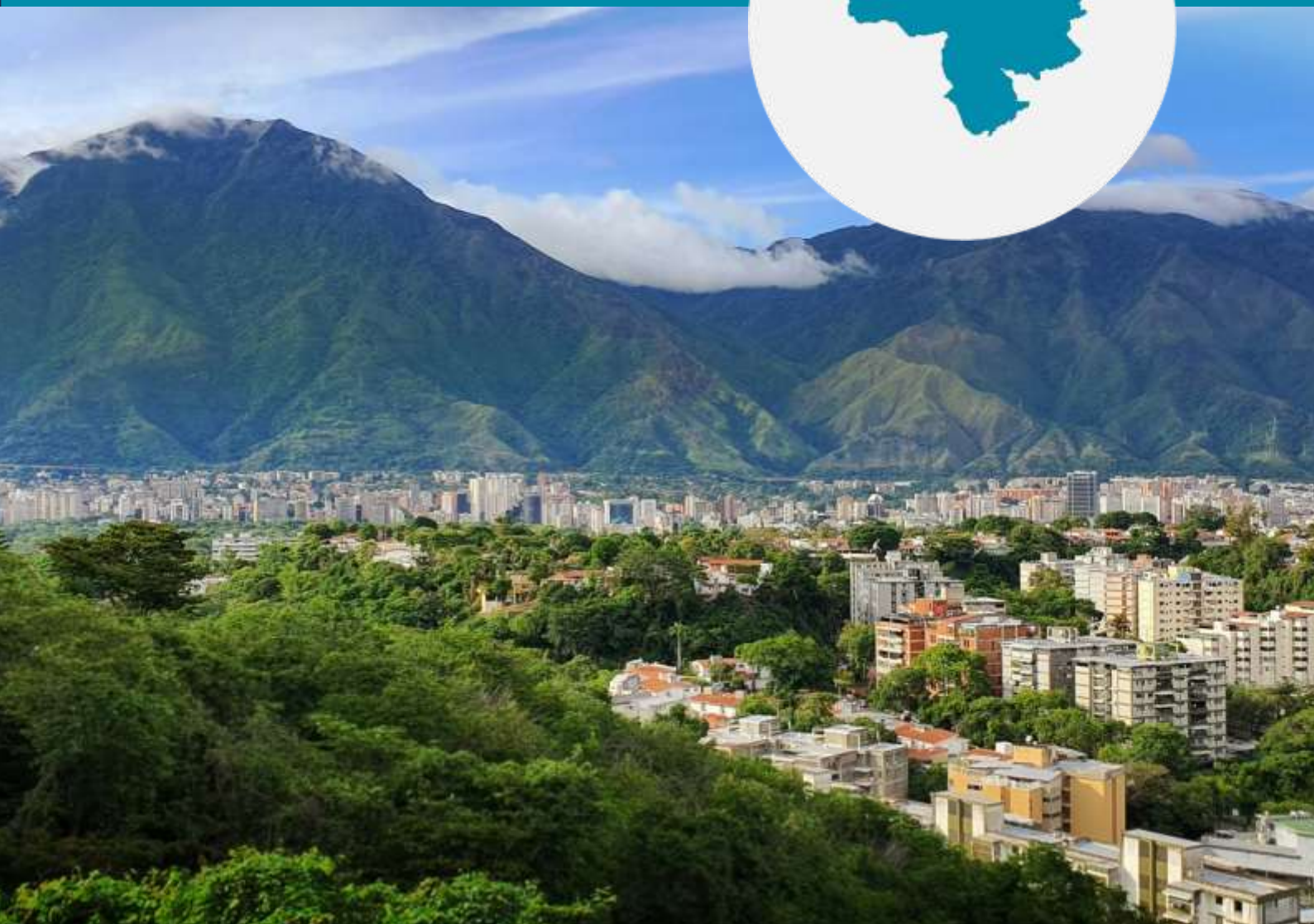


# Venezuela

## Country Focus Report

2025



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# A) An Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

## SIX ENABLING PRINCIPLES

- 1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms**
- 2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework**
- 3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources**
- 4. Open and Responsive State**
- 5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society**
- 6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment**

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the 6 principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

## Brief Overview of the Country Context

Over the past year and a half, the context of civic space in Venezuela has been marked by three key events. The first was the presidential elections in July 2024 and the events that followed, which marked a turning point in the country's political and social context, characterised by an intensification of repression and criminalisation of protest, harassment and arbitrary detentions, not only against demonstrators, but also against activists and human rights defenders.

The second was the approval and entry into force of the Law on the Control, Regularisation, Operation and Financing of Non-Governmental Organisations and Non-Profit Social Organisations, which represents a significant setback to the exercise of the right to freedom of association by imposing excessive requirements for the registration and operation of organisations, the establishment of a disproportionate sanctions regime, the concentration of extraordinary powers in the executive branch, and the lack of clear regulations, all of which have created a climate of legal uncertainty that affects the continuity of the organisations' work, even though the law has not been applied systematically.

The third event is the drastic reduction in international funding as a result of decisions taken by the United States government in early 2024, compounded by the lack of support from the State and the limited availability of resources from the private sector, which are insufficient to cover all needs.

The official discourse towards civil society organisations is characterised by stigmatisation, the dissemination of false information, and threats against individuals and organisations, which has had a significant impact on civic participation. These events are systematically repeated in the digital space, where massive blockades against the media and social networks are also implemented, hindering the exercise of fundamental rights.

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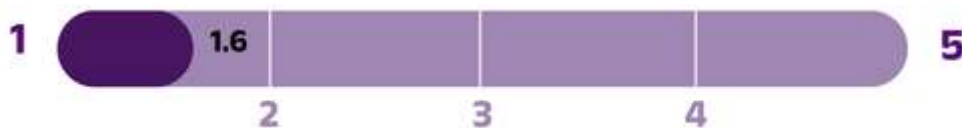


# B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score:<sup>1</sup>



#### 1.1 Freedom of Association

In November 2025, the Law on Oversight, Regularisation, Action and Financing of Non-Governmental Organisations and Non-Profit Social Organisations (hereinafter the Oversight Law) came into force, representing a milestone in the history of civil society organisation regulation in the country and significantly shaping the environment. The process leading to the final approval of this Act [began in 2023](#) and was [characterised](#) by a lack of publicity and [transparency](#). Before its approval, several unofficial versions were released, the last of which was finally approved and published in the Official Gazette. It contains some substantial differences from the draft initially presented, which contained even more restrictive provisions than the version finally approved.

Finally, the law was approved in August 2025, but it was not published until three months [later](#), on 15 November 2025, in a special Official Gazette which, despite being dated November, was not circulated until early December 2025.

Among other things, which are discussed in greater depth in subsequent sections of this report, the Law establishes an authorisation regime for new organisations created after the instrument's entry into force, whereby the organisation will only acquire legal personality once its registration has been authorised by the administrative registration authorities; in the case of established organisations, it established a series of obligations to adapt statutes, internal

<sup>1</sup>This is a rebased score derived from the [CIVICUS Monitor rating](#) published in December 2025.

rules, and the presentation of accounting and financial documents that establish the origin of funds and identify donors, under penalty of cancellation of registration and loss of legal personality.

The text also establishes a series of administrative sanctions with very high fines in which, in the highly diverse context of organisations in Venezuela, the eventual imposition of fines and submission to the procedures provided for in the Law would represent a technical closure due to inability to pay the fines and comply with requirements. These concerns have been reported to international bodies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ([IACHR](#)).

Although no cases of application of the Law have been documented since its publication, some organisations have decided to close their operations altogether or to operate from abroad. Notable cases include Alimenta la Solidaridad, which decided to close its operations due to the difficulties of complying with the requirements established in the Law, and [Transparencia Venezuela](#), the Venezuelan chapter of Transparency International, which decided to operate from abroad due to the closure of civic space and the impossibility of continuing its work in the field. On the other hand, in 2024, the Simón Bolívar Organic [Law](#) against Imperialist Blockade and in Defence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was passed, which has been described as an instrument that facilitates the imposition of [criminal](#) and administrative sanctions against individuals or organisations that [criticise](#) or disregard government institutions, and also establishes a basis for the criminalisation of international cooperation, which has an impact on the work of civil society organisations in the country.

Likewise, during the second half of 2024, the National Assembly approved in first discussion the Law against [Fascism](#), a bill that has been described as dangerous due to its conceptual [ambiguity](#) and breadth, which could also severely affect civic space. Several Special [Rapporteurs](#) of the United Nations System spoke out against the approval of this law.

As can be seen, the laws and bills mentioned above significantly affect civic space and represent a threat to the continuity of the work of civil society organisations, many of which do important humanitarian work. The impact on the most vulnerable populations, in the context of the complex humanitarian emergency that has persisted in the country since 2016, will therefore be significant.

## **1.2 Freedom of Peaceful Assembly:**

The presidential elections in July 2024 shaped the country's political and social context. The year [2024](#) ended with 5,226 protests, of which 2,722 (52%) were aimed at demanding and defending civil and political rights, most of which revolved around protests against the official results of the presidential election, which were disputed by the opposition and questioned by electoral observation missions.

Venezuelan organisations also documented an escalation in the repression and persecution of protesters and dissidents, as well as their relatives, and the implementation of systematic police persecution operations.

The wave of post-election protests in 2024 was accompanied by systematic restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, characterised by the excessive use of force by state security forces, the use of armed civilian groups known as ["colectivos"](#) to repress protesters, mass arrests of demonstrators and the general criminalisation of protest. These events were documented by [international](#) organisations and by the United [Nations](#) High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Fact-Finding [Mission](#), which report a sustained pattern of harassment and arbitrary detentions of human rights defenders, protesters, and even minors. Regarding these events, the National Executive itself acknowledged the [detention](#) of

more than 2,000 people in the context of post-election protests, including up to 173 adolescents, as documented by the United [Nations](#) High Commissioner for Human Rights and Venezuelan civil society organisations. Several of the [adolescents](#) were also charged with terrorism offences in the context of the 2024 post-election protests and faced judicial proceedings riddled with irregularities. Venezuelan organisations have documented that in 2024 there were nearly 2,600 violations of personal liberty, 96% of which were associated with post-election repression, resulting in nearly 2,400 arbitrary detentions. In 2025, the [pattern](#) has continued, characterised by the detention and [harassment](#) of [activists](#) calling for the [release](#) of people detained in the context of post-election protests and the detention of various union leaders from the [education](#), [justice](#) and [health](#) sectors, among others, for [demanding](#) improvements and respect for their rights. In this regard, Venezuela ranks among the worst countries in the world in terms of [trade union](#) rights. The Special [Rapporteur](#) on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association has identified Venezuela as a country where there is systematic and widespread repression of activism and political opposition, as well as repression and harassment of peaceful demonstrators. As an example of the impact of repression following the electoral events, in [August](#) 2025 there were 52% fewer protests than in the same month in 2024. This year demands for civil and political rights continue to dominate the focus of demonstrations.

### **1.3 Freedom of Expression:**

The right to freedom of expression in Venezuela has also been linked to the impact of the post-election events of July 2024. During [2024](#), at least 311 cases of violations of the right to freedom of expression were documented, representing a 52% increase over 2023. Similarly, up to 619 complaints of violations of this right were [documented](#), representing a 61% increase over 2023. During 2024, there were up to 99 arrests for exercising freedom of expression, affecting at least 24 journalists and press workers. In total, 28 arrests of individuals for posts on social media or the internet were documented. As of June 2025, journalists' [unions](#) counted at least 16 journalists and press workers deprived of their liberty. In terms of media closures, [Venezuelan](#) organisations have documented the closure of 23 media outlets since August 2024, including 21 radio stations and 32 blocked websites, including the social network X and the messaging app Signal. In general, the types of violations recorded are: intimidation, arbitrary detentions, judicial and verbal harassment, censorship and blocking of digital media, media closures, digital surveillance, and citizen denunciations. Restrictions on freedom of expression in the country have also been facilitated by a restrictive legal and regulatory framework that includes, among others, the NGO Oversight Law, which restricts the work of civil society organisations, including human rights organisations; the Anti-Fascism Bill; the Simón Bolívar Law; the creation of the National Cybersecurity Council, which allows for permanent surveillance of the digital space; and the Anti-Hate Law, which since 2017 has been used to justify detentions and censorship of the media.

### **Conclusion:**

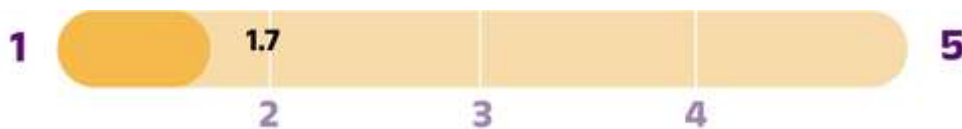
In Venezuela, the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression are severely restricted by a repressive legal framework and political and social context. The approval of the NGO Oversight Law has been a fundamental milestone affecting the work of civil society, and although organisations continue to operate and are committed to continuing their work, conditions are more restrictive. Added to this are the ongoing violations of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, creating a hostile environment where protecting human rights involves serious risks for citizens and civil society.

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# PRINCIPLE SCORE

## 2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



### 2.1 Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

With the entry into force of the NGO Oversight Act (November 2024), there was a [regression](#) in the process for establishing an organisation. Prior to the Act's entry into force, establishing an organisation simply required notification to the administrative authority, ensuring that the articles of association indicated the organisation's name, registered office, purpose and form of administration and management.

Under the new [Act](#), there are now up to 12 requirements that must be met by the organisation's statutory documents in order for it to be registered, which is a regression in terms of the right to freedom of association. In the case of already established organisations, the new law requires that their statutes be brought into line with legal requirements, establishing time limits of 60 and 180 days for the submission of relevant documents (annual inventory update, balance sheets, list of donations, donors and others) and the adaptation of their statutes. Compliance with these requirements means that new or existing organisations will have to incur significant expenses in order to provide the documentation required by the legal text, with the risk that registration will not be authorised or will be cancelled and, as a result, the organisations will lose their legal personality, which poses a risk to the legal continuity of already established organisations.

The new law establishes a dual registration system, one under the responsibility of the existing Public Registries and one under the responsibility of the Ministry of the People's Power for the Interior and Justice, which at the time of this report has not yet been created. This implies the imposition of dual administrative control and the concentration of oversight powers over civil society organisations in the executive branch. For its part, the executive branch acquires a series of extraordinary sanctioning powers, ranging from the imposition of heavy fines and the preventive suspension of activities without judicial control, to the cancellation of registration.



Reports from civil society networks show that there are no uniform criteria among registration authorities regarding the application of the law. Some registries requested balance sheets and financial information from between one and 10 years prior, imposed additional requirements not covered by the regulations, and some even refused to provide receipts for paperwork.

Likewise, civil society networks have also reported significant delays in the registration of documents. In this regard, few organisations have managed to register and adapt their documentation in accordance with the law, while others are still waiting for a response to the documents they have submitted. This is all due to a lack of clear and uniform application of the legal text, which, moreover, has no regulations to clarify its implementation. This situation creates difficulties that could affect the normal functioning of organisations in the medium and long term.

## **2.2 Operational Environment**

Article 13 of the Audit Law establishes that the statutes of organisations must include, among other elements, their purpose, territorial scope, disciplinary regime and form of internal administration. Although some of these obligations are new with respect to the regime provided for in the Civil Code, a literal interpretation of the law indicates that there is no impediment to organisations defining their own internal governance and objectives.

However, the lack of adequate regulation and the application of diverse criteria may give rise to risks of arbitrariness.

Some organisations have reported that when they submitted their amended statutes, registry officials demanded changes to the proposed governance provisions without any justification, forcing the organisation to redraft the documentation in order to comply with the deadlines set out in the regulations.

Before the Act came into force, organisations had to comply with all legislation applicable to their particular activity, such as labour or tax laws, which establish a series of obligations and penalties. The new Act adds new administrative controls that did not previously exist and, according to some [organisations](#), could facilitate the application of several penalties for the same offence.

## **2.3 Protection Against Interference**

Despite constitutional guarantees protecting freedom of association, the new Oversight Law establishes an uncertain control system and an excessive penalty framework, which could be used to attack civil society organisations that may be seen as contrary to the interests of the State.

It is important to note that, almost a year after its entry into force, there have been no cases of direct application of the law. However, networks of civil society organisations in Venezuela have reported situations in which some organisations have been sanctioned by administrative authorities through the application of a law establishing a special tax for the protection of pensions.

Although these cases cannot be classified as an application of the Fiscalisation Law, they do highlight the risks of fiscalisation to which organisations are exposed.

On the other hand, the Audit Law has reduced the time limits for filing administrative appeals against acts of refusal of registration. Thus, Article 42 of the Registry and Notary Law established a period of six months from the notification of the denial to file the respective

appeal, while the new law establishes a period of only 30 consecutive days, which is a significant deterioration in the legal tools for protection against administrative actions.

## **Conclusion**

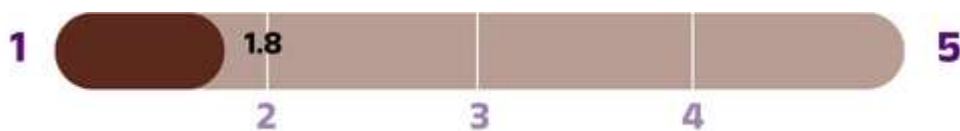
In general terms, the entry into force of the Oversight Law represents a step backwards in the regulatory and operational framework applicable to civil society organisations in Venezuela, as it imposes a series of more complex requirements that make registration more difficult, increase management costs and grant disproportionate powers of control and sanction. The lack of adequate regulations also hinders uniform application, favouring arbitrariness in enforcement. Finally, despite the existence of constitutional guarantees protecting freedom of association, the Law facilitates interference and the imposition of possible sanctions on organisations and limits effective means of defence against such actions, which affects their functioning and sustainability.



# PRINCIPLE SCORE

## 3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



### 3.1 Accessibility

Access to international cooperation funding has been significantly hampered by measures taken by the [United States](#) government [since January 2025](#), which have affected international [cooperation](#) funding [globally](#). In the case of the Venezuela Humanitarian Response Programme, during [2024](#), cooperation from the United States of America contributed just over £94 million, equivalent to almost 53% of the total amount raised for the Humanitarian Response Plan, while in [2025](#), the United States' contribution has been just over \$2 million, reflecting a sharp reduction in funding.

The funding cuts have had a significant impact on the operations of Venezuelan civil society [organisations](#) which, despite not receiving funds directly, participate in and implement projects within the clusters that make up the Humanitarian Response Plan in the country. This has had a major impact on the humanitarian sector, where the greatest needs of the population are concentrated. According to cooperation figures, in [2024](#) the Venezuela Humanitarian Response Programme reached 3.5 million people (63% of the target). However, in [2025](#) and up to the date of this report, the Programme has only reached 1.7 million people, i.e. just over half of the previous year's reach.

This situation is compounded by the lack of direct funding opportunities through the State for the implementation of programmes and a very limited supply of private sector funding in the country which, despite tax incentives that allow tax deductions for contributions to non-profit organisations and initiatives, is not sufficient to cover the funding needs of civil society organisations in the country and is mostly focused on financing educational or humanitarian assistance initiatives.

### 3.2 Effectiveness

Under the new Tax Law, organisations are required to report annually on the origin of their resources, expressly indicating the donors, their origin and the amount contributed, which could represent a threat to access to funding, taking into account also the [statements](#) made

by some government [leaders](#) on these issues, stigmatising international [cooperation](#). Similarly, changes implemented in international cooperation by the United States affected the focus and objectives of civil society organisations' programmes, as funding was limited for initiatives classified as "DEI" (diversity, equity and inclusion), which were excluded from the US government's agenda. This has affected the implementation of programmes related to LGBTQI+ rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and even issues related to gender-based violence.

### **3.3 Sustainability**

The few private sector funding initiatives in the country, referred to above, consist of small amounts and are short-term, which are not sufficient to sustain operations over long periods of time, particularly for small organisations. This has forced several organisations to make cuts and restructure their staff, objectives and activities.

In the context of the new Taxation Law, in the absence of a clear complementary regulatory framework to structure its implementation, there is no certainty as to how the State will be able to apply the law. However, the regulations establish control over access to international financing since, among other things, they require the identification of donors and, in the context of the stigmatisation of international aid described in previous sections, this further compromises the ability to access long-term financing.

### **Conclusion**

Changes in international cooperation that have affected international financing, together with the absence of state support, limited private investment, and new control measures imposed by the new Control Law, seriously affect the accessibility, efficiency, and sustainability of the work of Venezuelan civil society organisations. This will have an impact on operations, which will have consequences for humanitarian programmes and key initiatives in human rights, diversity, and social inclusion.

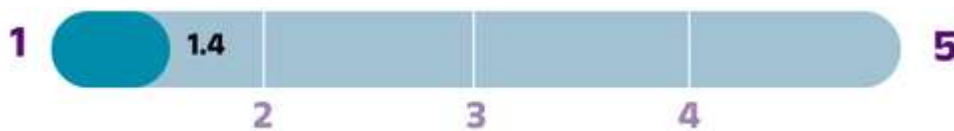
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# PRINCIPLE SCORE

## 4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



### 4.1 Transparency

Venezuela has a Transparency and Access to Information Act, which was last amended in 2021 and, according to international [organisations](#), has imposed limits on access to public information. The current regulatory framework does not establish a body to guarantee access to information, nor does it impose sanctions on officials who deny access to requests for information from any third party. Furthermore, in terms of public disclosure, the National Budget Law has not been published since at least [2017](#), despite being [presented](#) to parliament and subsequently approved, which represents a limitation on the right of access to public information and limits civil society participation in public management. On the other hand, the Venezuelan State has maintained a policy of generalised opacity, characterised by not publishing official figures. An example of this policy of opacity is economic figures: no inflation figures have been published since October [2024](#), when the last [indicator](#) on the subject was [published](#). For more than a decade, civil society organisations have tried to fill the information gap in almost all areas of public management.

Another important example of the opacity of information of public interest was the handling of the results of the July [2024](#) presidential elections, which were described by several international election [observation](#) mechanisms as lacking transparency. As of the date of this report, the National Electoral Council has not published the disaggregated figures for the election, despite a legal obligation to do so, and the body's official [website](#) is offline.

According to the *World Justice Project's* [Rule of Law Index](#), Venezuela ranks last in the global ranking, and in the specific section on open government, which measures the publicity of laws and access to government data, the right to information, civil society participation, and complaint mechanisms, Venezuela ranks 141st out of 143, which highlights the serious deficiencies in transparency and access to information of public interest.

## 4.2 Participation

There are few spaces in which civil society organisations can participate, and there is no sustained policy of openness that allows organisations to participate in the formation of laws or public policies, even though the legislative branch has announced the opening of public consultation processes. Even so, the results of such participation are not known, nor are the organisations or sectors that participate. In the case of the NGO Oversight Law, civil society organisations' participation in the public consultation process and/or the drafting of the legal text was very limited.

The limitation of citizen participation in public consultation processes on regulations is a situation that has been occurring in the country for at least a decade. [Experts](#) have argued that there is Supreme Court jurisprudence that has unjustifiably limited the scope of public consultation, even allowing for the exclusion of this step for reasons of collective interest.

A similar pattern is repeated in the area of international conventions. In the case of Venezuela's review process under the United Nations [Convention](#) Against Corruption, no information on this process has been made available to citizens, nor have any public consultations been held with civil society.

In the humanitarian field, there is greater rapprochement between civil society organisations working in this sector and certain government authorities, where there are opportunities to exert some influence in specific situations to resolve a serious situation, but this has no major long-term impact. However, many of these spaces fall within the framework of the Humanitarian Response Programme coordinated by the United Nations in the field, which means that much of this civil society participation takes place under the umbrella of United Nations agencies.

Finally, in the [electoral context](#), after the presidential elections in July 2024, some citizen groups attempted to file [legal appeals](#) with the Supreme Court of Justice to request the detailed publication of the election results. These efforts were unsuccessful and were also described as reckless. The Bar Associations were even ordered to initiate disciplinary measures against lawyers who supported or assisted in the filing of such appeals. These events have been [documented by various United Nations rapporteurs](#).

## 4.3 Accountability

With regard to accountability, within the context described in the two previous points, there is no evidence of the results of public consultations and other processes in which civil society organisations participate, since participation in such spaces is limited. A review of official websites shows that, despite announcing the supposed participation of social sectors and organisations, no reports on these consultations are published, leading to the conclusion that these processes are not very transparent and do not encourage the participation of diverse sectors, organisations and ways of thinking.

## Conclusion

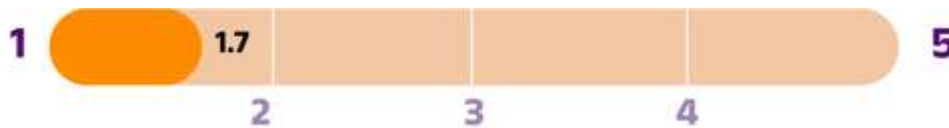
Access to information and participation in matters of public interest in Venezuela is seriously affected. The persistent failure to publish economic figures, information on the management of public finances and, of course, information on election results reflects a systematic policy of restricting access to information, which limits and, in several cases, stigmatises or criminalises participation. Furthermore, the opportunities for participation that are announced in the context of the creation of laws and regulations do not involve broad participation by civil society organisations and other sectors but, rather, are presented as purely declarative mechanisms that do not truly seek participation and social oversight.

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## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



#### 5.1 Public Discourse and Constructive Dialogue

Official public [discourse](#) by [various](#) spokespeople for [the](#) national [government](#) towards civil society is often laden with [stigmatising](#) messages, threats and attempts to discredit defenders, [activists](#) and organisations. It is common practice to use state [media](#) to launch [stigmatising](#) and harassing messages against civil society organisations. According to documentation compiled by civil society [organisations](#), as of September 2025, there have been up to 380 attacks against human rights defenders and organisations in the country. These attacks are characterised by stigmatisation, harassment, intimidation and threats, all framed within a discourse that seeks to portray organisations as the internal enemy and promotes external interference. However, despite the discourse and the context of threats and attacks on civic space, Venezuelan civil society organisations continue to resist, playing an important role in assisting people in need, caring for and accompanying victims of human rights violations, and working to raise awareness and defend the rights of vulnerable people, an effort that has been recognised in various sectors, including the [Centre for Political and Government Studies at the Andrés Bello Catholic University](#).

#### 5.2 Public Perception of Civil Society and Civic Engagement

The national Constitution enshrines Venezuelan participation as a fundamental right, providing guarantees so that any citizen can freely participate in public affairs. However, one of the essential mechanisms of civic participation, which also constitutes the exercise of a political right, is voting.

As explained in this report, the July 2024 presidential elections marked a turning point in the country's political landscape. The entire electoral process and its results were marked by a lack of transparency and accusations of fraud documented by electoral observation missions and national and international [organisations](#), which has deepened the political crisis. In this

context, the political crisis is deepening, polarisation is increasing, and a message of delegitimisation of voting as an [instrument](#) capable of generating political change is taking hold, leading to a decline in civic participation and [the demobilisation](#) of citizens in the exercise of their political rights. This situation was already evident in the elections held in May [2025](#), where turnout was low and [opposition](#) political parties were divided over whether or not [to participate](#) in the elections. Despite this, civil society organisations have struggled to maintain spaces for civic and citizen education in various sectors, as well as providing responses to humanitarian needs. Despite the climate of mistrust in political institutions, civil society organisations have [historically](#) been among the institutions that enjoy the highest level of trust among the population.

Organisations involved in [humanitarian](#) or assistance work are the best known among the population, and in general, non-governmental organisations have been one of the types of associations with the highest level of participation among the population.

Despite the high levels of trust in civil society organisations among the population, [some studies](#) suggest that the level of trust is affected by several factors, including the source of funding. In this regard, levels of trust in organisations decrease when funding comes from foreign governments, while trust increases when it comes from community sources and private companies.

This fragility of trust in organisations could be influenced in part by the government's narrative of stigmatising international cooperation, as described in this report.

The restrictions on civic space imposed by the Oversight Law create a climate of uncertainty and fear that translates into low public confidence in participation in civic spaces for fear of reprisals.

### **5.3 Civic Equality and Inclusion**

Members of the LGBTQI+ community continue to be victims of structural discrimination, which is compounded by the humanitarian and economic crisis, that affects them in a differentiated manner. Community [activists](#) have reported that in 2024, up to 415 cases of violence or discrimination against LGBTQI+ groups were documented in the country, including physical assaults, insults and denial of rights on the basis of sexual orientation.

Likewise, some LGBTQI+ rights activists have had to go into exile due to harassment and threats because of their work. One notable case is that of Yendri Velásquez, who in [2024](#) was detained as he was leaving the country and also had his [passport](#) revoked, a practice that has [been repeated](#) against several activists. Another relevant case that reflects the inequalities between vulnerable groups and populations is that of indigenous [peoples](#), who face [aggressive deterioration in their living conditions](#) and lack adequate access to health services, food, water, and education. Some communities also face the scourge of illegal mining, which has also imposed practices of forced labour and sexual slavery.

### **Conclusion**

The government's discourse towards civil society has been characterised by stigmatisation, threats and discrediting of defenders and organisations through various media, which has worsened since the July 2024 elections and the approval of the Oversight Law at the end of the same year. In 2025, more than 380 attacks against activists, defenders and organisations were documented. Despite this context, civil society organisations continue to play a key role in caring for people in vulnerable situations, defending rights and assisting victims of human



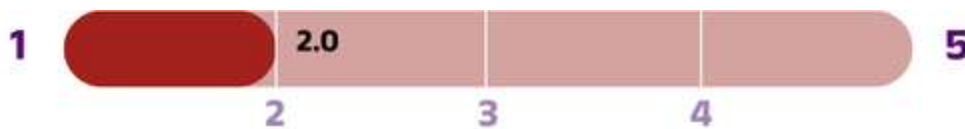
rights violations. Mistrust in voting as a political right to bring about change has limited citizen participation, and the critical situation of LGBTQI+ people and indigenous communities persists.



## PRINCIPLE SCORE

### 6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



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#### 6.1 Digital Rights

The exercise of digital rights and freedoms in the country is marked by increased state [censorship](#) and surveillance in the digital space. Once again, the July 2024 presidential elections have shaped the landscape in this regard. [UN](#) and IACHR [rapporteurs](#) have reported on how digital media blockades have intensified [since July 2024](#).

Multiple national and international organisations have documented systematic blockades of social networks, notably the case of the X network, which has been [blocked](#) since August 2024, and the temporary blockade of [TikTok](#), instant messaging applications such as Signal and [Telegram](#), and [VPN](#) applications, as part of a pattern of restricting access to information and controlling the digital space. As of March [2025](#), at least 949 blocks against various websites in Venezuela were active, and as of September 2025, digital [blocks](#) affecting 61 independent media outlets remain in place.

#### 6.2 Security and Privacy

During [2025](#), there has been an increase in digital [attacks](#) on journalists, characterised by account hacking, identity [theft](#) campaigns, harassment, bullying and online threats, which are intended to be used as tools to discredit and censor journalists, [activists](#) and media outlets, and have even reached figures such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker [Turk](#).

Privacy in the digital space has also been threatened, with various civil society [organisations](#) warning about the use of technologies for mass [control](#) and surveillance of citizens, including call interception, monitoring of social networks and mobile devices, as well as the [hijacking](#) of information communities in applications, which have facilitated access to personal information and user data.

### 6.3 Digital Accessibility

Although official public information on internet and mobile phone access is scarce, it is possible to find information from various sources suggesting that internet penetration and mobile phone access have grown in recent years, although the figures do not compare with those of other countries in the region that show greater and better progress in this area.

Thus, at the beginning of [2025](#), there were some 17.5 million active internet users, representing almost 62% of the population, meaning that more than half of Venezuelans have access to the web, although significant gaps in connectivity persist in rural areas, which have less access to adequate technological infrastructure. In terms of mobile telephony, by 2025 there are estimated to be some 22.5 million active users, equivalent to just over 79% of the population, making mobile devices an essential tool for accessing information, although the speed and quality of mobile connection services may be lacking in terms of coverage.

Notwithstanding the above, according to Freedom House, in [2024](#) Venezuela is listed as "Not Free" in its *Freedom on the Net* report due to intermittent blockages of platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as massive blockages of media outlets, as already mentioned in previous sections.

### Conclusion

The exercise of digital rights and freedoms continues to be affected by increased censorship and state surveillance on the internet, a situation that has intensified since July 2024, following the presidential elections. Restrictions are characterised by the blocking of digital media, social networks, instant messaging services, VPNs and other applications. There has also been an increase in attacks against activists, human rights defenders, and civil society organisations, including hacking, harassment, threats, and stigmatisation campaigns. Although Venezuela has widespread access to internet services and digital media, there are still significant gaps in terms of service stability and coverage, which are also affected by the restrictions and threats in the digital space described above.

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# C) Recommendations

## Recommendations

### Addressed to the Venezuelan State:

- Ensure the full exercise of the right to freedom of association by streamlining the procedures for registration, incorporation, and other formalities that civil society organisations must complete before the registration and notary authorities. This includes simplifying and harmonising the administrative requirements, ensuring uniform and fair criteria that allow for the continuity of the organisations' work;
- Review and make the necessary adjustments to the Law on the Oversight, Regularisation, Operation and Financing of Non-Governmental Organisations and Non-Profit Social Organisations, so as to guarantee the exercise of the right to freedom of association and provide tools to protect organisations from undue interference;
- Stop the harassment and stigmatisation of civil society organisations, especially those that defend human rights, allowing them to work freely and independently;
- Ensure the full exercise of the right to freedom of expression, allowing journalists and press workers to work freely, on the understanding that their work contributes to the construction of democratic strength;
- Work for the release of all persons unjustly detained in the context of post-election protests, ensuring their rights to due process and defence, as well as the release of detained human rights defenders, trade union leaders, journalists, media workers and other citizens in the same situation;
- Re-establish processes and mechanisms that guarantee transparency and access to information of public interest, through the publication of official figures and data on all matters of public interest, especially those related to the economy, health, and education;
- Work towards the establishment of regular mechanisms for dialogue and public consultation with citizens and civil society organisations in the design of public policies, laws and regulations;
- Guarantee the right to peaceful assembly, taking measures to prevent and punish arbitrary detentions of individuals or the disproportionate use of force by the police;
- Promote freedom and security in the digital space, guaranteeing the rights to privacy and security of all persons, ensuring equitable access to information, and lifting blocks on information applications and websites.

### To civil society organisations:

- Work to strengthen coordination and cooperation between organisations, with the aim of strengthening the capacity for collective action, protecting work and individuals, and continuing to provide care to individuals and groups at risk;



- Continue to develop protection policies that include physical and digital security, sensitive information management, psychosocial well-being of staff, and risk prevention strategies;
- Strengthen communication and public education strategies that promote and raise awareness of the social role of civil society organisations;
- Work on financial diversification and sustainability to ensure the continuity of operations;
- Strengthen advocacy spaces at the international level, working directly with international organisations, the Universal Human Rights Protection System, the Inter-American Human Rights System, as well as States and diplomatic representations.

**To international organisations:**

- Continue to support civil society organisations, strengthening international observation mechanisms that allow for monitoring of the situation in Venezuela, providing recommendations and raising alerts in serious situations;
- Maintain humanitarian and development cooperation frameworks, ensuring that such interventions contribute to expanding, rather than restricting, the space for action of local organisations.



## D) Research Process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members; the consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the [CIVICUS Monitor](#). However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year. This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. **The panel for this report was convened in <month>.** The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as [V-Dem](#), the [Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index](#), the [RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

*This publication was funded/co-funded by the European Union.  
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