



# World Index of Moral Freedom 2016

How free is your country from state-imposed moral constraints?

Andreas Kohl and Juan Pina





**“It seems to me that** this is theoretically right, for whatever the question under discussion — whether religious, philosophical, political, or economic; whether it concerns prosperity, **morality**, equality, right, justice, progress, responsibility, cooperation, property, labor, trade, capital, wages, taxes, population, finance, or government — at whatever point on the scientific horizon I begin my researches, I invariably reach this one conclusion: the solution to the problems of human relationships **is to be found in liberty”**

*Frédéric Bastiat*

*(The Law, 1850)*



# Table of contents

Foreword.....	4
Index, indicators and methodology.....	5
Findings.....	10
World Index of Moral Freedom 2016.....	17
WIMF Maps.....	26
Comparison with other indices.....	31
Final remarks.....	35
Main sources consulted.....	36
About the authors.....	38



## Foreword



There are as many courses of action to further the cause of Liberty as there are threats to its progress. The latter grow rapidly to discourage us, but so do the former to renew our resolve. The Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty is a new institution launched in 2015. We shall make use of many of those courses of action, and one of them is research on the actual reach of freedom.

A number of prestigious institutions periodically publish highly respected indices of general freedom or target economic freedom, press freedom or other particular aspects of freedom. However, many other specific areas deserve a closer look as well. We believe moral freedom to be one of those areas, and by producing the World Index of Moral Freedom (WIMF) we hope to provide valuable findings for both scholars and journalists, but also intellectual ammunition for the activists of Liberty.

The index aims at responding a simple question: how free from state-imposed moral constraints are human beings depending on their countries of residence? To answer this, the authors have processed and harmonized data into indicators pertaining to the main ethical debates of our time. It will also be thought-provoking **to compare a country's** moral freedom with its performance in other areas. Please feel free to contact us and contribute your critical views and suggestions to improve the index in future editions.

Roxana Nicula,  
Chair of the Board of Trustees,  
Fundación para el Avance de la Libertad



# Index, indicators and methodology

Is your country free in terms of individual moral decisions, or are these constrained by state intervention, whether derived from ideology, religion or traditional culture? In other words, to which extent is there a moral bias in your **country's laws and its government's practice** which reduces the scope of individual liberty?

If freedom is rightly described as absence of coercion, moral freedom may equally be defined as absence of moral coercion. Strong social engineering may dramatically distort the spontaneous evolution of a society, as we see both in countries where a particular religion dominates the state and in those where all of them are forbidden. Fighting state moral interference is not about being right wing or left wing, Christian or Muslim, religious or atheist. It is about stopping government from taking our moral decisions for us.

Benchmarking each country against the rest of the world provides facts and figures shedding some light on the situation in 160 countries. This is over 80% of all existing sovereign states, and **around 99% of the world's population**. Therefore we believe the index to provide a rather accurate picture of moral freedom in the current world. Like any new index, it will benefit from improvement in its calculations and indicators over the years to come, as well as from the ability to produce comparison charts based on each country or regional evolution.

## Indicators

The index is built on the most relevant moral debates of our time, and it works by measuring the degree of individual freedom citizens of each country enjoy on each of those issues. The purpose is by no means to endorse a particular



position on any of those debates, but to show whether tight rules are imposed or decisions are freely taken according to each **person's** particular beliefs and ideas, be them coincident or not with those of the majority or the state elite. This remark is important as some of the debates are controversial and tend to provoke heated discussions even among libertarians. We do not establish how “moral” or “immoral” **a country's laws or government are, but how much they** force people to act in line with an officially sanctioned set of values –or to refrain from acting in line with particular sets of values not endorsed by the country's authorities.

### Categories and methodology

The index is divided into five categories of indicators, each of them worth 20% of the final score:

- a) *Religious indicators*. How free is the practice of any religion or none, and how religious-controlled is the state.
- b) *Bioethical indicators*. How free is individual decision making on matters posing bioethical questions.
- c) *Drugs indicators*. How free is the production, trade and consumption of substances deemed harmful.
- d) *Sexuality indicators*. How free are sexual intercourse, pornography and sex services among consenting adults.
- e) *Gender & family indicators*. How free are women, LGBT individuals and unmarried couples living together.

Each category is made up of various indicators (normally one or two leading indicators adjusted by one or two lesser weighted ones), the weight of which is set in view of their inferred **relevance towards the category's overall** score as further detailed below. Countries have been classified towards each category according to the information available in the sources reviewed. All category results and the general index itself are presented in a 0-100 point scale. In some cases, existing indices, subindices, rankings and maps have been taken as the basis, converted to our scale (or attributed a value to each of their original intervals) and then further adjusted in view of other available material.



## Religious indicators

At this category we try to measure how free is the state from any religion, and, on the other hand, how free is the individual to practice any of them or none. Roughly half of the points go to each of these matters. 37,5% of the weight is allocated to the amount of religious influence on the state, including its formal institutional status and governmental practice. In addition to this, another 10% is assigned to moral censorship of online content. Likewise, 37,5% is reserved to religious freedom, mostly based on constitutional and legal provisions and adjusted to reflect breaches. To further adjust this, 15% is given to the indicator reflecting religion-related Human Rights, particularly taking into account the incarceration of prisoners of conscience in each country.

## Bioethical indicators

All bioethical issues are at the frontline whenever moral freedom is discussed. One particularly important –and highly **controversial**– **issue is abortion**. Whatever the views anyone may have on this practice, this indicator is broadly perceived by both the pro-life and pro-choice sectors as revealing a **country's broader policy on** moral decisions. A certain abortion policy normally indicates a general approach to other bioethical issues and to the general role the state plays in shaping or guarding certain moral values in society. For this reason and counting on abundant and accurate information, the legal status of abortion has been used as the main indicator and allocated 62,5% of this category, while euthanasia (where laws tend to be more similar around the world) weighs 12,5%. Another 25% is given to a combination of all other main bioethical freedom indicators: general biogenetic policy, rules on stem cell research, restrictions on therapeutical cloning, and constraints on surrogacy (the practice of hiring a woman to bear the child of a sterile or LGBT couple, with or without an economic compensation).



## Drugs indicators

Cannabis is rapidly moving from social tolerance to legal acknowledgement. Just like abortion, policy on this particular substance strongly characterizes a country's choice for either an individual or a collective approach on moral issues. Therefore, 70% of this category goes to this leading indicator, but we have considered it necessary to adjust this with the general policy on all drugs and with the actual amount of drug-related inmates in the country's prisons (which provides information on how strictly are drugs laws enforced). Each of these further indicators account for 15% of the total score in this category.

## Sexuality indicators

As the sexual revolution goes global, its actual reach and the amount of government interference provide useful information on a country's individual freedom on moral decisions. In this category, indicator weights are more distributed: 40% is allocated to the free consumption of pornographic content, as censorship still plays a significant role in many countries. 35% is reserved to the legal status of prostitution, and 25% to the legal age of sexual consent.

## Gender & family indicators

In traditional societies still suffering from strong state control over morality, women are particularly victimized. Their freedom from government interference in their activities and movement is therefore a valid indicator of a country's evolution into moral liberty. Therefore, 25% of this category's weight accounts for women's freedom, particularly focusing on their freedom of movement compared to that of the general population. Cohabitation of unmarried couples



is worth another quarter. Because of its novelty, the status of same sex marriage is particularly relevant to figure out the general amount of moral freedom in a society. This leading indicator accounts for 40% of the points in this category. Finally, 10% is given to the status of transgender individuals in each country.

### Classification of countries

The following classification has been applied in view of **the countries'** performance:

<i>90-100 points</i>	–	<i>Highest moral freedom</i>
<i>80-90 points</i>	–	<i>Very high moral freedom</i>
<i>60-80 points</i>	–	<i>High moral freedom</i>
<i>50-60 points</i>	–	<i>Acceptable moral freedom</i>
<i>40-50 points</i>	–	<i>Insufficient moral freedom</i>
<i>20-40 points</i>	–	<i>Low moral freedom</i>
<i>10-20 points</i>	–	<i>Very low moral freedom</i>
<i>0-10 points</i>	–	<i>Lowest moral freedom</i>



# Findings

## 1. Humankind still has a long way to go in terms of moral freedom

The main finding of this first edition of the World Index of Moral Freedom is that humankind is still far from being morally free. Only one country, the Netherlands, is classified as having the “highest” level of moral freedom by scoring slightly over the 90 points required for that label. Just four countries make it into the upper twenty points, and only ten pass the 75 point threshold. Out of the 160 countries considered, only 64 “pass the exam” and score 50 points or more. And around 30% of all countries fall in the “low”, “very low” or “lowest” moral freedom areas of the index.

While the way is long, there’s increasing hope for moral freedom in our world. A very simple exercise confirms this: taking some of the highest scoring countries and trying to suppose how many points they would have obtained twenty, fifty or a hundred years ago. Technology and the cultural globalization that it produces are powerful driving forces towards acceptance of individual moral freedom.

## 2. To nobody’s surprise, the Dutch lead the way

It has not come as a surprise that the Netherlands top the country ranking of the World Index of Moral Freedom. With a three point (three per cent) advantage over its closest competitor and eight points over the third, the Dutch score is an astonishing twenty-one points higher than the average of all countries enjoying “high” or “very high” moral freedom. For many decades the eyes of the world turned to the Netherlands whenever moral freedom was discussed, and the city of Amsterdam certainly became iconic for tolerance on elsewhere controversial issues. The first country to fight



human trafficking by legalising sex services performed by consenting adults, or to normalize the use of cannabis in its famous coffee shops, or to acknowledge same sex marriage already fifteen years ago, continues to perform remarkably well in most indicators considered and remains the most influential beacon of moral freedom. But even the Dutch still have room for improvement, particularly on bioethical regulations. While the Netherlands are the only country scoring over ninety points and thus entering the “highest moral freedom” area, three other countries join the Dutch in our hall of fame by reaching the next interval, “very high moral freedom”. These are Uruguay, Portugal and the Czech Republic.

### 3. As moral freedom goes global, several Latin countries rank surprisingly high

Even though this is the first edition of the World Index of Moral Freedom, and therefore its figures cannot be compared with previous data, a clear trend may be inferred towards international unification of the legal and political approach to moral issues. And that trend favours the Western world’s predominant choice for low moral interference by the state.

This is particularly noticeable when looking at the index performance of many Southern European and Latin American countries. We had expected a lower moral freedom in those regions, but their surprisingly high rankings reveal their fast cultural evolution from traditional, conservative values into a *laissez-faire* approach to moral issues. Suffice it to say that four of the top ten countries in our ranking are Latin American or Iberian, while six other Latin countries in Southern Europe and the Americas make it to the “high moral freedom” region of the index. The particular performance of countries like Portugal or Uruguay is simply outstanding if we consider their recent history. In fact, these and other Latin countries seem to have discarded their traditional background of religiously influenced governance and now happen to top many of the indicators we have considered towards this index. It could be argued that the Latin part of the Western world is somehow taking over leadership in terms of moral freedom.



To a lesser extent, similar remarks may be made on a number of scattered countries in other parts of the world where, possibly out of unwilling cultural prejudice, we had expected a poorer performance than the index has shown. This strengthens our perception of an ongoing globalization of moral freedom standards, as no opposite trend has been simultaneously noticed. On the other hand, a slight slowness in parts of Northern Europe and the anglo-saxon world is obvious when it comes to adopting a Liberty enhancing legal frame on cutting-edge moral debates. Some of these countries, which were traditionally reputed as the world's **most open to moral** freedom, are now slightly less so than their Southern European or Latin American counterparts. This is not because they have moved backwards, but because they have been overtaken in their cultural evolution towards Liberty. The only recent setback diminishing the moral freedom score of some Nordic countries is their decision to crack down on the legitimate provision of for-profit sex services among consenting adults.

#### 4. Almost every Islamic country is a source of deep concern

It comes as no surprise that all fifteen lowest ranking countries are Islamic, as the most radically theocratic versions of that religion are in full political control of those societies. Some of the most somber concerns have been confirmed on the limited spread of moral freedom in the Persian Gulf, North-Eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. This is also true for **the region's economically free enclaves** in the area. The particular situation in Saudi Arabia is extremely regrettable as the kingdom comes last in our ranking. The 160<sup>th</sup> country in the index shows a level of moral freedom even lower than that of its neighbours. Saudi Arabia **doesn't even** score ten points out of the one hundred potentially available in our scale, and heads our hall of shame as the **only country in the world falling in the "lowest moral freedom"** area of the WIMF.



Only four predominantly Islamic countries “pass the exam” and obtain more than fifty points: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Turkey and Kazakhstan. And only four out of thirty countries scoring below one third of the points available are non Islamic. This finding adds to the already widespread view that, while the predominant practice of any religion is of course compatible with a free and modern society, that compatibility requires a full separation of state and religion based on the fundamental human right to freedom of conscience.

The same goes for quite a few non Islamic countries which also show regrettably low levels of moral freedom due to the strong political leverage held by another religion. These include Belarus (Orthodox), Israel (Jewish), Nepal (Hinduist), the Philippines (Catholic), Thailand (Buddhist), Tonga (Methodist), or Tuvalu (Calvinist) to mention but a few.

#### 5. Russia has simply replaced one type of state social engineering with another

In the post-Cold War geopolitical scenario, the Russian establishment seems to have embraced sheer interventionism in order to shape culture and the predominant values. Moral conservatism, derived from either the Orthodox faith or traditional culture, seems to have replaced marxism as the basis for an ongoing, though softer, social engineering by the state. It is regrettable that **such an important country's** score is just in the middle of our classification, a position shared by some of her cultural and political allies, like Serbia or Moldova, while politically unfree Belarus falls further below. In all of these countries, the freedom of LGBT individuals is a matter of special concern.

#### 6. Communism is a conservative force against moral freedom

The remaining communist regimes, which are few but notorious, have continued to coerce their citizens into abiding by a moral code based on allegedly scientific views. Freedom of conscience and the practice of any religion –other than



marxism itself– are **fiercely repressed**. In the case of the People’s Republic of China, decades of limited economic liberalization have not resulted in an equally noticeable moral openness. Two other communist regimes, North Korea and Vietnam, fall further down into the low moral freedom area, while moral freedom is deemed insufficient in Laos and just slightly over the fifty point threshold in “**21<sup>st</sup> century socialist**” Venezuela or in outright communist Cuba.

### 7. Moral freedom is surprisingly low in a few scattered Western-style **societies...**

For different reasons, often including abnormally low scores in a particular set of indicators, a few Western countries which perform reasonably high in other freedom indices rank rather low in ours. It is surprising that Hungary and Norway fail to make it into the “**high moral freedom**” area, although just for under half a point. A bigger concern should be the British and Irish performance. And it is remarkable that Iceland, Japan, Poland and Romania barely manage to pass the fifty point mark, while otherwise free countries like Singapore, Israel or **South Korea even fall in the “insufficient moral freedom”** part of this index.

### 8. ...and surprisingly high in several developing countries

While most countries topping the WIMF in its first edition belong to the developed world, some countries with a lesser degree of development have also made their way into the higher classification areas. Cambodia, scoring just over seventy points, obtains a remarkable fifteenth place in the global classification and is the first developing country in the index. Two other surprisingly high scores are those of **South Africa and Montenegro, both achieving “high moral freedom”** positions. Already in the “**acceptable moral freedom**” area, countries like Guyana or Mozambique score higher than we had expected considering their location or background. For less than half a point, Nepal and Armenia fail to join the free world in terms of morality, but rank as the highest within the “**insufficient moral freedom**” area.



## 9. Country size seems to matter

It is also worth noting that the four European micro-states considered –the principalities of Andorra and Monaco and the republics of San Marino and Malta– score surprisingly low in comparison with their bigger neighbours. While these countries are famous for their high living standards and economic freedom, they fail to perform similarly when it comes to moral freedom. Neither the Principality of Liechtenstein nor the Vatican City State have been included in this index due to lack of sufficient data. A similar situation is observed in Caribbean and South Pacific island micro-states, which score poorly in most categories and rank in the lower areas of the WIMF classification. This similarity between very small countries in different regions, in spite of the cultural influence of their neighbours and allies, may lead to the conclusion that moral freedom is affected, among other relevant factors, by country size. This correlates to the well known fact that achieving a higher degree of moral freedom is one of the secondary but influential wishes driving migration from smaller to larger towns within a country. Smaller communities, where privacy is harder to preserve, may erode individual moral freedom.

## 10. Category correlations normally show a consistent pattern

Because the index is built on rather diverse matters and issues, it is possible to look for a pattern or its absence. The only common denominator of the ingredients combined towards the index is individual choice on moral matters, or lack thereof. It can safely be said that, yes, a certain approach to morality –state control, individual choice or a mix of the two– is normally stable and noticeable across the five categories and their indicators. Western-style countries with a high respect for the individual usually score high on all or most categories, while countries still anchored to traditional values, a certain religion or communism, also show a consistently low score across all categories. There are,



nevertheless, many particular exceptions where an otherwise high or low WIMF country performs differently on a certain matter. All in all, while the mix of moral debates in use for this index may of course be fine-tuned, its outcome shows a remarkable stability and provides ground for future editions in order to show **each country's** moral freedom evolution.



# World Index of Moral Freedom 2016

RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
1	Netherlands, The	91,70	Highest Moral Freedom	100,00	80,00	98,50	90,00	90,00
2	Uruguay	88,75	Very High Moral Freedom	92,50	81,25	85,00	95,00	90,00
3	Portugal	83,80	Very High Moral Freedom	100,00	62,50	73,50	93,00	90,00
4	Czech Republic	80,50	Very High Moral Freedom	100,00	72,50	72,00	88,00	70,00
5	Belgium	79,35	High Moral Freedom	88,75	85,00	50,00	83,00	90,00
6	Spain	78,60	High Moral Freedom	81,25	67,50	71,25	83,00	90,00
7	United States of America	78,20	High Moral Freedom	96,25	92,50	38,75	73,50	90,00
8	Germany	78,03	High Moral Freedom	90,63	67,50	62,00	100,00	70,00
9	Canada	76,58	High Moral Freedom	90,63	72,50	53,75	76,00	90,00
10	Mexico	75,53	High Moral Freedom	90,63	77,50	38,50	95,00	76,00
11	Colombia	74,98	High Moral Freedom	78,13	52,50	80,25	93,00	71,00
12	Luxembourg	72,60	High Moral Freedom	100,00	75,00	15,00	83,00	90,00
13	Switzerland	72,38	High Moral Freedom	90,63	75,00	36,25	90,00	70,00
14	Austria	71,13	High Moral Freedom	90,63	62,50	32,50	100,00	70,00
15	Cambodia	70,50	High Moral Freedom	77,50	62,50	85,00	60,00	67,50
16	Slovenia	70,00	High Moral Freedom	100,00	62,50	57,50	60,00	70,00
17	France	69,93	High Moral Freedom	90,63	67,50	13,50	88,00	90,00
18	Estonia	69,40	High Moral Freedom	100,00	62,50	31,00	86,00	67,50



RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
19	Brazil	69,30	High Moral Freedom	100,00	31,25	34,75	93,00	87,50
20	Sweden	66,95	High Moral Freedom	81,25	82,50	21,00	60,00	90,00
21	Denmark	66,33	High Moral Freedom	68,13	72,50	22,50	81,00	87,50
22	Bolivia	65,30	High Moral Freedom	96,25	31,25	51,50	100,00	47,50
23	New Zealand	65,25	High Moral Freedom	92,50	41,25	15,00	87,50	90,00
24	Ecuador	64,75	High Moral Freedom	85,00	31,25	40,00	100,00	67,50
25	Argentina	64,45	High Moral Freedom	85,00	31,25	32,50	86,00	87,50
26	Italy	64,25	High Moral Freedom	91,25	62,50	34,00	86,00	47,50
27	Slovakia	62,33	High Moral Freedom	90,63	62,50	13,50	95,00	50,00
28	South Africa	61,70	High Moral Freedom	98,50	72,50	7,50	40,00	90,00
29	Greece	61,38	High Moral Freedom	49,38	62,50	32,50	95,00	67,50
30	Australia	61,35	High Moral Freedom	100,00	41,25	32,50	63,00	70,00
31	Finland	60,58	High Moral Freedom	68,13	46,25	22,50	76,00	90,00
32	Montenegro	60,03	High Moral Freedom	90,63	62,50	13,50	86,00	47,50
33	Hungary	59,88	Acceptable Moral Freedom	56,88	67,50	15,00	100,00	60,00
34	Latvia	59,63	Acceptable Moral Freedom	90,63	62,50	7,50	90,00	47,50
35	Norway	59,63	Acceptable Moral Freedom	68,13	62,50	22,50	55,00	90,00
36	Chile	59,40	Acceptable Moral Freedom	77,50	0,00	66,00	86,00	67,50



RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
37	Croatia	59,13	Acceptable Moral Freedom	83,13	62,50	32,50	60,00	57,50
38	Peru	59,08	Acceptable Moral Freedom	68,13	31,25	38,50	100,00	57,50
39	United Kingdom	58,05	Acceptable Moral Freedom	77,50	50,00	18,75	56,00	88,00
40	Ireland	57,33	Acceptable Moral Freedom	85,00	20,63	22,50	71,00	87,50
41	India	57,03	Acceptable Moral Freedom	76,63	77,50	53,75	46,00	31,25
42	Bosnia and Herzegovina	55,63	Acceptable Moral Freedom	90,63	62,50	22,50	65,00	37,50
43	Macedonia	54,13	Acceptable Moral Freedom	90,63	62,50	15,00	65,00	37,50
44	Paraguay	54,13	Acceptable Moral Freedom	77,50	15,63	40,00	100,00	37,50
45	Jamaica	53,88	Acceptable Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	67,50	55,00	25,00
46	Cyprus	53,73	Acceptable Moral Freedom	83,88	31,25	15,00	71,00	67,50
47	Albania	53,50	Acceptable Moral Freedom	100,00	62,50	15,00	65,00	25,00
48	Bulgaria	53,33	Acceptable Moral Freedom	68,13	62,50	32,50	66,00	37,50
49	Serbia	53,13	Acceptable Moral Freedom	75,63	62,50	15,00	65,00	47,50
50	Costa Rica	53,08	Acceptable Moral Freedom	60,63	31,25	25,00	81,00	67,50
51	Iceland	52,95	Acceptable Moral Freedom	83,50	31,25	40,00	20,00	90,00
52	Moldova	52,88	Acceptable Moral Freedom	66,88	62,50	32,50	55,00	47,50
53	Russia	52,88	Acceptable Moral Freedom	51,88	62,50	67,50	35,00	47,50
54	Lithuania	52,63	Acceptable Moral Freedom	90,63	62,50	7,50	55,00	47,50



RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
55	Romania	52,00	Acceptable Moral Freedom	62,50	62,50	15,00	60,00	60,00
56	Guyana	51,83	Acceptable Moral Freedom	90,63	62,50	13,50	55,00	37,50
57	Panama	51,75	Acceptable Moral Freedom	92,50	31,25	7,50	80,00	47,50
58	Kazakhstan	51,08	Acceptable Moral Freedom	66,88	67,50	7,50	76,00	37,50
59	Cuba	50,88	Acceptable Moral Freedom	50,88	72,50	7,50	76,00	47,50
60	Japan	50,85	Acceptable Moral Freedom	95,25	52,50	24,00	35,00	47,50
61	Turkey	50,78	Acceptable Moral Freedom	45,88	72,50	15,00	73,00	47,50
62	Venezuela	50,75	Acceptable Moral Freedom	83,13	15,63	15,00	90,00	50,00
63	Mozambique	50,08	Acceptable Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	22,50	81,00	25,00
64	Poland	50,08	Acceptable Moral Freedom	68,13	31,25	15,00	81,00	55,00
65	Armenia	49,58	Insufficient Moral Freedom	51,88	67,50	15,00	76,00	37,50
66	Nepal	49,58	Insufficient Moral Freedom	89,13	62,50	22,50	55,00	18,75
67	Guinea	49,38	Insufficient Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	22,50	65,00	37,50
68	Ghana	49,00	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	31,25	22,50	60,00	31,25
69	Malawi	48,83	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	15,63	22,50	81,00	25,00
70	St. Vincent and the Grenad.	48,75	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	31,25	15,00	60,00	37,50
71	San Marino	48,43	Insufficient Moral Freedom	85,00	15,63	15,00	79,00	47,50
72	Tajikistan	48,38	Insufficient Moral Freedom	71,88	62,50	15,00	55,00	37,50



RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
73	Seychelles	48,25	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	31,25	7,50	65,00	37,50
74	Mongolia	48,08	Insufficient Moral Freedom	71,88	62,50	13,50	55,00	37,50
75	Senegal	47,63	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	15,63	15,00	95,00	12,50
76	Ukraine	47,58	Insufficient Moral Freedom	55,38	66,25	60,00	15,00	41,25
77	Monaco	47,08	Insufficient Moral Freedom	53,13	31,25	22,50	81,00	47,50
78	Madagascar	46,70	Insufficient Moral Freedom	71,88	15,63	22,50	86,00	37,50
79	Georgia	46,63	Insufficient Moral Freedom	68,13	67,50	7,50	55,00	35,00
80	Kyrgyzstan	46,38	Insufficient Moral Freedom	53,38	62,50	15,00	76,00	25,00
81	Ivory Coast	46,33	Insufficient Moral Freedom	92,50	15,63	22,50	76,00	25,00
82	Israel	46,28	Insufficient Moral Freedom	47,88	41,25	15,00	76,00	51,25
83	Cameroon	46,25	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	31,25	15,00	60,00	25,00
84	Saint Lucia	46,25	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	31,25	7,50	55,00	37,50
85	Andorra	46,13	Insufficient Moral Freedom	77,50	15,63	22,50	55,00	60,00
86	Solomon Islands	46,13	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	15,63	22,50	55,00	37,50
87	Belarus	46,08	Insufficient Moral Freedom	57,88	62,50	7,50	55,00	47,50
88	Singapore	46,08	Insufficient Moral Freedom	66,88	72,50	7,50	36,00	47,50
89	Bahamas, The	45,88	Insufficient Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	15,00	55,00	37,50
90	Liberia	45,88	Insufficient Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	15,00	55,00	37,50



RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
91	Gambia, The	45,80	Insufficient Moral Freedom	86,50	31,25	15,00	65,00	31,25
92	Mauritius	45,75	Insufficient Moral Freedom	90,63	15,63	15,00	60,00	47,50
93	Trinidad and Tobago	45,75	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	31,25	15,00	45,00	37,50
94	Guinea-Bissau	45,63	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	15,63	15,00	60,00	37,50
95	Suriname	45,38	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	15,63	15,00	55,00	41,25
96	Malta	45,20	Insufficient Moral Freedom	70,00	0,00	32,50	66,00	57,50
97	Korea, South	44,88	Insufficient Moral Freedom	85,63	41,25	22,50	25,00	50,00
98	Laos	44,63	Insufficient Moral Freedom	71,88	31,25	22,50	60,00	37,50
99	Haiti	44,13	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	15,63	22,50	45,00	37,50
100	Zimbabwe	44,08	Insufficient Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	13,50	60,00	25,00
101	Uzbekistan	43,93	Insufficient Moral Freedom	49,63	62,50	15,00	55,00	37,50
102	Equatorial Guinea	43,88	Insufficient Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	15,00	45,00	37,50
103	Papua New Guinea	43,63	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	15,63	22,50	55,00	25,00
104	Guatemala	43,45	Insufficient Moral Freedom	75,63	15,63	22,50	66,00	37,50
105	Dominica	43,13	Insufficient Moral Freedom	100,00	15,63	7,50	55,00	37,50
106	Azerbaijan	42,68	Insufficient Moral Freedom	53,38	62,50	7,50	55,00	35,00
107	Tunisia	42,58	Insufficient Moral Freedom	27,38	62,50	15,00	83,00	25,00
108	Honduras	42,45	Insufficient Moral Freedom	75,63	15,63	15,00	81,00	25,00



RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
109	Swaziland	41,88	Insufficient Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	15,00	60,00	12,50
110	Uganda	41,88	Insufficient Moral Freedom	75,63	31,25	22,50	55,00	25,00
111	Mali	41,55	Insufficient Moral Freedom	95,50	31,25	22,50	46,00	12,50
112	Tonga	40,75	Insufficient Moral Freedom	66,63	15,63	15,00	69,00	37,50
113	Tuvalu	40,05	Insufficient Moral Freedom	68,13	15,63	15,00	64,00	37,50
114	China	40,00	Insufficient Moral Freedom	40,00	72,50	15,00	25,00	47,50
115	Botswana	39,88	Low Moral Freedom	90,63	31,25	32,50	20,00	25,00
116	Philippines, The	39,63	Low Moral Freedom	92,50	15,63	15,00	25,00	50,00
117	Dominican Republic	38,90	Low Moral Freedom	77,50	0,00	13,50	66,00	37,50
118	El Salvador	37,70	Low Moral Freedom	77,50	0,00	7,50	66,00	37,50
119	Central African Republic	37,60	Low Moral Freedom	61,38	15,63	22,50	76,00	12,50
120	Kenya	37,33	Low Moral Freedom	89,13	31,25	15,00	20,00	31,25
121	Turkmenistan	36,88	Low Moral Freedom	15,88	62,50	13,50	55,00	37,50
122	Rwanda	36,58	Low Moral Freedom	70,38	31,25	7,50	55,00	18,75
123	Angola	36,50	Low Moral Freedom	71,88	15,63	15,00	55,00	25,00
124	Nicaragua	36,33	Low Moral Freedom	75,63	0,00	15,00	66,00	25,00
125	Jordan	35,88	Low Moral Freedom	34,38	31,25	57,50	25,00	31,25
126	Ethiopia	34,63	Low Moral Freedom	72,13	31,25	15,00	36,00	18,75



RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
127	Korea, North	34,50	Low Moral Freedom	37,50	62,50	15,00	20,00	37,50
128	Lebanon	33,90	Low Moral Freedom	80,13	15,63	15,00	40,00	18,75
129	Vietnam	33,88	Low Moral Freedom	51,88	62,50	15,00	5,00	35,00
130	Thailand	30,75	Low Moral Freedom	61,63	25,63	1,50	20,00	45,00
131	Djibouti	29,50	Low Moral Freedom	34,38	15,63	11,25	55,00	31,25
132	Bangladesh	28,90	Low Moral Freedom	33,88	15,63	22,50	60,00	12,50
133	Mauritania	28,73	Low Moral Freedom	20,50	15,63	22,50	60,00	25,00
134	Comoros	28,13	Low Moral Freedom	26,88	31,25	11,25	40,00	31,25
135	Nigeria	28,03	Low Moral Freedom	61,38	31,25	22,50	15,00	10,00
136	Myanmar	27,63	Low Moral Freedom	17,50	15,63	15,00	65,00	25,00
137	Morocco	27,08	Low Moral Freedom	42,88	31,25	15,00	15,00	31,25
138	Eritrea	26,80	Low Moral Freedom	41,50	31,25	15,00	15,00	31,25
139	Maldives	25,75	Low Moral Freedom	25,00	31,25	7,50	40,00	25,00
140	Malaysia	25,08	Low Moral Freedom	40,38	31,25	15,00	15,00	23,75
141	Syria	23,30	Low Moral Freedom	30,88	15,63	18,75	20,00	31,25
142	Somalia	22,25	Low Moral Freedom	34,38	15,63	15,00	15,00	31,25
143	Libya	22,00	Low Moral Freedom	25,00	31,25	22,50	0,00	31,25
144	Sri Lanka	21,90	Low Moral Freedom	38,88	15,63	15,00	15,00	25,00

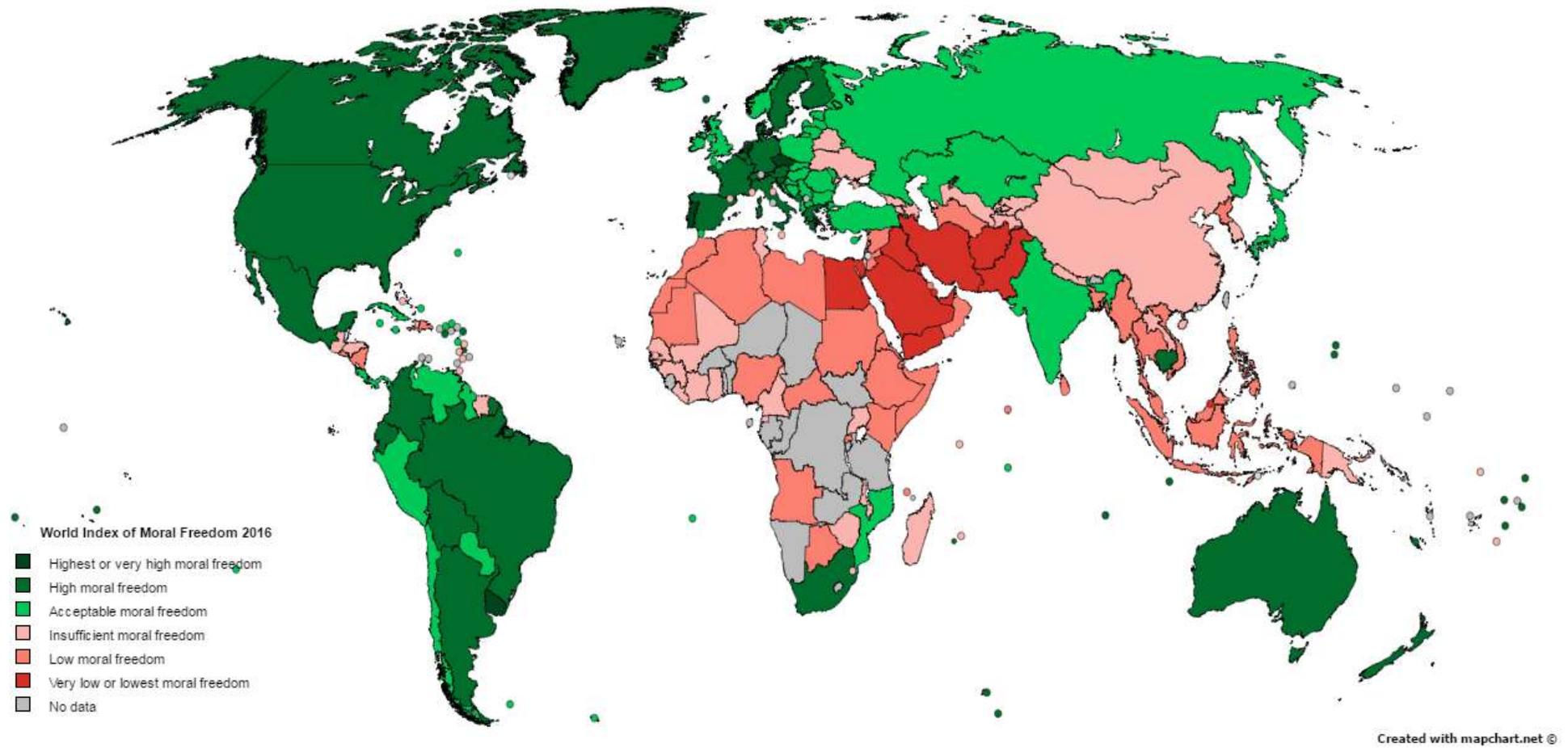


RANK	COUNTRY	WIMF 2016	WIMF 2016 CLASSIFICATION	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	BIOETHICAL FREEDOM	DRUGS FREEDOM	SEXUAL FREEDOM	GENDER & FAMILY FREEDOM
145	Bahrain	21,63	Low Moral Freedom	16,88	67,50	11,25	0,00	12,50
146	Indonesia	21,43	Low Moral Freedom	20,88	31,25	22,50	0,00	32,50
147	Sudan	21,43	Low Moral Freedom	13,38	31,25	22,50	15,00	25,00
148	Algeria	20,63	Low Moral Freedom	30,63	31,25	15,00	20,00	6,25
149	Oman	20,63	Low Moral Freedom	43,13	31,25	22,50	0,00	6,25
150	Brunei	18,75	Very Low Moral Freedom	26,88	15,63	11,25	15,00	25,00
151	Pakistan	18,05	Very Low Moral Freedom	14,00	31,25	22,50	0,00	22,50
152	Afghanistan	16,88	Very Low Moral Freedom	25,00	15,63	18,75	0,00	25,00
153	Egypt	16,88	Very Low Moral Freedom	25,00	15,63	22,50	15,00	6,25
154	Iran	16,63	Very Low Moral Freedom	0,00	35,63	25,00	0,00	22,50
155	Kuwait	15,93	Very Low Moral Freedom	33,38	31,25	15,00	0,00	0,00
156	Qatar	15,63	Very Low Moral Freedom	31,88	31,25	15,00	0,00	0,00
157	United Arab Emirates	15,38	Very Low Moral Freedom	25,88	31,25	13,50	0,00	6,25
158	Iraq	13,00	Very Low Moral Freedom	34,38	15,63	15,00	0,00	0,00
159	Yemen	11,23	Very Low Moral Freedom	18,00	15,63	22,50	0,00	0,00
160	Saudi Arabia	7,75	Lowest Moral Freedom	0,00	31,25	7,50	0,00	0,00



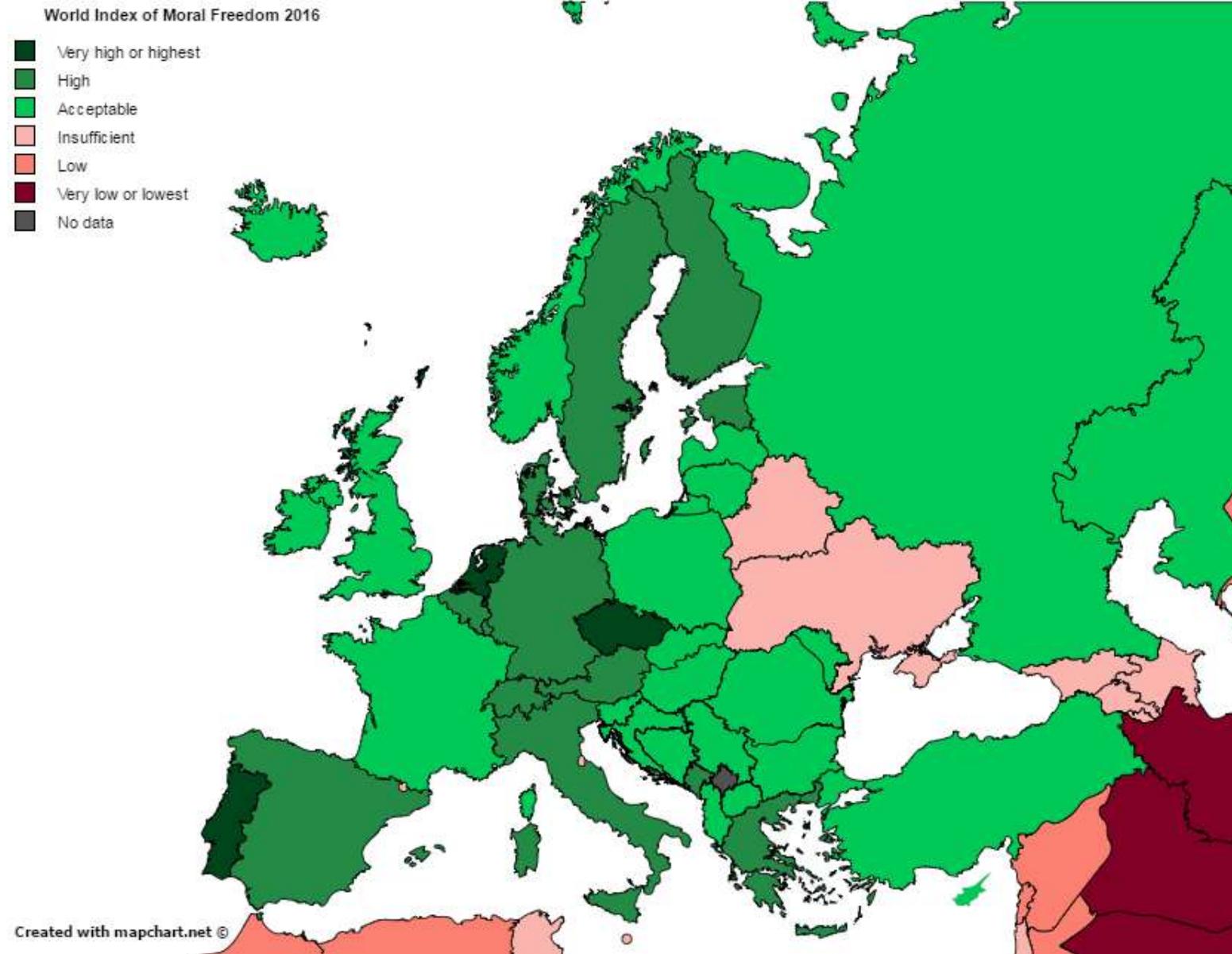
# WIMF maps

## World map



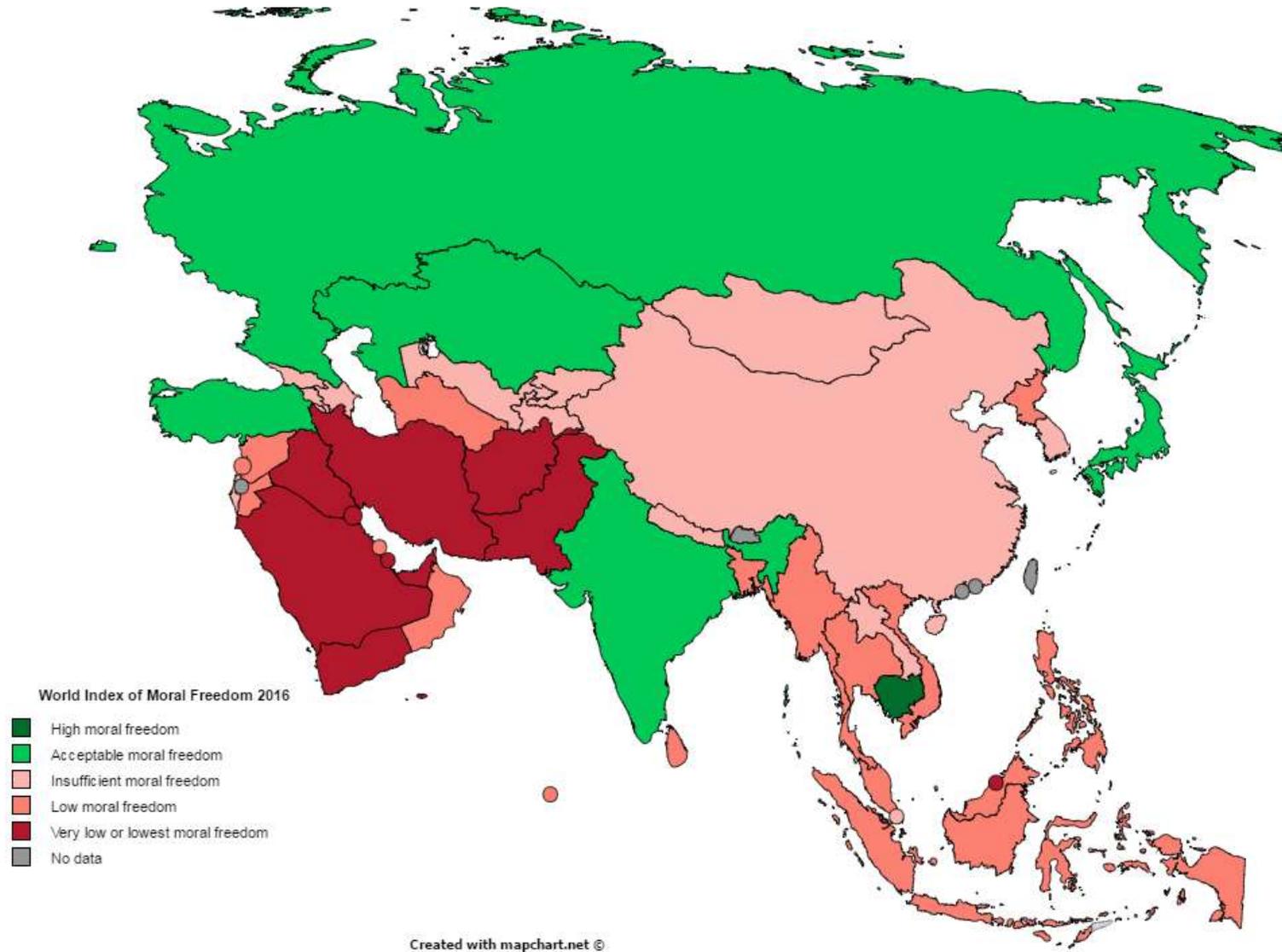


## Europe



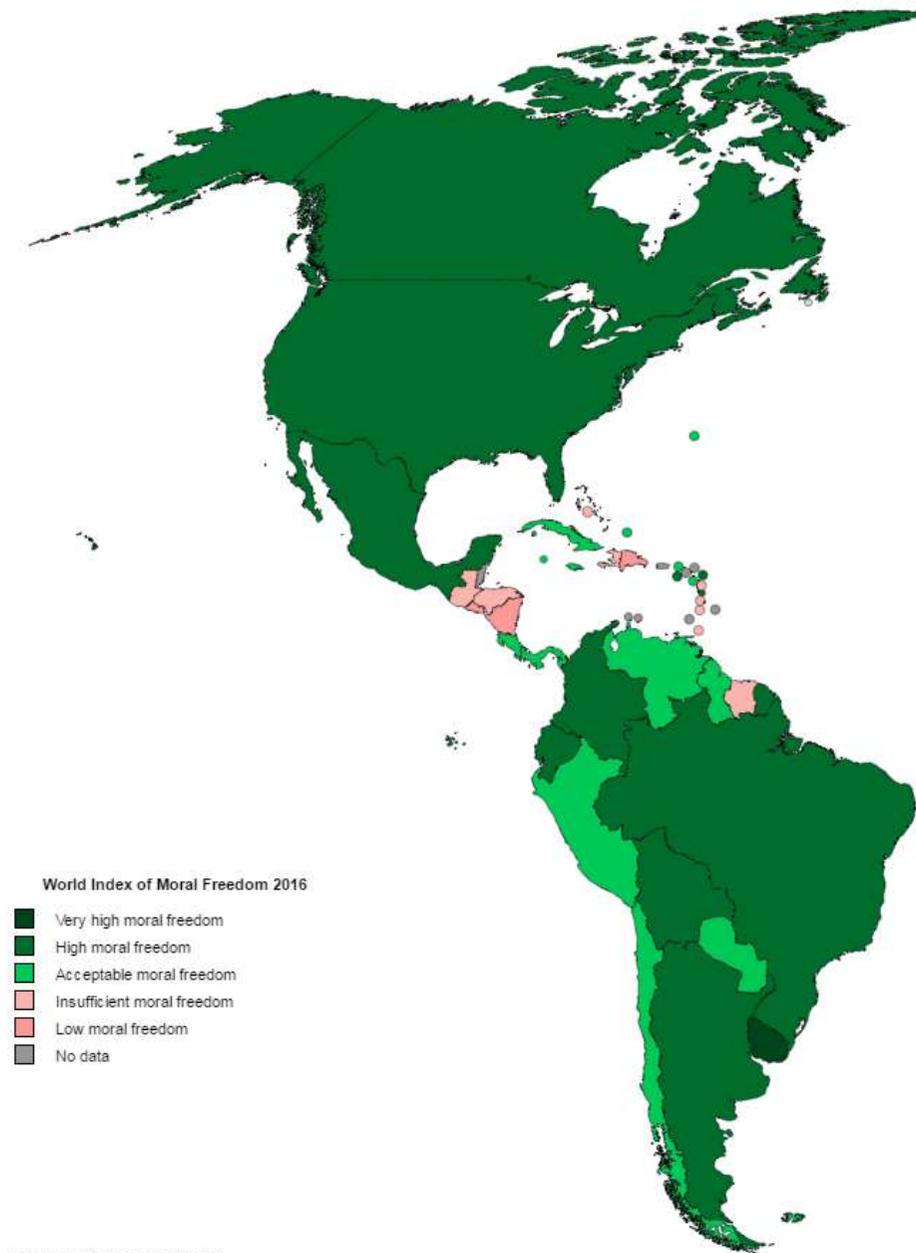


## Asia





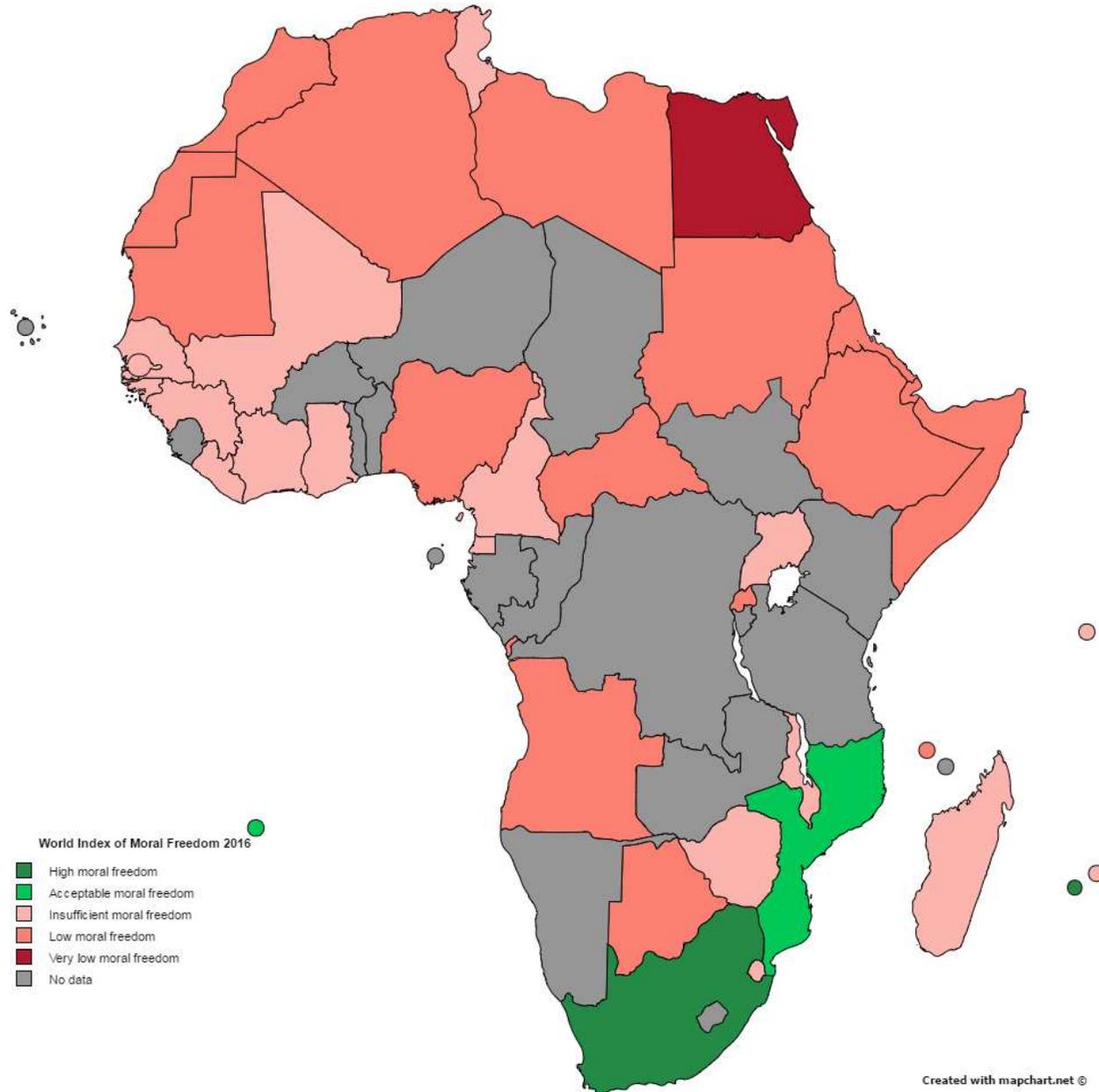
## The Americas



Created with mapchart.net ©



# Africa





## Comparison with other indices

The World Index of Moral Freedom shows a noticeable level of divergence with other freedom or development indices. Countries performing either very well or very poorly at those will normally have a correspondingly high or low position in ours, but there are also many countries with a significantly higher or lower amount of state moral interference than one would expect. In fact, some of our findings contradict widespread perceptions about a few countries –particularly in **Latin America**– **while in most other cases our research tends to confirm them. A country may be free from moral interference by the state and still suffer from high levels of its coercion on other issues. The opposite is also true in some cases. We have compared this first edition of WIMF with the indices below.**

### Moral freedom and human development

The Human Development Index (HDI) is published every year by the United Nations Development Program (UNPD). It is based on three categories: life expectancy, education and gross national income per capita. All ten best scoring countries at HDI 2015 perform in the “high”, “very high” or “highest” moral freedom sector of our index, with the exception of Norway (which is only 0,37 points below “high”) and, more notably, Ireland. Likewise, all top ten WIMF countries score over 80% of the available points at HDI, with the exception of Uruguay and, especially, Mexico. These two countries are nevertheless between 75% and 80%.

**We may conclude there’s a general correlation** between high human development and high moral freedom. Two important exceptions to this trend are Singapore and South Korea, both with a very high human development but insufficient moral freedom. A similar situation, although less extreme, is found in Iceland, Israel or Japan. On the



opposite end of the chart things are different, as the lower HDI countries are usually very undeveloped. Some of them perform much better at the WIMF than at the United Nations sponsored index (e.g. Cambodia or Mozambique), while an extremely low moral freedom score **doesn't stop several Islamic countries to reach the upper sectors of the Human Development Index**. These are usually very rich countries (e.g. Brunei, Bahrein, Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates) as well as Iran.

### Moral freedom and economic freedom

Published by the Heritage Foundation in partnership with the Wall Street Journal, the Index of Economic Freedom (IEF) is particularly respected for its rigour and accuracy. Over the years, it has become one of the leading tools in the promotion of free market ideas as it shows an evident correlation between prosperity and economic freedom. The IEF's 2016 edition again shows a discrepancy with the WIMF in the cases of South Korea and, especially, Singapore. The latter is number two at IEF while South Korea is the seventeenth country, but both of them fail our test for moral freedom. Other than this, most of the high moral freedom countries are also in the first or second sector of the IEF, with five notable exceptions: Uruguay, Spain, Belgium and, especially, Portugal and Mexico. These latter two countries, which rank 2 and 10 in moral freedom, perform quite poorly in economic freedom, ranking 62 and 64 respectively.

Islamic countries tend to perform poorly in both indices, with the notable exception of some of the richest countries in the Arabic Peninsula, which score rather high in economic freedom while they remain at the bottom of our ranking. Out of the twenty-four states **where economic freedom is deemed "repressed"**, only a few Latin American countries (e.g. Argentina) show a high moral freedom score. In most other cases, the level attained in both indices is similar. In particular, communist countries as well as Russia and her allies have both a low economic and moral freedom.



## Moral freedom and property rights

The International Property Rights Index (IPRI) is an initiative of the Property Rights Alliance, based in Washington, D.C. This eminent index is the result of close cooperation by about a hundred economic think tanks and academic institutions all over the world. The latest edition of the IPRI, published in November, 2015, shows that protection of private property is generally correlated to respect for individual moral choices. Singapore is again the poorest WIMF country with a top IPRI score. Most other countries with a high protection of property rights are also deemed to be morally free. The other way around, things are slightly different as some countries (e.g. Portugal, Spain, the Czech Republic and especially Mexico) perform much better in moral freedom than in the protection of private property. Once more, a few of the worst performing countries at the IPRI happen to achieve good or very good results in the WIMF, and this includes several Latin American countries.

## Moral freedom and democracy

The latest available edition of the Democracy Index is included among the appendices of the prestigious Human Freedom Index. Malta, Mauritius, Costa Rica, Israel and Botswana are the only highly democratic countries which do not perform accordingly on moral freedom. More than the economic ones, this index shows a parallel with the WIMF in the lower performance sector. This is particularly noticeable among communist and Islamic regimes.

## Moral freedom and press freedom

The World Press Freedom Index (WPFI) is published every year by Reporters Without Borders, a press freedom organization based in Paris. Just like the Democracy Index, the 2015 edition of the WPFI shows a remarkable similarity



with the WIMF, with the higher and lower countries tending to be symmetric. Nevertheless, Latin American countries with a remarkably high moral freedom rank do not usually perform so well when it comes to press freedom, and their rank at the WPFI is normally found in the next intervals. It is worth mentioning that two of these countries, Mexico and Colombia, show a major discrepancy between their high moral freedom and their low press freedom. However, the regions of deepest concern are similar in both indices: communist regimes, sharia-ruled countries and, to a lesser extent, the states formerly making up the Soviet Union (with the exception of the Baltic countries). The surprisingly low WPFI levels achieved by Singapore, South Korea and (to a lesser extent) Japan are also a reflection of these countries' WIMF performance.

### Moral freedom and general human freedom

And last but not least, it is important to see how moral freedom correlates to general freedom. The Human Freedom Index (HFI), co-authored by **Ian Vásquez and Tanja Porčnik**, has been published by five prominent pro-liberty think tanks (the Cato Institute, the Fraser Institute, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the Institute of Economic Analysis and the Visio Institute). The index includes both economic and personal freedom criteria to build up a balanced classification of countries according to human freedom. This is very revealing, because in some countries a higher economic freedom and a lower personal freedom (or the other way around) are compensated and provide a clearer picture of the overall situation. And again, the parallel with the outcome of the WIMF is remarkable, while the exceptions are also noticeable and usually affect countries with a particularly high moral freedom which nevertheless fail to attain equivalent levels of general freedom. The most precarious situations for human freedom registered by the HFI are vastly coincidental with a lack of individual moral choices. This especially affects the remaining communist regimes, most Islamic countries and, less intensively, the former Soviet Union and a number of developing countries.



## Final remarks

While various other aspects of human freedom are well studied by scholars and publicized by the media, free moral choice is usually either neglected or included in a more general set of data. But the heated debates and controversies of our time, which often take place on the very boundaries of ethics and liberty, provide a fertile ground for study –and a battleground we cannot give up. In launching this first edition, we hope to raise awareness on the need to redouble efforts on fighting state interference in our moral choices and individual sovereignty.

In some countries, the reach of moral freedom is so limited that the individual is reduced to the status of a conscienceless robot. Under these circumstances, society is not the product of a spontaneous and ever-changing interaction by thousands of individual values, beliefs, plans and projects. It is carefully engineered by those in power at the expense of free will, the very factor making us all human. But in many other countries, human moral freedom is possibly at an all-time high, and it is no coincidence that many of those fortunate societies top the main indices of wealth and development. Liberty and prosperity walk together. Statism and poverty, too. And individual moral freedom is an inalienable part of Liberty. **The very idea of a ‘public’ morality needs to be rejected in a free society.**

This first edition of the World Index of Moral Freedom has provided several surprising results, while it has also confirmed and made the case for some of the most extended ideas on how morally free the studied countries are. We hope the next edition may be perfected with the readers’ suggestions and contributions. We thank you for your interest in advancing Liberty.

Andreas Kohl and Juan Pina



## Main sources consulted

Ageofconsent.net, 2016.

Amnesty International Report 2015-2016.

Center for Genetics and Society: Bio Policy Wiki.

**Center for Reproductive Rights: The World's Abortion Laws**, 2015

Central Intelligence Agency: The World Factbook, 2015.

Dignity South Africa: Assisted Suicide Laws around the World, 2016.

Europa.eu: Unmarried Couples.

Euthanasia Research and Guidance Organization: World Laws on Assisted Suicide, 2010.

Euthanasia.com, 2016.

Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2015.

Freedom House: Freedom on the Net 2015.

Heritage Foundation, The: Index of Economic Freedom 2016.

Human Rights Watch: World Report 2015.

International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA): Worldwide Legislation.

Internet Censorship World Map, 2014.

OECD: Social Institutions & Gender Index 2014.

OECD Social Policy Division: Partnership and prevalence of cohabitation, 2013.

OpenNet Initiative: Global Internet Filtering and Country Profiles, 2016.

Pew Research Center, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2016.

Procon.org: World chart of prostitution legal status, 2015.



The Guardian: Women's Rights Country By Country, 2014.

TGEU: Trans Rights Europe Index 2014.

United Kingdom Government Publications: Drugs International Comparators, 2014.

United Nations Organization: Human Development Report 2015.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): World Drug Report 2015.

United Nations Organization – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: Human Rights by Country, 2016

United States Department of State: International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 2015.

United States Department of State: International Religious Freedom Report, 2015.

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Reports 2015 & 2014.

**Vásquez & Porčnik**, 2015: The Human Freedom Index 2015 (jointly published by several academic institutions).

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

World Bank, The: Women, Business and the Law, 2016.

World Justice Project: Rule of Law Index 2015.



## About the authors



**Andreas Kohl** is an economist and entrepreneur in the blockchain and financial technology industry, currently developing automated teller machines for cryptocurrencies. With an international family background, Andreas has lived in several countries including the UK, Spain, Austria and the United States. A member of the Spanish Libertarian Party, he was its provincial coordinator in Toledo until he moved abroad. In 2015 Andreas won the third Vernon Smith prize for the advancement of Austrian School economics, a prestigious award offered by Liechtenstein's princely family. As international advisor to the Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty since 2015, Andreas has designed a project targeted at diminishing jihadist recruitment in some areas of Spain's large cities as well as Ceuta and Melilla. This project was a finalist at the European Resource Bank 2016 in Berlin. Andreas joined the Council of the Foundation in February of 2016.



**Juan Pina** is a political scientist and holds a Masters degree in Institutional Communication. He's been very much involved in Spanish politics as the founder and first chairperson of the Libertarian Party and as its head candidate to the European Parliament in 2014. Author of countless opinion articles and two published novels, his essay book *Una política para la Libertad* ("A Policy for Liberty") appeared in 2014 under the seal of Unión Editorial, Spain's prestigious pro-Liberty publishing house. For five years, Juan was editor in chief of *Perfiles Liberales*, a social sciences magazine with a classical liberal and libertarian perspective sponsored by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. Since 2015 Juan is involved with the Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty as a Council member and as secretary to the Board of Trustees. In these capacities he's particularly involved in the launching of several specific associations furthering the cause of Liberty, like the Taxpayers Union. Juan works as Communication Director for a Spanish private company in the IT consultancy industry.



Published by the Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty in April of 2016

[www.fundalib.org](http://www.fundalib.org)

Note on finance. No taxpayer money has been used for the production of this index, which has been carried out on the Foundation's own resources. Please visit the Foundation's web site to better know its aims and lines of action, as well as the projects open for crowdsourcing. Your donation is very much needed and appreciated.

Note on intellectual property. No rights are reserved. While this index may be freely used towards any purpose by other authors and institutions, we kindly ask for fair acknowledgement of authorship (including a hyperlink where applicable), and for accurate quoting and properly contextualized use of the data and findings provided.