

U.S. Ranks 35th in 'Report Card' on World Social Progress; Sudden, Unexpected Shift Forward for Africa

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Sweden and Denmark lead the world in social progress, Afghanistan is at the bottom of the list and the United States ranks 35th among 162 nations, tied with Ireland, Latvia and Hong Kong. Those are among the rankings in the latest Index of Social Progress.

These “world social report” figures, which document global social progress for the last 40 years, were released this week by Richard Estes, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice, at the 2009 Globalization Forum at the Penn Institute for Urban Research.

The 12th in a series, the report notes a continuing social decline in the U.S., attributing this to increasing poverty across the nation and a weakened social infrastructure, even for the middle class. Other noteworthy changes include the sudden and unexpected shift forward for Africa as a whole, after more than 30 years of persistent and often overwhelming social decline.

In addition, the report notes steady but uneven progress over the last 40 years in Latin America, due to increasing prosperity among its largest countries, including Brazil, as well as dramatic increases for Asia, especially in China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and [Hong Kong](#) with unparalleled levels of growth and prosperity.

The nations comprising the top 10 are [Sweden](#), Denmark, Norway, Germany, Iceland, Austria, Finland, Italy, France and Luxembourg. The bottom 10 are Afghanistan, Liberia, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic.

Using data provided to the United Nations, the World Bank and other data-collection bodies by national governments, Estes' study measures the ability of nations to meet the needs of their residents in terms of health, education, human rights, political participation, population growth, cultural diversity and freedom from "social chaos." Military spending, unemployment and environmental protection also are among the 41 factors used to tabulate the Weighted Index of Social Progress.

More information: Additional details, as well as charts and graphs, are available at www.sp2.upenn.edu/~restes/WSS09.html .

Provided by University of Pennsylvania ([news](#) : [web](#))

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