

DATA AT A GLANCE

Human Freedom is Declining in the World

APSSR Editorial Team
 romeo.lee@dlsu.edu.ph

Cato Institute’s Human Freedom Index covers 79 indicators related to personal, civil, and economic freedom such as the rule of law, religion, size of government, access to sound money, freedom to trade internationally, and regulation of credit, labor, and business, among others. Human freedom in the foregoing contexts is construed as negative liberty or absence of coercive constraint. Produced since 2008, the index involving data from more than 150 countries suggests that the higher the score (between 0 and 10), the greater the human freedom. What are the level and the trajectory of the world’s human freedom through the years?

Using the country-level human freedom score contained in the Excel data file available at the website of Cato Institute (2018), we computed the global mean scores for 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. We also identified the countries having the lowest and the highest scores. Table 1 reveals the results.

Through the years, the data suggest that the world has had a moderate level of human freedom (range: 0.6.89-7.07). However, the findings indicate that this level has been declining, albeit gradually, from 7.07 in 2008 to 6.99 in 2012 and 6.89 in 2016. The countries having the highest scores (i.e., more human freedom) are Hong Kong and New Zealand whereas those with the lowest scores (i.e., less human freedom) are Zimbabwe, Iran, and Syria. Among countries with the highest and the lowest scores, their scores have been on a decreasing trend as well.

The results are highly informative because there is a common perception that human freedom would expand

Table 1

Mean Scores Indicating Global Human Freedom, 2008-2016

Year	Number of Countries	Mean Score	Countries with Lowest/Highest Score
2008	140	7.07	Zimbabwe (4.94)/ Hong Kong (9.13)
2010	152	7.04	Zimbabwe (4.91)/ Hong Kong (9.03)
2012	152	6.99	Iran (4.44)/Hong Kong (9.00)
2014	158	6.96	Syria (4.02)/New Zealand (8.92)
2016	161	6.89	Syria (3.77)/New Zealand (8.88)

further as the liberalization of the world’s structures and cultures increases. Liberalization appears to exert a constraining effect upon human freedom, or possibly, many parts of the world. Despite liberalization, freedom has remained unchanged.

Reference

Cato Institute. (2018). *Human freedom index*. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/human-freedom-index-new>

DATA AT A GLANCE

ASEAN's Movement Towards Gender Equality in the Economic Sphere

Wilfred Luis Clamor
wilfred.clamor@dlsu.edu.ph

Since 2006, the Gender Gap Index has been used to describe the difference between men and women, in countries throughout the world, in four basic categories. One such category relates to economic participation and opportunity (EPO). In EPO, the values for women's labor force participation, wage, earned income, legislative/senior/managerial position, and professional/technical position are computed against the values for men in the same areas. A higher score suggests more equality, or better economic participation and opportunity, for women.

Table 1 shows the EPO scores of six ASEAN countries with complete 2006 (World Economic Forum, 2006) and 2017 data (World Economic Forum, 2017). The 2006 and 2017 scores suggest that these countries have already gone beyond the halfway point in achieving economic gender equality. The Philippines (0.757 in 2006 and 0.764 in 2017) and Thailand (0.722 in 2006 and 0.767 in 2017) have been the frontrunners.

Although the EPO scores of these six countries increased from 2006 to 2017, the pace of absolute change has been rather modest (range: 0.007-0.106). The movements of these countries to further advance gender equality in the economic domain are clearly not that significant even after 11 years.

Studies are needed to identify the factors that could help these ASEAN countries to close the persistent gender gap.

Table 1

Economic Participation and Opportunity Scores Among ASEAN Countries, 2006 Versus 2017

Country	2006	2017	Absolute Change
Cambodia	0.675	0.698	0.023
Indonesia	0.598	0.610	0.012
Malaysia	0.592	0.654	0.062
Philippines	0.757	0.764	0.007
Singapore	0.646	0.752	0.106
Thailand	0.722	0.767	0.045
Mean	0.665	0.708	0.043

Source: World Economic Forum (2006, 2017)

References

- World Economic Forum. (2006). *Global gender gap report 2006*. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2006.pdf
- World Economic Forum. (2017). *Global gender gap report 2017*. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf