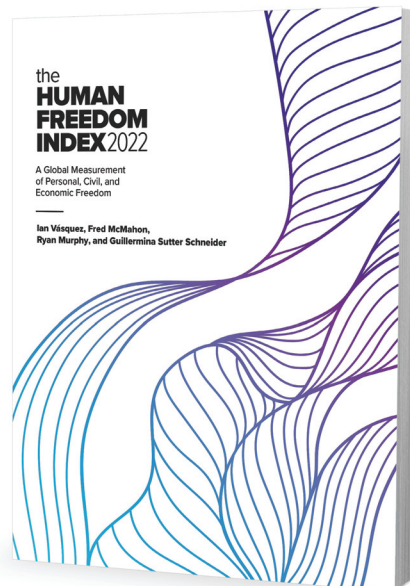


# COVID-19 Pandemic Was a Catastrophe for Global Freedom

## New *Human Freedom Index*

“Emergencies’ have always been the pretext on which the safeguards of individual liberty have been eroded,” wrote the late F. A. Hayek, distinguished senior fellow of the Cato Institute and Nobel Prize–winning economist. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic proved his words to be true, according to the 2022 *Human Freedom Index*, released in January by Cato and the Fraser Institute.

In 2020, 94 percent of the world’s population saw a fall in freedom compared with the year before, highlighting how the pandemic was catastrophic for human



freedom. According to coauthor Ian Vásquez, vice president for international studies and director of Cato’s Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity, the latest *Human Freedom Index* tracks how the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated worrisome long-term trends—some 79 percent of the world’s population had already experienced decreases in freedom from 2007 through 2019. Freedom of expression, the rule of law, and freedom of association and assembly were among the categories that saw the most deterioration in the past two decades.

The 2022 *Human Freedom Index* presents the state of human freedom in the world on the basis of 83 broad indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedom—including rule of law, size of government, freedom of movement, religion, sound money, property rights, and more—across 165 jurisdictions around the world and shows a decline in freedom in most (148) jurisdictions.

The report has long tracked a decline in freedom in the United States. In 2000, the United States ranked sixth. Today the United States is 23rd, having fallen seven places since 2019.

In the latest rankings the top 10 freest countries in order are Switzerland, New Zealand, Estonia, Denmark, Ireland, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

The 10 jurisdictions with the largest declines in freedom since 2007—a global high point for human freedom—are all led by authoritarian regimes. In order of largest declines, those are Syria, Nicaragua, Hungary, Egypt, Venezuela, Turkey, El Salvador, Burundi, Bahrain, and Hong Kong. ■

**THE HUMAN FREEDOM INDEX CAN BE FOUND AT CATO.ORG.**

## Cato News Notes

### BANK PRIVACY REFORM ACT



Rep. John Rose (R-TN) announced the reintroduction of the Bank Privacy Reform Act at the Cato event “Bank Secrecy Act Reform: Restoring the

Fourth Amendment.” The bill is intended to prevent the government from accessing consumers’ transaction history without first obtaining a warrant, reaffirming the Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable searches and seizures.

### LIBERTARIANISM.ORG WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR

Jonathan Fortier is joining Cato as the new director of Libertarianism.org. Fortier was managing director of academic relations at the Institute for Humane Studies, and was previously an assistant professor at Bishop’s University, a fellow at Liberty Fund, senior fellow at the Fraser Institute, and junior dean at Corpus Christi College at Oxford.

### FENTANYL AND THE BORDER



Associate director of immigration studies David Bier testified at the hearing “Every State Is a Border State: Examining Secretary Mayorkas’ Border

Crisis,” which aired on C-SPAN. Bier summarized the event as “not a hearing with the intent of getting to the truth about anything.” Dr. Jeffrey Singer testified before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Surveillance at the hearing “The Fentanyl Crisis in America: Inaction Is No Longer an Option,” which aired on C-SPAN 2.