

Suriname

Republic of Suriname



Key Facts



OAS Membership Date: 1977

Head of State / Head of Government: President Desire Delano Bouterse

Capital city: Paramaribo

Population: 597,927

Language(s): Dutch (official), English (widely spoken), Sranang Tongo (native language), Caribbean Hindustani, Javanese

Religions: Protestant 23.6%, Hindu 22.3%, Roman Catholic 21.6%, Muslim 13.8%, other Christian 3.2%, Winti 1.8%, Jehovah's Witness 1.2%, other 1.7%, none 7.5%, unspecified 3.2%

Ethnic Groups: Hindustani 27.4%, "Maroon" 21.7%, Creole 15.7%, Javanese 13.7%, mixed 13.4%, other 7.6%, unspecified 0.6%

Currency: Surinamese dollar (SRD)

Gross domestic product (PPP): \$8.688 billion (2017 est.)

Legal System: civil law system influenced by the Dutch civil codes. The Commissie Nieuw Surinaamse Burgerlijk Wetboek completed drafting a new civil code in February 2009.

Political system: Suriname is a presidential republic. The president and vice president are indirectly elected by the National Assembly, where they go on to serve five-year terms without any term limits. The president will serve the Chief of State and the Head of Government. The National Assembly that elects people to these offices consists of 51 members who are directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by party-list proportional representation vote. These members also serve five-year terms. The High Court of Justice of Suriname consists of four members, as well as one court president and vice president. Each of these members are to be appointed by the national president in consultation with the National Assembly, the State Advisory Council, and the Order of Private Attorneys. Those appointed will serve for life. Any appeals beyond the High Court are to be referred to Caribbean Court of Justice, but human rights violations are to be appealed to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights where the case is to be decided by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Economy: Suriname's economy is heavily dependent on its mining exports, where gold and oil make up 85% of Surinamese exports and 27% of government revenues. This unfortunately means the Surinamese economy is vulnerable to mineral price volatility and fluctuations in commodity prices, both of which have had negative effects on the Surinamese economy in the past few years. Economic growth in Suriname has declined annually from just under 5% in 2012 to -10.4% in 2016. By the end of 2016, the SRD had lost 46% of its value against the dollar. This depreciation of the SRD, as well as increased tariffs on electricity, had caused prices to rise 22% year-over-year in Suriname by the end of 2017. While there have been some recent positivity in the Surinamese economy- the Fitch Credit Bureau reported a positive growth of 1.2% in 2017 and the World Bank predicted 2.2% growth in 2018, inflation is 9%, down from 55% in 2016, and increased gold production helped lift exports. The Surinamese economic prospects are highly dependent on the government's commitment to responsible fiscal policies and reform that liberalizes the market and introduces competition. Purchasing power has dropped significantly and if the Surinamese does not take measures to strengthen the country's fiscal position, it could be faced with liquidity pressures.

Diplomatic Relations

Relations with the OAS

Suriname was not an original OAS member state, but instead had joined the organization in 1977. Recently, Suriname has been a donor country for various conferences and events through OAS, including:

- *The Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence Against Women* that established mechanisms for the protection of women facing violence publicly and privately;
- *The OAS Academic Scholarship Program's Special Caribbean Scholarships Program (SPECAP)* that grants scholarships to residents of Caribbean states and Suriname to put towards higher education.

Suriname has also been the beneficiary of many OAS projects targeting Caribbean states, including:

- *The Caribbean Sustainable Energy Roadmap Strategy* that provides services to Caribbean nations and Suriname that transition them towards enhanced energy services;
- *ReefFix* which provides framework and financial support to Caribbean nations and Suriname in an effort to preserve marine life;
- *Expanding the Socio-Economic Potential of Cultural Heritage in the Caribbean* which emphasizes the long-term conservation of cultural heritage with full integration into economic, political, and social life of the population.

Suriname has yet to host the organization's General Assembly, despite its membership since 1977 and active participation in projects.

Relations with Venezuela

Suriname and Venezuela have civil relationships with one another and both have embassies in each other's capitals. The only country separating the two is Guyana whom both have border disputes with. Despite this, Suriname's relationship with Guyana is much more civil than Venezuela's relationship with Guyana. Guyana and Suriname are members of another regional organization, the Caribbean Community, or CARICOM, which has sided against Venezuela in their border dispute with Guyana, marking some room for disagreement between Venezuela and Suriname. Other than this, CARICOM has publicly expressed its concern over the situation in Venezuela as one that could escalate into a greater political crisis resulting in more violence, however it has also claimed that the solution should be reached through a peaceful, internal process in accordance with "the principles of non-interference and non-intervention in the affairs of states, respect for sovereignty, the constitutional framework, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for human rights and democracy." CARICOM did not recognize Maduro or Guaido as the legitimate president of Venezuela and most Caribbean nations, including Suriname recognized the election result in January. This could be because many CARICOM members, including Suriname, have benefited from the Petrocaribe program that allows certain Caribbean states to purchase Venezuelan oil under preferential payment. There has been evidence, however, that this program may be hurting Venezuelans and members of the opposition have claimed that this program is in the process of being dismantled, making more room for disagreement and tension between the currently civil states of Venezuela and Suriname.