

# Uruguay - Human Rights Scorecard <sup>1</sup>

The Oriental Republic of Uruguay is a South American country located between Argentina to the east and Brazil to the west. It gained its independence from the Brazilian Empire in 1828. Before the downfall of the civic-military regime in 1985, Uruguay was steeped in a humanitarian crisis involving little freedom of political free speech and civil liberties. Since then, the nation has been progressing and mending, becoming one of the most developed countries on the continent.

**Official language:** Spanish

**Capital:** Montevideo

**Population:** 3.4 million

**Ethnic groups:** 88% White; 8% Mestizo; 4% Black

**Government:** Unitary presidential constitutional republic

- President: Tabaré Vázquez
- Vice President: Lucía Topalansky

**Life expectancy:** 76.4 years

**Under-5 mortality:** 7 per 1000

**Adult literacy:** 98.1%

**Death penalty:** Abolished



## Section 1: Overall Development

The overall development of a country – considering education, health, income, and other factors – is a strong indicator of whether average citizens have a reasonable chance to enjoy social and economic well-being and mobility.

### Human Development (UNDP Human Development Index (HDI)) <sup>2</sup>



#### 0.795 – High Human Development <sup>3</sup>

According to the UNDP, Uruguayans in 2015 enjoyed a gross national income per capita of \$19,148, could expect to have on average 8.6 years of schooling. Compared to other countries with comparable gross national income per capita, this is a high HDI.

## Section 2: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

### Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



#### Respected <sup>4</sup>

There are no reports that the government or its agents have committed arbitrary or unlawful killings in 2017.

### Freedom from disappearance



#### Respected <sup>5</sup>

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of the government in Uruguay in 2017.

### Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



#### Respected <sup>6</sup>

Torture and similar practices are outlawed under the Uruguayan constitution, and no instances of torture have been reported.

### Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



#### Respected <sup>7</sup>

These freedoms are generally respected, and the government is even taking steps to investigate such infractions that took place under previous regimes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Freedom from denial of fair public trial



#### **Partially respected**<sup>8</sup>

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but juries are not used. Judicial officials often receive threats from organized crime groups, and are assigned police protection by the government.

### Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



#### **Respected**<sup>9</sup>

The law prohibits such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

## Section 3: Respect for Civil Liberties

*Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.*

### Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)<sup>10</sup>



#### **Score: 15.56, Rank: 20 / 180 – Mostly free, diverse and independent**<sup>11</sup>

The law provides for freedom of expression, including for the press, and the government generally respected this right. There have been no credible reports of internet censorship or monitoring by the government.

### Freedom from academic censorship



#### **Respected**<sup>12</sup>

There were no government restrictions of academic freedom or cultural events.

### Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



#### **Respected**<sup>13</sup>

These rights are protected by Uruguayan law and are generally respected by the government.

### Freedom of religion



#### **Respected**<sup>14</sup>

There is no religion affiliated with the Uruguayan state, and religious rights are protected. There are only a handful of cases of religious discrimination reported.

### Freedom of movement



#### **Respected**<sup>15</sup>

Uruguayan law protects internal movement, emigration, and travel, and the government respects these rights; the government also works with the UNHCR in providing asylum to IDPs and refugees.

### Protection of refugees and stateless persons



#### **Respected**<sup>16</sup>

Uruguayan law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a special commission for providing protection to refugees and helping in the resettlement process.

### Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)<sup>17 18</sup>



#### **1 / 7 (1 is best) – Free**<sup>19</sup>

Uruguay is one of the top protectors of civil liberties.

## Section 4: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc.

### Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)<sup>20</sup>



**1 / 7 (1 is best) – Free**<sup>21</sup>

Political rights and participation are respected in Uruguay.

## Section 5: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

### Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)<sup>22</sup>



**Score: 70%, Rank: 23 / 180 – Limited corruption**<sup>23</sup>

Uruguay has the third best corruption perceptions index in the Americas, with low levels of corruption. Some officials engaged in corruption, but authorities addressed them with legal action. The Uruguayan VP resigned in September over corruption allegations.

## Section 6: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

### Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



**Respected**<sup>24</sup>

A number of human rights groups operate in Uruguay without government restriction, and government officials often were cooperative and responsive to their views.

## Section 7: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

### Endangered Minorities (*Peoples Under Threat – Minority Rights Group International*)<sup>25</sup>



**No threat listed – Limited dangers to minorities**<sup>26</sup>

According to Minorities Rights Group International, Uruguay does not have any minorities which face an immediate threat of violence.

### Rights of women (*World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index*)<sup>27</sup>



**Score: 71.0%, Rank: 56 / 144 – Somewhat unequal rights**<sup>28</sup>

Hefty legislation has been passed surrounding sexual assault and harassment. Women continue to face discrimination in employment, pay, education, and credit. Women's wages average 10-30% less than those of men.

### Rights of Children (*KidsRights Index Overall Score*)<sup>29</sup>



**Score: 84.9%, Rank: 14 / 165 – Somewhat protected**<sup>30</sup>

Citizenship is derived from birth in the country's territory and/or from one parent. The Uruguayan government provides services and hotlines for child victims of abuse and exploitation.

### Rights of persons with disabilities



**Respected**<sup>31</sup>

Disabled Uruguayans are legally protected to participate socially and politically. Public institutions and universities are accessible and offer interpreters, and all news channels are legally obligated to offer subtitles or sign language interpretation.

## Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



### Partially respected<sup>32</sup>

The Afro-Uruguayan community faces societal discrimination and high levels of poverty, and are systemically underrepresented in government. Anti-Semitic graffiti has been reported in some cities, including the defacement of the Holocaust memorial in Montevideo.

## Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



### Partially respected<sup>33 34</sup>

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and same sex marriage is legal. However, there is still high discrimination and unemployment for LGBTI+ citizens, particularly transgender Uruguayans.

## Section 7: Workers' Rights

*Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.*

## Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



### Respected<sup>35</sup>

The law protects workers' rights to strike and bargain collectively, and labour unions work unimpeded by the government. The state has worked to reinforce these rights in past years.

## Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



### Partially respected<sup>36</sup>

The law criminalizes forced labour, though there were some instances of foreign workers living in these conditions.

## Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



### Partially respected<sup>37</sup>

The minimum age of employment in Uruguay is 15 years. Protection of children from child labour is generally respected, however there were reported failures of enforcement particularly in the informal economy and domestic and construction sectors.

## Right to acceptable conditions of work



### Partially respected<sup>38</sup>

Workers in all sectors enjoy a minimum wage and protection from dangerous work environments, but these are not enforceable in the informal sector. Penalties for labour violations are not strong enough to prevent them from happening.

## Right to employment



### 6.3% - Reasonable unemployment<sup>39</sup>

The unemployment rate has been dropping in recent years, but is expecting to increase again.

<sup>1</sup> A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

<sup>2</sup> The UN Development Program HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. The HDI can also be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts can stimulate debate about government policy priorities. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>

<sup>3</sup> "Table 1: Human Development Index and its components, Uruguay" UNDP, based on 2014 or the most recent year available. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>.

<sup>4</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Uruguay." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a “disappearance” is different than simple arbitrary detention because a “disappearance” is considered permanent.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>10</sup> The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

<sup>11</sup> "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.

<sup>12</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Uruguay." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

<sup>13</sup> "Uruguay." World Report 2014: Uruguay. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/Uruguay>.

<sup>14</sup> "Uruguay." International Religious Freedom Report for 2013. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 25, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

<sup>15</sup> "Uruguay." World Report 2014: Uruguay. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/Uruguay>.

<sup>16</sup> "Uruguay." World Report 2014: Uruguay. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/Uruguay>.

<sup>17</sup> Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

<sup>18</sup> Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed Dec. 9, 2014

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

<sup>19</sup> "Uruguay." Freedom in the World 2014: Uruguay. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/Uruguay-0#.VIIIHzGG9e8>.

<sup>20</sup> See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed Dec. 9, 2014 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

<sup>21</sup> "Uruguay." Freedom in the World 2014: Uruguay. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/Uruguay-0#.VIIIHzGG9e8>.

<sup>22</sup> Transparency International (TI) publishes a “Corruption Perceptions Index” annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

<sup>23</sup> "Uruguay." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.transparency.org/country#BHR>.

<sup>24</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Uruguay." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

<sup>25</sup> The Peoples under Threat assessment by Minority Rights Group International highlights countries most at risk of genocide and mass killing. The ranking is created by compiling data on the known antecedents to genocide or mass political killing. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.

<sup>26</sup> "Uruguay." Peoples under Threat, Minority Rights Group International. 2015, or most recent data. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.

<sup>27</sup> This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

<sup>28</sup> "Uruguay." World Economic Forum. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=BHR>.

<sup>29</sup> This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

<sup>30</sup> "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

<sup>31</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Uruguay." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>33</sup> "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>34</sup> ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

---

<sup>35</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Uruguay." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_minimum\\_wages\\_by\\_country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country)

<sup>39</sup> "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2013. Accessed December 7, 2014. [http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS\\_233936/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm).