administrating two social media pages, one featuring the work of female artists and the other addressing LGBT+ issues.

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?

2 / 4

The government places some restrictions on freedoms of movement and residence. 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 ethnic minorities and migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Most Russians are free to travel abroad, but more than four million employees tied to the military and security services were banned from foreign travel under rules issued in 2014.

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

Power and 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.

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?

2 / 4

Constitutional amendments adopted in 2020 define marriage as between a man and a woman, a change that makes it impossible to pass legislation legalizing same-sex marriage. The Kremlin used homophobic campaign advertisements to support the amendment's adoption.

Domestic violence receives little attention from the authorities. Instead, domestic violence survivors who kill abusers in self-defense are commonly imprisoned; as many as 80 percent of women imprisoned in Russia may fall under this category. In 2017, Putin signed a law that decriminalized acts of domestic violence that do not result in permanent physical harm. The new law also relieved police from the obligation of automatically opening domestic violence cases, transferring that burden to survivors. During Russia's COVID-19 lockdown, Russian NGOs reported a doubling of domestic violence cases, while official police statistics reported a decrease. In December 2020, the Justice Ministry listed the NGO Nasiliu.net, which fights gender-based violence, as a "foreign agent."

In July 2019, the European Court of Human Rights found that Russia had violated the rights of citizens to be free from torture and inhuman treatment. The Court ruled in favor of Valeriya Volodina, who had experienced extreme physical and psychological abuse from her former husband over the course of several years. Three separate judges found that the severity of the treatment amounted to torture, and declared that

the state's negligence in combatting domestic violence amounted to discrimination against women.

Official tolerance of domestic violence was put to the test again in 2020, when Muscovite sisters Angelina, Krestina, and Maria Khachatryan were charged with their father's 2018 murder, despite a subsequent investigation revealing his history of physical and sexual abuse. The case sparked controversy in Russia, fostering protests and calls for legal reform. By December, murder charges were recommended against the two older sisters, Krestina and Angelina, while Maria faced a separate trial; their cases remained open at year's end.

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. Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has spoken in favor of polygamy and sought to compel divorced couples to remarry.

G4 0-4 pts

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

2 / 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. The US State Department's 2020 *Trafficking in Persons Report* criticizes Russia's lack of significant efforts to address trafficking, despite some convictions of traffickers, identification of victims, and return of Russian children from Iraq and Syria. The government enforces a policy of forced labor and records a far lower number of victims than the estimated scope of the problem would suggest. Victims are routinely detained, deported, and prosecuted for activity they were forced to participate in.



On Russia

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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

20/100 Not Free

Internet Freedom Score

30/100 Not Free

Other Years

2020

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