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ACCORDING TO THE HUMAN FREEDOM INDEX, SWITZERLAND IS THE MOST LIBERTARIAN-ORIENTED NATION

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A new edition of the Human Freedom Index has been released. When you combine measures of personal freedom and economic freedom, the “sensible nation” of Switzerland is at the top of the rankings.

enjoy a significantly higher average per capita income (\$48,748) than those in other quartiles; the average per capita income in the least free quartile is \$11,259. The HFI also finds a strong relationship between human freedom and democracy.”

Rank	Freedom rank change (2018–2019)	Country/Territory	Personal freedom	Economic freedom	Human freedom
1	0	Switzerland	9.56	8.48	9.11
2	0	New Zealand	9.33	8.56	9.01
3	0	Denmark	9.56	8.17	8.98
4	▲1	Estonia	9.48	8.21	8.91
5	▲1	Ireland	9.40	8.21	8.90
6	0	Finland	9.52	7.92	8.85
6	▲3	Canada	9.40	8.06	8.85
8	▼4	Australia	9.30	8.20	8.84
9	▼1	Sweden	9.63	7.72	8.83
10	0	Luxembourg	9.48	7.84	8.80
11	▲3	Netherlands	9.36	7.96	8.78
12	▲1	Iceland	9.40	7.90	8.77
13	▼1	Norway	9.50	7.72	8.76
14	▼3	United Kingdom	9.19	8.15	8.75
15	0	United States	9.09	8.24	8.73
15	▲1	Germany	9.32	7.91	8.73
15	▲1	Japan	9.26	7.98	8.73
18	▲1	Portugal	9.33	7.79	8.69
19	▲1	Taiwan	9.14	8.02	8.68
19	▲3	Lithuania	9.01	8.21	8.68

If you want to know the world’s worst nations, here are the bottom 10. Venezuela is normally the worst of the worst, but in this case Syria wins the Booby Prize.

156	▼3	Libya	5.17	4.79	5.05	▼0.09
157	▼3	Iraq	4.49	5.74	5.02	▲0.04
157	▼2	Burundi	4.57	5.65	5.02	▲0.05
159	-	Somalia	3.68	6.67	4.93	-
160	▼3	Iran, Islamic Rep.	4.14	5.06	4.53	▼0.11
161	▼3	Egypt, Arab Rep.	3.63	5.68	4.49	▲0.08
162	▼1	Sudan	4.74	4.19	4.48	▲0.53
163	▼3	Yemen, Rep.	3.11	5.45	4.08	▲0.01
164	▼5	Venezuela, RB	4.90	2.83	4.03	▼0.22
165	▼3	Syrian Arab Republic	2.60	5.19	3.66	▼0.17

I don’t know if this means we should view Switzerland as the world’s most libertarian nation (or perhaps the world’s least statist nation), but it’s obviously good to lead this list. And it’s not surprising that New Zealand is next, though many people are probably shocked to see Denmark in third place (it has very bad fiscal policy, but otherwise is a very laissez-faire nation). The United States is #15, which is good but not great.

Let’s now give some extra attention to Hong Kong. The report notes that there’s been a very unfortunate decline in human freedom in Hong Kong, mostly because of an erosion of personal freedom. And Hong Kong’s score is expected to drop even further in future editions. “Freedom has suffered a precipitous decline in Hong Kong. The territory was once one of the freest places in the world, but the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) escalating violations of Hong Kong’s traditional liberties has caused its ranking in our index to fall from 4th place in 2008—when the first globally comprehensive data appeared—to 30th place in 2019, the most recent year in our report...



Here are a few passages from the report’s executive summary: “The Human Freedom Index (HFI) presents a broad measure of human freedom, understood as the absence of coercive constraint. This seventh annual index uses 82 distinct indicators of personal and economic freedom... The HFI covers 165 jurisdictions for 2019, the most recent year for which sufficient data are available. ...fully 83 percent of the global population lives in jurisdictions that have seen a fall in human freedom since 2008. That includes decreases in overall freedom in the 10 most populous countries in the world. Only 17 percent of the global population lives in countries that have seen increases in freedom over the same time period. ...Jurisdictions in the top quartile of freedom

Our survey does not yet capture the suppression of 2020 and 2021, including the CCP’s imposition of a draconian security law that enabled its aggressive takeover of Hong Kong.” Thanks to the recent election, I expect we will see a similar discussion of Chile’s decline in future editions.

Here’s a final observation that should be highlighted. Because the report relies on hard data (which often takes a year or two to be finalized and reported), this year’s HFI is based on 2019 data. And that means we won’t see the effect of pandemic-related restrictions, which generally were adopted in early 2020, until next year’s version.