

Freedom in the World Methodology Summary

The *Freedom in the World* survey provides an annual evaluation of the progress and decline of freedom in 193 countries and 15 select related and disputed territories. The survey measures freedom according to two broad categories: political rights and civil liberties. Each country and territory is rated on a seven-point scale for both political rights and civil liberties, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free, and then assigns each country and territory a broad category status of Free (for countries whose ratings average 1.0 to 2.5), Partly Free (3.0 to 5.0), or Not Free (5.5 to 7.0). Freedom House also assigns upward or downward “trend arrows” to certain countries and territories which saw general positive or negative trends during the year that were not significant enough to result in a ratings change from the previous year. In addition, the survey includes detailed narrative reports on each country and territory describing the major political and human rights developments of the year.

Freedom House does not maintain a culture-bound view of freedom. The methodology of the survey is grounded in basic standards of political rights and civil liberties, derived in large measure from relevant portions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These standards apply to all countries and territories, irrespective of geographical location, ethnic or religious composition, or level of economic development. The survey operates from the assumption that freedom for all peoples is best achieved in liberal democratic societies.

The survey does not rate governments or government performance per se, but rather the real-world rights and social freedoms enjoyed by individuals. Freedoms can be affected by state actions, as well as by nonstate actors, including insurgents and other armed groups. Thus, the survey ratings generally reflect the interplay of a variety of actors, both governmental and nongovernmental.

The survey findings are reached after a multi-layered process of analysis and evaluation by a team of in-house and consultant regional experts and scholars. The survey, which has been published since 1972, enables an examination of trends in freedom over time and on a comparative basis across regions with different political and economic systems. *Freedom in the World's* ratings and narrative reports are used by policy makers, leading scholars, the media, and international organizations in monitoring the ebb and flow of freedom worldwide.

For a more detailed analysis of last year's survey methodology, please consult the methodology chapter from *Freedom in the World 2007*. The methodology for the forthcoming survey edition will be published in *Freedom in the World 2008*.