

North Korea 2013



Total: 1.85

Quick facts

Population:	24.72 million
Population growth:	0.53 %
GDP:	40 billion \$
GDP growth rate:	0.8 %
GDP per capita:	1800 \$

Political Freedom

Free and Fair Elections : 0

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a dictatorship. Despite the dictatorial nature of the regime and the complete lack of democratic structures, North Koreans go to polls. 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. Voting is mandatory and 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 leads to severe punishment.

Absence of Unconstitutional Veto Players : 0

Since the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is one of the most, if not the most repressive country in the world, there are no unconstitutional veto players which could challenge the power of the government. Literally everything is state-owned or state-controlled and decision making processes are never transparent or in any way communicated to the public. Therefore, there is no way for citizens to hold authorities accountable for their actions. Although the absence of veto players is necessary in democratic systems it can hardly be perceived as a positive thing in the case of the DPRK, as it coincides with an absolute lack of opposition or civil society, hence the score of 0 in this category.

Freedom of Press : 0.4

There is absolutely no freedom of expression or freedom of the press in any kind of way in the DPRK. Although the constitution formally guarantees freedom of expression, additional provisions in it call for adherence to the "collective spirit", practically banning all non-censored reporting. All media is state owned and serves as a propaganda apparatus for the regime. There are no foreign broadcasters available in the country and listening to foreign radio or possession of dissident publications is punished as a crime against the state. Recently the Associated Press was allowed to open a full time office in Pyongyang from where it operates under heavy restrictions. Estimates put the number of North Koreans with access to the internet (the proper one, not the odd North Korean variety) at about 4,000. Most of them are high-level party officials.

Rule of Law

Independence of the Judiciary :

No data available.

Corruption : 0.8

North Korea remains at the bottom of Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perception Index, along with Somalia and Afghanistan, as it did in 2011. The overarching state apparatus has further strengthened its grip of society and government corruption penetrates all facets of life. In the world's last remaining totalitarian state, corruption is inevitable.

Protection of Human Rights : 0.65

The new phase of Kim leadership in North Korea has, according to Maple Croft's Human Rights Atlas, coincided with a tightening of state control and a worsening of its human rights levels. The Atlas has marked a steady decline during the transition period from Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un (from 1.5 in 2010 to 0.8 in 2013), as the government sought to consolidate power and quell unrest. North Korea does not allow any kind of organised opposition, religious freedom, civil society or free media.

Arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial murder, disappearances, torture, internal displacement, trafficking of people and a lack of any freedom of thought and expression remain serious and pervasive problems. Collective punishment is still used and hundreds of thousands of people are enslaved in forced labour camps and re-education centers. Individuals convicted of crimes are often condemned to serve their sentences with their spouse, children, parents and even grandchildren. The state still publically executes prisoners who steal state property and commit other "anti-government", "anti-Kim" and "anti-socialist" crimes.

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.