



What's Making Venezuela So Miserable? Money.

The country may find itself at the top of this year's global Misery Index for the second year in a row

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Money, it's such a drag. Just ask Venezuela, which is the most miserable country in the Americas for the third year in a row, at least in economic terms. The United States is least miserable, five places 'happier' than it was in 2013, by the same ranking from economist Steve Hanke, of the CATO Institute and Johns Hopkins University, who recently released [a preview](#) to his worldwide index for 2015.

As might be expected from a libertarian think tank, the index defines misery through the cold, surgical lens of economics. Hanke's index adds the unemployment rate, lending rate, and inflation rate, and subtracts the annual percent change in real GDP per capita to determine these rankings. Misery may be a subjective, human concept, but the economists' version is empirical. The fear caused by, say, your country ranking among the [top ten countries globally for murders](#), doesn't get factored into calculations, but does loosely line up with the economic data. Venezuela, Honduras, Jamaica and El Salvador, for example, all rank within the top ten countries for murder rate, and three of those four are in the misery index's top ten. And despite the fact that homicides are causing a [dramatic shift in national life expectancy](#) in Mexico, the U.S.'s southern neighbor is technically the second-least miserable country in the Americas.

In addition to being the most economically miserable country in the Americas this year, Venezuela held the same rank globally on more than one occasion. [Last year](#), it was indexed just above Argentina, Syria, Ukraine, Iran, and Brazil.

The nation's president [Nicolas Maduro declared](#) a "state of emergency" last week after publishing [years of economic data](#), which revealed annual inflation rates over 140 percent. (Henke, however, [estimates](#) that figure is closer to 392 percent.) Smuggling and illegal trading within the country and across its borders is [reportedly becoming](#) an increasingly large issue as the country's financial standing worsens. With the price of oil—the backbone of Venezuela's economy—[steadily falling](#), a turnaround in 2016 does not seem likely.

While Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina are continuing to slide into economic misery on the index, the U.S., on the other hand, has been continuously sitting pretty for the past two years as the least miserable country after topping Panama, the 2013 leader. Someone better tell Donald Trump.