



What's the Status of Freedom in the World?

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Freedom is on the decline according to one study.

Global freedom has moderately declined, from 7.05 to 6.93 on a ten-point scale, since 2008 through 2015, according to the third annual Human Freedom Index (HFI), the most comprehensive measure of freedom ever created for a large number of countries, according to a recent report from CATO.

The United States does not rank in the top ten. It comes in at 17th, which is higher than its ranking since 2008, although its index score has remained relatively flat. The US score of 8.27 compares to a 8.38 in 2008.

The top 10 most free countries are Switzerland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Ireland, Australia, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and, tied at 9th place, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Canada ranks 11th, Sweden 13th, Germany 16th, Japan 27th, Mexico 73rd, India 102, Russia 126th, China 30th, and Venezuela 158th.

The report quoted a co-author, Tanja Pornik, saying, "In many parts of the world, freedom is under assault, with nationalism, populism, and hybrid forms of authoritarianism being sold as viable alternatives. As such, the largest deteriorations in freedom have occurred in Syria, Egypt, Venezuela, Belize, and Greece. The good news is that freedom has taken root in a diverse set of societies and it is also spreading in numerous countries around the globe."

Countries in the top quartile of freedom enjoy a significantly higher per capita income \$38,871 than those in other quartiles; the per capita income in the least-free quartile is \$10,346. Studies have consistently found a direct correlation between the level of freedom in a region and income levels.

The HFI covers 159 countries for 2015, the most recent year for which sufficient data are available.

The report is co-published by the Cato Institute, the Fraser Institute, and the Liberales Institut at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

The index measures a broad range of indicators of personal and economic freedom, including rule of law, security and safety, movement, religion, association, assembly and civil society,

expression, relationships, size of government, legal system and property rights, access to sound money, freedom to trade internationally, regulation of credit, labor and business.

Interestingly when it comes to the “rule of law” – one of the most profound principles upon which the US Constitution is based – the US ranks only 28th out of 159 countries and its index score is but 6.73 of a possible 10.

Perhaps not surprising in a country where the rule of law is slipping, the efficacy of the US legal system and its protection of property rights, which are integral to supporting the rule of law, – those scores too are rather dismal. The US falls to a 5.45 when it comes to the legal enforcement of contracts; a 6.38 in terms of impartial courts; and 5.76 in terms of the cost of crime to business. Despite that the country’s score on the “integrity of the legal system” is 8.33. It is buoyed by “reliability of police”

The US scores a full measure for religious freedom, freedom of association, relationships; and almost a 10 in areas of “sound money” and “Security and Safety.” In terms of freedom of expression and information the US scores 9.05. It gets a ten from the fact that there is as yet no state control over the internet, and no people in the media having been killed; however, the US scores only 7.25 in terms of political pressure or control of media or laws that regulate it.

The category in which the US does the most poorly is in “size of government” with an aggregate score of 6.41. It scores a 5 in “top marginal tax rate,” a 6.55 in “government consumption”, a 6.08 in terms of wealth transfers and subsidies.

In rate of homicide the US scores 8.47, compared to scores of other countries such as 9.62 in United Kingdom, 9.57 in Australia, 9.71 in Austria, 2.43 in Mexico, 5 in the Bahamas, 5.16 in Bolivia, 0 in Colombia, 9.42 in Canada, 9.67 in China, 9.70 in Denmark, 9.72 in Germany, 9.56 in Ireland, 9.30 in Israel, 3.14 in Panama, 6.40 in Russia.