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## Freedom in the Americas Today

This series of charts and graphs tracks freedom's trajectory in the Americas over the past thirty years. The source for the material in subsequent pages is two global surveys published annually by Freedom House: *Freedom in the World* and *Freedom of the Press*. *Freedom in the World* has assessed the condition of world freedom since 1972, providing separate numerical scores for each country's degree of political rights and civil liberties as well as designating countries as "free," "partly free," and "not free." *Freedom of the Press* assesses the level of media freedom in each country in the world and designates countries as "free," "partly free," and "not free."

The graphs and charts in this package tell a story that is both encouraging and a source of concern. When Freedom House launched its global index of political rights and civil liberties, freedom was on the defensive throughout much of the Americas. Juntas, military councils, and strongmen held the reins of power throughout much of south and Central America. At various times dictatorships prevailed in such key countries as Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Chile, as well as in every country of Central America except Costa Rica. Latin America was not alone in the grim picture it presented as democracy was by and large restricted to the countries of Western Europe and North America.

Conditions in the Americas were strongly influenced by the Cold War. Marxist insurgencies, often employing kidnappings, assassinations, and terrorism, had emerged in a number of countries; military governments responded with extreme brutality, including the use of paramilitary death squads. The authorities rarely distinguished between Marxist guerrillas and leaders of the social democratic opposition, targeting both for arrest, torture, and murder.

By the end of the 1980s, the situation had dramatically reversed. Freely elected civilian governments had replaced military rule throughout South America, and progress towards democratic rule had been registered in Central America. Latin America joined the formerly Communist countries of Central Europe as the most notable success stories of the wave of democratic gains that came with the end of the Cold War. Throughout South and Central America, competitive elections became almost universally accepted, the only significant holdouts being Cuba, still under

unreformed Communist rule, and Haiti, where chaos and upheaval generally prevailed. In a particularly significant development, the one-party rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico that had prevailed for most of the twentieth century gave way to democratic pluralism with the 1999 victory of President Vicente Fox.

Yet even as the countries of Latin America have registered impressive gains for democracy and the region itself has come to enjoy an unprecedented level of freedom, old problems remain while new concerns have arisen. Some of these problems can be traced to a persistence of widespread poverty and increased inequality. For many in Latin America and the Caribbean, the anticipated pay-off in an enhanced quality of life has not materialized with the onset of democracy. The result has been a decline in public faith in democracy, the collapse of many of the traditional political parties, and the rise of populist political leaders who preach a message that is critical of the United States as well as of free market economics. A number of countries in the hemisphere have also experienced an alarming increase in violent crime and an accompanying deterioration in the institutions of law enforcement. Corruption, a longstanding regional problem, also persists at a high level.

The gains that the Americas have recorded and the distance the hemisphere still must travel were noted in *Freedom in the World 2006*—the most recent edition of Freedom House’s annual survey. Globally, the survey rated 89 countries “free,” 58 countries “partly free,” and 45 countries “not free.” The survey also determined 122 countries to be electoral democracies—the largest proportion of such countries in *Freedom in the World*’s 33-year tenure.

Among the 35 countries of the Americas, 24 were rated “free” for their performance in 2005, while 9 were rated “partly free” and 2 rated “not free.” One country, Guyana, saw its rating decline from “free” to “partly free” because of the increased influence of the narcotics trade on national politics. Four countries from the region—Brazil, Colombia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia—showed significant gains in political rights or civil liberties. Brazil registered an improvement because of continued progress toward racial equality while Colombia saw its score improve due to a step up in the fight against corruption, an improved security environment, and a decline in attacks against journalists. St. Kitts and Nevis’s civil liberties score improved due to a consolidation of the rule of law. St. Lucia’s civil liberties score increased due to an enhanced rule of law. Two countries saw notable declines in freedom during the same year. While not warranting a change in their overall freedom rating (free/partly free/not free), Suriname saw a decline in its score due to increased corruption and discrimination against Amerindians, and Venezuela continued a several years’ trend of decline due to the increased militarization of government, corruption, and the intimidation of voters during national elections.

The first pair of pie charts—comparing the assessments made in the *Freedom in the World 1976* survey with those made in the most recent 2006 edition—reveals a

substantial increase in the proportion of “free” countries (and a related decrease in “not free” societies) in the world. The second pair of charts presents the same comparison for the Americas, showing an impressive increase in freedom in the region. The findings of the more recently established Freedom of the Press survey are similarly presented in the third and fourth pairs of pie charts, looking at the media environments assessed in *Freedom of the Press 1990* versus those assessed in *Freedom of the Press 2006*. In contrast to Freedom in the World, these charts reveal a relatively static picture of global press freedom; regarding the Americas, the charts show an actual decline in press freedom, an unusual development for the period. These sets of pie charts are followed by two tables listing the most recent, country-specific ratings for the Americas from the most recent editions of the Freedom House surveys: *Freedom in the World 2006* and *Freedom of the Press 2006*. In both tables, the countries are listed in order from most to least free.

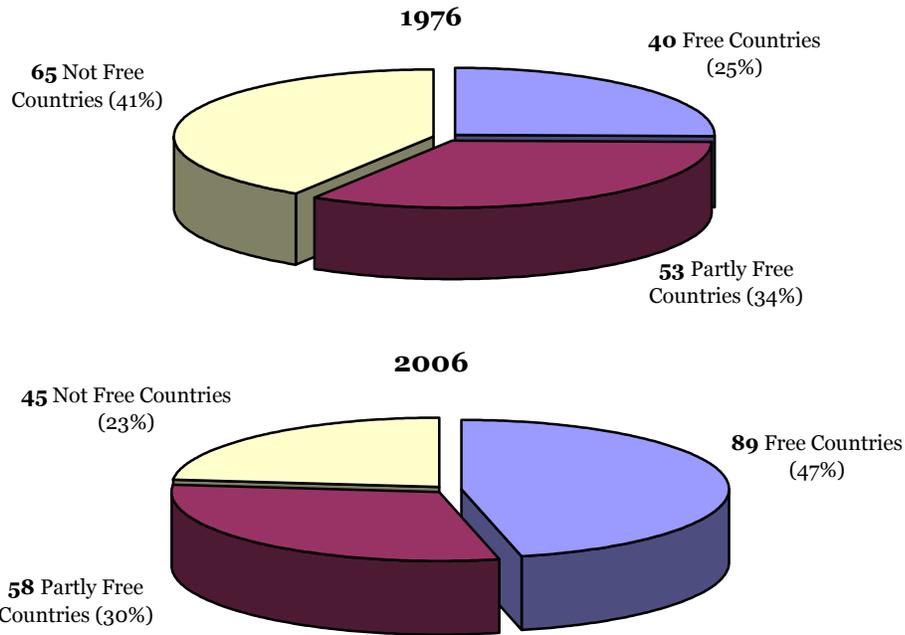
The next graphs provide a series of snapshots of freedom’s condition in the Americas. The first line graph displays the number of “free,” “partly free,” and “not free” countries in the region as determined by the 1976, 1986, 1996, and 2006 editions of Freedom in the World. The next line graph shows two trend lines: one representing the *average* regional Freedom in the World rating for “political rights,” the other representing the same for “civil liberties.” The following bar graph, limited to the past 15 years, breaks down improvements and declines in hemispheric countries’ Freedom in the World ratings into five-year intervals (this graph measures changes in the countries’ “combined average ratings,” which is the average of the “political rights” and “civil liberties” ratings determined in each edition of Freedom in the World). The bar chart shows that (a) the post Cold War improvement trend is reversed after 1995 with more countries showing declines than improvements between 1995 and 2000; (b) that the most dramatic improvements came in the period immediately following the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War (1990 to 1995); and (c) a substantial number of countries have seen no change in their ratings, which highlights the stagnation in political development that also characterizes the region.

The final group of line graphs tracks the progress and decline for each of the region’s countries. Each graph reveals the course of each country’s “political rights” and “civil liberties” ratings from 1979 to the present.

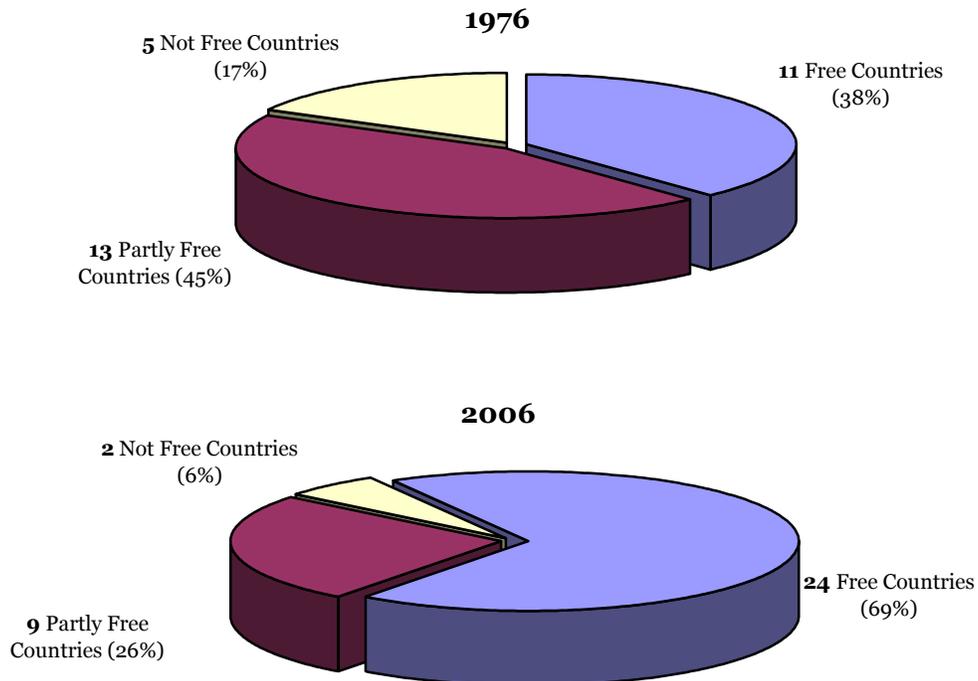
We hope these are useful reference points for discussion about freedom in the Americas. We welcome feedback on this graphic presentation as well as on the larger issues they illustrate.

Charts and graphs prepared by Raffael Himmelsbach

**Figure 1: Freedom in the World<sup>1</sup>**



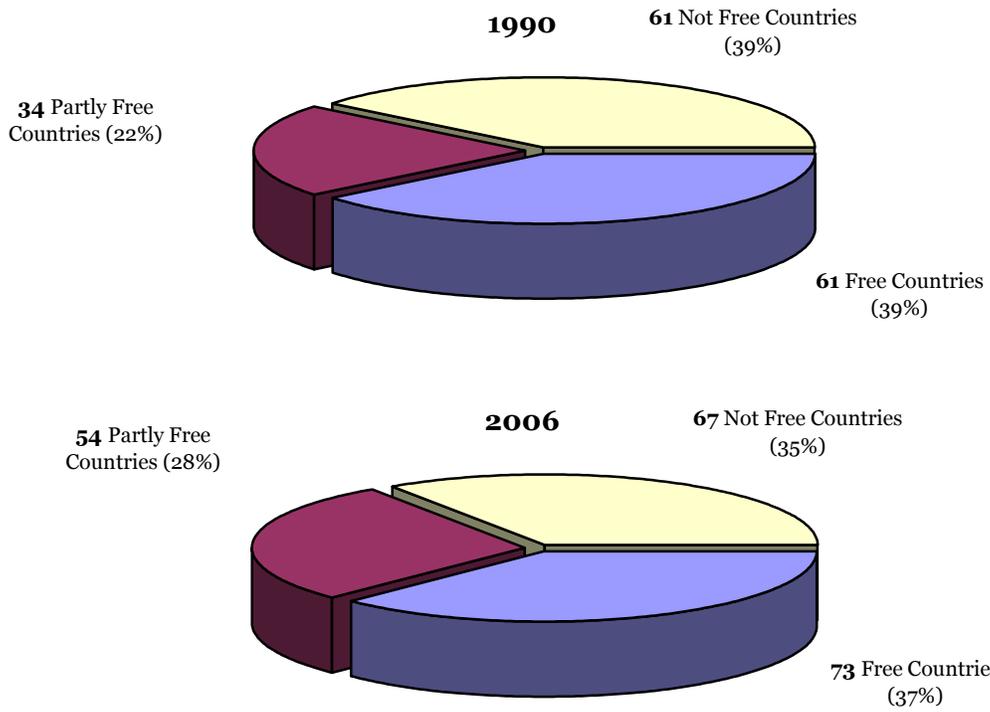
**Figure 2: Freedom in the Americas<sup>2</sup>**



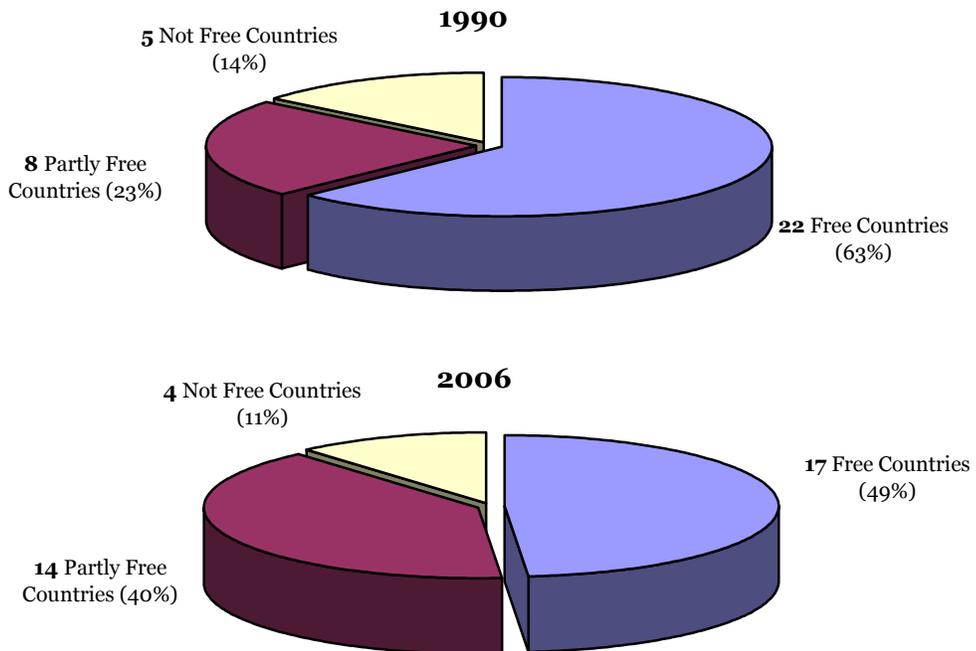
<sup>1</sup> All years refer to publication editions and reflect the state of freedom in the previous year.

<sup>2</sup> The 1976 *Freedom in the World* survey covers only 29 out of 35 American countries.

**Figure 3: Freedom of the Press Global**



**Figure 4: Freedom of the Press in the Americas**



**Table 1: Freedom in the World 2006: The Americas**

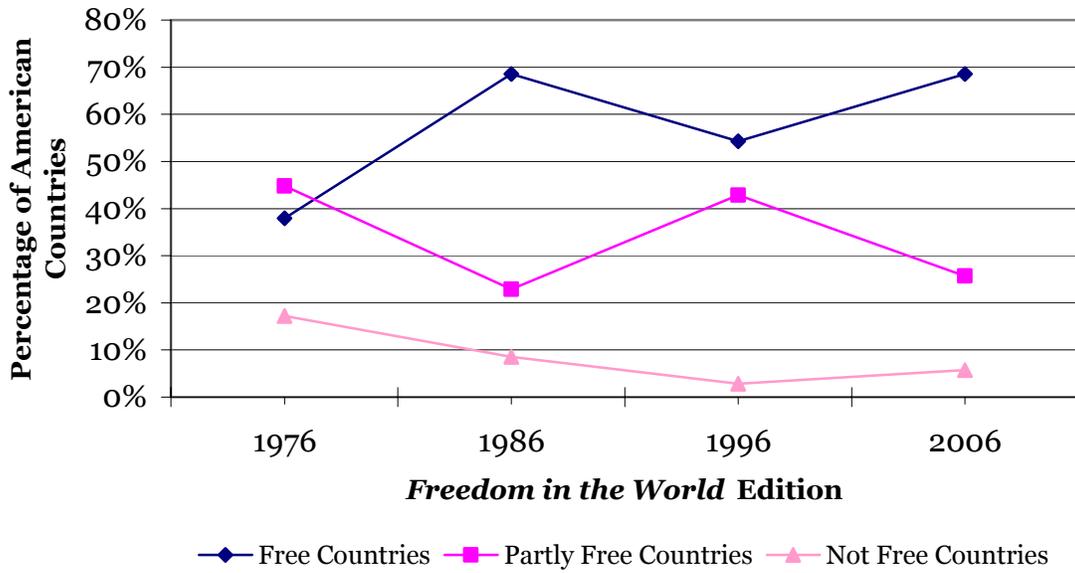
<b>Country</b>	<b>Political Rights</b>	<b>Civil Liberties</b>	<b>Status</b>
Bahamas	1	1	Free
Barbados	1	1	Free
Canada	1	1	Free
Chile	1	1	Free
Costa Rica	1	1	Free
Dominica	1	1	Free
St. Kitts & Nevis	1	1	Free
St. Lucia	1	1	Free
United States	1	1	Free
Uruguay	1	1	Free
Belize	1	2	Free
Grenada	1	2	Free
Panama	1	2	Free
St. Vincent & Grenadines	2	1	Free
Antigua & Barbuda	2	2	Free
Argentina	2	2	Free
Brazil	2	2	Free
Dominican Republic	2	2	Free
Mexico	2	2	Free
Suriname	2	2	Free
El Salvador	2	3	Free
Jamaica	2	3	Free
Peru	2	3	Free
Trinidad & Tobago	3	2	Free
Bolivia	3	3	Partly Free
Colombia	3	3	Partly Free
Ecuador	3	3	Partly Free
Guyana	3	3	Partly Free
Honduras	3	3	Partly Free
Nicaragua	3	3	Partly Free
Paraguay	3	3	Partly Free
Guatemala	4	4	Partly Free
Venezuela	4	4	Partly Free
Haiti	7	6	Not Free
Cuba	7	7	Not Free

**Table 2: Freedom of the Press 2006: The Americas**

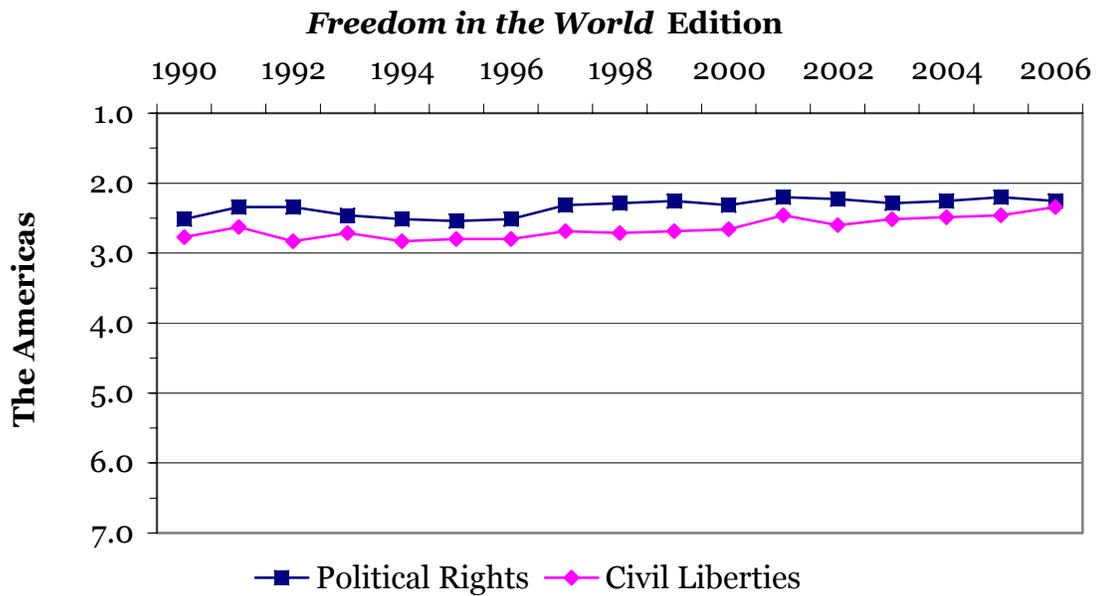
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Status</b>
1	Bahamas	16	Free
	St Vincent & Grenadines	16	Free
	United States	16	Free
4	Barbados	17	Free
	Jamaica	17	Free
6	Canada	18	Free
	Costa Rica	18	Free
	St Lucia	18	Free
9	Dominica	19	Free
10	Belize	21	Free
	St Kitts & Nevis	21	Free
12	Grenada	23	Free
	Suriname	23	Free
14	Chile	26	Free
	Trinidad & Tobago	26	Free
16	Guyana	27	Free
17	Uruguay	28	Free
18	Bolivia	33	Partly Free
19	Dominican Republic	37	Partly Free
20	Antigua & Barbuda	38	Partly Free
21	Brazil	39	Partly Free
	Peru	39	Partly Free
23	Ecuador	41	Partly Free
24	El Salvador	43	Partly Free
	Panama	43	Partly Free
26	Nicaragua	44	Partly Free
27	Argentina	45	Partly Free
28	Mexico	48	Partly Free
29	Honduras	52	Partly Free
30	Paraguay	57	Partly Free
31	Guatemala	58	Partly Free
32	Colombia	61	Not Free
33	Haiti	68	Not Free
34	Venezuela	72	Not Free
35	Cuba	96	Not Free

**Figure 5: Trends in Freedom: The Americas**

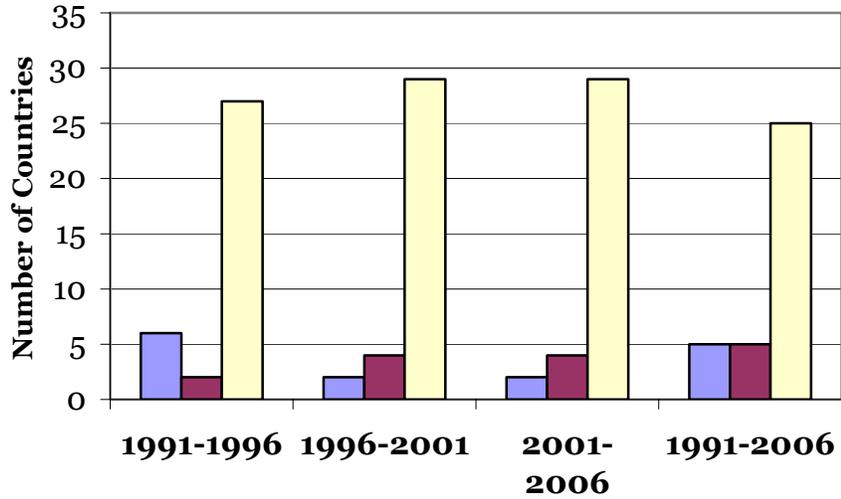
**Freedom Status, 1976-2006**



**Average Political Rights & Civil Liberties  
1990-2006**



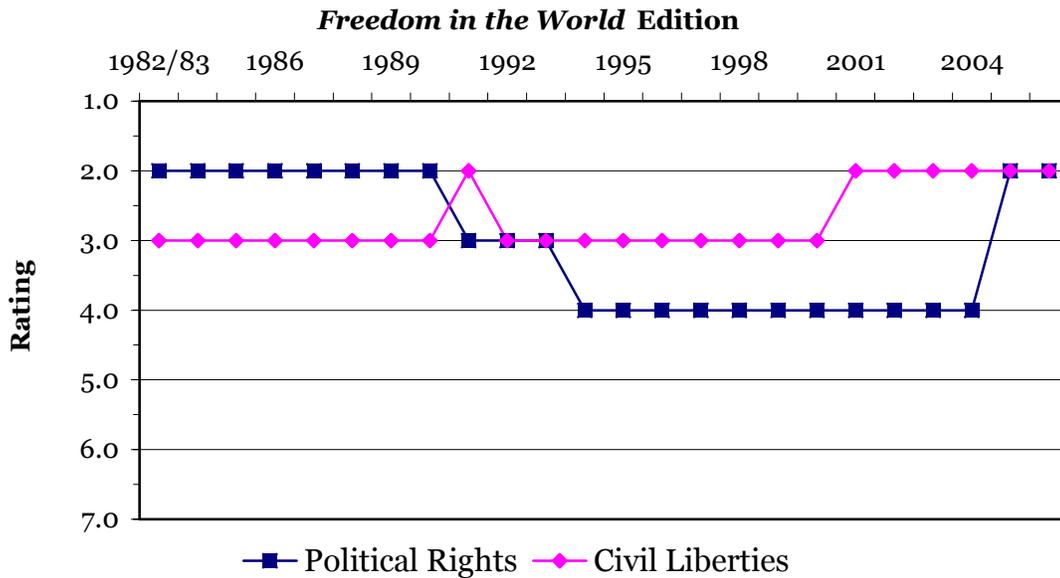
**Improvements & Declines in the Combined Average Ratings of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1991-2006**



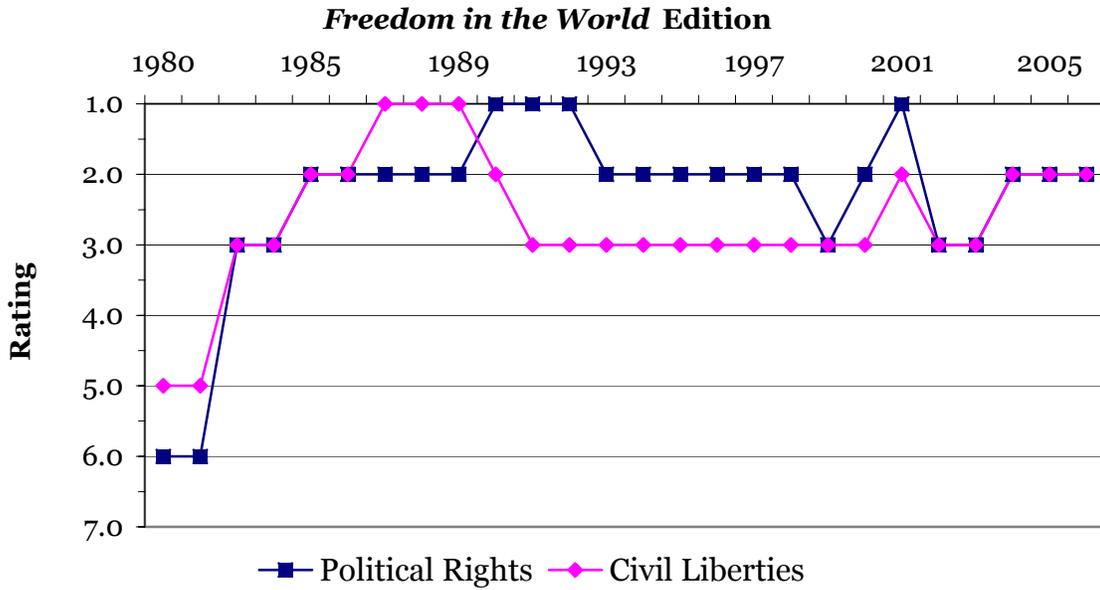
*Freedom in the World Editions*

■ Improved Ratings ■ Declined Ratings □ No Change

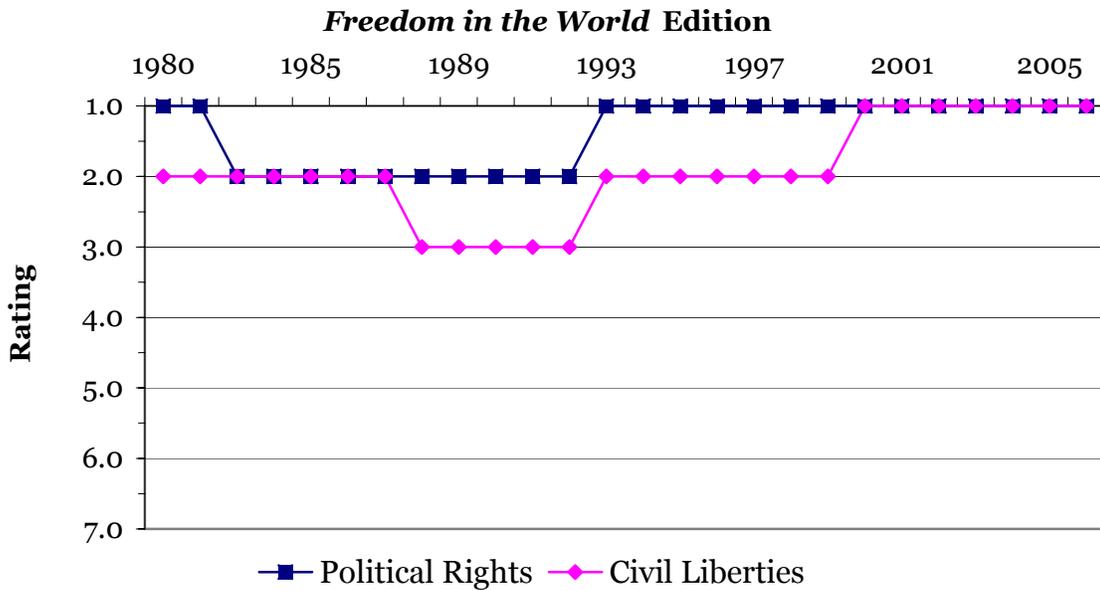
**Freedom in Antigua & Barbuda  
1982-2006**



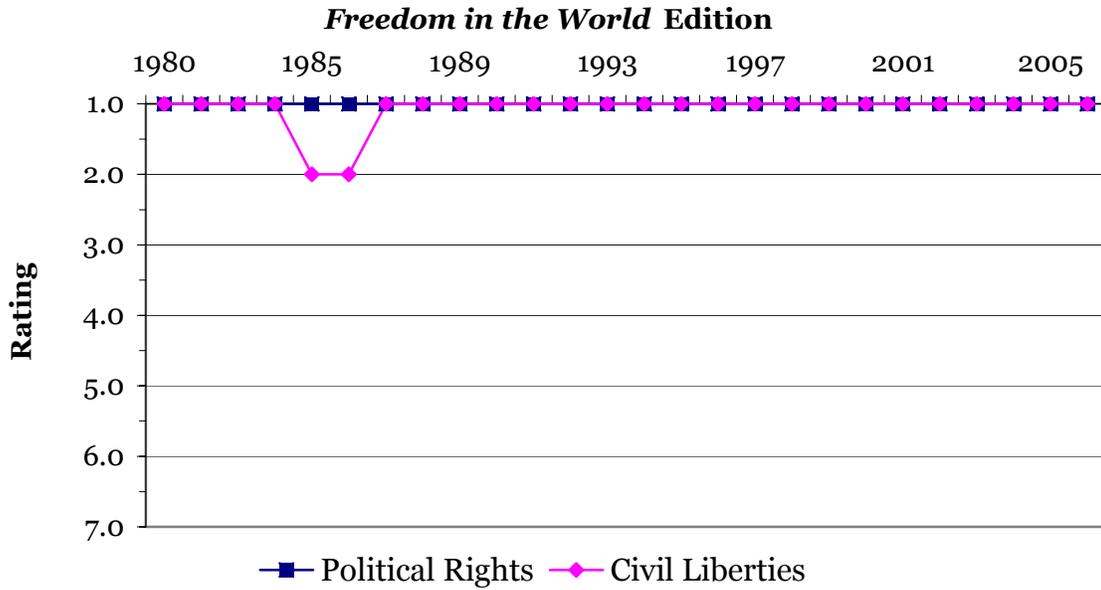
## Freedom in Argentina 1980-2006



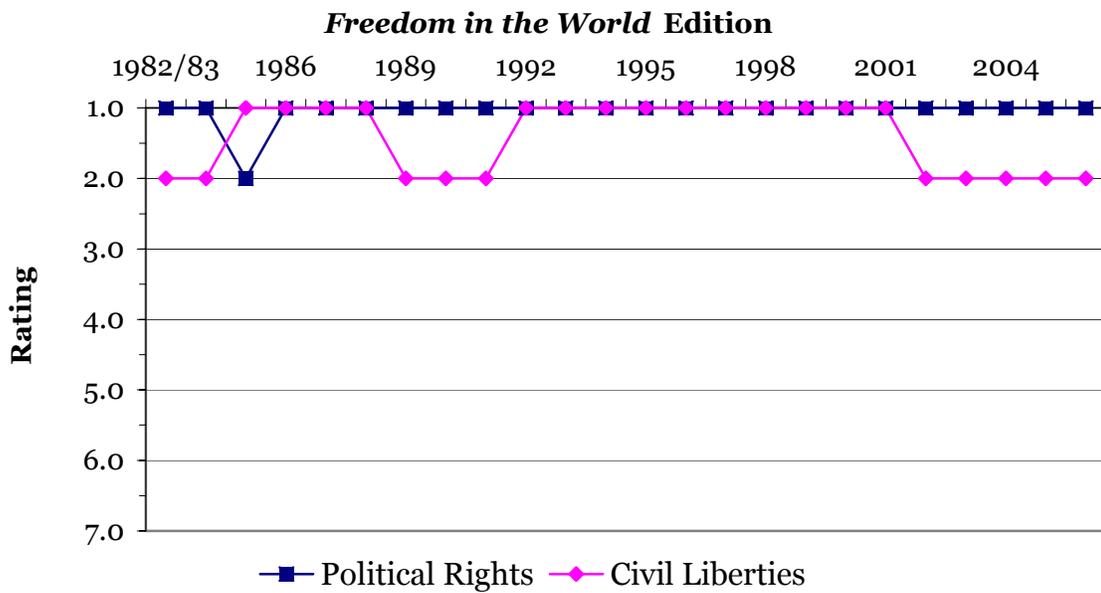
## Freedom in Bahamas 1980-2006



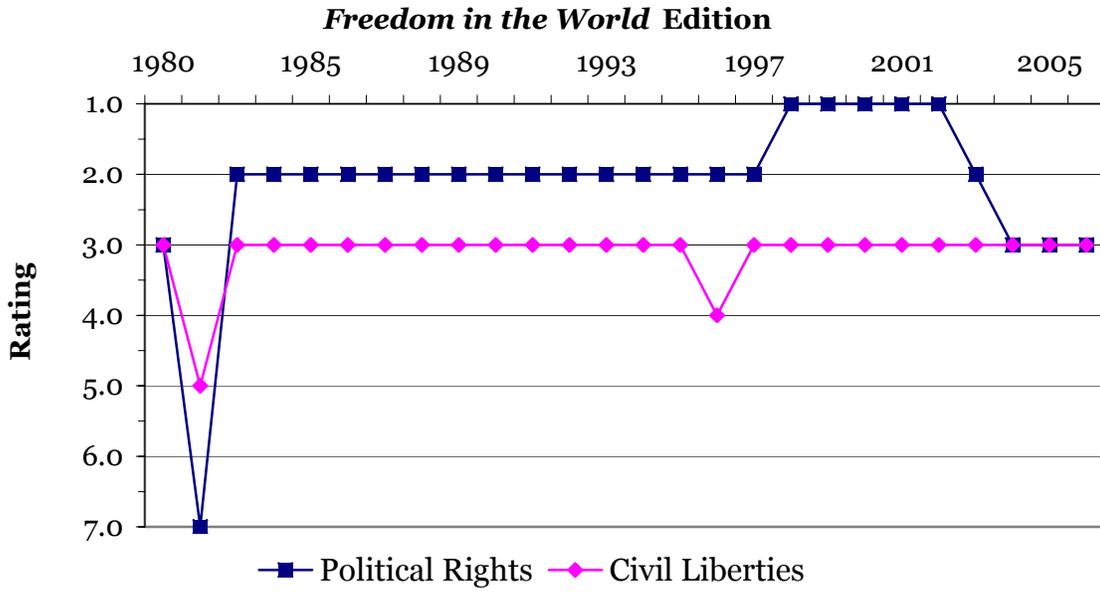
## Freedom in Barbados 1980-2006



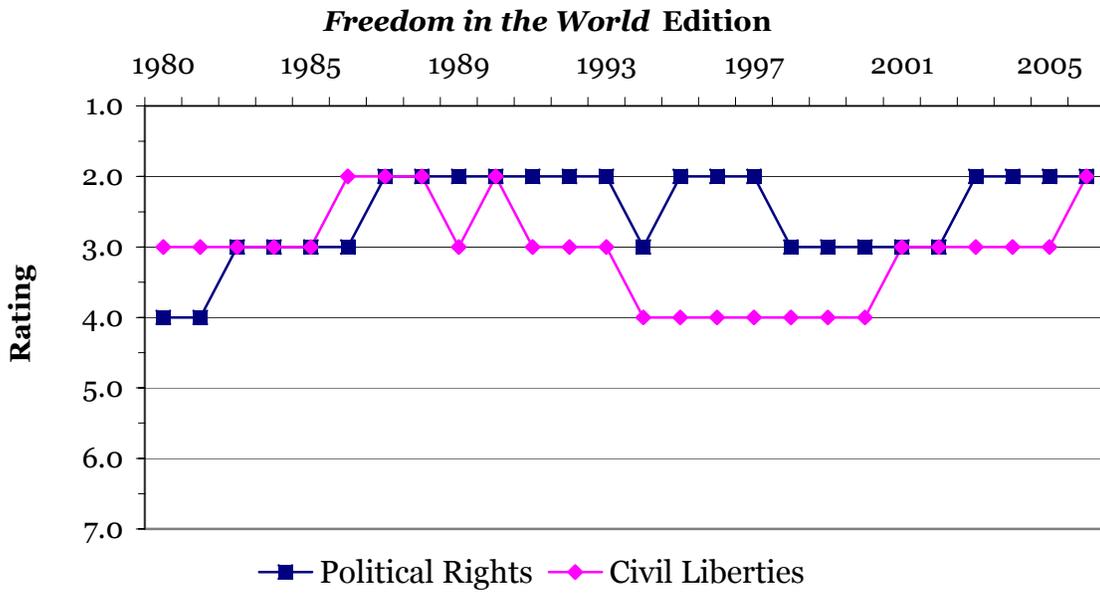
## Freedom in Belize 1982-2006



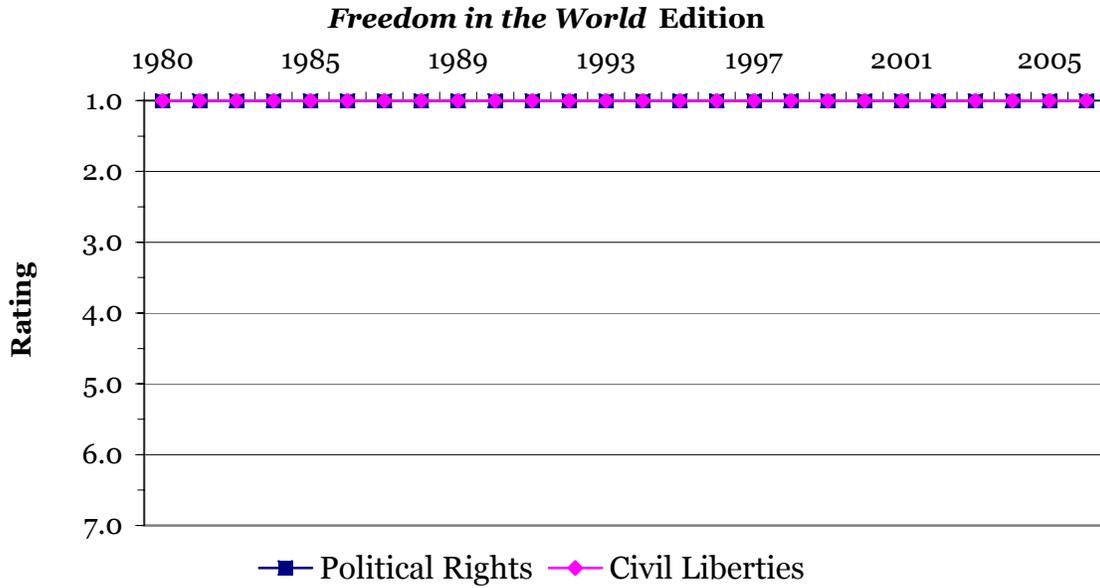
## Freedom in Bolivia 1980-2006



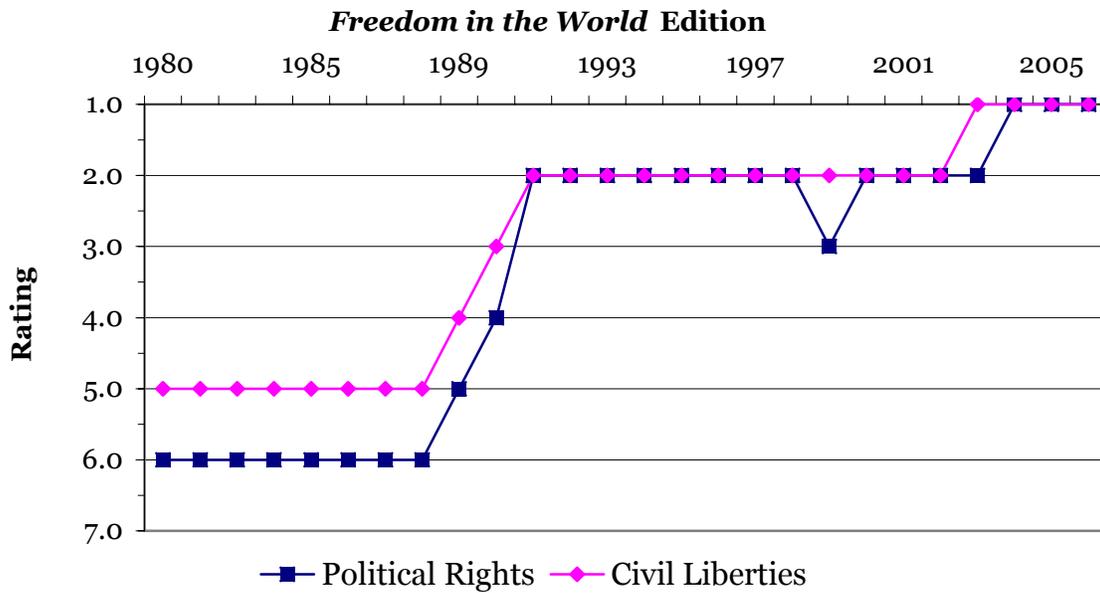
## Freedom in Brazil 1980-2006



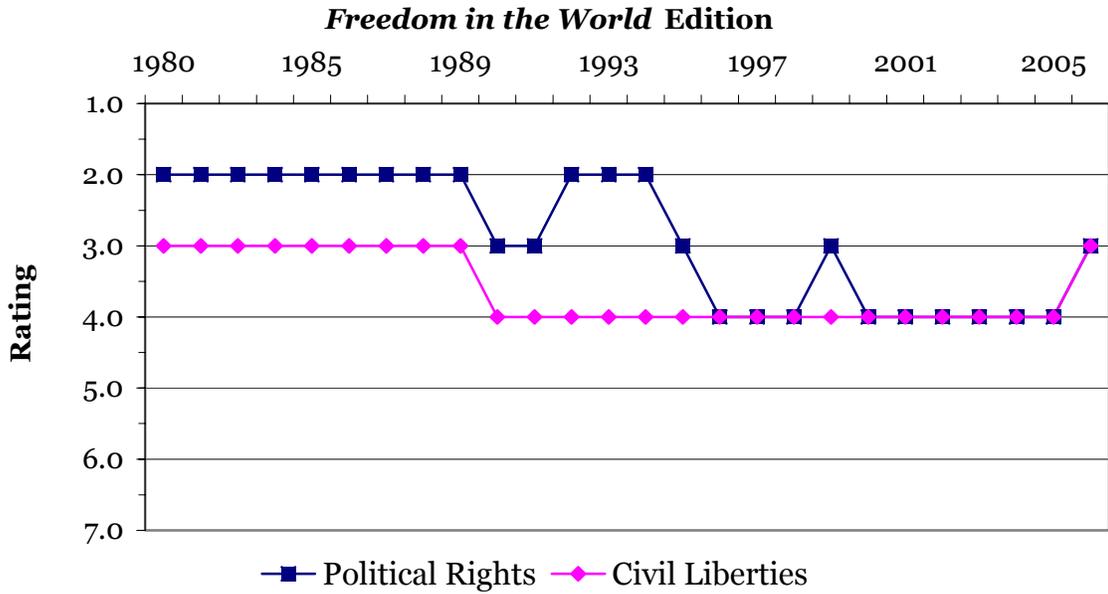
## Freedom in Canada 1980-2006



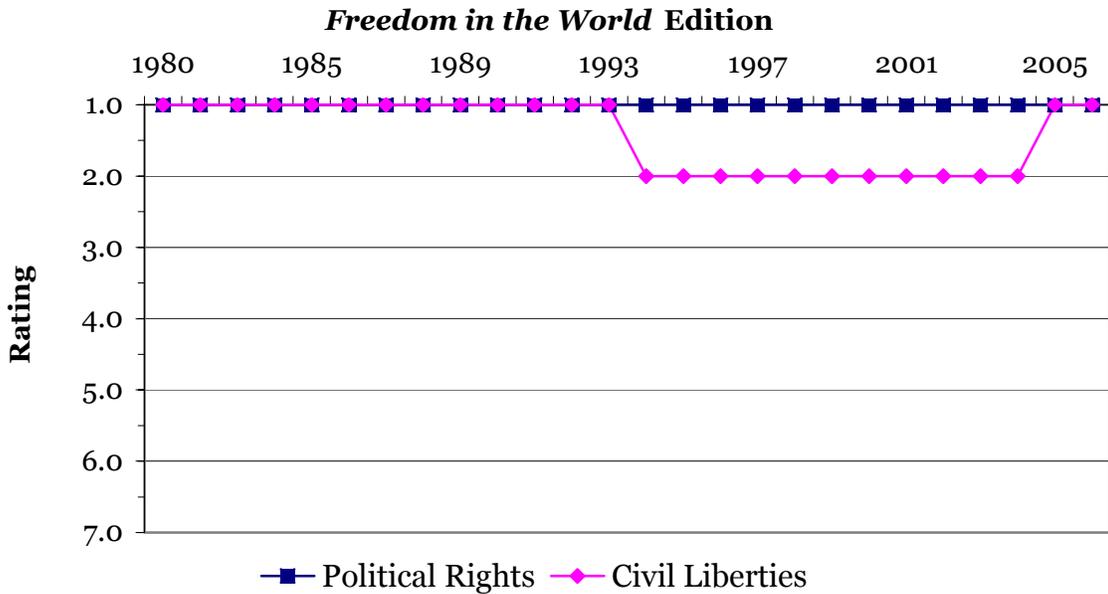
## Freedom in Chile 1980-2006



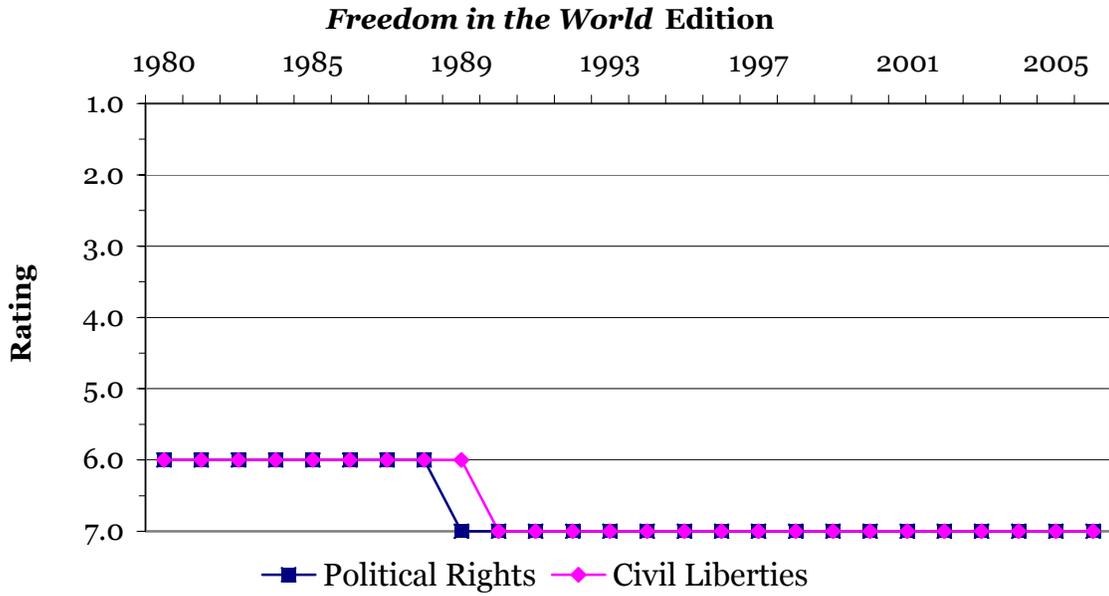
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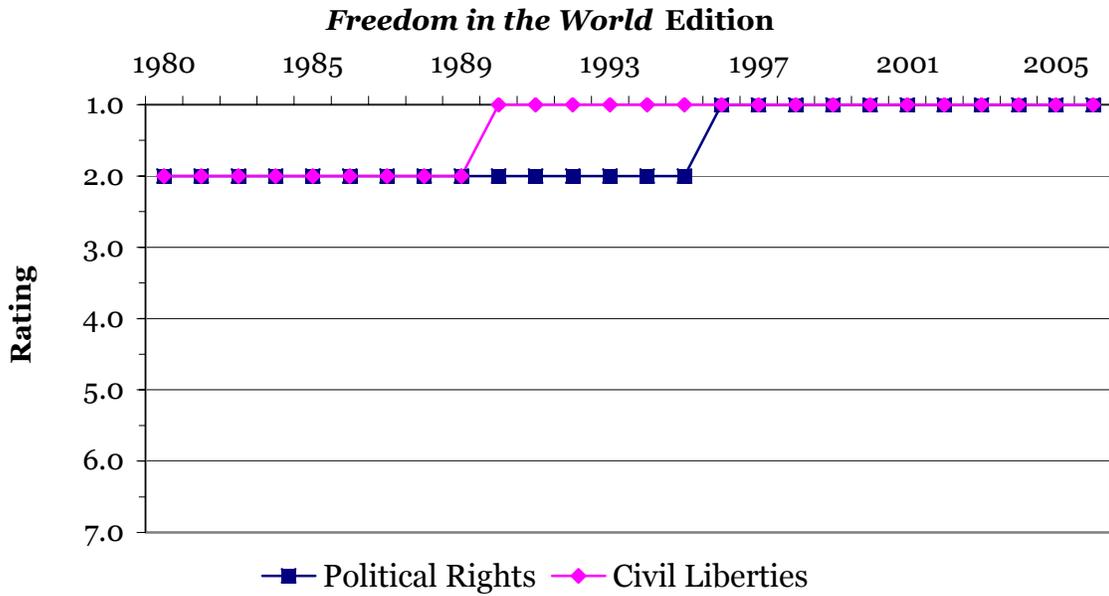
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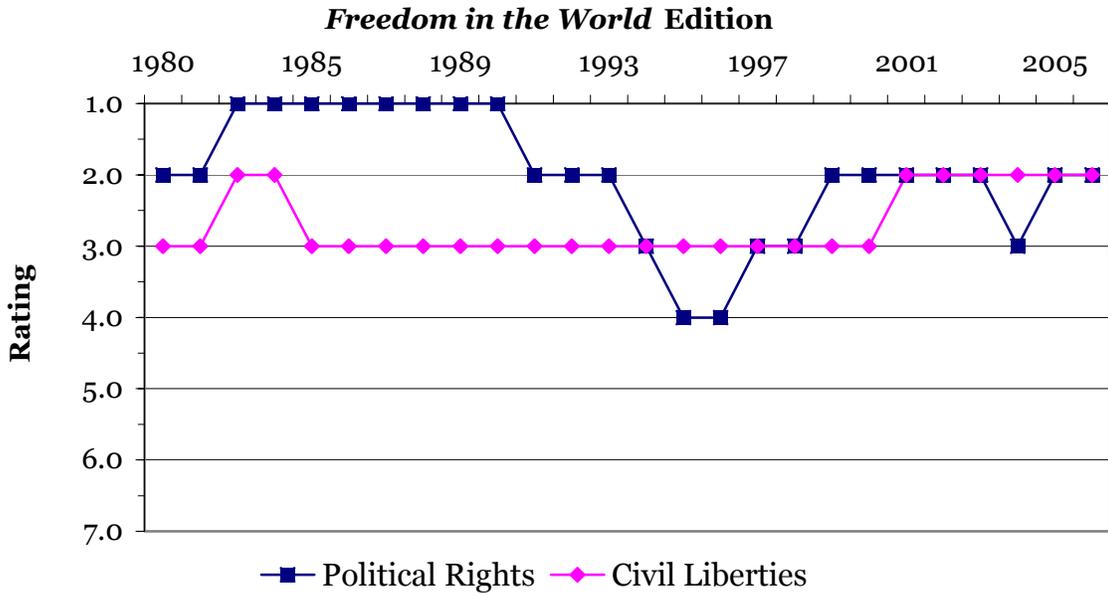
## Freedom in Cuba 1980-2006



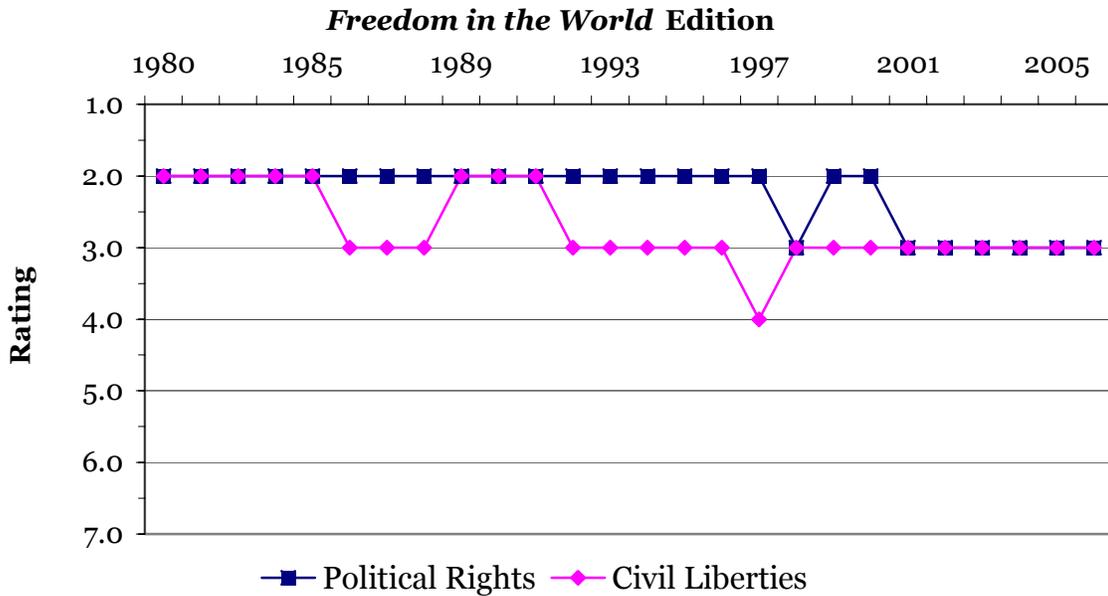
## Freedom in Dominica 1980-2006



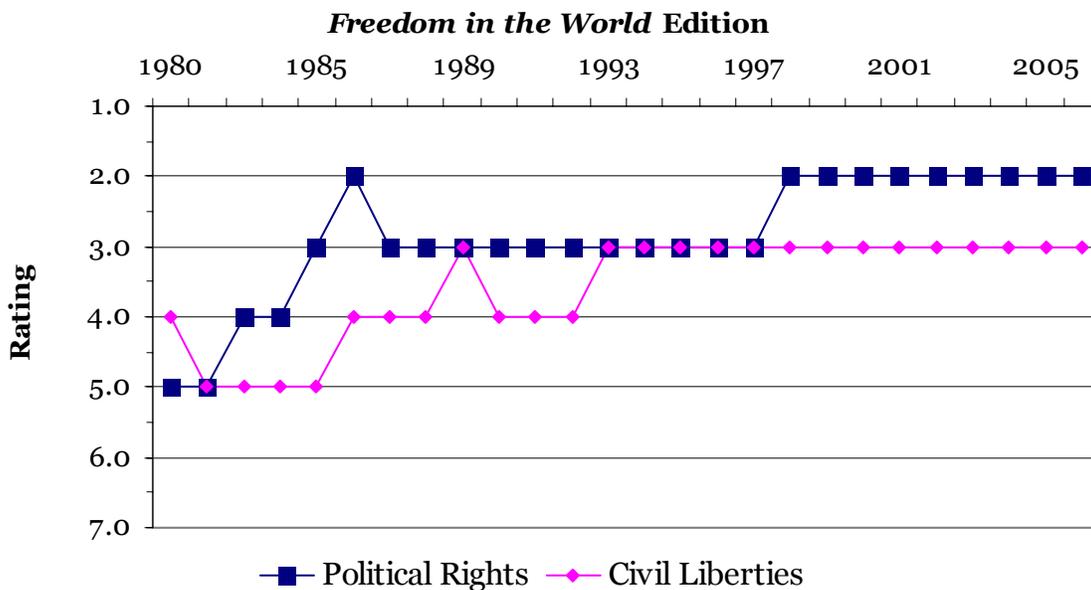
## Freedom in Dominican Republic 1980-2006



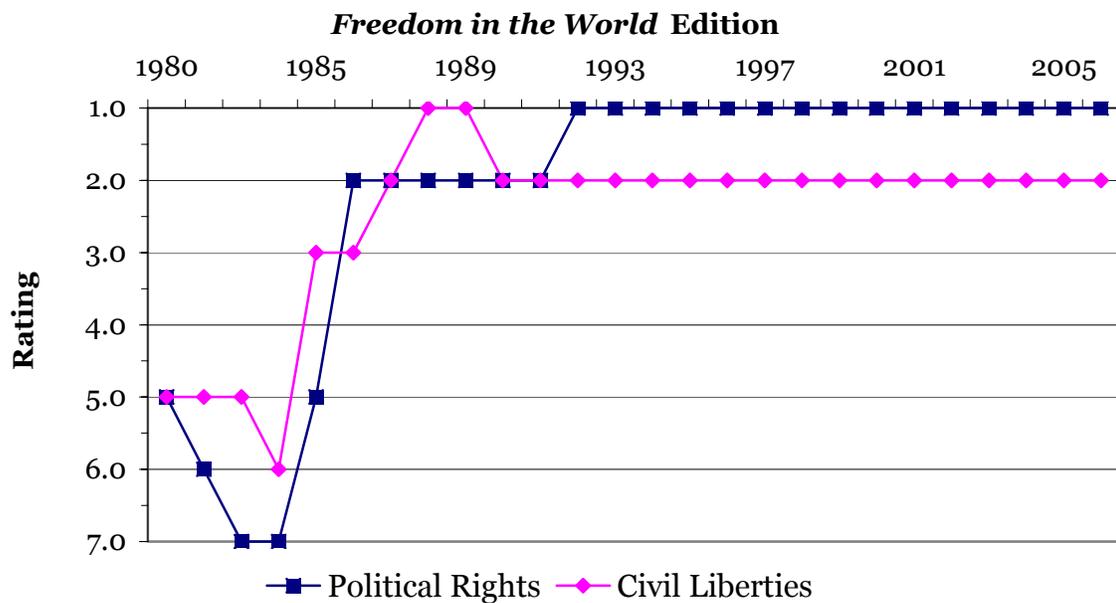
## Freedom in Ecuador 1980-2006



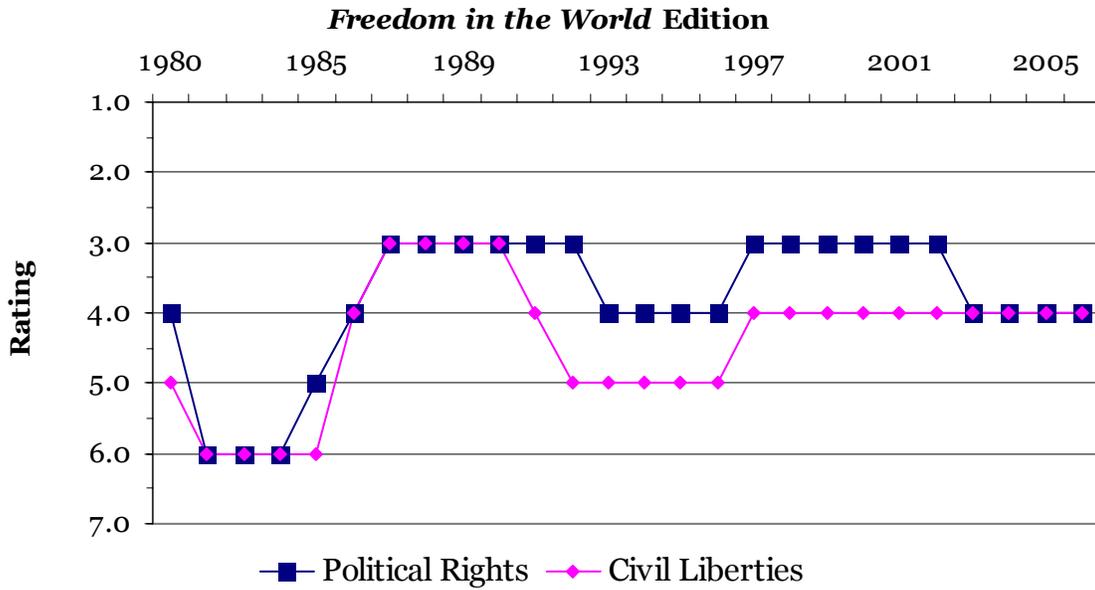
## Freedom in El Salvador 1980-2006



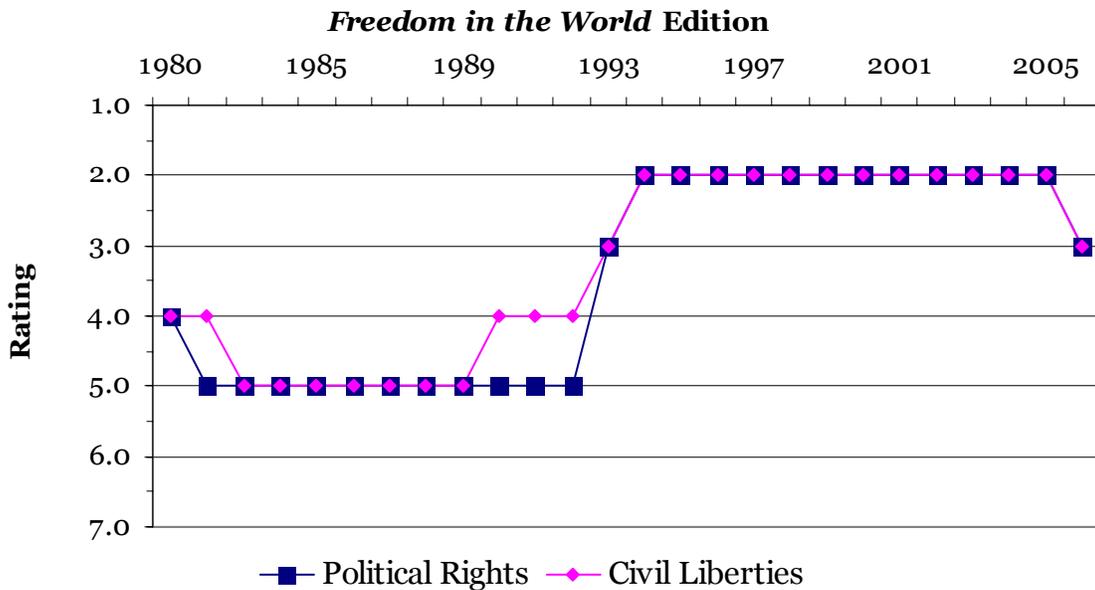
## Freedom in Grenada 1980-2006



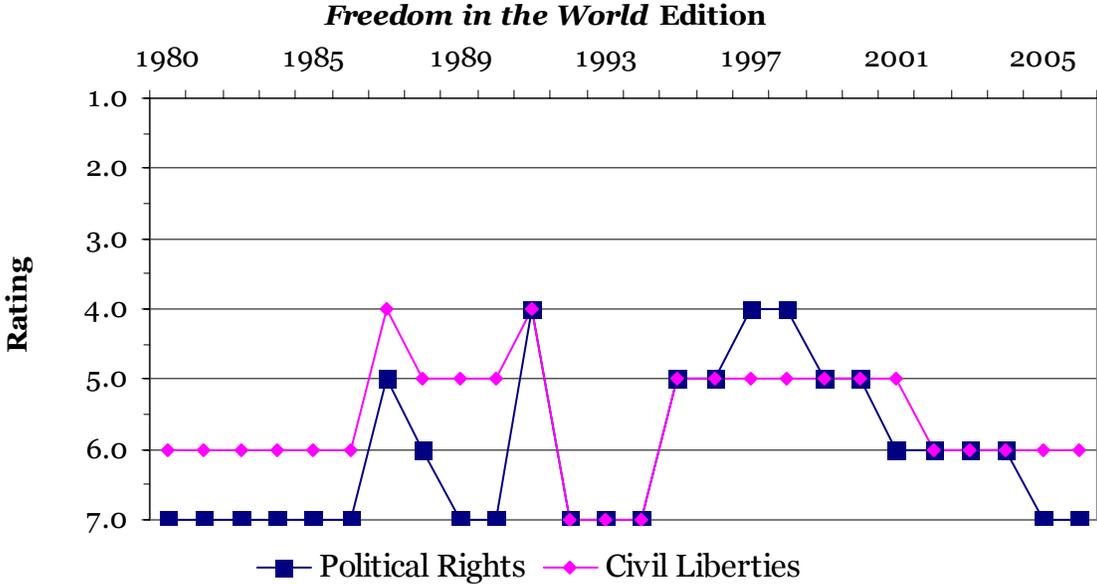
## Freedom in Guatemala 1980-2006



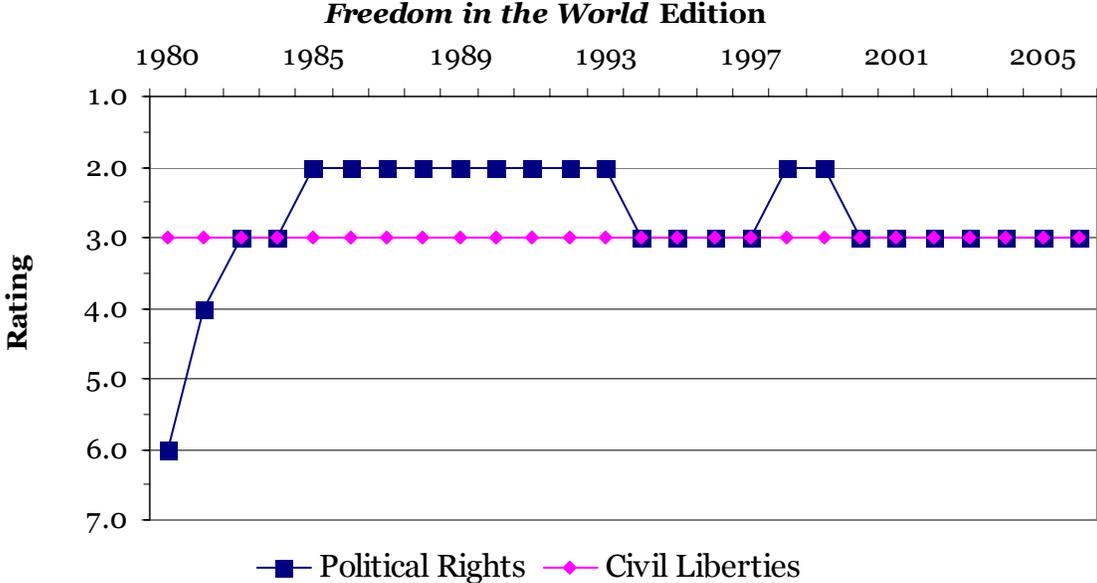
## Freedom in Guyana 1980-2006



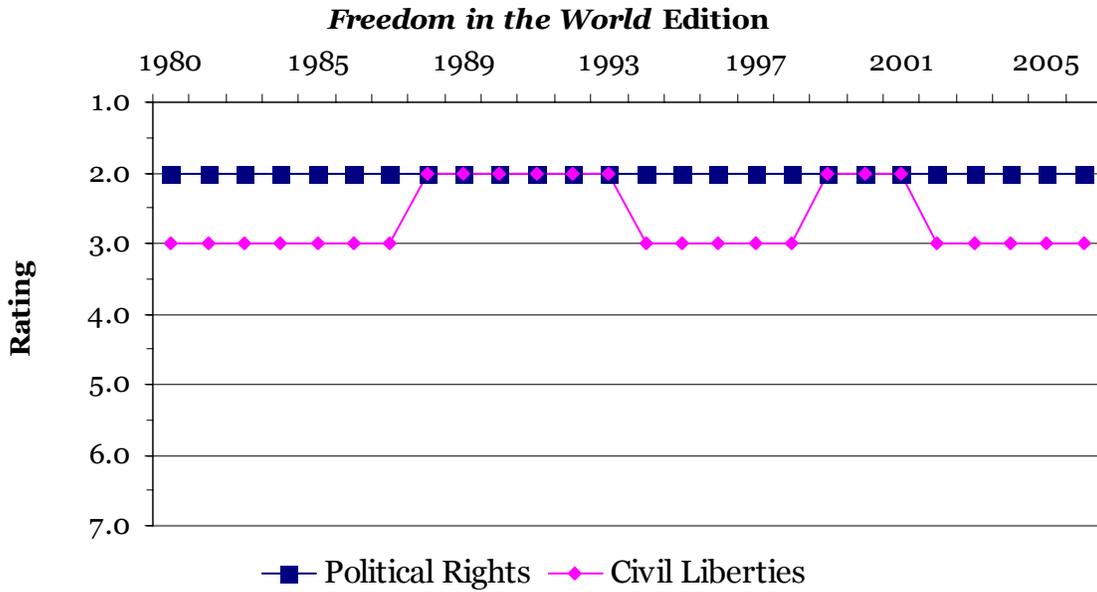
# Freedom in Haiti 1980-2006



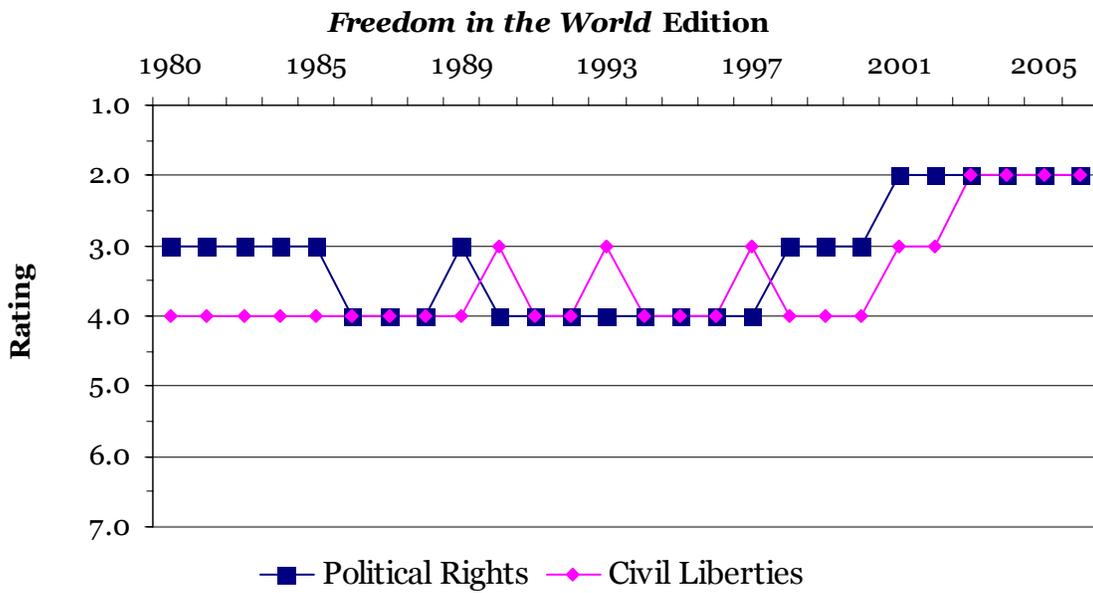
# Freedom in Honduras 1980-2006



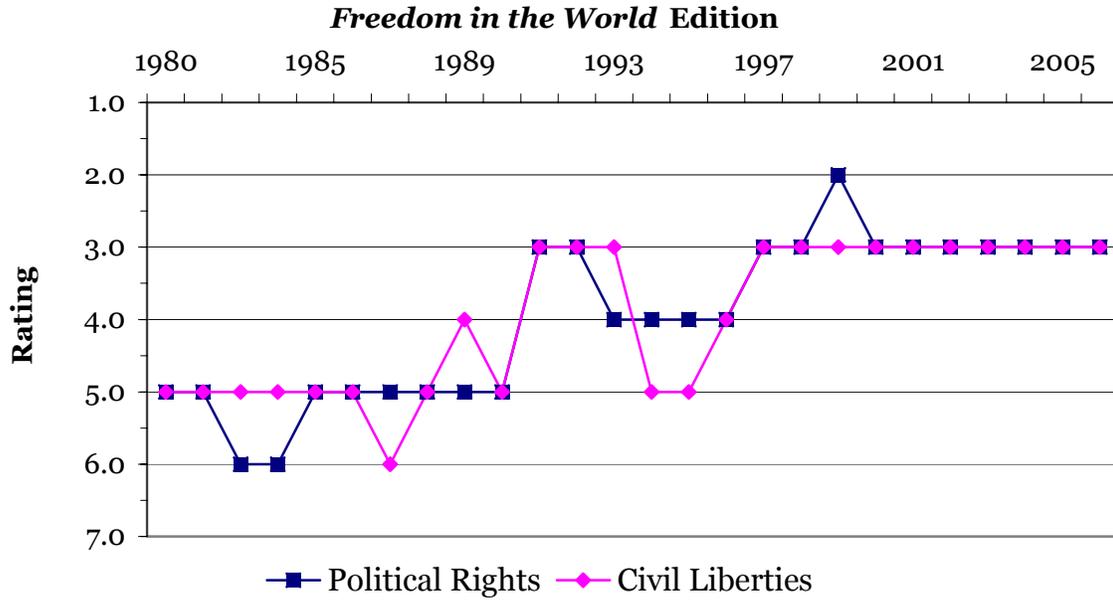
## Freedom in Jamaica 1980-2006



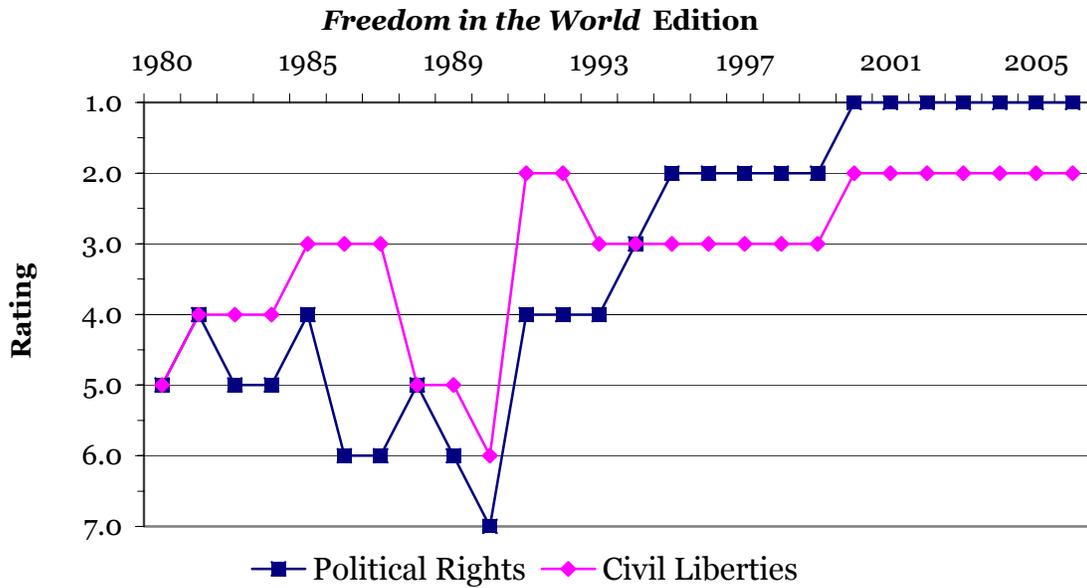
## Freedom in Mexico 1980-2006



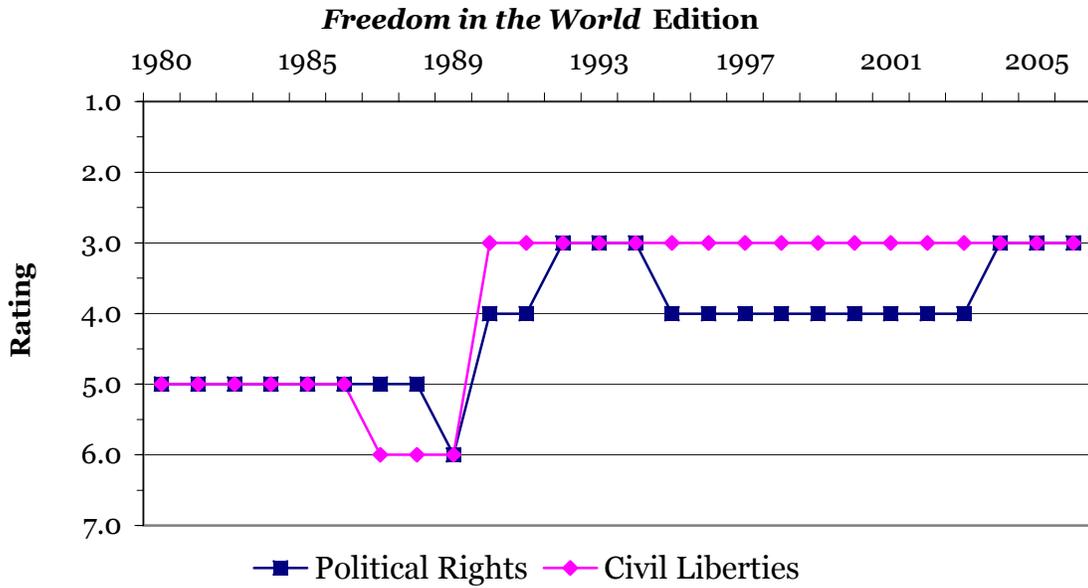
## Freedom in Nicaragua 1980-2006



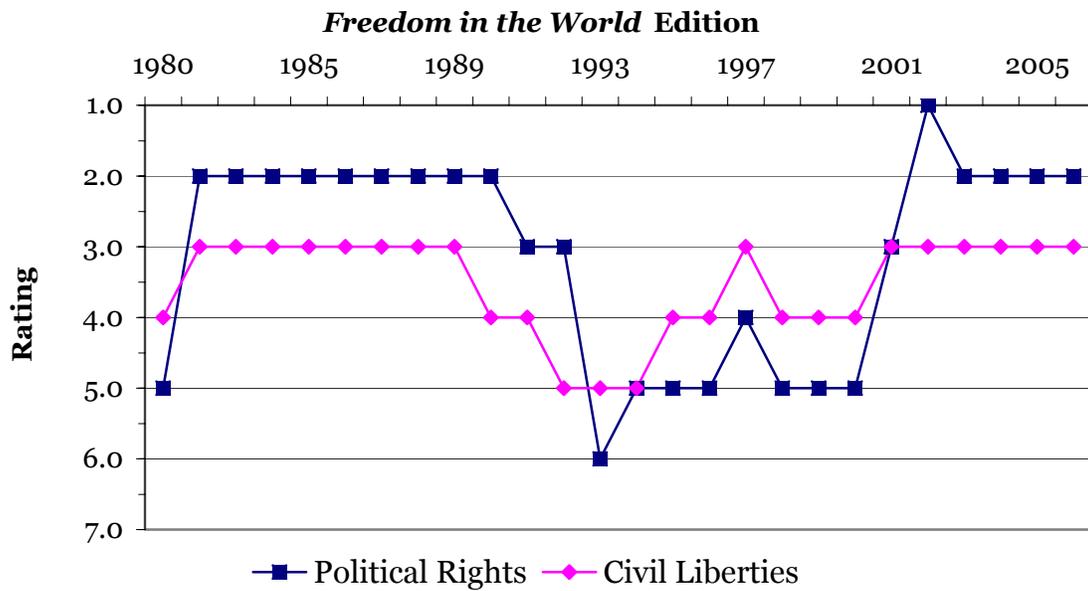
## Freedom in Panama 1980-2006



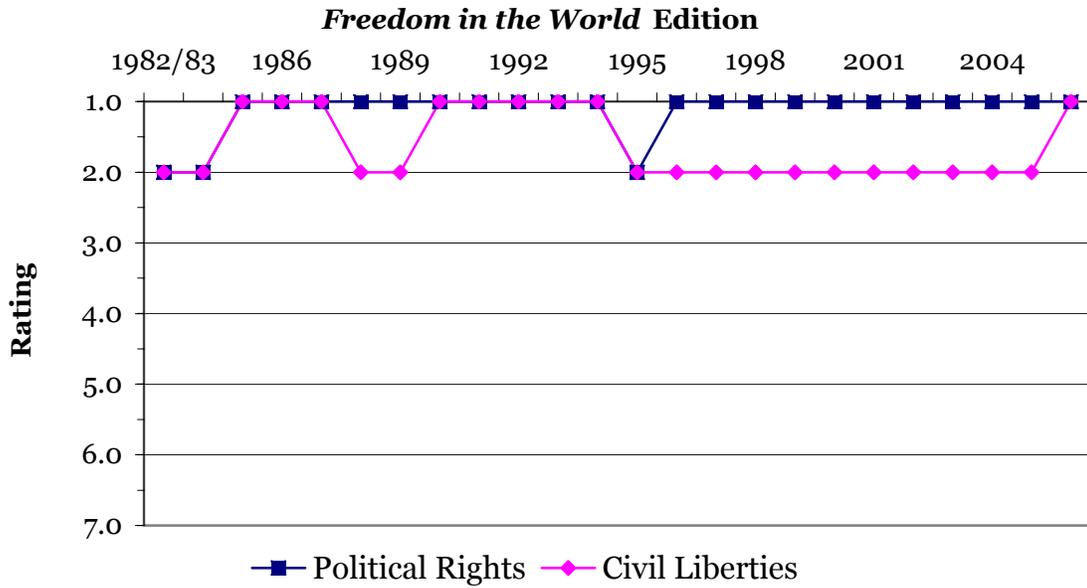
## Freedom in Paraguay 1980-2006



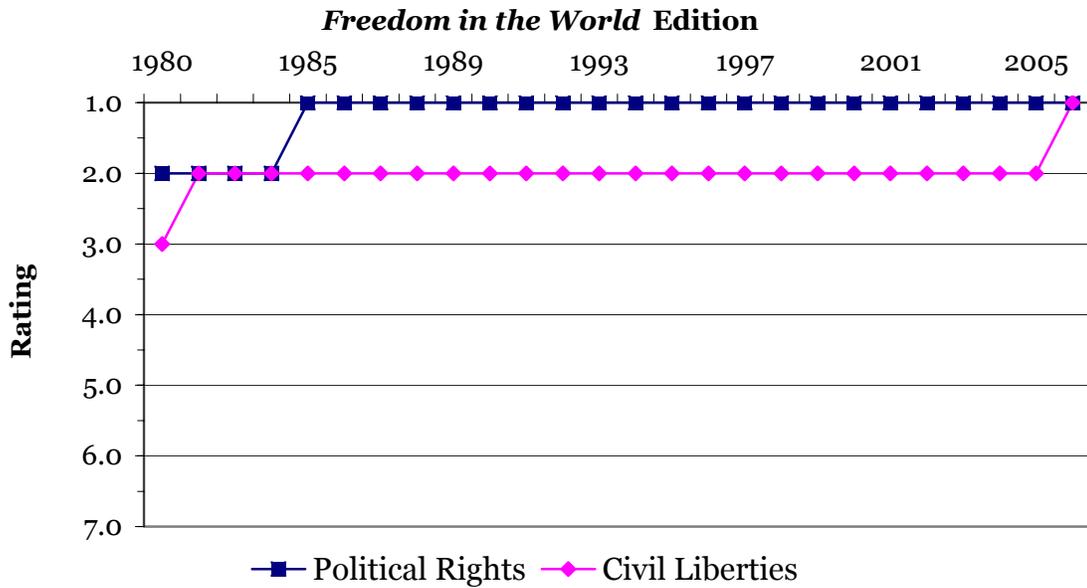
## Freedom in Peru 1980-2006



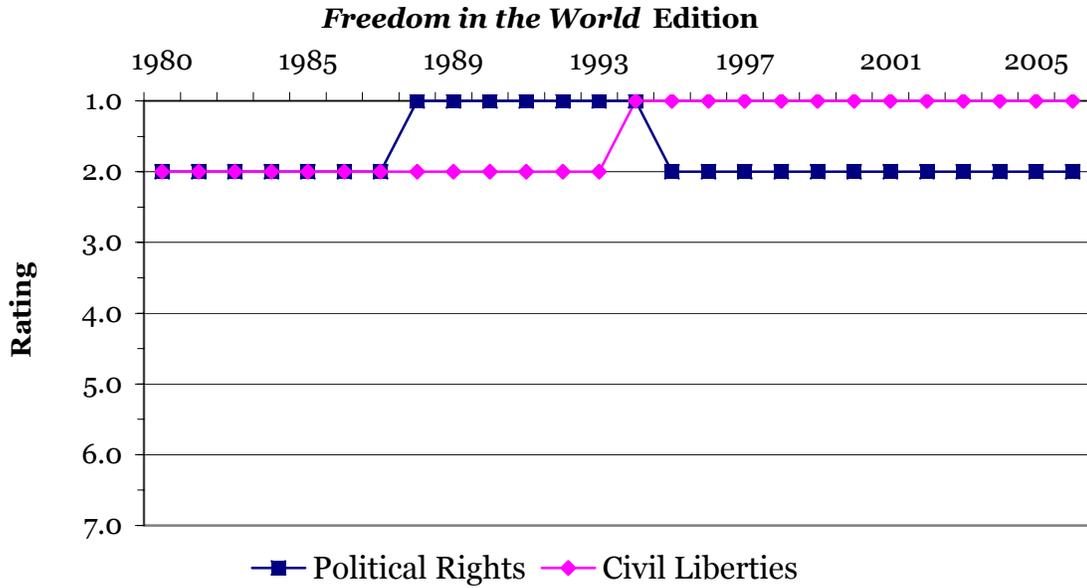
## Freedom in St. Kitts & Nevis 1980-2006



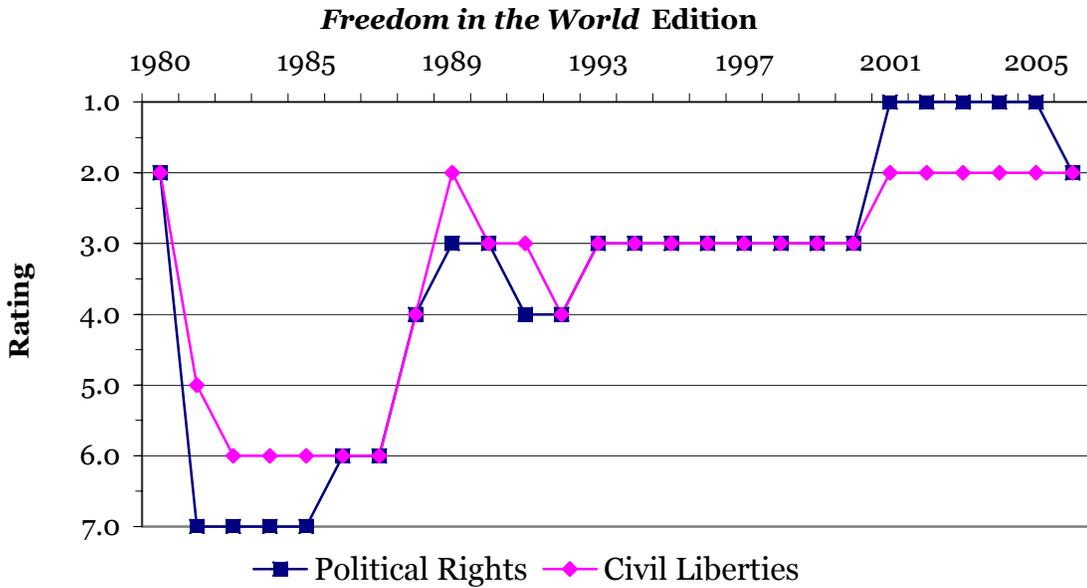
## Freedom in St. Lucia 1980-2006



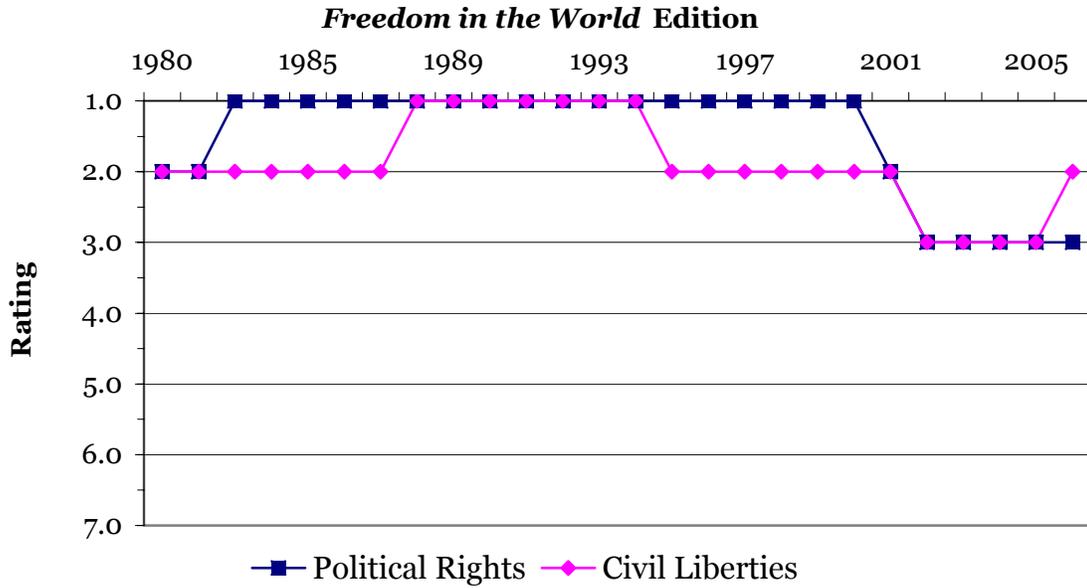
## Freedom in St. Vincent & Grenadines 1980-2006



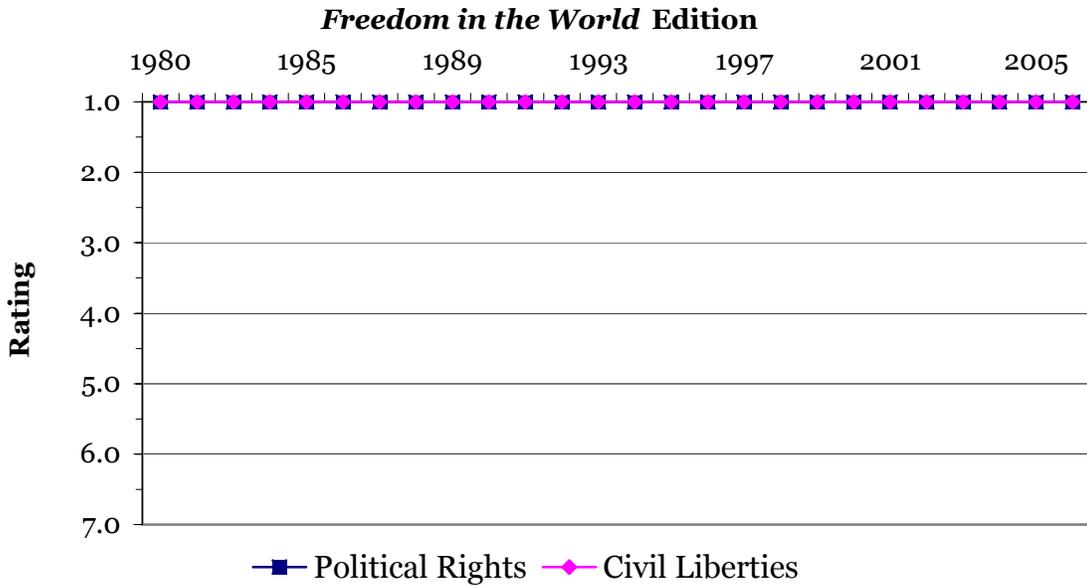
## Freedom in Suriname 1980-2006



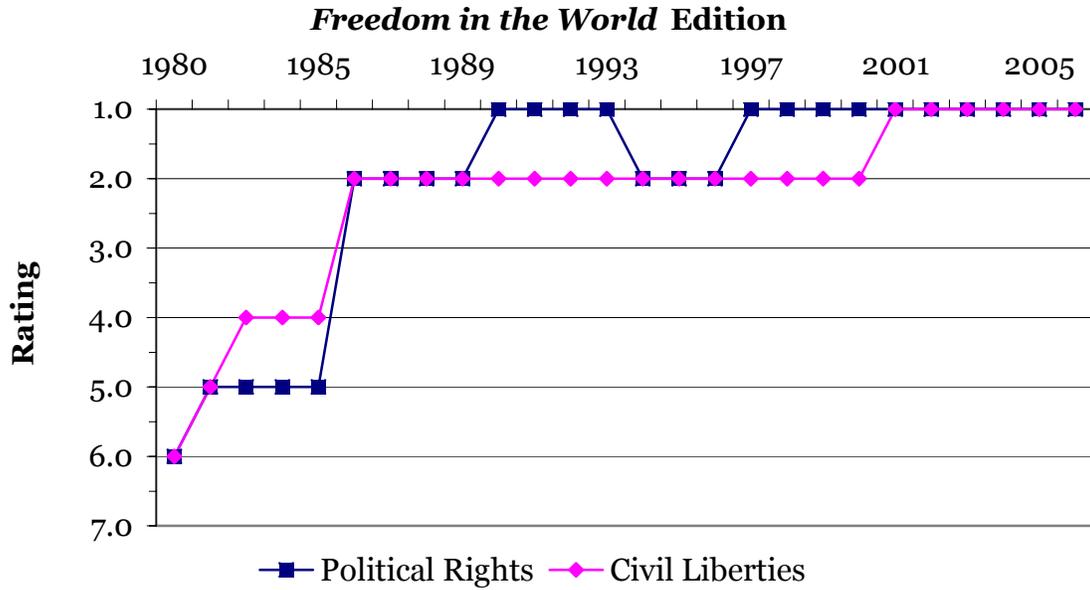
## Freedom in Trinidad & Tobago 1980-2006



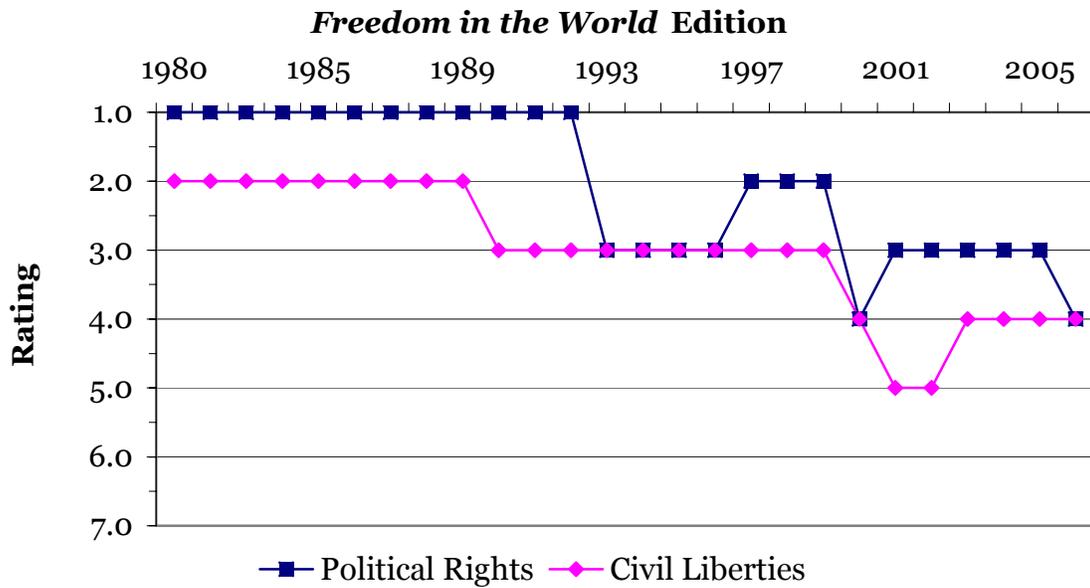
## Freedom in the United States 1980-2006



## Freedom in Uruguay 1980-2006



## Freedom in Venezuela 1980-2006





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**Freedom House is an independent private organization supporting the expansion of freedom throughout the world.**

Freedom is possible only in democratic political systems in which governments are accountable to their own people, the rule of law prevails, and freedoms of expression, association and belief are guaranteed. Working directly with courageous men and women around the world to support nonviolent civic initiatives in societies where freedom is threatened, Freedom House functions as a catalyst for change through its unique mix of analysis, advocacy and action.

- **Analysis.** Freedom House's rigorous research methodology has earned the organization a reputation as the leading source of information on the state of freedom around the globe. Since 1972, Freedom House has published *Freedom in the World*, an annual survey of political rights and civil liberties experienced in every country of the world. The survey is complemented by an annual review of press freedom, an analysis of transitions in the post-communist world, and other publications.
- **Advocacy.** Freedom House seeks to encourage American policymakers, as well as other governments and international institutions, to adopt policies that advance human rights and democracy around the world. Freedom House has been instrumental in the founding of the worldwide Community of Democracies; has actively campaigned for a reformed Human Rights Council at the United Nations; and presses the Millennium Challenge Corporation to adhere to high standards of eligibility for recipient countries.
- **Action.** Through exchanges, grants, and technical assistance, Freedom House provides training and support to human rights defenders, civil society organizations and members of the media in order to strengthen indigenous reform efforts in countries around the globe.

Founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie and other Americans concerned with mounting threats to peace and democracy, Freedom House has long been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and a steadfast opponent of dictatorships of the far left and the far right. The organization's diverse Board of Trustees is composed of a bipartisan mix of business and labor leaders, former senior government officials, scholars and journalists who agree that the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad is vital to America's interests abroad.