

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Russia

NOT FREE

13
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	4 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	9 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

16/100 **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 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 2023

- The Russian military's full-scale invasion of Ukraine continued into its second year, and there were few major changes in the front line despite intense fighting and high casualty rates. Ukrainian attacks struck Russian territory on several occasions, including drone strikes on Moscow, military airfields, and the border region of Belgorod.
- In March, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for President Putin, accusing him of the war crime of unlawful deportation and transfer of children from Ukraine. Evidence of other war crimes and crimes against humanity by Russian forces continued to mount.
- In June, the state-funded private military company Wagner Group, under the leadership of Yevgeny Prigozhin, initiated a short-lived rebellion and march on Moscow after the Defense Ministry moved to incorporate Wagner into the formal military structure. Prigozhin soon agreed to stand down and withdraw to Belarus, but he died in August when his private plane was destroyed under suspicious circumstances.
- The Russian government continued to crack down on domestic dissent, adding to a total of nearly 20,000 detentions for alleged antiwar activities since February 2022. Concerns over the well-being of two political prisoners, opposition politicians Aleksey Gorinov and Aleksey Navalny, grew in December, when both disappeared from the prisons where they had been serving their sentences. They were located weeks later, having been secretly transferred to different facilities.
- In November, the Supreme Court designated the "international LGBT public movement" as an extremist organization, intensifying the regime's

persecution of LGBT+ people and effectively prohibiting any advocacy on their behalf.

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.

As with past elections, 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 notably opaque. He was officially credited with 77 percent of the vote in a field of eight candidates.

In December 2023, Putin announced his intent to seek another term in the election scheduled for March 2024.

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 main Kremlin-approved opposition parties—the Communist Party, A Just Russia, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, and the New People party—won 118 seats combined. Three smaller parties and five independents won 8 seats. Voter turnout stood at 52 percent. The three-day election featured the first use of an opaque online voting system.

The OSCE was unable to observe the polls due to government-imposed restrictions on the number of observers. The Russian election-monitoring group Golos and independent media reported violations including vote buying, pressure on voters, “clone” candidates, and ballot stuffing. Authorities pressured Apple and Google into removing the Navalny-backed Smart Voting mobile application from their online stores. Some opposition candidates were not permitted to register. After delayed online-voting results were released, pro-Kremlin candidates were declared the victors in Moscow districts where challengers had built early leads, prompting further accusations of fraud.

Direct gubernatorial elections were held in 21 regions in September 2023. Voters in 16 regions also participated in regional legislative elections. United Russia won all of the 19 gubernatorial races it contested and all regional party-list votes but one. The polls were marred by the absence of genuine opposition candidates, ballot stuffing, intimidation, anomalous electronic voting results, and the use of prefilled ballots.

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 400 criminal and administrative offenses cannot pursue candidacy. In 2021, Golos estimated that nearly one-tenth of all Russian adults had effectively been denied the right to run. 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.

In May 2023, Putin signed legislation allowing elections to take place in portions of the country that were under martial law. As of late 2023, the only Russian-controlled territories under martial law were in 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

The multiparty system is carefully managed by the Kremlin, which tolerates only superficial competition against United Russia. Several new parties qualified to contest the 2021 Duma elections, but they were apparently designed to encourage division and confusion among the opposition, and none posed a significant political threat to the regime. The Justice Ministry has repeatedly refused to register Navalny’s political party. In 2021, Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation was declared an extremist organization, effectively preventing anyone associated with it from running for office.

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 then.

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. Navalny 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 upon his return in January 2021 for violating probation. In 2022, he received a nine-year prison sentence on embezzlement and contempt-of-court charges. His prison term was extended by at least 10 years in August 2023, when he was convicted on extremism charges.

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.

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

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 only 17 percent of Duma seats and 19 percent of Federation Council seats. Few women serve as cabinet members, and many issues of importance to women are not prominent in Russian politics.

LGBT+ people face major challenges in pursuing their political interests. In November 2023, the Supreme Court ruled that the “international LGBT public movement” was an extremist organization, effectively banning any advocacy on behalf of this community.

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. 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.

In 2022, Putin exempted government officials, including individuals deployed to Ukraine, from following a 2008 anticorruption law that mandated the disclosure of income and assets. The presidential decree also allowed Russian forces in Ukraine to receive "rewards and gifts" deemed humanitarian in nature.

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 during 2023 that most court verdicts and statistics related to soldiers who desert or refuse service were no longer published. There was a distinct lack of transparency around the June 2023 mutiny

of the Wagner mercenary group and the suspicious death of its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, in an August plane crash.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because authorities have increasingly withheld information related to the invasion of Ukraine, including economic data, statistics on casualties and cases of desertion, and facts surrounding the mutiny and death of mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin.

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 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. 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.

Since the February 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.

The crackdown has extended to foreign journalists as well. In March 2023, authorities arrested Evan Gershkovich, a correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and a US citizen, for alleged espionage. He remained in detention at year’s end. In October, Alsu Kurmasheva, a Prague-based journalist for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty who holds US and Russian citizenship, was detained for failing to register as a foreign agent. In December, she faced additional charges of spreading “fake” information about Russia’s military.

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. Antiterrorism legislation approved in 2016 grants authorities the power to suppress religious groups that are deemed extremist.

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. More than 700 Jehovah’s Witnesses had been charged with or convicted of extremism by the end of 2023.

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 October 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 area. In one high-profile case, a mob stormed an airport in Dagestan in search of 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.

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. 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 the school curriculum.

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. 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, criminal cases related to antiwar activity had been opened against nearly 800 defendants by December 2023, with charges such as spreading false news and discrediting the Russian military. In addition to the growing number of criminal cases, thousands of cases have been filed under the code of administrative offenses, including more than 2,800 for discrediting the armed forces in 2023 alone. 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. However, denunciations from civilian informants and other sources have become increasingly common over the past two years. For example, Roskomnadzor reported receiving a total of more than 280,000 denunciations in 2022, most of which pertained to illegal online content.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because authorities have initiated hundreds of criminal and thousands of administrative cases against citizens accused of speech-related offenses since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, further deterring public and private expression of dissent.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	0/4
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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 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. Authorities can ban rallies on vaguely defined "public interest" grounds. People who are labeled as foreign agents are prohibited from organizing public events. In addition, authorities employ an expansive surveillance apparatus to monitor, identify, and arrest demonstrators.

The government has cracked down on public assemblies following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. OVD-Info reported that more than 19,000 arrests had been made at antiwar demonstrations between February 2022 and December 2023. Many detainees have been physically abused during or after arrest.

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 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 mid-2023, a total of 649 organizations and individuals were listed as foreign agents. Russian human rights NGOs that were ordered to close on various grounds during the year included the SOVA Center and the Moscow Helsinki Group.

Foreign and international NGOs can be designated as undesirable organizations and forced to shutter any operations in the country. In 2023, 53 entities received this designation, up from 23 in 2022. Those newly listed included Transparency

International and the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum. In August, Putin signed a law that criminalized collaboration with unregistered foreign NGOs.

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. In 2022, a Moscow court dissolved the independent Journalists' and Media Workers' Union a month after it was fined for "discrediting the Russian armed forces" in a statement against the invasion of Ukraine.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

1/4

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?

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 regime and its allies. Under legislation signed in 2021, 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 have themselves faced prosecution. Notably, three of Aleksey Navalny's lawyers were arrested in October 2023 on charges of extremism.

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. An April 2023 law repealed a previous rule ensuring that people accused of violating military draft laws would have access to a public defender. In addition, judgments in such cases would no longer be suspended during appeals, meaning defendants could be forced into service before a final ruling.

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.

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 a September 2023 UN special report, detained individuals are at risk of death due to "the persistent 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 December 2023, Navalny and another jailed opposition politician, Aleksey Gorinov, lost contact with their lawyers and families for weeks, during which they were secretly transferred to other prisons. Both had experienced deteriorating health, and the disappearances added to concerns about their survival.

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. During 2023, Ukrainian drone strikes targeted central Moscow, military airfields, and locations near the Ukrainian border. Limited raids by Ukrainian-backed ground troops in the border regions of Bryansk and Belgorod were also reported. In December, more than 20 people were allegedly killed in a Ukrainian drone and rocket attack on Belgorod.

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 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 ethnic Russians by implication.

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.

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 November 2023 decision to designate the “international LGBT public movement” as an extremist organization effectively outlawed many aspects of LGBT+ people’s lives. After the ruling, police raided a number of businesses that served the community, and other venues and organizations were forced to close.

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

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 May 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. Under the April 2023 law on conscription, draft notices are served electronically, and draftees are immediately banned from leaving the country once a summons is issued.

A law that took effect in December 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 March 2023, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for President Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian commissioner for children's rights; they were accused of the war crime of unlawful deportation and transfer of children from occupied Ukraine to Russia. While the exact figure is unknown, as of late 2023 Ukrainian officials said they had identified more than 19,000 Ukrainian children who had been transferred without the consent of their families or guardians. Russian officials stated in July that some 4.8 million Ukrainians, including more than 700,000 children, had chosen to take refuge in Russia since February 2022.

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.

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. An April 2023 decree allowed for the introduction of "external management" and seizure of assets owned by legal entities and individuals from "unfriendly" countries.

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 relieved police of the obligation to initiate cases, transferring that burden to survivors. Over 12,000 women may have died in domestic violence incidents between 2011 and 2019, according to a 2021 report published by the Russian Consortium of Women's NGOs.

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.

In July 2023, Putin signed legislation that outlawed nearly all medical assistance for transgender people, including surgical procedures. 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 November 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.

The government took further steps in 2023 to encourage women to have more children and 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.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the government imposed new legal restrictions on the personal autonomy of transgender people, and because the Supreme Court effectively banned any expression of LGBT+ identity as “extremist.”

G4 0-4 pts

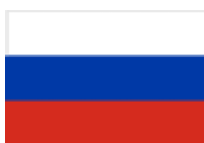
Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

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.

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 April 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

Global Freedom Score

13/100 **Not Free**

Internet Freedom Score

21/100 **Not Free**

Other Years

2023

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ADDRESS

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

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info@freedomhouse.org

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press@freedomhouse.org

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