

North Korea 2010



Total: 0.93

Quick facts

Population:	22.76 million
Population growth:	0.39 %
GDP:	40 billion \$
GDP growth rate:	-0.9 %
GDP per capita:	1800 \$

Political Freedom

Free and Fair Elections : 0

Elections are generally held every five years. At national level, North Koreans elect a legislature - the Supreme People's Assembly. Additionally, people elect representatives to city, county, and provincial people's assemblies. However, the term election is misleading when it comes to North Korea's political system. Candidates for office must be a member of the "Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland" which is a coalition of the country's three political parties. Before elections, each party may nominate candidates for office. The Democratic Front then selects a single nominee for each political post and presents the list to the voters who have the choice of voting for or against each candidate. This means that the people do not themselves choose representatives but are restricted to merely ratifying candidates chosen by the unelected Democratic Front. Official figures put voter turn-out and approval of candidates usually at roughly 100 percent, a fact that suggests a rather limited choice in the polling booth. Political participation and pluralism also have a distinct North Korean touch: Besides the all-powerful Worker's Party of Korea (WPK) two other political parties exist. But they are bound by law to follow the WPK's political agenda and therefore differ in name only. Individual political participation is forced by the state as a sign of respect to the "Dear Leader" and therefore mandatory. The refusal to participate in certain political activities is perceived as a lack of support for the government and in turn heavily punished.

Absence of Unconstitutional Veto Players : 0

Since North Korea is generally considered to be the world's most oppressive political system, there is no force challenging the government. Everything is either state-owned or state-controlled, nothing else besides exists. Therefore, the government of course holds the effective power to govern. Government policies and actions are never transparent or open and the public has no means of holding government officials accountable. This is why the score in this section is rated as 0.00: Even though there are no veto players at all in the political system of North Korea, by democratic standards this cannot be estimated a positive thing.

Freedom of Press : 0.1

All media in North Korea is state owned, so there is absolutely no freedom of press or expression. Internet access is restricted to only a few thousand people and foreign websites are generally blocked. The only way to get information that is not controlled by the government is through the black market: Radios equipped to receive foreign broadcasts, pirated movies or mobile phones provide such alternative sources of information. Trading on the black market is very much of a risk though – people face heavy punishment if authorities become aware of such activities.

Rule of Law

Independence of the Judiciary :

No data available.

Corruption :

No data available.

Protection of Human Rights : 0.83

The human rights situation in North Korea is devastating. Even though the government initiated a revision of the constitution in March 2009 to stipulate that it respects and protects human rights, this step was widely perceived as being a response to international pressure without any internal consequences. Not only that the death penalty is still in effect – executions are often held publicly and people are forced to attend. Unlawful detentions and torture are also common practices. People considered to be political dissidents are sent to special detention centres for re-education (which in many cases equals a death sentence). Moreover, North Koreans are classified by the government according to their perceived loyalty to the regime. This classification determines every aspect of a person's life, including the access to education or health facilities, to food and employment opportunities.

Economic Freedom

Security of Property Rights :

No data available.

Size of Government: Expenditures, Taxes, and Enterprises :

No data available.

Regulation of Credit, Labour, and Business :

No data available.

Freedom to Trade Internationally :

No data available.