



Canada better than U.S. in 2016 freedom index

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Canada has emerged near the top of the 2016 Human Freedom Index - well ahead of the United States.

Fred McMahon, editor of the study and the Dr. Michael A. Walker Research Chair in Economic Freedom at the Fraser Institute, warned Canada's sixth-place ranking could be in jeopardy due to moves by Ontario and Alberta to raise taxes.

"The problem that's going on in Ontario and Alberta is that increasingly intrusive government is limiting people's economic freedom," McMahon said.

Tax hikes in Alberta and higher electricity prices in Ontario due to the government's energy policies take money away from their residents, reducing their economic freedom, he said.

There were two particularly unusual results in the Index – Hong Kong was ranked No. 1 and the U.S. came in at No. 23.

The U.S. used to rank as well as or better than Canada but has been steadily dropping on the Human Freedom Index, McMahon said.

He pointed to concern over the rule of law in the U.S., degraded in part by the war on terror and drugs, as a key reason for the decline.

While Hong Kong ranked at the top of the Index, the findings were based on 2014 data and recent negative developments in its relationship with China could impact that standing in the future, McMahon said.

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

The index is made up of 79 indicators - such as rule of law, security and safety, freedom to trade internationally, relationships and size of government – to assess personal and economic freedom, defined in the report as the absence of coercive constraint.

“The Human Freedom Index is the first index that measures really all aspects of human freedom including economic freedom and security – you clearly can’t have freedom if it’s unsafe to walk on the streets,” he said. “You aren’t free because you’re richer. Your freedom refers to whether you can freely make choices within your range of possibilities.

“The fact that you can’t jump 10 feet into the air doesn’t limit your freedom. But if somebody stops you from jumping, your freedom is limited,” McMahon said.

Freest Countries

- (1) Hong Kong
- (2) Switzerland
- (3) New Zealand
- (4) Ireland
- (5) Denmark
- (6, tied) Canada, United Kingdom, Australia
- (23) United States

Least Free Countries

- (156) Syria
- (157) Iran
- (158) Yemen
- (159) Libya