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# Exclusive polling reveals surging optimism inside Venezuela

A survey commissioned for *The Economist* also reveals an overwhelming desire for democracy

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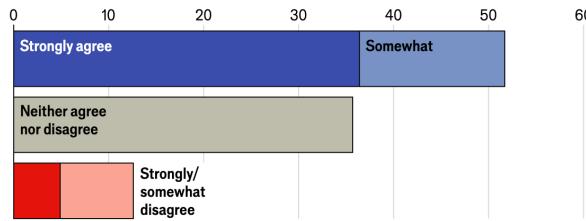
Jan 13th 2026 | 4 min read

**S**EEEN FROM Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, the small hours of January 3rd were terrifying. Bombs fell, helicopters and planes roared overhead and confusion reigned. By dawn perhaps 100 people were dead and Nicolás Maduro, the country's authoritarian leader since 2013, had been seized by American special forces. Yet shock and fear quickly gave way to something else: happiness. According to exclusive polling for *The Economist* by Premise, a research firm based in Virginia, Venezuelans inside the country are pretty pleased with the dramatic turn of events, even if their vision for its future differs from that of Donald Trump.

The survey offers one of the first glimpses of Venezuelans' reaction to the snatching of Mr Maduro. Conducted via mobile app, it asked 600 Venezuelan residents their views on the raid, their expectations for the future and their opinions of various figures. The results are weighted by age and sex to reflect the national population.

### "I support the United States' capture of Nicolás Maduro"

Venezuela, % responding\*



Source: Premise/*The Economist*, Jan 9th-13th 2026

\*600 respondents

The polling shows that Mr Maduro, who presided over torture and economic collapse and brazenly stole the presidential election in 2024, was deeply hated. Just 13% of respondents even mildly opposed his capture. Strikingly, more than half of them said their opinion of the United States had improved after the raid.

### "In the next 12 months, do you think the your situation in Venezuela will be..."

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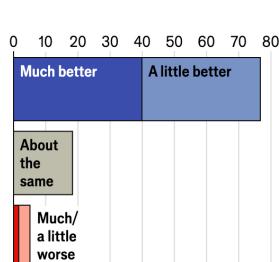
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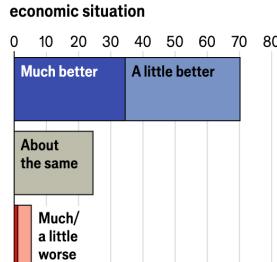
**YOUR SITUATION IN VENEZUELA WILL BE...**

Venezuela, % responding\*

**The political situation**



**You and your family's economic situation**



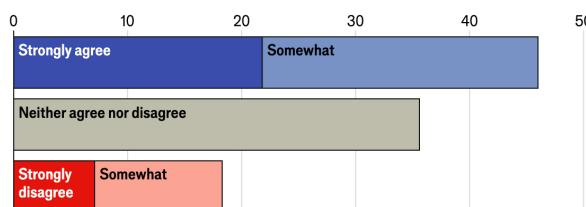
Source: Premise/The Economist, Jan 9th-13th 2026

\*600 respondents

The raid has given Venezuelans hope. Before his capture, many feared they were stuck with Mr Maduro, possibly for decades. Now almost four in five of them think the political situation will be better in a year. Almost as many think their personal economic situation will have improved by then, too—the Venezuelan economy shrank by 70% under Mr Maduro's rule.

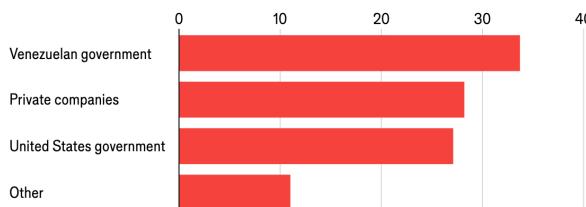
**"I support US governance in Venezuela"**

Venezuela, % responding\*



**"Who do you believe should run Venezuela's oil industry in the future?"**

Venezuela, % responding\*



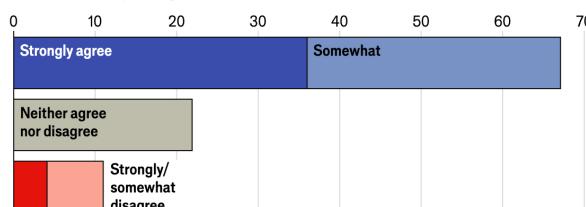
Source: Premise/The Economist, Jan 9th-13th 2026

\*600 respondents

For now, Venezuelans appear remarkably sanguine about the Trump administration's plans to "run" the country and its keen interest in Venezuelan oil. Almost half support some form of American governance; just 18% oppose it. Views are more divided on who should control the oil industry. Just over a quarter of respondents thought the American government should be in charge, while about a third chose the Venezuelan government. Nearly 30% opted for private companies.

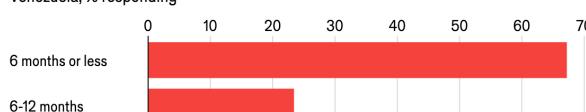
**"There should be a new presidential election in Venezuela"**

Venezuela, % responding\*



**"How soon do you believe new elections should be held?"**

Venezuela, % responding†





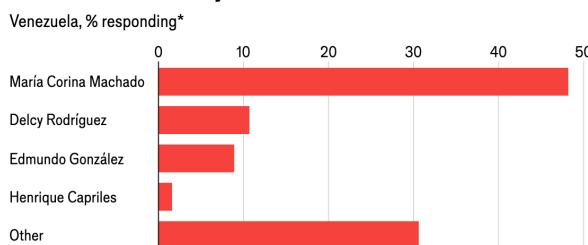
\*600 respondents

<sup>†</sup>Among those who agreed there should be a new presidential election, 402 respondents

Source: Premise/The Economist, Jan 9th-13th 2026

Where Venezuelans' views diverge most sharply from those of Mr Trump is over who should lead the country. The majority of Venezuelans want a quick democratic transition. After María Corina Machado, the most popular opposition leader, was barred from running in the presidential election in July 2024 she backed Edmundo González, who won handsomely, only for Mr Maduro to declare himself the winner. More than a third of Venezuelans think Mr González should now take office, given he already has a democratic mandate. Two-thirds think there should be new elections. Of those 91% say they should happen within a year, with most wanting polls within just six months. That is far quicker than the several years that members of the Trump administration have publicly implied.

**"If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which candidate would you vote for?"**

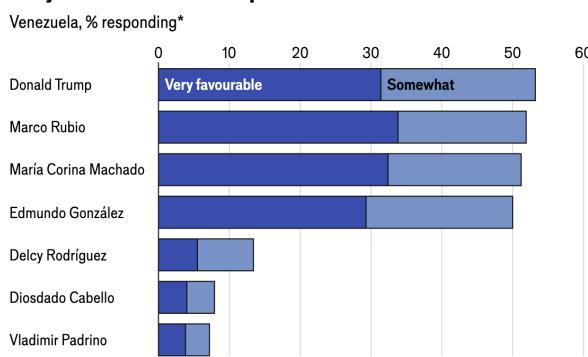


Source: Premise/The Economist, Jan 9th-13th 2026

\*600 respondents

Venezuelans are also unhappy about Delcy Rodríguez, Mr Maduro's vice-president, taking over—Mr Trump has openly backed her, at least for now. A piddling 10% agree, even somewhat, that she should complete Mr Maduro's (stolen) term, which runs to 2031. Just 13% hold a favourable view of her. Ms Rodríguez performs slightly better when Venezuelans are asked about who is most capable of ensuring political stability—the apparent basis for Mr Trump's support—but still trails Ms Machado by 30 percentage points.

**"Do you have a favourable opinion of..."**



Source: Premise/The Economist, Jan 9th-13th 2026

\*600 respondents

The Trump administration should take these demands for democracy seriously. Mr Trump and Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, are remarkably popular in Venezuela: our polling finds that both have higher approval ratings in Venezuela than does Ms Machado. (Their approval ratings in Venezuela are also higher than they are in America.) Failure to take Venezuelans' demands seriously will not merely hamper their approval ratings; they could be a recipe for instability in the country.

The oil investment that Mr Trump is so fixated on is likely to materialise only if democracy and the rule of law come first. Yet getting to elections will not be easy. Our polls show Venezuelans have limited trust in the existing electoral authority to run a fair election. And they do not trust the army, which should

uphold the results. All that requires reform. The Trump administration would be wise to bring the same urgency to repairing Venezuela's democracy as it is to repairing its oilfields. ■

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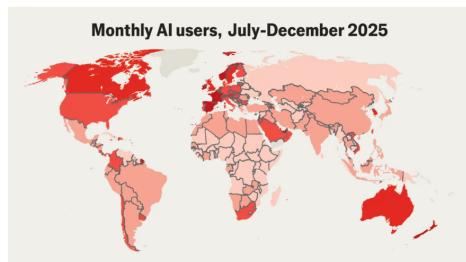
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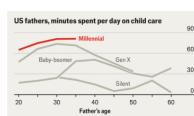


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