

NEWS RELEASE

Hong Kong plummets to 46th spot in latest Human Freedom ranking as China continues to violate “one country, two systems” pact

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For Immediate Release

TORONTO—As a result of increasing restrictions on liberties in Hong Kong—once among the freest places on earth—it now ranks 46th in the latest *Human Freedom Index* report, released today by Canada’s Fraser Institute and the U.S.-based Cato Institute.

As recently as 2010, Hong Kong was the 3rd freest jurisdiction on earth. Mainland China has always been less free than the territory and this year, China ranks 149th out of 165 jurisdictions.

“Freedom has suffered a precipitous decline in Hong Kong, but its tragic descent into oppression provides important lessons about the value of freedom,” said Fred McMahon, resident fellow at the Fraser Institute and co-author of this year’s report.

The index measures personal freedom—the rule of law, safety and security, identity and relationships (i.e. the freedom to choose your relationship partner), freedom of movement, speech, assembly and religion—alongside economic freedom, the ability of individuals to make their own economic decisions.

This year’s report ranks 165 jurisdictions around the world. It finds that from 2019 to 2021 (the latest year of available data), 89.8 per cent of the world’s population experienced a decline in freedom.

In Hong Kong, the areas that show the most pronounced declines in this year’s report are: The rule of law, freedom of expression, and freedom of association and assembly.

"Suppression in Hong Kong continues to ramp up as the jailing of journalists and pro-freedom advocates grows, with arrest warrants issued for exiled activists to quash even overseas dissent," said Ian Vásquez, report co-author and vice president of international studies at the Cato Institute.

Switzerland, once again, tops this year’s freedom ranking followed by New Zealand, Denmark, Ireland, Estonia and Sweden (tied for 5th). The five least-free countries are (in descending order) Iran, Myanmar, Sudan, Yemen and Syria.

Overall worldwide rankings for other significant countries include Taiwan (12), Canada (13), Japan (16), the United Kingdom and the United States (tied at 17), Germany (21), South Korea (28), France (39), Ukraine (83) Mexico (95), and India (109).

Crucially, people in freer jurisdictions are more prosperous than those in less-free jurisdictions. For example, the average per-capita income for the top-quartile of jurisdictions on the index was US\$47,421 compared to US\$14,157 for the least-free quartile in 2021.

“Human freedom increases prosperity and human well-being and has powered the growth of some of the most remarkable jurisdictions in the world, including Hong Kong,” McMahon said.

The complete index, a joint project of the Fraser Institute and the Cato Institute, is available as a free PDF download at www.fraserinstitute.org. The co-authors of the report are Ian Vásquez, Fred McMahon, Ryan Murphy, associate professor, Bridwell Institute for Economic Freedom, Southern Methodist University, and Guillermina Sutter Schneider, data scientist and former research and project director at the Cato Institute.

The 10 freest and the least-free countries in 2021:

The 10 freest jurisdictions	The 10 least-free countries
1. Switzerland	156. Iraq
2. New Zealand	157. Saudi Arabia
3. Denmark	157. Somalia
4. Ireland	159. Egypt
5. Estonia	160. Venezuela
5. Sweden	161. Iran
7. Iceland	162. Myanmar
8. Luxembourg	163. Sudan
9. Finland	164. Yemen
10. Norway	165. Syria

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