



Singapore maintains 30th spot on global Human Freedom Index

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A global study measuring human freedom, defined as the absence of coercive constraint, has ranked Singapore 30th out of the 162 countries and territories for the second time running.

Released on Wednesday (18 December), the annual Human Freedom Index (HFI) saw Singapore score well in the study's three categories in 2017: human freedom, personal freedom and economic freedom. The study focused on 2017 as it was the most recent year for which sufficient data is available for examination.

In the previous study, which relied on 2016 data, Singapore also took 30th place – two spots higher than it was ranked the year before.

The top-ranked country was New Zealand, while Switzerland and Hong Kong took second and third place, respectively. The UK and US were ranked 14th and 15th respectively, while Asian countries like Japan (25th) and South Korea (27th) also featured in the top 30.

Syria finished bottom of the study, while the likes of Myanmar, Venezuela, Yemen, Sudan and Saudi Arabia were listed among the bottom 15.

On a scale of 0 to 10, with high numbers representing more freedom, the average human freedom rating for the 162 countries and territories was 6.89. Singapore had an overall score of 8.11.

Out of 10 regions, those with the highest levels of freedom were North America, Western Europe and East Asia. Among the regions with the lowest levels of freedom were the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

“The HFI also finds a strong relationship between human freedom and democracy. Hong Kong is an outlier in this regard,” said the study.

Compiled by the libertarian Cato Institute since 2008, the HFI uses 76 distinct indicators of personal and economic freedom. They include rule of law; security and safety; religion; association, assembly and civil society; legal system and property rights; and freedom to trade internationally.

Singapore scored poorly for indicators such as assembly and demonstration (2.5), laws and regulations that influence media (2.0) and political pressure, control media (4.5).

Conversely, the island-state had excellent marks in security and safety indicators such as homicide (9.9) and women's security, safety (8.8). It was also highly ranked in economic indicators such as tariffs (10.0) and movement of capital and people (8.5).