

North Korea 2012



Total: 1.85

Quick facts

Population:	24.59 million
Population growth:	0.54 %
GDP:	28 billion \$
GDP growth rate:	4 %
GDP per capita:	1800 \$

Political Freedom

Free and Fair Elections : 0

At the end of 2011, the world witnessed the succession of Kim Jong-Un, the youngest son of the late Kim Jong-Il, as North Korea's dictator. North Koreans were confronted with a *fait accompli*, as public participation in the transition of leadership was restricted to the expression of grief at the loss of Kim Jong-Il and then to the rejoicing at the immediate advancement of their new Supreme Leader.

However, North Koreans do go to polls which are generally held every five years. At the national level, citizens elect a legislature - the Supreme People's Assembly. Additionally, people elect representatives to city, county, and provincial people's assemblies. But 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, presents this list to the voters, who then have the choice of either voting for or against each candidate. What this means is that the people do not choose representatives and are restricted to merely confirming candidates chosen by the unelected Democratic Front. Moreover, voting is practically mandatory - police forces are guaranteed to find out the whereabouts of any person eligible to vote but failing to do so.

North Korea also displays its uniqueness when it comes to political participation and pluralism. To be sure, there are other political parties in addition to the all-powerful Workers' Party of Korea

(WPK), but they are bound by law to follow the WPK's political agenda. Individual political participation is required by the state as a sign of respect to the Supreme Leader, *i.e.* it is mandatory. Refusal to participate in certain political activities is perceived as a lack of support for the government and, in turn, leads to severe punishment.

Absence of Unconstitutional Veto Players : 0

As North Korea is known to be one of the world's most repressive political systems, there are no other actors challenging the government. Everything is either state-owned or state-controlled, so the government holds all effective power to govern. The public has no means of holding government officials accountable, as government policies and actions are never transparent or open. However, the absence of veto players in the political system of North Korea can hardly be seen as a positive thing by democratic standards. Thus, North Korea obtains the score of 0.00 in this section.

Freedom of Press : 0.3

All media in North Korea are 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 uncensored information is through the black market, by getting items such as radios equipped to receive foreign broadcasts, pirated movies or mobile phones. However, trading on the black market is very much a risk. People face heavy punishment if authorities learn of such activities.

Rule of Law

Independence of the Judiciary :

No data available.

Corruption : 1

Corruption penetrates every level of the state and the economy. North Korea shared the bottom rank (182nd) with Somalia in Transparency International's 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Protection of Human Rights : 0.55

The North Korean government engages in systematic human rights violations. It is known to regularly carry out arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, torture and other forms of ill-treatment on its population, including children. North Koreans are denied freedom of assembly and the right to organise political opposition. There is no functioning civil society. The death penalty is still practiced, with executions periodically held in public. Moreover, the government classifies citizens into 53 subgroups based on their perceived loyalty to the regime. The rating given to an individual has an impact on every aspect of his/her life, including access to education or health facilities, 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.