

Venezuela



Capital City: Caracas

Background: Venezuela was one of three countries that emerged from the collapse of Gran Colombia in 1830 (the others being Ecuador and New Granada, which became Colombia). For most of the first half of the 20th century, Venezuela was ruled by generally benevolent military strongmen, who promoted the oil industry and allowed for some social reforms. Democratically elected governments have held sway since 1959. Hugo CHAVEZ, president since 1999, has promoted a controversial policy of "democratic socialism," which purports to alleviate social ills while at the same time attacking globalization and undermining regional stability. Current concerns include: a weakening of democratic institutions, political polarization, a politicized military, drug-related violence along the Colombian border, increasing internal drug consumption, overdependence on the petroleum industry with its price fluctuations, and irresponsible mining operations that are endangering the rain forest and indigenous peoples.

Geography:

- **Location:** Northern South America, bordering the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, between Colombia and Guyana.
- **Area comparative:** 13 times the size of Ireland.
- **Climate:** Tropical; hot, humid; more moderate in highlands.
- **Natural resources:** Petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, gold, bauxite, other minerals, hydropower, diamonds.
- **Natural hazards:** Subject to floods, rockslides, mudslides; periodic droughts.
- **Environmental issues:** Pollution, deforestation, threat to rainforest eco system from irresponsible mining operations.

People:

- **Population:** 26,023,528 (July 2007).
- **Birth rate:** 21.22 births per 1000.
- **Infant mortality:** 22.52 deaths per 1000 live births.
- **Life expectancy:** *Total population:* 73.28 years, *male:* 70.24 years, *female:* 76.48 years.

Religion: Nominally Roman Catholic 96%, Protestant 2%, other 2%.

**Government:**

- **Type of government:** Federal Republic.
- **Administrative divisions:** 23 states, 1 capital district, 1 federal dependency.
- **Independence:** 5th July 1811 (from Spain).
- **National holiday:** Independence Day 5th July (1811).

Economy:

- **Unemployment:** 8.9 %
- **Population below poverty line:** 37.9%
- **Agricultural products:** Corn, sorghum, sugarcane, rice, bananas, vegetables, coffee; beef, pork, milk, eggs; fish.
- **Industries:** Petroleum, construction materials, food processing, textiles; iron ore mining, steel, aluminum; motor vehicle assembly.

Education:

- **Literacy:** *Definition:* Age 15 and over can read and write. Total population 93%, *Male* 93.3%, *Female* 92.7%.
- **Language:** Spanish (Official), numerous indigenous dialects.

Communication:

- **Telephone lines:** Landlines: 4.217 million, Mobile lines: 18.79 million
- **TV stations:** 66
- **Internet users:** 4.14 million

Asylum: According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics, there were fewer than 100 asylum claims by Venezuelan nationals in Ireland in 2005.

Internally Displaced Persons: The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre did not record an internally displaced population in Venezuela as of September 2007.

Migration: In the first 8 months of 2007 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment issued 24 work permits to Venezuelan nationals.

Sources:

CIA The World Factbook – Venezuela, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>

UNHCR 2005 Global Refugee Trends, <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4486ceb12.pdf> 5/10/07

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment,

<http://www.entemp.ie/publications/labour/2007/Permits%20by%20nationality.xls> 5/10/07

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre – Statistics <http://www.internal-displacement.org> 5/10/07

Flag: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/flags/ve-flag.html>

Photo: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/galleries/motorcyclediaries/photo6.html>

Map: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>