

## World is at Risk of First Social Progress Recession

*Retreat in Personal Rights Globally Leads Sustained Decline in Global Social Progress*

**(Washington, D.C. – September 26, 2022)** - According to the 2022 Social Progress Index, there is significant risk that the world's social progress will actually retreat in 2023, leading to the first-ever global "social progress recession." The index is published by the [Social Progress Imperative](#), a US-based non-profit.

The 2022 Social Progress Index is one of the world's largest curated collections of social and environmental data and is the first holistic measure of a country's social performance that is independent of economic factors. It is designed as a complement to GDP and other economic indicators to help us understand how people across the globe are really living and who is being left behind. The Social Progress Index was designed by a team led by Professor Michael E. Porter of Harvard Business School and Prof Scott Stern at the Sloan School of Management MIT.

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.

The findings highlight that, overall, the world has improved but only by 0.37 points last year, while 52 countries (31%) saw a decline in social progress. The decline is led by retreating personal rights around the world, including in the United States and United Kingdom, and arrives as governments, businesses and individuals grapple with the still-unfolding effects of Covid-19 as well as threats from climate change, economic turbulence and widespread political change.

The Social Progress Index shows that since 2011:

- The United States' social progress has stalled, and, as a result, the US has sunk to 25th place in the second tier of world social progress.
- The United Kingdom is one of only four countries to see a decline in social progress, alongside Venezuela, Libya and Syria.
- This has been a lost decade for key emerging markets such as Brazil and Turkey where social progress has largely stagnated.
- China and India have seen significant improvement, but both countries are held back by lack of progress on rights, inclusiveness and environmental quality.

Sustained Decline in Social Progress Risks First-Ever Social Progress Recession

The results of the Index reveal that while the world is getting better in terms of social progress, the rate of progress has slowed significantly, and a sustained decline will lead to the first-ever "social progress recession" in 2023. 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. Notably, the full impacts of Covid-19 on social progress across the world are not yet known.

The world is declining in **Personal Rights** (-5.34) and stagnating in **Inclusiveness** (+0.32). Notably: Three of the G7 countries have declined in rights over the past decade - United States, United Kingdom and Canada.

**Norway** ranks first on the 2022 Social Progress Index, with a score of 90.74, while South Sudan is again at the bottom, at 169th, with a score of 30.65. Germany, ranking eighth with a score of 88.72, is the top performing G7 country.

#### Declines in the United States and United Kingdom Signal Broader Social and Economic Effects

The 12 years of data highlight that the United States has consistently shown under-performance relative to its GDP per capita, which is exceptional among leading economies. The United States ranks 25th in the world on social progress, between Portugal and Malta, and is the lowest of the G7.

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 six of the 12 components, including Personal Rights (-8.99) where it's ranked 46th in the world, and Inclusiveness (-7.51), where it's ranked 33rd - with the steepest declines in the past five years. This recorded decline in Personal Rights comes notably before the overturn of Roe vs. Wade, the increase of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and the implementation of voter suppression measures.

The United States spends significantly more per capita on healthcare than any other OECD country, yet it ranks 44th on Nutrition and Basic Medical Care. It also ranks 73rd in Maternal Mortality, which precedes the overturn of Roe vs. Wade. There is also stagnation in Health and Wellness and a decline in Access to Basic Knowledge, indicating early impact of Covid-19.

The **United Kingdom** has experienced a lost decade of social progress since 2011 (-0.28), with the impact of austerity measures and Brexit apparent in the data in every area, from education to healthcare, to rights and tolerance. The United Kingdom, ranked 19th in the world, is one of only four countries whose social progress has declined since 2011 - alongside Syria, Venezuela, and Libya - and is close to relegation into the second tier of social progress.

The United Kingdom 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 five years. This confirms a trend we have seen of an increasingly intolerant UK whose liberties are in retreat.

**Commenting on the global results, CEO of the Social Progress Imperative, Michael Green, noted:**

*“Forward movement in world social progress was nearly imperceptible last year. While the direct and indirect effects of Covid play a role, a precipitous decline in personal rights around the world betrays an even deeper problem, for which there is little on the horizon to suggest that 2023 will be a year of resurgence. The yen to get back to business as usual in a time of crisis is strong, but if policy-makers just focus on an economic recovery, they will miss half the story.”*

Learn more about the Social Progress Index rankings in our full report at [socialprogress.org](https://socialprogress.org).

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**About the Social Progress Imperative:**

We use data to influence policies and investments to better serve all of humanity.

We partner with leaders in every sector —government, business, and civil society—to meet the pressing needs of communities and equip them with the right information to tackle urgent global challenges like Covid-19 and climate change. Since 2012, we have developed data-driven tools that measure whether people have what they need to prosper, from basic needs like adequate shelter, being well-nourished, and feeling safe, to whether they are treated equally regardless of gender, race, or sexual orientation in order to help improve the quality of life for all.

The Social Progress Index measures how well countries and communities convert their resources into social and environmental outcomes that impact people's lives every day. A global network of local partners is now delivering subnational Social Progress Indexes that have revealed the true state of society for more than 2.7 billion people across more than 45 countries.

Explore the reports and join the conversation at [socialprogress.org](https://socialprogress.org)

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