

North Korea 2014



Total: 1.67

Quick facts

Population:	24.85 million
Population growth:	0.53 %
GDP:	40 billion \$
GDP growth rate:	1.3 %
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 the polls every five years. At the national level, citizens elect a legislature – the Supreme People's Assembly, which has 687 seats. 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 an alliance of the country's three political parties, the Worker's Party of Korea, the Korean Social Democratic Party and the Cheondoist Chongu Party. (The two latter ones are bound by law to follow the Workers' Party's political agenda, so the distinction is rather academic.) Before elections, each party nominates candidates for office; the Democratic Front then selects a single nominee for each political post. The candidate in each seat is then considered by the electors in meetings at the workplace or similar, and on election day the electors can then indicate approval or disapproval of the candidate on the ballot paper. A voter may cross off the candidate's name to vote against him, but must do so in a special booth without any secrecy, which nobody dares. This means people merely confirm candidates chosen by the unelected Democratic Front. Voting is mandatory and mainly serves as a test of people's loyalty to the leadership and to confirm people's whereabouts.

March 2014 saw the first parliamentary election after the death of leader Kim Jong-il in December

2011. Unsurprisingly, the three member parties of the Democratic Front snapped up nearly all the votes, with the Workers' Party winning 607 seats, the Social Democratic Party 50, and the Chongu Party 22. Voter turnout was reported to be near 100%.

Absence of Unconstitutional Veto Players : 0

Since North Korea is one of the most, if not the most repressive country in the world, there are no unconstitutional veto players who 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 the 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 North Korea, as it coincides with an absolute lack of opposition or civil society, hence the score of 0.00 in this category.

Freedom of Press : 0.3

There is absolutely no freedom of expression or freedom of the press in any form in North Korea. In all press freedom rankings, the country regularly occupies the very bottom. 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 propaganda apparatus for the regime. The regime tries to cut the population off from uncensored information from the outside world, but more and more foreign movies, songs, etc. are being smuggled into the country via China on USB sticks and DVDs. This trade is organised through illegal mobile phone calls to China, and with the goods come news into North Korea that are spread by word of mouth. Also, balloons launched by civil rights groups across the border in South Korea carry information into the country.

North Korea runs *Kwangmyong* (bright), a tightly controlled Intranet. *Kwangmyong* can only be accessed by a small number of people from within the country and its content is strictly limited. Only a few people have access to the proper internet, most of them are high-level party officials. Associated Press opened an office in Pyongyang in 2012, but is restricted in its reporting. Agence France-Presse will open an office there soon as well. Foreign TV programmes can be watched at selected places like foreigners' hotels only. Listening to foreign radio or possession of dissident publications is punished as a crime against the state. The regime distorts programmes of broadcasting stations like Radio Free Asia.

Rule of Law

Independence of the Judiciary :

No data available.

Corruption : 0.8

North Korea remains at the bottom of Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perception

Index, tied with Somalia and Afghanistan, as it did in 2012. 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.

Strict rules and draconian punishments imposed by the regime, for example, against accessing foreign media or for modifying radio or television receivers to access foreign media, are commonly evaded by offering bribes to the police.

North Korea's state media admitted widespread corruption in North Korea, when laying out the accusations against Jang Sung-taek after his execution in December 2013. The statement mentioned bribery, deviation of materials, selling resources and land, securing funds and squandering money for private use by organisations under his control.

Protection of Human Rights : 0.57

Kim Jong-un's accession to power has coincided with a tightening of state control and a worsening of North Korea's already dismal human rights situation. Arbitrary arrests and detentions, extrajudicial murder, disappearances, torture, internal displacements, trafficking of people, and a lack of any freedom of religion, 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 centres. Individuals convicted of crimes are often condemned to serve their sentences with their spouse, children, parents and even grandchildren. Executions of people convicted for anti-government, anti-Kim or anti-socialist crimes are public.

In December 2013 Kim Jong-un ordered the execution of Jang Sung-taek, the husband of Kim Jong-il's younger sister. Jang, formerly one of the country's leading officials, was accused of being counter-revolutionary, corrupt and a drug abuser.

In response to a recent UN report on North Korea's miserable human rights record, the country issued a report of its own. According to it, North Korea has "the world's most advantageous human rights system".

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.