

NEWS RELEASE

Switzerland overtakes Hong Kong to claim top spot in freedom index, United States rises to 17th

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For Immediate Release

TORONTO—Switzerland is the freest country in the world, having replaced Hong Kong atop the [*Human Freedom Index*](#), released today by the Fraser Institute and a network of international public policy think-tanks.

The United States inched upwards six spots from 24th to 17th in the index, which uses 79 indicators of personal, civil and economic freedoms to rank 159 countries and jurisdictions worldwide.

“The Human Freedom Index measures the degree to which people are free to enjoy civil liberties—freedom of speech, religion, women’s rights, association and assembly and economic freedom,” said Fred McMahon, Dr. Michael A. Walker Research Chair in Economic Freedom at the Fraser Institute and editor of the report.

Other notable countries include: Canada (11), Germany (16), Japan (27), France (33), Mexico (73), India (102), Russia (126) and China (130).

For the past two years, Hong Kong led the rankings as the freest jurisdiction in the world, largely as a result of the city’s score in economic freedom.

“Hong Kong’s fall from the top of the Human Freedom Index this year could indicate China is encroaching on its one-country, two-system relationship and the people of Hong Kong are materially less free because of it,” McMahon said.

Crucially, people in freer countries earn more money than those who live in less-free countries. For example, the average per capita income for the top-quartile countries on the index was US\$38,871 compared to just US\$10,346 for the least-free quartile in 2015, the most recent year of available comparable data in the freedom index.

“The evidence is clear—when people are free, they have much greater opportunity to prosper,” McMahon added.

The complete index, a joint project of the Fraser Institute, Germany’s Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Cato Institute in the U.S., is available as a free PDF download at www.fraserinstitute.org. It is prepared by Ian Vasquez of the Cato Institute and Tanja Porčnik of the Visio Institute in Slovenia.

The 10 freest and the least-free countries in the index

| The 10 freest jurisdictions (from top) | The 10 least-free countries |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Switzerland | 150. Burundi |
| 2. Hong Kong | 151. Central African Republic |
| 3. New Zealand | 152. Democratic Republic of Congo |
| 4. Ireland | 153. Algeria |
| 5. Australia | 154. Iran |
| 6. Finland | 155. Egypt |
| 7. Norway | 156. Yemen |
| 8. Denmark | 157. Libya |
| 9. Netherlands | 158. Venezuela |
| 9. United Kingdom (tied) | 159. Syria |

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