

2019 SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX

Executive Summary



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Introduction

We are excited to announce the 2019 Social Progress Index. The Social Progress Index is the only measurement tool to comprehensively and systematically focus exclusively on the non-economic dimensions of social performance across the globe with transparent and actionable data.

This is the sixth year of the index, and the index contains actionable and sharp insight for nations and communities around the world. This short brief focuses on some of the overarching findings that we have taken away from this year's index, including four headline findings:

- Overall, social progress is advancing across the world. Since 2014, the world average increased from 62.16 to 64.47, and there has been improvement on eight of 12 social progress components.
- Despite this overall progress, Personal Rights have regressed since 2014, and there has been stagnation in the areas of Personal Safety, Access to Basic Knowledge and Inclusiveness.
- 137 of 149 countries register an improved social progress score since 2014, with several countries, including The Gambia, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia demonstrating particularly notable improvement.
- With that said, there are important negative outliers. Most notably, the United States has dropped from 84.74 to 83.62 over time, experiencing both an absolute and relative decline.

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 allied initiatives across more than 50 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.

We look forward to the exciting ways that citizens 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. Citizens' demands for better lives are evident in uprisings since the Arab Spring and the emergence of new political movements in even the most prosperous countries. Since the financial crisis of 2008, there has also been a growing expectation that business must play its role in delivering improvements in the lives of customers and employees, and 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 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 then 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 comingled 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 51 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 / 2019 Social Progress Index framework



Each of the twelve components of the framework is made up of between three and five 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.

The high-level structure of the 2019 Social Progress Index remains unchanged from 2018. To improve the measurement of component-level concepts and accommodate changes in data availability, some modifications were made to individual indicators and to the composition of several components.

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.

The first Social Progress Index was released in 2014, which means that this is the sixth annual index. Therefore, we can also analyze change over time.

2019 Social Progress Index Results

The 2019 Social Progress Index ranks 149 countries that have sufficient available data to assess all 12 components. We group countries from highest to lowest social progress into six tiers. Tiers are based on hierarchical clustering to set empirically determined break points across groups of countries based on their Social Progress Index scores.¹ Here we present results across all countries and for the world as a whole. We then discuss the relationship between Social Progress and GDP per capita. Finally, we explore changes in social progress at the country level since 2014, with a spotlight on US performance.

2019 Country Rankings

Norway ranks first on the 2019 Social Progress Index, with a score of 90.95. Germany, ranked eighth with a score of 88.84, is the top-performing G7 country. All 15 Tier 1 countries are high-income, and all score very similarly on social progress—just 3.95 points separate first-ranked Norway at the top of the tier from 15th-ranked France.

Tier 2 features a much wider range of scores, from Luxembourg (87.66, ranked 16th) to Greece (82.48, ranked 30th). The US and Italy—both wealthy G7 countries—are ranked in Tier 2 of the Social Progress Index. All Tier 2 countries are high-income.

Costa Rica (34th), the best-performing country in Latin America with a score of 80.65, is among the leaders of Tier 3. Newer EU member states Bulgaria (76.17, 43rd) and Romania (74.81, 45th) fall in Tier 3, which also includes large Latin American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

Several resource-rich countries, including the United Arab Emirates (69.84, 61st), Russia (69.71, 62nd), Qatar (69.37, 64th) and Kazakhstan (68.20, 69th), are among the leading countries in Tier 4. Notably, four of the five BRICS countries—Russia, South Africa, China, and India—score in Tier 4 of the index. Most Tier 4 countries are middle- or lower-income. Noteworthy exceptions include the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, which ranks 90th in the world with a score of 63.95.

Tier 5 countries exhibit the widest range of scores of any of the six Social Progress Index tiers. 13.35 points separate Timor-Leste (55.80, 105th) from Mauritania (42.45, 138th). Tier 5 is mainly comprised of lower-middle- and lower-income countries, many of them in East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Eleven countries are in Tier 6, many of which are fragile states where instability has hindered social progress. Some, like South Sudan and Afghanistan, are also active conflict zones. While most of these countries are lower-income, two middle-income countries, Sudan and Papua New Guinea, also rank in the lowest social progress tier. South Sudan (24.44, 149th) ranks last on the 2019 Social Progress Index.

¹ To determine tiers, we ran a number of iterations of clusters and decided upon the common breaks, with six different tiers being the best fit for the Index. We note that although these tiers show similarities among countries in terms of aggregate performance, there is significant variation in each country's performance across components.

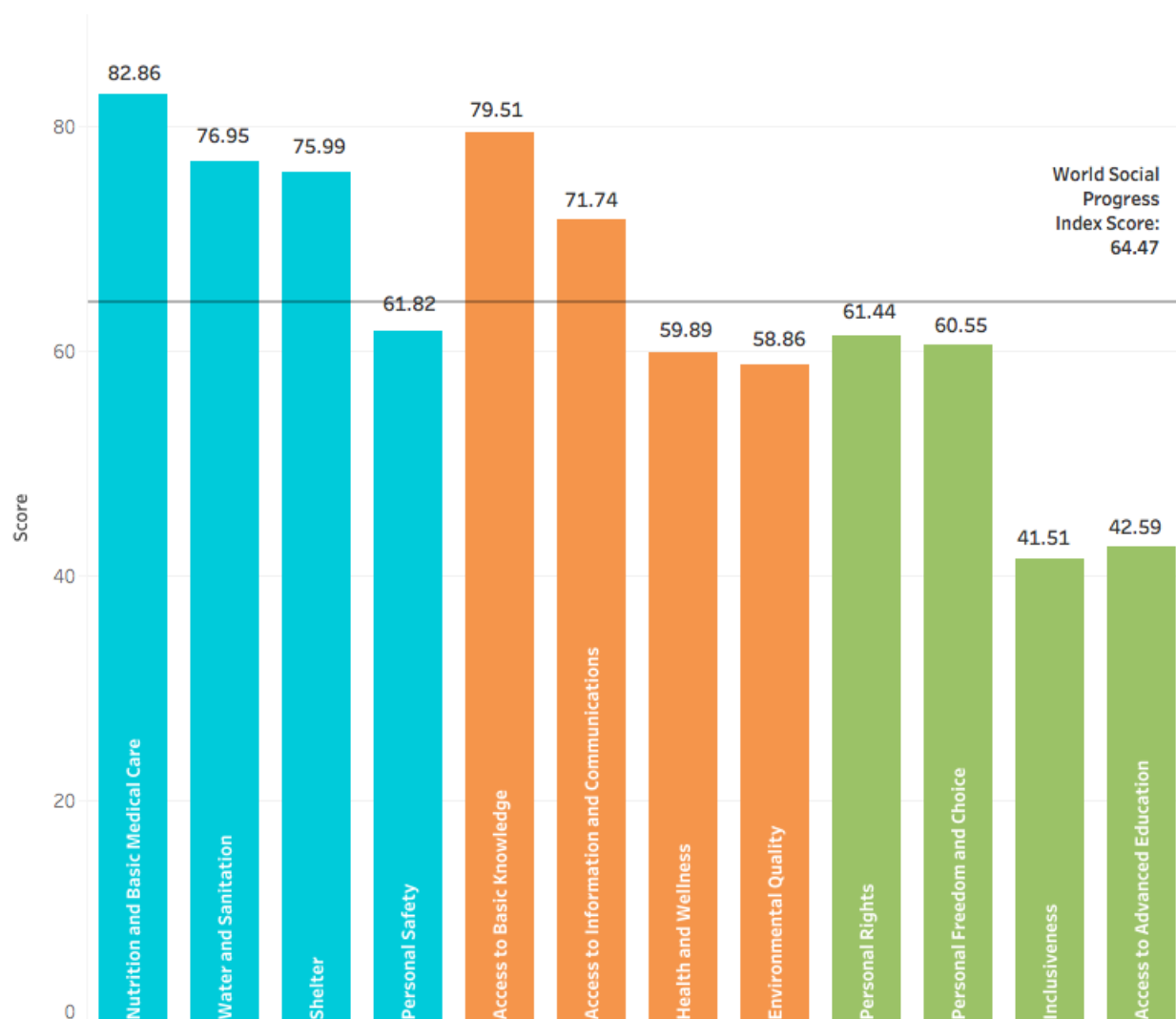
Figure 2 / 2019 Social Progress Index rankings

RANKING	COUNTRY	SPI	RANKING	COUNTRY	SPI	RANKING	COUNTRY	SPI	RANKING	COUNTRY	SPI
1	Norway	90.95	40	Barbados	77.89	79	Algeria	67.06	118	Malawi	50.52
2	Denmark	90.09	41	Uruguay	77.77	80	Ukraine	66.97	119	Cambodia	50.36
3	Switzerland	89.89	42	Argentina	76.86	81	Kyrgyzstan	66.64	120	Laos	49.34
4	Finland	89.56	43	Bulgaria	76.17	82	Morocco	66.04	121	Nigeria	49.20
5	Sweden	89.45	44	Mauritius	74.88	83	Mongolia	65.60	122	Sierra Leone	49.09
6	Iceland	89.29	45	Romania	74.81	84	Botswana	65.58	123	Togo	48.58
7	New Zealand	88.93	46	Malaysia	74.17	85	Indonesia	65.52	124	Lesotho	48.44
8	Germany	88.84	47	Panama	73.96	86	Iran	65.15	125	Pakistan	48.20
9	Canada	88.81	48	Belarus	73.90	87	Lebanon	64.98	126	Djibouti	48.05
10	Japan	88.34	49	Brazil	72.87	88	El Salvador	64.65	127	Cameroon	48.04
11	Netherlands	88.31	50	Jamaica	72.58	89	China	64.54	128	Burkina Faso	47.82
12	Australia	88.02	51	Tunisia	72.33	90	Saudi Arabia	63.95	129	Democratic Republic of Korea	46.95
13	United Kingdom	87.98	52	Ecuador	71.88	91	Fiji	63.85	130	Liberia	46.67
14	Ireland	87.97	53	Serbia	71.59	92	Guyana	63.74	131	Zimbabwe	46.58
15	France	87.79	54	Albania	71.57	93	Bolivia	63.66	132	Mali	45.98
16	Luxembourg	87.66	55	Mexico	71.51	94	Philippines	63.40	133	Republic of Congo	45.67
17	Spain	87.47	56	Georgia	71.34	95	Ghana	61.75	134	Ethiopia	45.41
18	Portugal	87.12	57	Peru	71.31	96	Egypt	61.71	135	Mozambique	45.39
19	Belgium	86.77	58	Montenegro	71.16	97	Sao Tome & Principe	61.42	136	Madagascar	43.58
20	Austria	86.40	59	Armenia	71.14	98	Honduras	60.31	137	Angola	42.58
21	Slovenia	85.80	60	Colombia	70.31	99	Nepal	60.23	138	Mauritania	42.45
22	Italy	85.69	61	United Arab Emirates	69.84	100	Uzbekistan	59.83	139	Niger	41.74
23	Republic of Korea	85.61	62	Russia	69.71	101	Guatemala	59.67	140	Sudan	41.59
24	Czech Republic	84.36	63	Jordan	69.57	102	India	59.10	141	Guinea	40.59
25	Estonia	83.98	64	Qatar	69.37	103	Nicaragua	58.97	142	Burundi	39.09
26	United States	83.62	65	Sri Lanka	69.09	104	Senegal	58.59	143	Afghanistan	38.60
27	Singapore	83.23	66	Oman	69.08	105	Timor-Leste	55.80	144	Papua New Guinea	38.59
28	Cyprus	83.14	67	Republic of North Macedonia	68.92	106	Turkmenistan	55.57	145	Democratic Republic of Congo	36.77
29	Malta	82.63	68	Cabo Verde	68.55	107	Tajikistan	54.92	146	Eritrea	31.61
30	Greece	82.48	69	Kazakhstan	68.20	108	Bangladesh	54.11	147	Chad	28.79
31	Israel	81.44	70	Moldova	67.58	109	Kenya	53.51	148	Central African Republic	28.05
32	Lithuania	81.30	71	Turkey	67.49	110	Rwanda	52.96	149	South Sudan	24.44
33	Poland	81.25	72	Thailand	67.47	111	The Gambia	52.90			
34	Costa Rica	80.65	73	South Africa	67.44	112	Tanzania	52.69			
35	Slovakia	80.43	74	Cuba	67.42	113	Myanmar	52.65			
36	Latvia	80.42	75	Suriname	67.27	114	Comoros	52.04			
37	Chile	80.02	76	Bhutan	67.26	115	Eswatini	51.21			
38	Croatia	79.21	77	Paraguay	67.20	116	Benin	51.07			
39	Hungary	78.77	78	Dominican Republic	67.15	117	Côte d'Ivoire	50.56			

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 China and Saudi Arabia on the Social Progress Index (score: 64.47). On average, the world scores highest on Nutrition and Basic Medical Care and Access to Basic Knowledge. The world performs worst on the Opportunity dimension, particularly on Inclusiveness and Access to Advanced Education.

Figure 3 / Population-weighted world scores by component

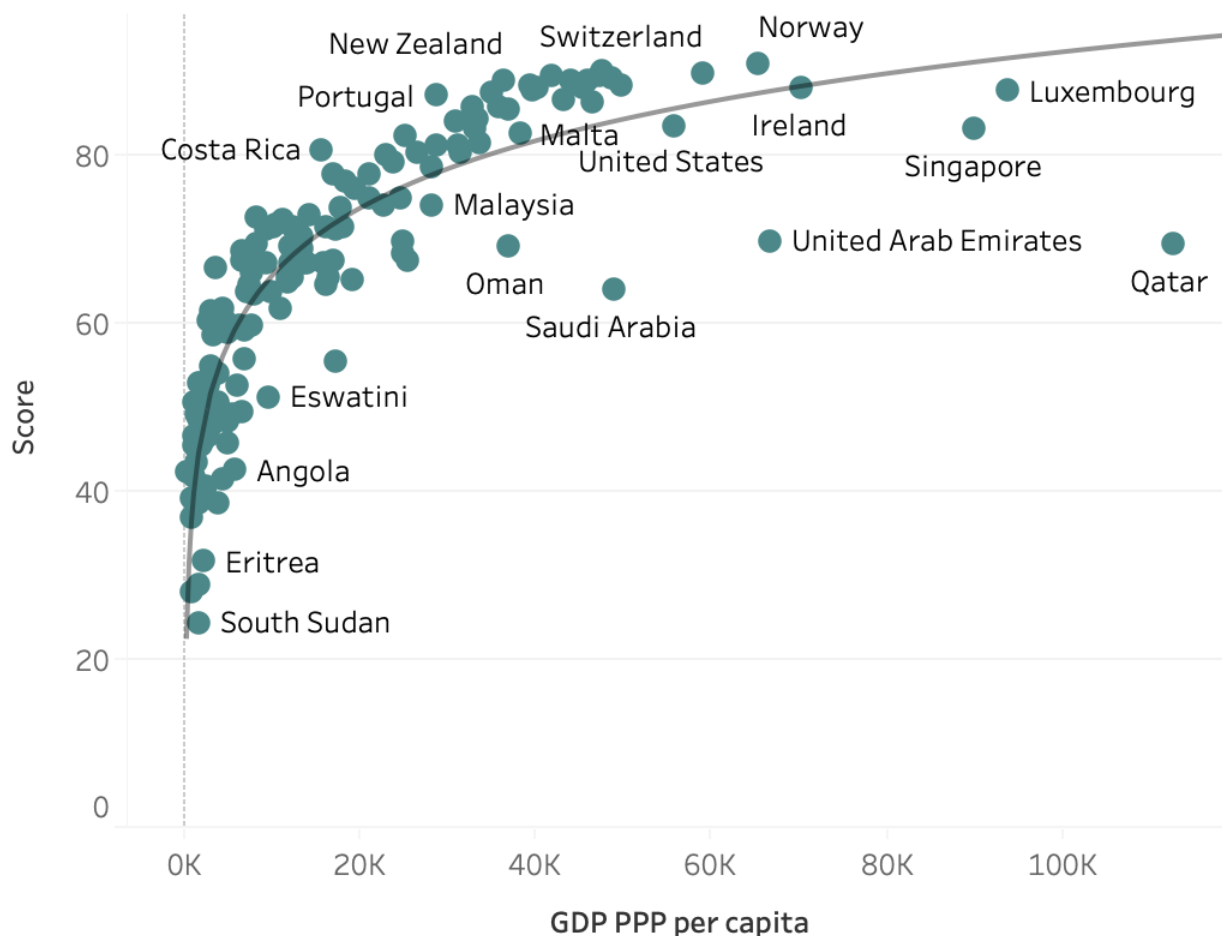


Social Progress Index vs. GDP per capita

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 or less 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 as a whole 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 149 ranked countries.

Figure 5 / 2019 World scorecard

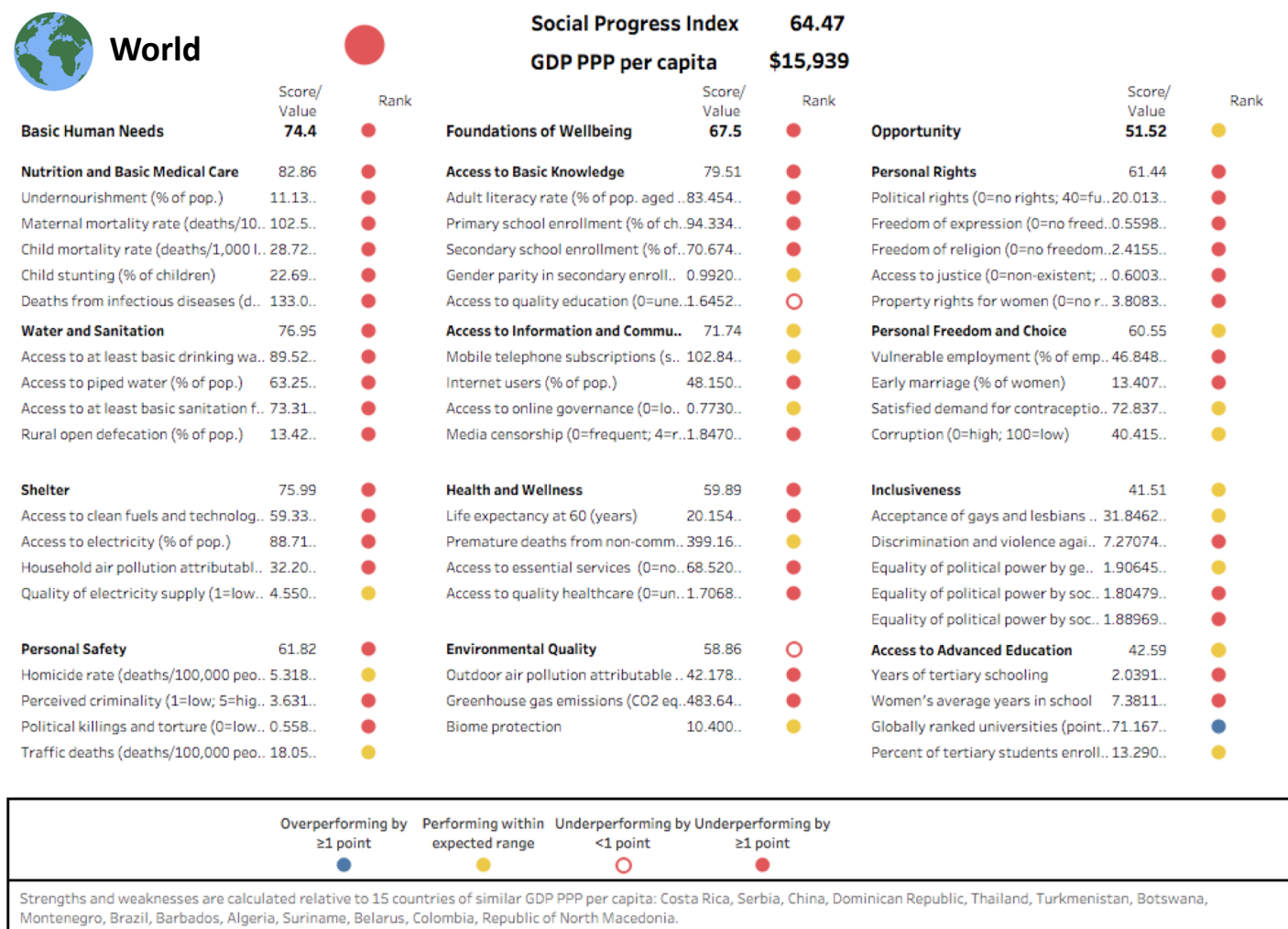
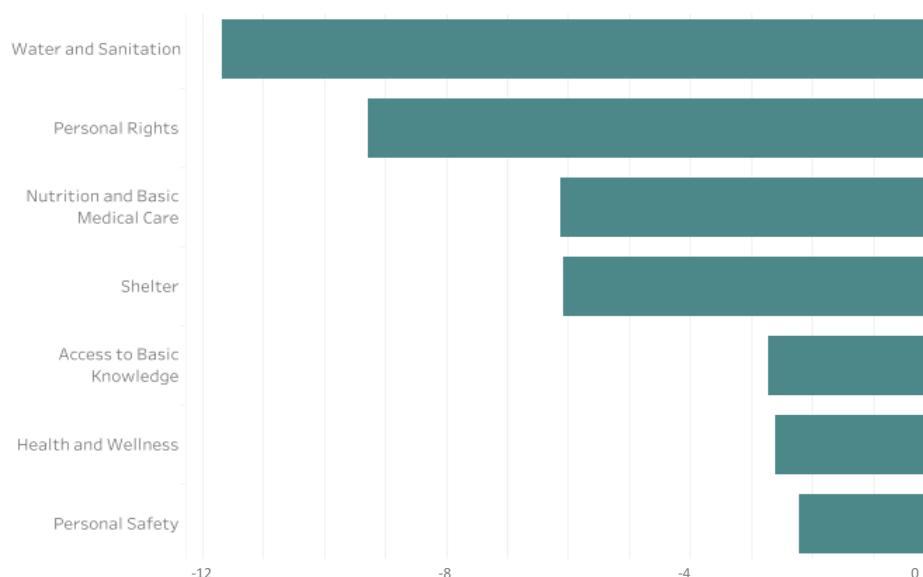


Figure 6 / Degree of world underperformance by component



We also see (Figure 6) that the degree of world underperformance varies widely. Notably, while the world's absolute performance on Water and Sanitation is third highest among the twelve components, its relative performance is worst. Meaning, relative to its economic performance, the world, on average, is not keeping pace with improvements on access to water and sanitation.

Changes in Social Progress 2014-19

In 2019 we are able to measure changes in social progress over six years. To do so, we utilize the 2019 index framework, then apply that methodology across countries and years back to 2014.² We can measure the evolution of aggregate social progress and also 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. The population-weighted world score on the Social Progress Index rose from 62.16/100 in 2014 to 64.47/100 in 2019—a 2.31 point increase.

² 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 datasets from 2014-2019 are available on the Social Progress Imperative website: www.socialprogress.org.

Figure 7 / Change in population-weighted world social progress 2014-19



However, the gains in social progress are not evenly distributed across the components of the framework. Since 2014 the world score has improved on eight components: Access to Information and Communications (+11.49 point change), Access to Advanced Education (+6.08), Water and Sanitation (+3.84), Shelter (+3.69), Nutrition and Basic Medical Care (+2.50), Environmental Quality (+1.76), Personal Freedom and Choice (+1.03), and Health and Wellness (+0.97).

The world is declining on Personal Rights, and stagnating on Inclusiveness, Personal Safety, and Access to Basic Knowledge. The world score on Personal Rights has declined by 4.17 points since 2014. 77 of the 149 ranked countries experienced declines in Personal Rights and 26 countries showed no meaningful change. The world has seen little meaningful change on Inclusiveness (+0.42), Access to Basic Knowledge (+0.12), or Personal Safety (-0.03), in this period.

We find that 137/149 countries—92% of those measured—improved on social progress 2014-19. Yet these gains in social progress are also unevenly distributed among countries. The largest improvement is by The Gambia (8.78); the largest decline by Nicaragua (-2.73).

Figure 8 / Significant improvers and decliners on social progress 2014-19

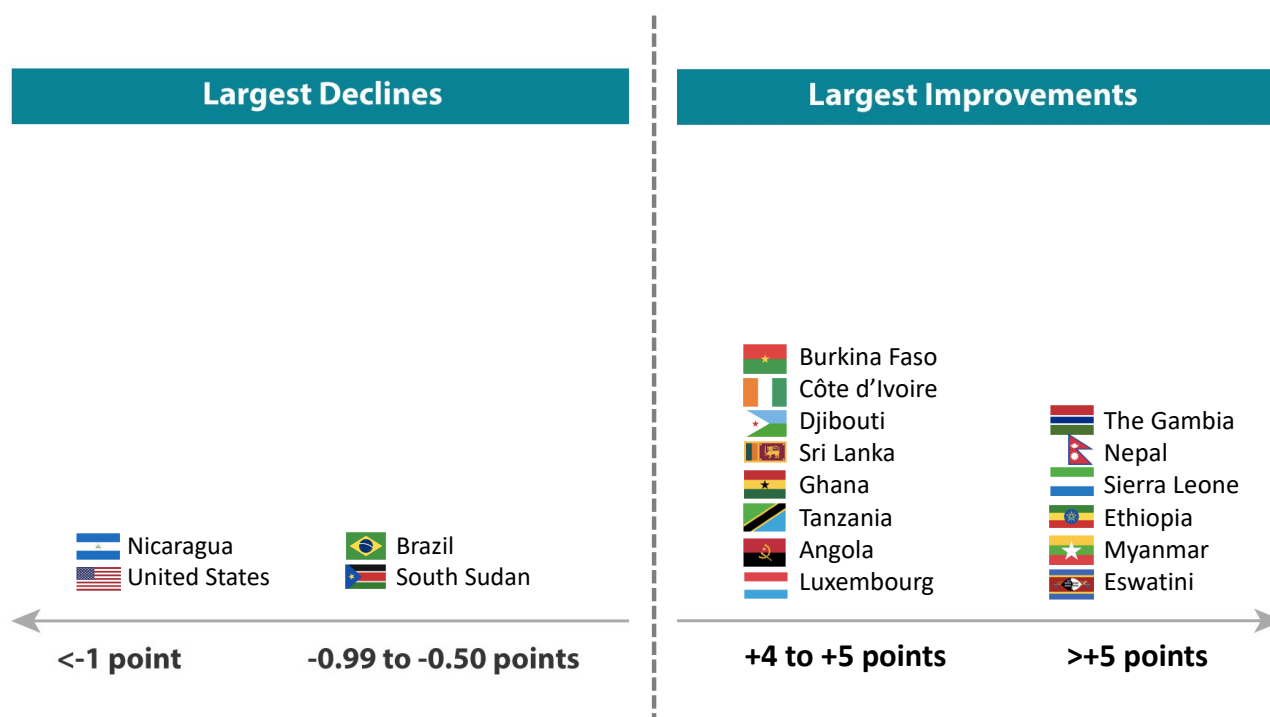


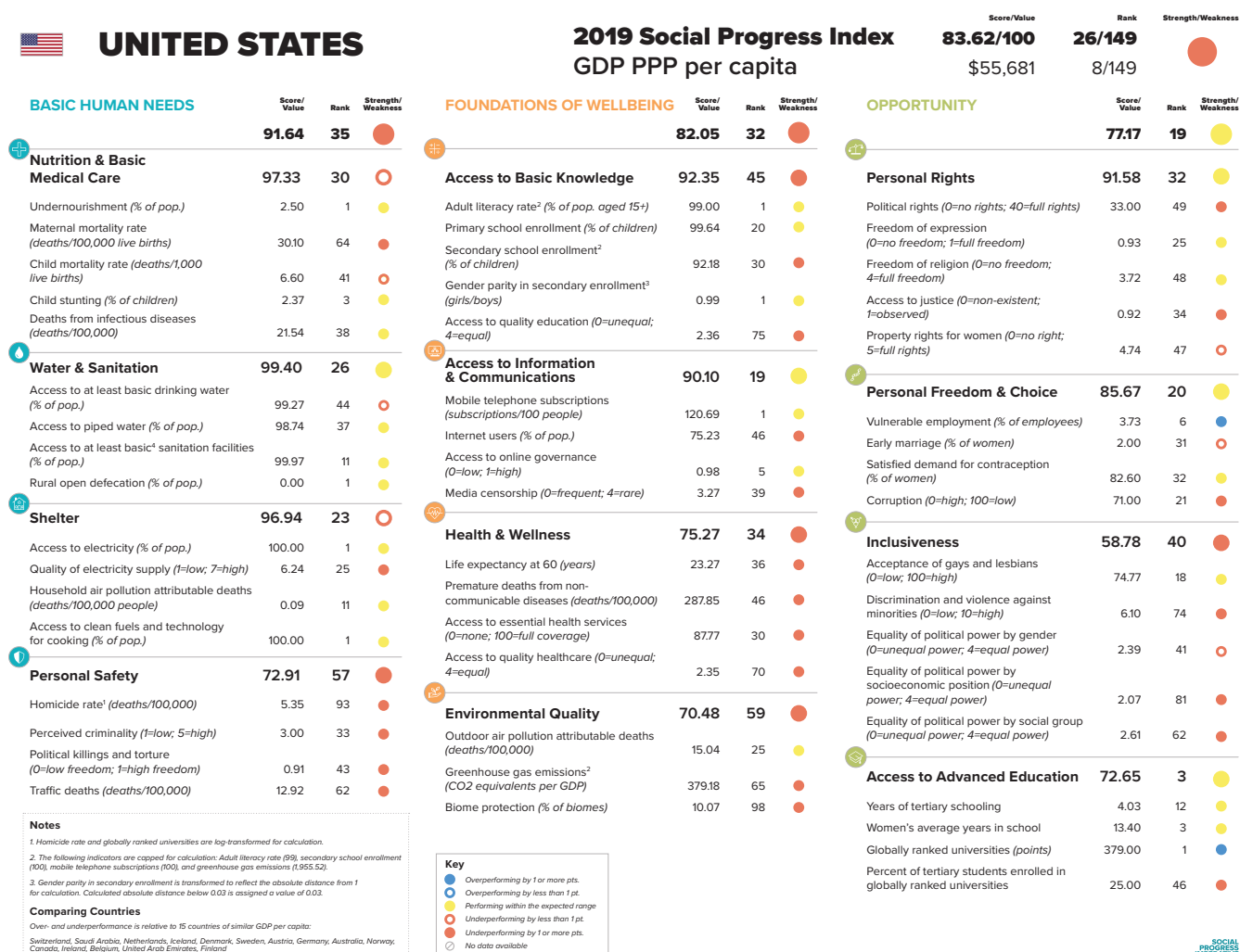
Figure 8 shows that the most improved countries since 2014 have been low and lower middle-income, including The Gambia, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. Richer countries which overall show stronger performance on the Social Progress Index have tended to improve more slowly.

Only 4 countries register a significant decline of 0.5 points or more: Nicaragua, the US, South Sudan, and Brazil. Other countries in conflict or crisis such as Syria, Yemen and Venezuela are also likely to be declining but published data from sources are not reliably reflecting their deteriorating conditions.

Spotlight: United States and Social Progress

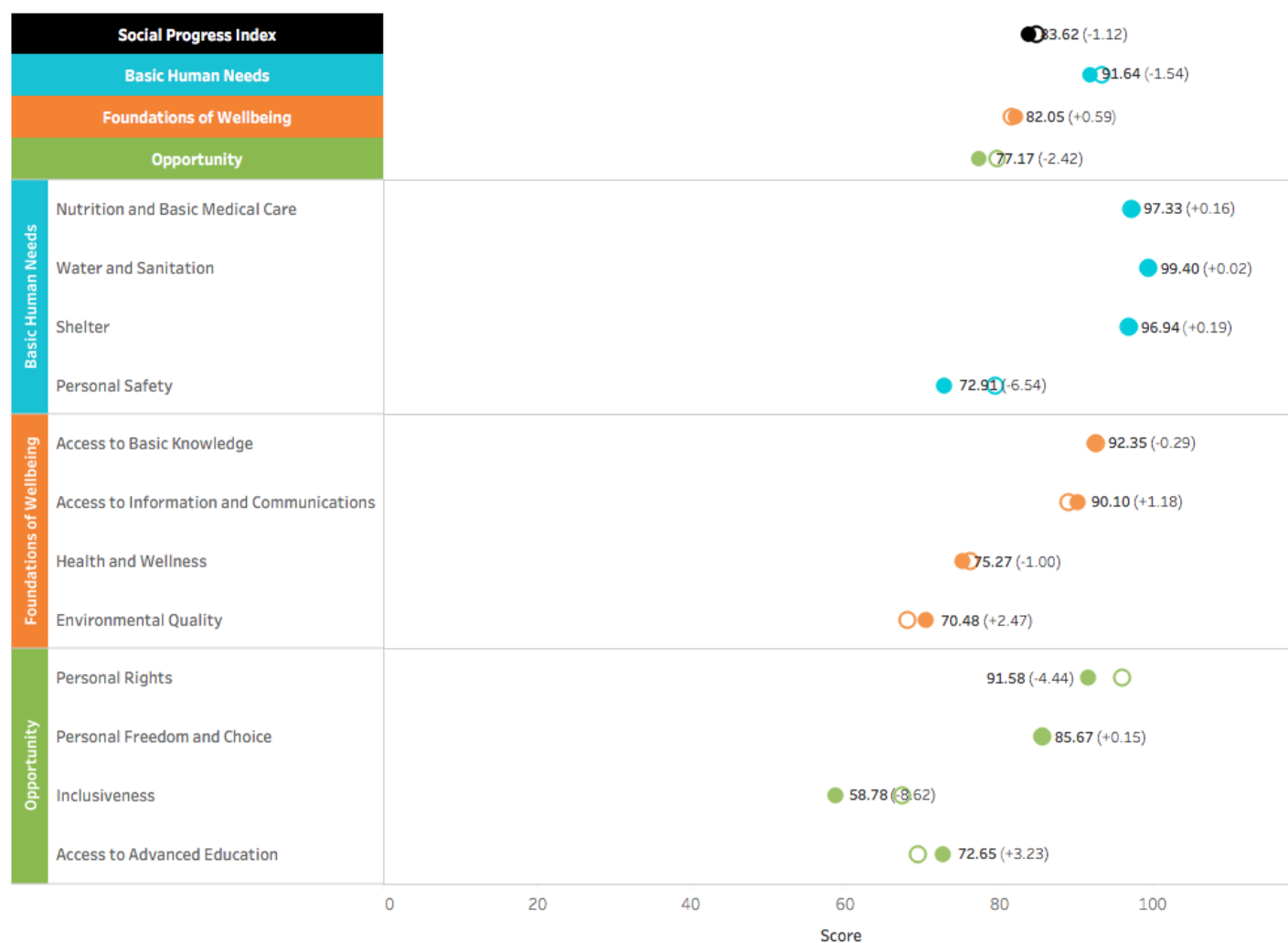
Since the first Social Progress Index in 2014, the United States has consistently shown under-performance relative to its GDP per capita. This is exceptional among leading economies. That trend continues in 2019 (see Figure 9 below). The US ranks 26th in the world on social progress, below Slovenia and Estonia and the lowest of the G7. On Access to Basic Knowledge, the US performs worse than Poland, while on Health and Wellness the US score is comparable to Panama's. On Personal Safety, the US ranks below the Senegal and Sri Lanka.

Figure 9 / 2019 US scorecard



The United States is also an outlier amongst its peers as one of only four countries that has seen a decline in social progress since 2014 (see Figure 10). The most significant deterioration has been in Inclusiveness (-8.62), Personal Safety (-6.54), and Personal Rights (-4.44). There has also been a decline in Health and Wellness (-1.00).

Figure 10 / Change in US social progress 2014-19



From Index to Action to Impact

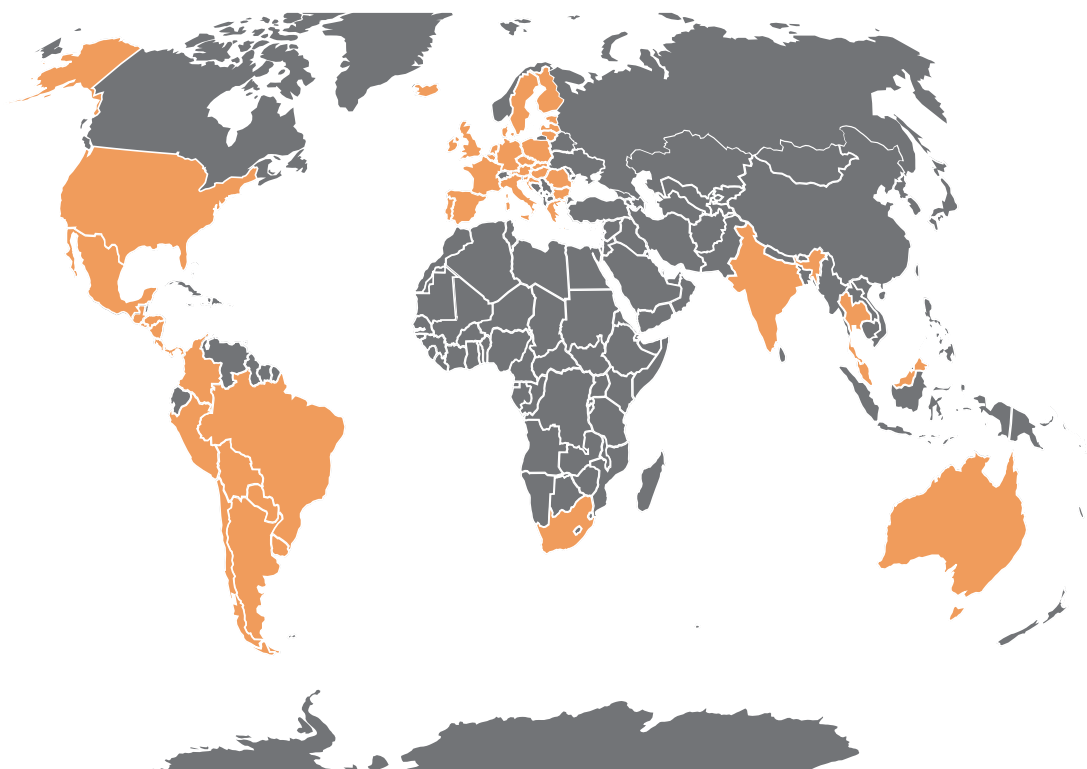
The Social Progress Imperative publishes the annual Social Progress Index in order to build a common language and data platform that supports benchmarking, collaboration and change. Throughout the world, the Social Progress Imperative has catalyzed the formation of local action networks that bring together 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.

Our network of partners and champions now extends more than 50 countries around the world and includes leading institutions from all sectors of society, including INCAE Business School, Fundación Avina, and the Institute for Competitiveness, India.

The index has gained significant traction across Latin America. In Paraguay, the central government has officially adopted the index as part of the National Development Plan, doubling its budget for nutrition programs as a result of the priorities highlighted by the data. In Brazil, multinational corporations like Coca-Cola, Natura and Fiat-Chrysler are using customized indexes to ensure their supply chains are socially and environmentally sustainable. In cities from Bogota to Medellín to Rio de Janeiro, local indexes are guiding urban policy and framing political debates. And in Costa Rica, the index was applied to measure the effects of the tourism industry on local communities—the first application to assess the social impact of a major economic sector.

We are also making progress in Europe, North America, Africa and Australia. In Europe we are working with DG Regio of the European Commission which has integrated the Index into Cohesion Policy. In the United States, we are partnering with city leadership in communities as diverse as San Jose, California and Jackson, Mississippi to leverage hyper-localized SPI data for policy development and investment decision-making. Finally, new countrywide Social Progress Indexes will soon be released in South Africa (in partnership with IQ Business) and Australia (in partnership with the Centre for Social Impact). Both represent major milestones for the Social Progress Index as it continues to be applied to successfully inform decision makers across the world.

Figure 11 / 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.