2022 SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Introduction

We are excited to announce the 2022 Social Progress Index®. The Social Progress Index is one of the world’s largest curated collections of social and environmental data: 164,000 carefully selected pieces of data covering the last 12 years collected, vetted, and brought together using our unique methodology. The index is the only measurement tool to focus exclusively comprehensively and systematically on the non-economic dimensions of social performance across the globe with transparent and actionable data.

The 2022 Social Progress Index® uses its 12 components and 60 indicators to measure the social performance of 169 countries fully and an additional 27 countries partially. It helps us understand how people across the world are living, who is being left behind and how to accelerate progress.

This brief focuses on some of the overarching findings that we have taken away from this year’s index and includes four headline findings:

- **The world is at risk of a social progress recession in 2023.** Overall, the world has improved but only by 0.37 points last year, while 52 countries (31%) saw a decline in social progress. Though the world has improved since 2011 (by 5.4 points), in the past five years, since 2017, the rate of progress has slowed by nearly one-half (2011-16 +3.44 points; 2017-22 +1.95 points). The legacy of Covid is one of the causes of the slowdown. Given risks from climate change, economic turbulence and political change we see a significant risk that, for the first time, the world’s social progress will retreat in 2023.

- **Retreating rights have been the biggest brake on social progress.** There has been a significant decline in the world score on personal rights since 2011 (-5.34 points). 111 countries (66%) have declined in rights since 2011. Three of those countries are in the G7 - Canada, the UK, and the US.

- **The United Kingdom has declined in social progress since 2011** (-0.28). We see the impact of austerity measures and Brexit showing up in the data in every area from education to healthcare, to rights and tolerance.

- **Social progress in the United States has stagnated since 2011** (+0.06) and **has been in decline since 2017** (-0.56) Since 2011, the United States has been declining in 6 of the 12 components, including Personal Rights (-8.99) where it’s ranked 46th in the world and 33rd in Inclusiveness (-7.51). The steepest declines happened in the past 5 years. We also see stagnation in Nutrition and Basic
Medical Care, Health and Wellness and a decline in Access to Basic Knowledge, we’re likely seeing the impact of Covid-19.

Beyond these headline empirical findings, we are excited to share this report with you in order to also continue to engage the growing social progress community. The Social Progress Imperative now works with over 70 partners across more than 45 countries covering 2.4 billion people, to not only chart social progress but to use the insights from systematic measurement to make a positive difference for all.

We look forward to the exciting ways that the public and decision-makers around the world can engage in this movement and look forward to your feedback and continued engagement on this important mission!

ABOUT THE SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX®
Social progress has become an increasingly critical agenda for leaders in government, business, and civil society. The demand for better lives and greater equality is evident across the world as we see protests and new political movements for racial equity, women’s rights, climate change, gun violence and beyond. As the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world it highlighted our structural weaknesses and our inequities. There has been a growing expectation that it is not just governments who need to play a role in delivering improvements, but that business is also accountable, and must deliver improvements in the lives of people, as well as protecting the environment for us all. This is the social progress imperative.

Progress on social issues does not automatically accompany economic development. Rising income usually brings major improvements in areas such as access to clean water, sanitation, literacy, and basic education. But on average, personal security is no better in middle-income countries than in low-income ones and is often worse. And too many people—regardless of income—live without full rights and experience discrimination or even violence based on gender, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Traditional measures of national income, such as GDP per capita, fail to capture the overall progress of societies.

The Social Progress Index® rigorously measures country performance on many aspects of social and environmental performance which are relevant for countries at all levels of economic development. It enables an assessment of not just absolute country performance but also relative performance compared to a country’s economic peers. The index gives governments and businesses the tools to track social and environmental performance rigorously, and make better public policy and investment choices. The Social Progress Index also allows us to assess a country’s success in turning economic progress into improved social outcomes. Overall, the Social Progress Index provides the first concrete framework for benchmarking and prioritizing an action agenda advancing both social and economic performance.
The Social Progress Index® Methodology

The Social Progress Index® follows four key design principles:

1. **Exclusively social and environmental indicators:** Our aim is to measure social progress directly, rather than utilize economic proxies or outcomes. By excluding economic indicators, we can, for the first time, rigorously and systematically analyze the relationship between economic development (measured for example by GDP per capita) and social development. Prior efforts to move “beyond GDP” have commingled social and economic indicators, making it difficult to disentangle cause and effect.

2. **Outcomes not inputs:** Our purpose is to measure the outcomes that matter to the lives of real people, not the inputs. For example, we want to measure a country’s health and wellness achieved, not how much effort is expended nor how much the country spends on healthcare.

3. **Holistic and relevant to all countries:** We strive to create a holistic measure of social progress that encompasses the many aspects of the health of societies. Most previous efforts have focused on the poorest countries, for understandable reasons. But knowing what constitutes a successful society for any country, including higher-income countries, is indispensable for charting a course for all societies.

4. **Actionable:** The Social Progress Index® aims to be a practical tool that helps leaders and practitioners in government, business, and civil society to implement policies and programs that will drive faster social progress. To achieve that goal, we measure outcomes in a granular way that focuses on specific areas that can be implemented directly.

The design principles are the foundation for our conceptual framework and formulate our definition of social progress. The Social Progress Index® uses the following working definition:

*Social progress is the capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow citizens and communities to enhance and sustain...*
the quality of their lives, and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential.

The index is structured around 12 components and 60 distinct indicators. The framework not only provides an aggregate country score and ranking but also allows benchmarking on specific areas of strength and weakness. Transparency of measurement based on a comprehensive framework allows change-makers to set strategic priorities, acting upon the most pressing issues in their societies.

**Figure 1 / 2022 Social Progress Index® Framework**

Each of the framework’s twelve components comprises between four and six specific outcome indicators. Indicators are selected because they are measured appropriately with a consistent methodology by the same organization across all (or essentially all) of the countries in our sample. Taken together, this framework aims to capture a broad range of interrelated factors revealed by the scholarly literature and practitioner experience as underpinning social progress.

A key advantage of the Social Progress Index’s exclusion of economic variables is that we can compare social progress relative to a country’s level of economic development. In many cases, it is more useful and interesting to compare a country’s performance to countries at a similar level of GDP per capita than to all countries in the world. For example, a lower-income country may have a low score on a certain component but may greatly exceed typical scores for countries with similar per capita incomes. Conversely, a high-income country may have a high absolute score on a component, but still fall short of what is typical for comparably wealthy countries. For this reason, we present a
country’s strengths and weaknesses on a relative rather than absolute basis, comparing a country’s performance to that of its economic peers.

This is the eighth annual index. For the first time, we can measure 12 years of progress, from 2011-22.

**2022 SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX® RESULTS**

The 2022 Social Progress Index® ranks 169 countries that have sufficient available data to assess all 12 components. We group countries from highest to lowest social progress into six tiers. In previous editions of the index, the tiers were based on hierarchical clustering to set empirically determined break points across groups of countries based on their Social Progress Index scores. For the 2022 Social Progress Index we applied a slightly different approach where we define deciles in the Social Progress Index scores across the 12 years. We then assign deciles into tiers as per the following: Tier 1: first decile, Tier 2: second and third decile, Tier 3: fourth and fifth decile, Tier 4: sixth and seventh decile, Tier 5: eight and ninth decile, Tier 6: tenth decile. This method ensures comparability of tiers across years. Here we present results across all countries and for the world. We then discuss the relationship between Social Progress and GDP per capita. Finally, we explore changes in social progress at the country level since 2011, with spotlights on UK and US performance and the mandate for prioritizing social progress.

For the 2022 Social Progress Index we made the decision to include every country for which we were able to get complete data. We know that there are countries whose indicators of social progress are likely not an accurate representation due to recent conflict or major upheaval, for example, Ukraine and Afghanistan. However we feel that it is better to publish all the data. We publish all the data sources on our website.

**2022 Country Rankings**

Norway ranks first on the 2022 Social Progress Index, with a score of 90.74. Germany, ranking eighth with a score of 88.72, is the top performing G7 country. All 20 Tier 1 countries are high-income, and all score very similarly on social progress—just 4.7 points separate first-ranked Norway at the top of the tier from 20 ranked France at the bottom.

Tier 2 features a much wider range of scores, from Spain (85.35, ranked 21st) to the Republic of North Macedonia (72.74, ranked 58th). Italy and the US are in Tier 2, the only G7 countries not in Tier 1. All EU member states are in Tier 1 or 2, with Bulgaria as the worst performing of the EU countries at 44th. Tier 2 countries have a very wide wealth
gap. The US (84.65) has a 69,287.5 USD GDP per capita\(^1\) and is ranked 25\(^{th}\) on the Social Progress Index. Yet, the Czech Republic (85.19) with a significantly lower GDP per capita of 26,378.5 USD\(^2\) scores very similarly and ranks two places higher at 23/169. This highlights that a country’s GDP does not have to determine their social progress.

Russia (59\(^{th}\)), leads Tier 3 with a score of 71.99. Tier 3 also includes many other large emerging market economies, as defined by the IMF, such as Brazil, China, Colombia, Indonesia, Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, and the UAE.

Ghana tops Tier 4 (64.80) at 98\(^{th}\). Tier 4 also includes Saudi Arabia (63.89, 103\(^{rd}\)), India (60.19, 110\(^{th}\)), and Egypt (58.73, 113\(^{th}\)). It is also home to several Central American countries including El Salvador (64.42, 99\(^{th}\)), Honduras (61.17, 107\(^{th}\)), Nicaragua (60.23, 108\(^{th}\)), and Guatemala (60.21, 109\(^{th}\)).

Tier 5 is home to several of the countries that have improved most over the past 12 years, including Côte d’Ivoire (54.01, 127\(^{th}\)), Sierra Leone (50.48 141\(^{st}\)), Ethiopia (47.43, 150\(^{th}\)), and Guinea Bissau (46.65, 154\(^{th}\)). Tier 5 is mainly comprised of lower-income countries, many of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

Tier 6 countries are generally low income, and several are fragile states where instability has hindered social progress. Some, like South Sudan, Yemen, and Afghanistan, are also active conflict zones. South Sudan (30.65) ranks last on the 2022 Social Progress Index.

**Figure 2 / 2022 Social Progress Index Rankings**

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\(^{1}\) https://data.worldbank.org/  
\(^{2}\) https://data.worldbank.org/
World Average Performance

We can sum country Social Progress Index scores, population-weighted, to look at world performance. If the world were a country, it would rank between Guyana and West Bank and Gaza on the Social Progress Index (score: 65.24). On average, the world scores highest on Nutrition and Basic Medical Care and Water and Sanitation. The world performs worst on Inclusiveness and Environmental Quality.

Figure 3 / Population-weighted world scores by component.
Social Progress Index vs. GDP per capita

Figure 4 shows the relationship between GDP per capita and social progress. The data reveal several key findings:

- There is a positive and strong relationship between the Social Progress Index and GDP per capita.
- The relationship between economic development and social progress is not linear. At lower income levels, small differences in GDP per capita are associated with large improvements in social progress. As countries reach high levels of income, however, the rate of change slows.
- GDP per capita does not completely explain social progress. Countries achieve divergent levels of social progress at similar levels of GDP per capita.

Figure 4 / SPI vs GDP per capita

Benchmarking Countries

We can assess a country’s performance relative to its level of GDP per capita using the social progress “scorecard”. This compares the performance of a country on aggregate social progress, as well on the dimensions, components, and indicators of the Social Progress Index, to the performances of 15 other countries with similar GDPs per capita. By revealing where each country is using its resources more efficiently than countries of similar income, the scorecard can point to either successes or specific priority areas for actions and investments, respectively.
The world scorecard compares the population-weighted world average Social Progress Index scores to the median score of the 15 countries with GDPs per capita closest to that of the world. It shows that the world is underperforming on many aspects of social progress relative to the economic resources, measured in GDP per capita, that are available. We also produce full scorecards for all 169 ranked countries.

**Figure 5 / The world scorecard**

![World Scorecard](image)

### Changes in Social Progress 2011-2022

In 2022 we can measure changes in social progress over 12 years. To do so, we utilize the 2022 index framework, then apply that methodology across countries and years.
We can measure the evolution of aggregate social progress and identify the relative movement of each component and dimension of the index. This dynamic analysis is a first and critical step towards not simply measuring social progress for a country but also identifying what is driving social progress improvement.

The world is getting better in terms of social progress, but the rate of progress has slowed significantly. The population-weighted world score on the Social Progress Index rose from 59.84 in 2011 to 65.24 in 2022—a 5.40 point increase. However, in the past five years, since 2017, the rate of progress has nearly halved and last year the world only improved by 0.37 points, indicating stagnation. We have not yet seen the full impact that Covid-19 had on social progress across the world. When we consider this plus the risks posed by climate change, economic uncertainty and political change, we see a significant risk that for the first time the world’s social progress could retreat in 2023.

**Figure 6 / Change in Social Progress globally 2011-2022**

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3 As such, our analysis accounts for retroactive data revisions from sources as well as minor changes in the Social Progress Index methodology. Accordingly, the figures cited here may differ from the SPI scores and rankings that were reported in the context of earlier annual reports. Full dataset from 2011-2022 is available on the Social Progress Imperative website: [www.socialprogress.org](http://www.socialprogress.org).
The gains in social progress are not evenly distributed across the components of the framework. Since 2011 the world score has improved on ten components: Access to Information and Communications (+31.40 point change), Shelter (7.82), Water and Sanitation (+7.11), Access to Advanced Education (+5.67), Health and Wellness (+4.65), Nutrition and Basic Medical Care (+4.11), Access to Basic Knowledge (+3.26), Environmental Quality (+2.21), Personal Safety (+2.16), and Personal Freedom and Choice (+1.34).

The world is declining in Personal Rights (-5.34) and stagnating in Inclusiveness (+0.32).

**159 countries** (94% of those measured) have improved by one point or more. **Four countries** (2%) have declined. Of the 159 countries that improved, **79 countries** (47%) have improved by five or more points.

**Figure 7 / Significant improvers and decliners of social progress 2011-2022**

![Improvers](image)

- Bhutan
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Ethiopia
- The Gambia
- Guinea-Bissau
- Sierra Leone
- Timor Leste

![Decliners](image)

- Libya
- Syria
- United Kingdom
- Venezuela
- Uzbekistan

Figure 7 shows that the most improved countries since 2011 have been low and lower middle-income, including The Gambia, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leone. Richer countries, which overall show stronger performance on the Social Progress Index, have tended to improve more slowly. Only four countries registered a decline: the United Kingdom, Libya, Syria and Venezuela.
SPOTLIGHT: UK AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

The United Kingdom has slipped into a social progress recession after a lost decade of social progress. -0.15 last year, and -0.28 since 2011 (one of only four countries whose social progress has declined since then, which includes Syria, Venezuela, and Libya). The UK ranks 19th in the world and is close to relegation into the second tier of social progress. We see the impact of austerity measures and Brexit showing up in the data in every area from education to healthcare, to rights, and tolerance. Highlighting how responding to an economic crisis can have a knock-on effect on a country’s social progress.

Figure 8 / Change in UK social progress 2011-2022
The UK has steadily been declining in the area of rights (-3.02) over the past decade. It is currently ranked 35th in the world, behind countries that include Chile, the Czech Republic, and Barbados. It performs particularly poorly in freedom of peaceful assembly where it’s ranked 80th down from 49th a decade ago, and in freedom of religion where it's ranked 70th down from the 21st spot a decade ago. Inclusiveness has also been on the decline in the UK over the past decade (-5.0), with the steepest decline happening within the past 5 years. We see this play out in the discrimination and violence against minorities, where its ranked 93rd in 2022, yet in 2011 it was 29th in the world. This confirms a trend we have seen of an increasingly intolerant UK whose liberties are in retreat.

The UK ranks 46th on nutrition and basic medical care, worse than Poland, Bosnia, and Serbia. One of the biggest areas we see this play out is with a diet low in fruit and vegetables where it ranks 81st, behind countries that include Mexico, the United States, and Hungary.

The UK is 47th on shelter, worse than the United States, Kazakhstan, and Albania. We see this play out prominently in dissatisfaction with housing affordability, where its ranked 91st, down from 26th a decade earlier, it proves to be worse than all of the European countries who are also suffering a housing crisis, as well as worse than many developing economies, such as South Africa, and Mexico, and many poverty stricken countries such as Somalia, Eswatini, and Rwanda.

The UK ranks 35th on access to basic knowledge, behind countries that include Russia, Poland, and Kyrgyzstan. It scores poorly in secondary school attainment in particular ranking 59th marking a more than 10 point drop over the past decade and dropping a massive 30 places in the rankings (down from 29 in 2011).

Water and sanitation have taken a dip (-3.90) which is in large part due to a decline in satisfaction with the quality of the water. The UK has seen smaller declines and stagnation in its health and wellness (-1.69), access to basic education (-1.44), nutrition and basic medical care (+0.30), personal freedom and choice (+0.31), and personal safety (+0.78).

**SPOTLIGHT: US AND SOCIAL PROGRESS**

Since the first Social Progress Index in 2014, the United States has consistently shown under-performance relative to its GDP per capita. This is exceptional among leading economies. The US ranks 25th in the world on social progress, between Portugal and Malta and the lowest of the G7.
The US spends $4,935 more per capita[^4] on healthcare, than any other OECD country. Yet it ranks 44th in the world on nutrition and basic medical care - we see this play out most prominently in maternal mortality where it ranks 73rd. The US ranks 33rd on health and wellness - we see this play out most in deaths from noncommunicable diseases where it is in 54th place, behind Guatemala, Saudi Arabia, and El Salvador.

The US is 48th in the world on personal safety, behind Bosnia, Serbia, and Montenegro, in particular it is ranked 107th for interpersonal violence, behind the Republic of Congo, Nicaragua, and Sierra Leone.

**Figure 9 / Change in US Social Progress 2011-2022**

United States - The decline of rights, democracy, and tolerance

The US is in 46th/169 position on rights. This puts it behind countries that include South Africa and Argentina. Where we see this play out most prominently is with the freedom to assemble peacefully where it’s ranked 88th, in political rights where it has fallen to 54th from 36th in 2017, and in freedom of discussion where it’s ranked 29th. The US is 33rd on inclusiveness - where this plays out most is with the discrimination and violence against minorities where its ranked 102nd, behind South Africa, Poland, and the United Kingdom.

This decline is before the impact we are likely to see from the overturn of Roe vs. Wade, the increase of anti LGBTQ+ bills and the implementation of voter suppression laws.

Since 2011 the US score has deteriorated significantly on personal rights (-8.99) and inclusiveness (-7.51) and seen smaller declines and stagnation in housing (-2.87), water and sanitation (-0.40), basic education (-0.28), advanced education (-0.22), freedom and choice (0), nutrition and basic medical care (+0.28), and health and wellness (+0.95). We see similar trends across the rest of the G7 and other rich countries where they are either declining, stagnating or making very minor gains in all these areas. Declines in health and wellness, as well as in education are likely to have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Maternal mortality rates in the United States are shockingly high. The US is ranked 73rd in the world on maternal mortality, putting it behind countries that include Iraq, China, and Russia. The overturn of Roe vs. Wade and the restrictions that many states have already placed on abortion, even in some instances when it comes to preventing the death of the mother, mean that these numbers are likely to skyrocket in the coming years.
FROM INDEX TO ACTION TO IMPACT

The Social Progress Imperative publishes the annual Social Progress Index in order to build a common language and data platform that supports benchmarking, collaboration and change. Throughout the world, the Social Progress Imperative has catalyzed the formation of local action networks that bring together government, businesses, academia, and civil society organizations committed to using the Social Progress Index as a tool to assess strengths and weaknesses, spur constructive dialogue, catalyze change, and improve people’s lives.

We have over 70 partners in 45 countries around the world and include leading institutions from government, business, finance, and civil society.

**Figure 10 / Map of the Social Progress Network**

Our network continues to expand globally, providing more and more change-makers around the world with the data and insight they need to change lives. To learn more about the Social Progress Index and the ways in which it is driving impact around the world, visit [www.socialprogress.org](http://www.socialprogress.org).
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