



## **Study: US Falls Behind Canada, Finland And Hong Kong In Human Freedom Index**

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The United States lags far behind other developed countries in terms of personal, civil and economic freedoms, according to a study released this month. Its neighbor to the north, for example, ranked 14 spots ahead of the so-called “Land of the Free.”

Three international think tanks — the U.S.-based Cato Institute, Canada’s Fraser Institute, and Germany’s Liberales Institut at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom — released the Human Freedom Index earlier this month. In addition to major civil liberties, the study considers safety and rule of law, relative size of government and capitalist values like the soundness of money, property rights, and access to international trade. The authors used a total of 70 data sources ranging from 2008 to 2012, the most recent year for which all necessary data is currently available.

According to the report, *“The top 10 jurisdictions in order were Hong Kong, Switzerland, Finland, Denmark, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Sweden.”* The U.S. ranks 20th, while Myanmar, Congo and Iran round out the bottom of the list of 152 countries.

Commenting on Canada’s high ranking compared to the U.S., Fred McMahon, the editor of the study, told the Toronto Sun:

*“Canada doesn’t lead in a single area, but it’s high on all areas, like economic freedom ... We have a very strong rule of law, good on safety and security. You can’t really have freedom without safety and security. And of course, in what you might call political freedoms and associations, speech and so on, we’re also top of the class.”*

McMahon cited the U.S. war on terror, recent changes to property rights, and the ongoing effects of the 2008 financial crisis for the country’s poor ranking. *“The U.S. has declined incredibly over the past decade- and-a-half,”* he told the Sun last week, adding:

*“The U.S. is known as the ‘Land of liberty’ and Canada is known as ‘The land of good governance,’ so it’s a little surprising that a country whose motto hinges on good government as a motto is well-ahead of a country whose motto hinges on liberty.”*

Hong Kong’s high ranking may seem surprising, but the index does not attempt to measure democracy, and this year’s report doesn’t take into account recent pro-democracy protests in the country and the subsequent government crackdown.

This wasn't the only recent study to take issue with civil liberties in America. In February, Reporters Without Borders announced that the U.S. had dropped three places in its "World Press Freedom Index" as a result of a "*war on information*" by the Obama administration" and a crackdown on reporters' abilities to freely report on events like the Ferguson protests, where trespassing charges were recently leveled against two journalists for their work documenting last year's uprising following the death of Michael Brown.