

FreeFACTS

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How free are we?

How free are we as South Africans? Are we more or less free than the average world citizen?

Freedom itself is something that can be hard to quantify but that hasn't stopped a number of organisations from trying. When looking at how South Africa fares in these various measures one thing that becomes apparent is that we do pretty well on measures of political freedoms but less well on those that look at economic freedom.

And when we talk about economic freedom we do not mean the type proposed by the misnamed Economic Freedom Fighters, which envisages a state controlling nearly all economic interactions between people. Economic freedom in this case rather means the freedom to engage freely in economic activity with others with little interference from the government. And on that measure, South Africa is failing.

On the various measures of political freedom South Africa, while not without its problems, does well. People are free to criticize the government, associate with who they wish, and elections – while not run perfectly – reflect the will of the people. South Africans enjoy higher levels of political freedom than the average Earthling.

Conversely, the level of economic freedom which South Africans enjoy is lower. On some measures South Africa has lower levels of economic freedom than a country like Vietnam, which explicitly describes itself as a one-party communist state, meaning that even the world's communists have seen the value in the free market.

This lack of economic freedom is reflected in the country's insipid growth over the past decade. This has resulted in declining per capita incomes and a stagnant or declining tax take, which has serious implications for the country and its future.

As a matter of urgency South Africa should do whatever it takes to allow the country to become freer economically. Prosperous countries around the globe are those which are ranked highly for economic freedom.

For this country to become prosperous higher levels of economic freedom for all is non-negotiable. — **Marius Roodt**

JOIN US

The IRR is an advocacy group that fights for your right to make decisions about your life, family and business, free from unnecessary government, political, and bureaucratic interference. FreeFACTS publishes evidence that communities are better off when individuals are free to make decisions about how they want to live, be educated, work, access healthcare, think, speak, own property, and protect their communities. If you agree with the issues we stand for, welcome to the team. There are millions of people just like you who are tired of South African politicians, activists, and commentators attempting to rein in your freedom to decide. Take control and make sure your voice is heard by becoming a friend of the IRR.

**SMS YOUR NAME
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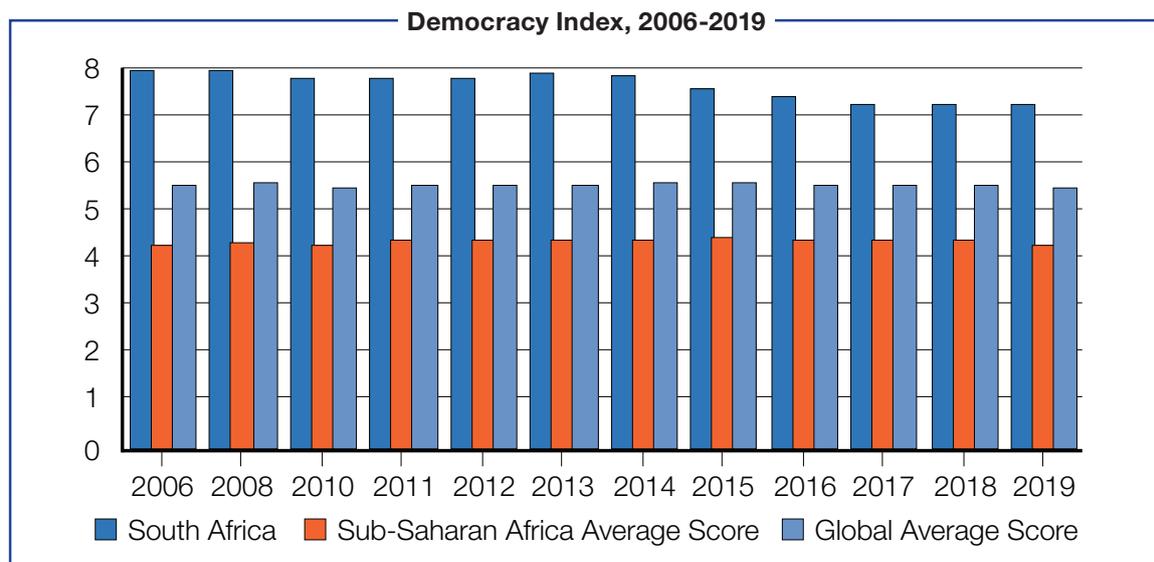
Freedom

Democracy Index			
Year	South Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Global
		Average Score	Average Score
2006	7.91	4.24	5.52
2008	7.91	4.28	5.55
2010	7.79	4.23	5.46
2011	7.79	4.32	5.49
2012	7.79	4.32	5.52
2013	7.90	4.36	5.53
2014	7.82	4.34	5.55
2015	7.56	4.38	5.55
2016	7.41	4.37	5.52
2017	7.24	4.35	5.48
2018	7.24	4.36	5.48
2019	7.24	4.26	5.44

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2019: A year of democratic setbacks and popular protests*

The Democracy Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) determines the quality of a country's democracy on a number of indices. These are: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. Countries are then assigned a score out of ten. It also categorises countries into four groups, full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes. South Africa does fairly well on the index and was ranked 40th on the index in 2019 (out of 167) and was considered a 'flawed democracy'. The index which South Africa fared best in was political participation and worst on political culture. Although South Africa has seen its score deteriorate slightly since 2006 it still does fairly well in comparison with other sub-Saharan African countries and the rest of the world. We face many challenges as a democracy but this is one area where we are holding our own relatively well.

South Africa also fares well on another Democracy Index published by Freedom House. According to that organisation's *Freedom in the World* report South Africa is ranked as 'free' (the other categories being 'partly free' and 'unfree'). Our country has enjoyed that ranking for the vast majority of the post-apartheid period indicating that, in general, South Africans enjoy full civil liberties and political rights. The only other countries in Africa that are considered 'free' by the index are Namibia, Botswana, Mauritius, and Ghana. South Africa is also ranked as an 'electoral democracy' by Freedom House, meaning that, in general, elections reflect the will of the people and citizens are free to vote for whom they wish.



Freedom

Press freedom index, 2013-2018

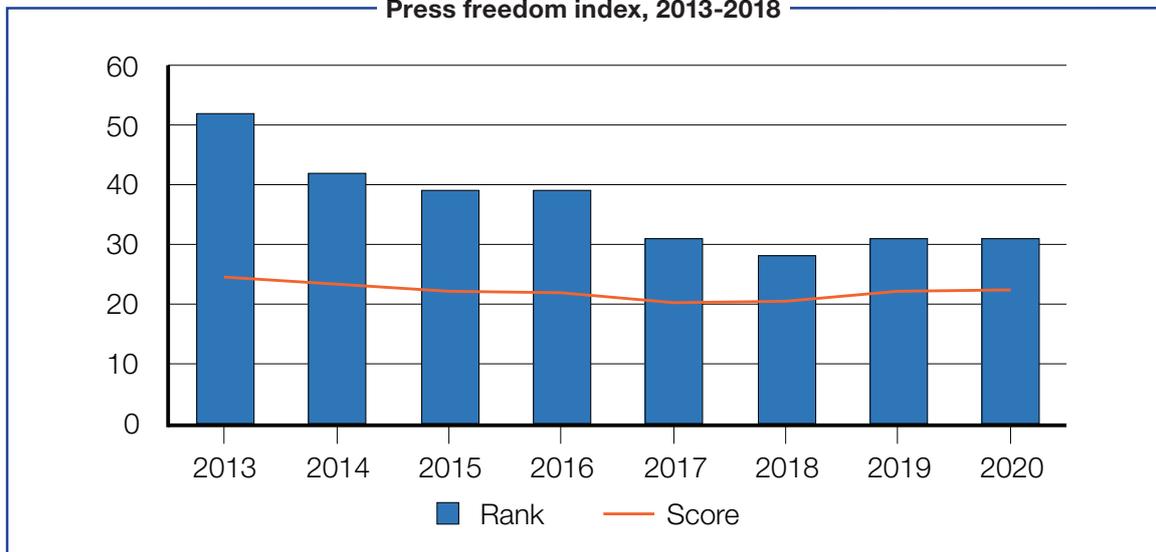
Year	Score*	Rank
2013	24.56	52
2014	23.19	42
2015	22.06	39
2016	21.92	39
2017	20.12	31
2018	20.39	28
2019	22.19	31
2020	22.41	31

Source: 2020 World Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders

* The higher score the worse your ranking in terms of press freedom. In 2013 South Africa's score indicates there was a worse situation with regard to press freedom than in 2020.

The World Press Freedom Index examines pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework, and safety of journalists in a number of countries to determine the status of the media. South Africa does fairly well on the index after having seen a slight decline in the Zuma years.

Press freedom index, 2013-2018

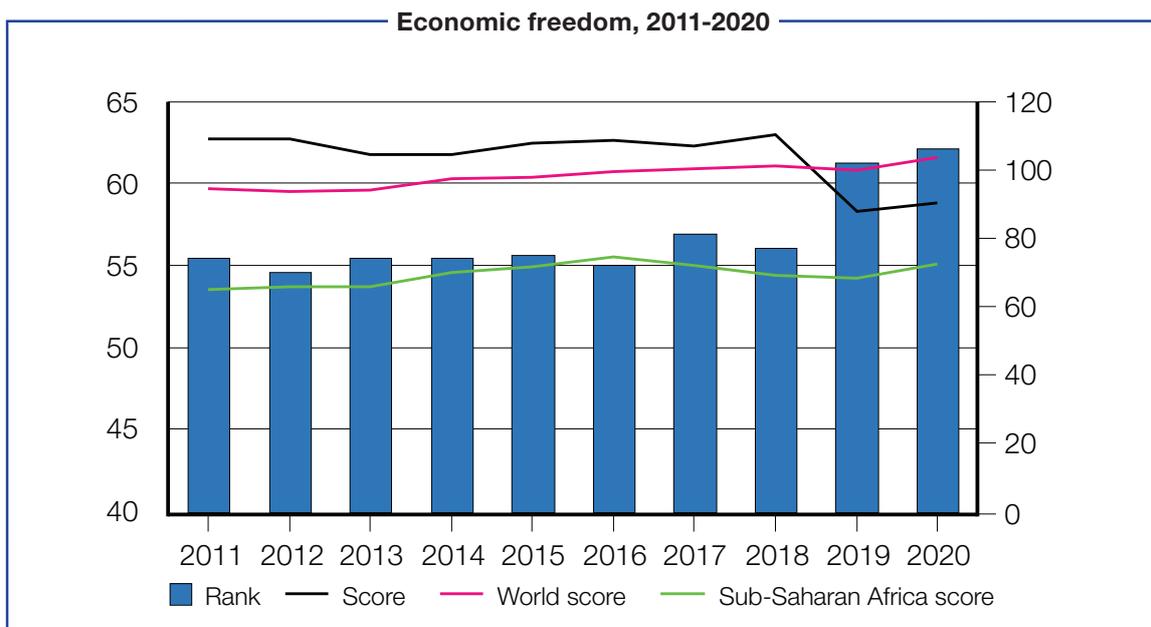


Freedom

Economic freedom (Heritage Foundation)				
Year	Rank	Score	World score	Sub-saharan Africa score
2011	74	62.7	59.7	53.5
2012	70	62.7	59.5	53.7
2013	74	61.8	59.6	53.7
2014	74	61.8	60.3	54.6
2015	75	62.5	60.4	54.9
2016	72	62.6	60.7	55.5
2017	81	62.3	60.9	55.0
2018	77	63.0	61.1	54.4
2019	102	58.3	60.8	54.2
2020	106	58.8	61.6	55.1

Source: Index of Economic Freedom, Heritage Foundation

It is clear that South Africa has been declining in terms of economic freedom in recent years and is now considered 'mostly unfree' according to the index. This index measures economic freedom by looking at the rule of law, regulatory efficiency, the size of the government, and open markets. South Africa's economy is now less free than the global average and only slightly more free than the average of our regional counterparts. Even countries which are governed by communist parties, such as Vietnam and China, are ranked as having freer economies than South Africa, meaning even they have realised the benefits which come from allowing free economic activity and fewer regulatory burdens.



Freedom

Human Freedom Index, 2011-2018						
Year	Human Freedom (score)	Human Freedom (rank)	Personal Freedom (score)	Personal Freedom (rank)	Economic Freedom (score)	Economic Freedom (rank)
2011	7.3	62	7.6	63	7.2	66
2012	7.2	65	7.5	65	6.9	81
2013	7.2	67	7.4	65	6.9	80
2014	7.2	65	7.6	59	6.8	90
2015	7.2	66	7.6	60	6.8	91
2016	7.0	76	7.3	72	6.7	98
2017	7.1	69	7.4	66	6.7	93
2018	7.1	68	7.4	63	6.7	90

Source: *The Human Freedom Index 2020: A Global Measurement of Personal, Civil, and Economic Freedom*, Cato Institute and Fraser Institute

This index looks at the state of human freedom in the world, creating a composite index which looks at economic, political, and civil freedoms. The areas in particular which it looks at are: Rule of Law; Security and Safety; Movement; Religion; Association, Assembly, and Civil Society; Expression and Information; Identity and Relationships; Size of Government; Legal System and Property Rights; Access to Sound Money; Freedom to Trade Internationally; and Regulation of Credit, Labor, and Business. In 2018, the latest year for which data was available, the average Human Freedom rating was 6.93 (the higher the score the more free a country is). South Africa's score was 7.1 meaning that the country is slightly more free than the global average. South Africa has also been slipping down the rankings, especially in terms of economic freedom. This index also shows what is evident to most South Africans, freedom is declining but we enjoy higher levels of personal and political freedoms than economic freedoms.

