82 is the Economic Freedom Index score given to the United States in 2007 according to The Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal. The index attempts to rank all 157 countries based on each one’s ability to promote mobility and security with regard to labor, capital, goods, and property rights without excessive coercion or restriction. A nation’s score is derived from ten factors rated out of one hundred and averaged given equal weight for a composite economic freedom score. The ten factors are: Business Freedom, Trade Freedom, Fiscal Freedom, Freedom from Government, Monetary Freedom, Investment Freedom, Financial Freedom, Property rights, Freedom from Corruption, and Labor Freedom. Five countries were omitted due to violence and political turmoil.

Somewhat strikingly, despite being the world’s dominant economy, the United States is ranked fourth in the world behind Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia. However, not surprisingly, the U.S. ranks number one of twenty-nine in the Americas and is 21.4 points above the world average of 60.6. The United States ranks above the world average in every category except two. Fiscal freedom is limited because of high tax rates and the government expenditures are high (36.4% of the GDP) keeping the freedom from government score down.

An understanding of any social structure is necessarily tied to many economic factors; wealth and income being the two most prominent. As Americans, we often make the mistake of using our own country as a paradigm, when in fact we are firmly entrenched in our elite status. Only seven of one hundred fifty-seven countries are considered economically free. Our massive scale of production and consumption coupled with vast economic freedom may partially explain the gaping void between the American rich and the American poor. However, even our notion of poor is saturated with elitism. The United States is home to the richest poor people in the world.

To understand the implications of what is meant by “social structure” one must attempt to have a global perspective. Though complete objectivity is impossible, one can attempt to expand their social imagination by conceiving the economic freedom in countries closer to the world average. Kazakhstan, Qatar, Mongolia, and Macedonia are all within one point of the global average. Corruption in the government and an almost complete lack of property rights would be foremost in the American consciousness that so highly values security of property. Analyzing the global economic freedom index also reveals some interesting facts. Though we often associate economic freedom with geographic location, this may be a misconception. Typically, the U.S. and Western Europe are exemplars of freedom and economic prosperity, however, Asia is home to the world’s first, second, and third most economically free nations. Further, Cuba is only about 90 miles from the U.S. yet is the second most repressed economy in the world.

Social structure has been a fact of every existing society to date and many would argue is necessarily tied to the existence of society itself. However, it is important to remember that the global society is should not be ignored in favor of strictly nationalized analyses of social structure.
The economy is 82% free

Online: http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/index.cfm