



U.S. Ranks 17th on Human Freedom Index 2020 -- New Zealand is No. 1

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(CNS News) -- In their annual report on human freedom in 162 countries worldwide, the Cato Institute and the Fraser Institute report that personal freedom has been on the decline since 2008, and that while New Zealand ranks No. 1 in terms of freedom, the United States and the United Kingdom are both ranked No. 17. The country with the least amount of freedom is Syria, ranked No. 162.

The *Human Freedom Index 2020* uses "uses 76 indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedoms to rank 162 countries from 2008 to 2018, the most recent year for which internationally comparable data is available," states *Index* co-author [Ian Vasquez](#), vice president for international studies at the Cato Institute, a free market-libertarian think tank.

Using those indicators, each country is scored between zero and 10, on personal freedom and economic freedom, with a 10 meaning more freedom. The United States, for instance, earned a score of 8.44, putting it in 17th place.



(Cato Institute, Fraser Institute)

The average score for the 162 countries in 2018 was 6.93.

"Of the 12 major categories that we measure in the report, all but five have seen some deterioration, with freedom of religion, identity and relationship freedoms, and the rule of law seeing the largest decreases," said Vasquez.

"New Zealand and Switzerland are ranked in the top two spots, with Hong Kong coming in third," reported Vasquez. "My coauthor Fred McMahon of the Fraser Institute and I note that the territory has been losing freedom during the past 10 years and we expect future editions of the index to show notable declines in Hong Kong's ratings and rankings, especially given Beijing's aggressive interventions there in 2019 and 2020."

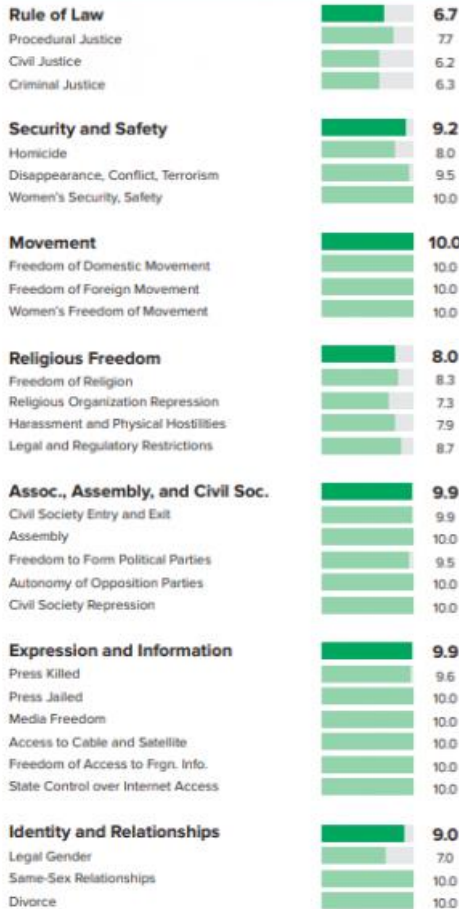
UNITED STATES

NORTH AMERICA

Ranking **17** Score **8.44**

Personal Freedom

29/162 Ranking Score 8.66



Economic Freedom

6/162 Ranking Score 8.22



Human Freedom



(Cato Institute, Fraser Institute)

"[T]he highest levels of freedom are in North America (Canada and the United States), Western Europe, and East Asia," states the report. "The lowest levels are in the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. Women-specific freedoms, as measured by five indicators in the index, are strongest in North America, Western Europe, and East Asia and are least protected in the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia."

In the United States, the size of government and the legal system and property rights scored low, respectively 7.5 and 7.3. The lowest score was in rule of law, 6.7.

In movement, "freedom of movement," the United States scored 10; freedom of expression and information earned 9.9; religious freedom, 8.0; regulation, 8.8; and sound money scored 9.7.