

Venezuela

Geography

Location: Northern South America, bordering the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, between Colombia and Guyana

Area:

total area: 912,050 sq km

land area: 882,050 sq km

Land boundaries: total 4,993 km, Brazil 2,200 km, Colombia 2,050 km, Guyana 743 km

Coastline: 2,800 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 15 nm

continental shelf: 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: tropical; hot, humid; more moderate in highlands

Terrain: Andes Mountains and Maracaibo Lowlands in northwest; central plains (llanos); Guiana Highlands in southeast

Natural resources: petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, gold, bauxite, other minerals, hydropower, diamonds

Land use:

arable land: 3%

permanent crops: 1%

meadows and pastures: 20%

forest and woodland: 39%

other: 37%

Irrigated land: 2,640 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: sewage pollution of Lago de Valencia; oil and urban pollution of Lago de Maracaibo; deforestation; soil degradation; urban and industrial pollution, especially along the Caribbean coast
natural hazards: subject to floods, rockslides, mudslides; periodic droughts

Note: on major sea and air routes linking North and South America

People

Population: 21,004,773 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 35% (female 3,650,705; male 3,795,032)

15-64 years: 60% (female 6,350,466; male 6,313,887)

65 years and over: 5% (female 486,020; male 408,663) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.1% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 25.11 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 4.57 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0.46 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 26.5 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 73.31 years
male: 70.48 years
female: 76.29 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.97 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Venezuelan(s)
adjective: Venezuelan

Ethnic divisions: mestizo 67%, white 21%, black 10%, Amerindian 2%

Religions: nominally Roman Catholic 96%, Protestant 2%

Languages: Spanish (official), native dialects spoken by about 200,000 Amerindians in the remote interior

Literacy:
total population: 90%
male: 91%
female: 89%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Venezuela

conventional short form: Venezuela

local long form: Republica de Venezuela

local short form: Venezuela

Type: republic

Capital: Caracas

Independence: 5 July 1811 (from Spain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 5 July (1811)

Constitution: 23 January 1961

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: three equal horizontal bands of yellow (top), blue, and red with the coat of arms on the hoist side of the yellow band and an arc of seven white five-pointed stars centered in the blue band

Economy

Industries: petroleum, iron-ore mining, construction materials, food processing, textiles, steel, aluminum, motor vehicle assembly

Agriculture: accounts for 6% of GDP; products - corn, sorghum, sugarcane, rice, bananas, vegetables, coffee, beef, pork, milk, eggs, fish; not self-sufficient in food other than meat

Illicit drugs: illicit producer of cannabis, opium, and coca leaf for the international drug trade on a small scale; however, large quantities of cocaine and heroin transit the country from Colombia; important money-laundering hub

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 542 km (

Highways:

total: 81,000 km

Inland waterways: 7,100 km; Rio Orinoco and Lago de Maracaibo accept oceangoing vessels

Pipelines: crude oil 6,370 km; petroleum products 480 km; natural gas 4,010 km

Ports: Amuay, Bajo Grande, El Tablazo, La Guaira, La Salina, Maracaibo, Matanzas, Palua, Puerto Cabello, Puerto la Cruz, Puerto Ordaz, Puerto Sucre, Punta Cardon

Airports:

total: 431

Defence Forces

Branches: National Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Nacionales or FAN) includes Ground Forces or Army (Fuerzas Terrestres or Ejercito), Naval Forces (Fuerzas Navales or Armada), Air Force (Fuerzas Aereas or Aviacion), Armed Forces of Cooperation or National Guard (Fuerzas Armadas de Cooperacion or Guardia Nacional)