

Term

Freedom of the World Index

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Definition

The Freedom of the World Index (FWI) evaluates changes and trends in the extent of freedom in the world by comparing civil liberties and political rights among countries each year.

Relevancy

The goal of the "Top 15 Vision" is to see Israel achieve a significant socioeconomic advancement that would put Israel among the 15 leading countries in terms of Quality of Life within fifteen years.

Quality of Life is a subjective term determined by various components. Numerous indices attempt to measure the Quality of Life of individuals in different countries. The most prominent indices among them are the Economist's Quality of Life Index, the UN Human Development Index, and the Quality of Life chapter in the OECD Factbook. These indices utilize a range of methodologies and examine diverse components of Quality of Life.

In order to pursue the Top 15 Vision, the Government of Israel should first define the key components relevant to Quality of Life¹ in Israel. Thus the Reut Institute identified three main areas that affect Quality of Life in Israel directly and enable a basis for comparison to other countries:

- **Economic well-being** reflects the individual's ability to secure financial stability for himself and for his family.
- **Social well-being** reflects the desire and ability of an individual to identify with his community and to play an active role in it.
- **Personal and physical well-being** reflects the extent to which an individual's life or health is exposed to danger.

The FWI examines various components of social well-being: political and civil rights, social cohesion and trust in the political system. In this framework the index studies factors such as democracy, corruption in the public sector, conduct and protection of civil rights.

The Reut Institute has concluded that the FWI is the most appropriate² index to use in estimating social well-being.

Israel in Comparison to the Top 15

¹ See: Reut Institute paper: Quality of Life.

² In order for international indices to affect the design and implementation of policy they must help identify groups, geographical areas, institutions, or sectors of the economy that need to be addressed through policy. Indices should also help evaluate the success of past policy. Finally, indices have a role in affecting the national discourse and guiding public opinion. See, Reut Institute Policy Position: [Competitiveness Indices - Tools for Policy Design](#).

The FWI reports on 193 countries and 15 disputed territories, including the Palestinian Authority. According to 2007 data, Israel is classified as a "Free" country. Calculation shows that Israel is ranked 62nd out of 193 countries.³

The Publisher

[Freedom House](#) is a nonprofit organization and a proponent of democratic values around the world. The organization was founded in 1941.⁴

Structure and Limitations

The FWI is comprised of two main sub-indices which are made up of seven pillars and 25 variables.⁵

- **Political Rights** – This sub-index evaluates the extent to which individuals have the freedom to participate in governance. The sub-index is comprised of the following pillars: 'Electoral Process', 'Political Pluralism and Participation' and 'Functioning of Government'.
- **Civil Liberties** – This sub-index evaluates to what extent individuals enjoy freedoms. This sub-index is comprised of the following pillars: 'Freedom of Expression and Belief', 'Associational and Organizational Rights', 'Rule of Law', and 'Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights'.

The FWI publishes a final score for each country, as well as scores for the sub-indices and pillars. The index provides limited comparative analysis because it does not rank each country. Furthermore, although the index evaluates components of social well-being, it does not examine aspects of economic or personal and physical well-being.

Data Sources

Nations are ranked by expert analysts according to their area of specialty (e.g. communications or human rights). A third of the analysts are members of Freedom House, while the others are external.

Usage

The Freedom of the World Index enables identification of the areas that hinder public trust in the governing system. The FWI can become central to the public discourse due to the sensitivity of the public regarding the issues addressed.

End.

³ Although Freedom House does not do so, countries can be ranked by summing the score each country received along all seven subcategories. Using this method Israel is ranked 62nd out of 193 countries.

⁴ For further information see the [Freedom House website](#).

⁵ For further details, see the [Methodology section](#) on the Freedom House Website.