



# SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX **2017**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BY MICHAEL E. PORTER AND SCOTT STERN  
WITH MICHAEL GREEN

**SOCIAL  
PROGRESS  
IMPERATIVE**

**S**ocial progress has become an increasingly critical agenda for leaders in government, business, and civil society. Citizens' demands for better lives are evident in uprisings such as the Arab Spring and the emergence of new political movements in even the most prosperous countries, such as the United States and France. Since the financial crisis of 2008, citizens are increasingly expecting that business 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 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. Too many people — regardless of income — live without full rights and experience discrimination or even violence based on gender, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

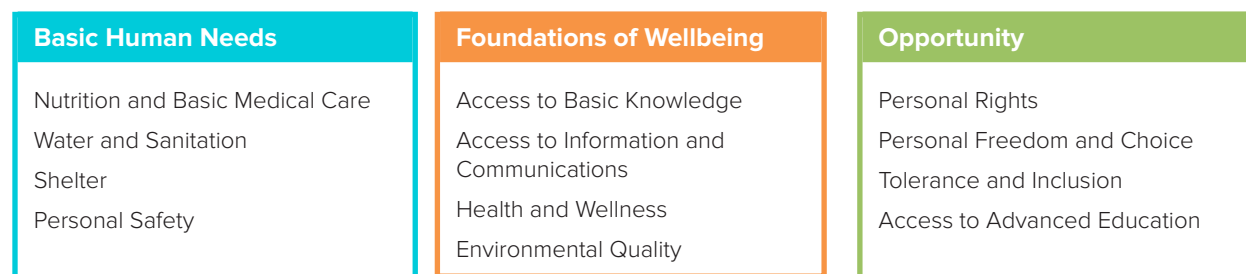
Traditional measures of national income, such as GDP per capita, fail to capture the overall progress of societies.

The Social Progress Index rigorously measures country performance on a wide range of 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 relative performance compared to a country's economic peers. Governments and businesses have the tools to track social and environmental performance rigorously, and make better public policy and investment choices. The Social Progress Index also assesses a country's success in turning economic progress into improved social outcomes; it helps translate economic gains into better social and environmental performance in ways that are critical to enabling even greater economic success. The Social Progress Index provides a concrete framework for understanding 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 even prosperous countries face social challenges, and knowing what constitutes a successful society, including at higher income levels, is indispensable for charting a course for every country.
- 4. Actionable:** The Social Progress Index aims to be a practical tool that will help 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 2017 Social Progress Index is structured around 12 components and 50 distinct indicators. The framework not only provides an aggregate country score and ranking, but also allows benchmarking on specific areas of strength and

Figure 0.1/ **Social Progress Index component-level framework**

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.

The design principles are the foundation for Social Progress Imperative's 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.***

Each of the 12 components of the framework comprises 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 2017 Social Progress Index remains unchanged from 2016. To improve the measurement of component-level concepts and accommodate changes in data availability, we made some modifications 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 results can be evaluated 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.

For a full explanation of how the Social Progress Index and country scorecards are calculated, see our separate 2017 Methodology Report. All the underlying data is downloadable from our website at [www.socialprogressimperative.org](http://www.socialprogressimperative.org). The methodology has been refined and improved through the generous feedback of many individuals and organizations around the world. We will continue to refine and improve the methodology and welcome feedback at [feedback@social-progress.org](mailto:feedback@social-progress.org).

## 2017 SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX RESULTS

The 2017 Social Progress Index (see Figure 0.2) ranks 128 countries that have sufficient data for all 12 components. We group countries from highest to lowest social progress into six tiers from 'Very High Social Progress' to 'Very Low Social Progress.'

Figure 0.2 / Full 2017 Social Progress Index Rankings

## 2017 SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX RESULTS

## ::: Very High Social Progress

Rank	Country	Score
<b>1</b>	<b>Denmark</b>	90.57
<b>2</b>	<b>Finland</b>	90.53
<b>3</b>	<b>Iceland</b>	90.27
<b>3</b>	<b>Norway</b>	90.27
<b>5</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	90.10
<b>6</b>	<b>Canada</b>	89.84
<b>7</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	89.82
<b>8</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	89.66
<b>9</b>	<b>Australia</b>	89.30
<b>9</b>	<b>New Zealand</b>	89.30
<b>11</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	88.91
<b>12</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>	88.73
<b>13</b>	<b>Germany</b>	88.50
<b>14</b>	<b>Austria</b>	87.98

## ::: High Social Progress

Rank	Country	Score
<b>15</b>	<b>Belgium</b>	87.15
<b>16</b>	<b>Spain</b>	86.96
<b>17</b>	<b>Japan</b>	86.44
<b>18</b>	<b>United States</b>	86.43
<b>19</b>	<b>France</b>	85.92
<b>20</b>	<b>Portugal</b>	85.44
<b>21</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>	84.32
<b>22</b>	<b>Czech Republic</b>	84.22
<b>23</b>	<b>Estonia</b>	82.96
<b>24</b>	<b>Italy</b>	82.62
<b>25</b>	<b>Chile</b>	82.54
<b>26</b>	<b>Korea, Republic of</b>	82.08
<b>27</b>	<b>Cyprus</b>	81.15
<b>28</b>	<b>Costa Rica</b>	81.03
<b>29</b>	<b>Israel</b>	80.61
<b>30</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>	80.22
<b>31</b>	<b>Uruguay</b>	80.09
<b>32</b>	<b>Poland</b>	79.65
<b>33</b>	<b>Greece</b>	78.92

Rank	Country	Score
<b>34</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	78.61
<b>35</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>	78.09
<b>36</b>	<b>Croatia</b>	78.04
<b>37</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	77.32
<b>38</b>	<b>Argentina</b>	75.90

## :: Upper Middle Social Progress

Rank	Country	Score
<b>39</b>	<b>Mauritius</b>	75.18
<b>40</b>	<b>Panama</b>	74.61
<b>41</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	74.42
<b>42</b>	<b>Kuwait</b>	74.12
<b>43</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	73.97
<b>44</b>	<b>Romania</b>	73.53
<b>45</b>	<b>Serbia</b>	73.41
<b>46</b>	<b>Jamaica</b>	72.42
<b>47</b>	<b>Peru</b>	72.15
<b>48</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	71.93
<b>49</b>	<b>Colombia</b>	71.72
<b>50</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	71.14
<b>51</b>	<b>Tunisia</b>	71.09
<b>52</b>	<b>Albania</b>	70.97
<b>53</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	70.80
<b>54</b>	<b>Montenegro</b>	70.01
<b>55</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	69.97
<b>56</b>	<b>Jordan</b>	69.85
<b>57</b>	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	69.45
<b>58</b>	<b>Macedonia</b>	69.35
<b>59</b>	<b>Armenia</b>	69.01
<b>60</b>	<b>Paraguay</b>	68.73
<b>61</b>	<b>Turkey</b>	68.68
<b>62</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	68.51
<b>63</b>	<b>Dominican Republic</b>	68.42
<b>64</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>	68.35
<b>65</b>	<b>Belarus</b>	67.80
<b>66</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	67.25
<b>67</b>	<b>Russia</b>	67.17

continued on page 5

Figure 0.2 / Full 2017 Social Progress Index Rankings (continued)

Rank	Country	Score	Rank	Country	Score
<b>68</b>	Philippines	67.10	<b>99</b>	Laos	54.17
<b>69</b>	Bolivia	66.93	<b>100</b>	Malawi	53.09
<b>∴ Lower Middle Social Progress</b>			<b>101</b>	Rwanda	52.78
<b>70</b>	El Salvador	66.43	<b>102</b>	Swaziland	52.64
<b>71</b>	Lebanon	66.31	<b>103</b>	Lesotho	51.74
<b>71</b>	Moldova	66.31	<b>104</b>	Benin	51.69
<b>73</b>	Sri Lanka	66.16	<b>105</b>	Pakistan	51.54
<b>74</b>	Kazakhstan	66.01	<b>106</b>	Côte d'Ivoire	50.65
<b>75</b>	Algeria	65.41	<b>107</b>	Tanzania	50.21
<b>76</b>	Azerbaijan	65.33	<b>108</b>	Zimbabwe	50.10
<b>76</b>	Kyrgyzstan	65.33	<b>109</b>	Nigeria	50.01
<b>78</b>	Morocco	65.25	<b>110</b>	Burkina Faso	49.75
<b>79</b>	Indonesia	65.10	<b>111</b>	Uganda	49.59
<b>80</b>	Botswana	64.44	<b>112</b>	Liberia	49.34
<b>81</b>	Nicaragua	64.17	<b>113</b>	Mauritania	48.44
<b>82</b>	Egypt	63.76	<b>114</b>	Congo, Republic of	48.24
<b>83</b>	China	63.72	<b>115</b>	Togo	48.21
<b>84</b>	Guatemala	62.62	<b>116</b>	Mozambique	47.90
<b>85</b>	Uzbekistan	62.02	<b>117</b>	Cameroon	47.83
<b>86</b>	Mongolia	62.00	<b>118</b>	Mali	47.75
<b>87</b>	Namibia	61.98	<b>119</b>	Madagascar	47.40
<b>88</b>	Iran	61.93	<b>120</b>	Sierra Leone	47.10
<b>89</b>	Honduras	61.76	<b>121</b>	Ethiopia	45.29
<b>90</b>	Ghana	61.44	<b>∴ Very Low Social Progress</b>		
<b>91</b>	Nepal	60.08	<b>122</b>	Yemen	43.46
<b>92</b>	Tajikistan	58.87	<b>123</b>	Guinea	43.40
<b>93</b>	India	58.39	<b>124</b>	Niger	42.97
<b>94</b>	Senegal	58.31	<b>125</b>	Angola	40.73
<b>∴ Low Social Progress</b>			<b>126</b>	Chad	35.69
<b>95</b>	Kenya	56.17	<b>127</b>	Afghanistan	35.66
<b>96</b>	Myanmar	55.69	<b>128</b>	Central African Republic	28.38
<b>97</b>	Bangladesh	54.84			
<b>98</b>	Cambodia	54.54			



### SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX VS. GDP PER CAPITA

The 2017 Social Progress Index findings reveal that countries achieve widely divergent levels of social progress, even at similar levels of GDP per capita. For example, a country with high GDP per capita may do well on absolute social progress, reflecting high income, yet under-perform relative to countries of similar income. Conversely, a country with low GDP per capita may achieve only modest levels of social progress, yet substantially outperform countries at similar economic levels.

Figure 0.3 shows the relationship between GDP per capita and overall social progress. The data reveal several key findings:

- First, there is a positive and strong relationship between the 2017 Social Progress Index and GDP per capita.
- Second, 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.

Figure 0.3 / Social Progress Index vs. GDP per capita



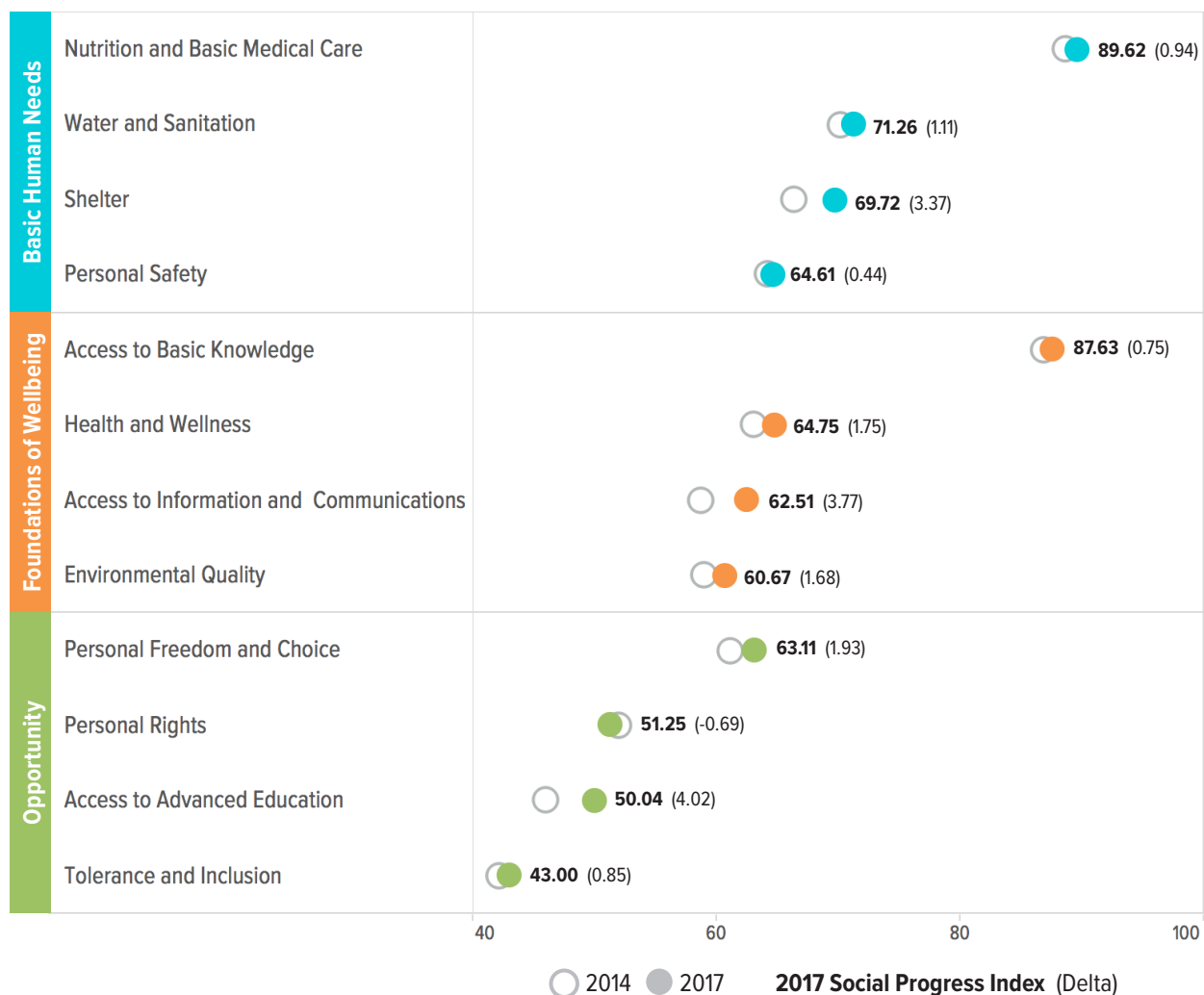
### SOCIAL PROGRESS OVER TIME

As we enter a fourth year of the Social Progress Index, we are able to introduce a new dimension to our analysis, the evaluation of social progress over time. We are therefore able to evaluate both the evolution of social progress, and also identify the relative movement of each component and dimension of the Social Progress Index.

To summarize our findings, we find that overall social progress is improving but that there are components of social progress that have experienced deeply

worrying erosion. Disaggregated by component, we find that Access to Information and Communications and Access to Advanced Education improve markedly in a short period of time. This improvement is in sharp contrast to declines or stagnation in Personal Rights, Personal Safety, and Tolerance and Inclusion. In other components, progress is slow and/or uneven. The findings suggest that improved social progress in the aggregate should not mask the erosion in personal rights and challenges to tolerance and safety that threaten to undermine hard-earned social progress achievements.

Figure 0.4 / Population-weighted world scores in 2014 and 2017



Relative to 2014, 113 out of 128 countries have improved their Social Progress Index score. The improvement of social progress is largely concentrated in South Asian and Western African nations, whose original scores were in the Lower Middle or Low Social Progress Tiers of the Index. This improvement suggests that countries at a relatively low level of social progress may be able to improve more rapidly since they both have more opportunities for improvement and can draw on lessons and approaches that have been implemented elsewhere.

While global social progress is improving, a small group of 15 countries register a marked decline in their overall score, with an average decline in this group of 0.64 points. The biggest decliners are mainly in Central America or Sub-Saharan Africa, but Hungary stands out with the largest decline by far among European countries, driven largely by change in Tolerance and Inclusion.

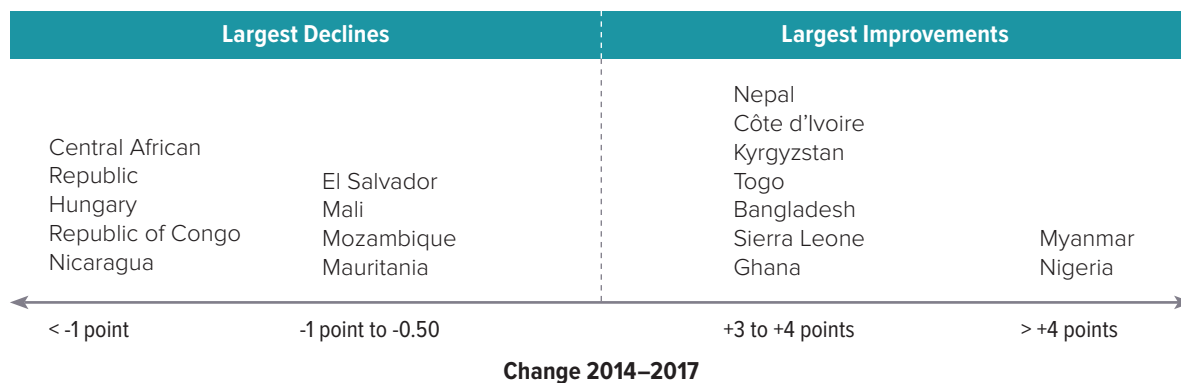
## PUTTING SOCIAL PROGRESS INTO ACTION

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, 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.

The Social Progress Index Amazonia, led by regional partner Fundación Avina and local nonprofit Imazon, represents the most detailed social and environmental diagnosis of the Amazon’s 772 municipalities across nine states.<sup>1</sup> Alarmed by the low levels of social progress in the municipality of Carauari, an important region for their supply chain, Coca-Cola and Natura partnered with Ipsos to create a community needs survey based on the Index framework. This community-level Social Progress Index has been the foundation for a new development program developed in collaboration between citizens, government, business and civil society.

1. [www.ipsamazonia.org.br](http://www.ipsamazonia.org.br)

Figure 0.5 / Top Improvers and Decliners on Social Progress Index 2014 to 2017





Guided by the social progress data, this program has improved water and sanitation infrastructure, providing 500 households with consistent sources of clean water for the first time. They also constructed new river piers to improve transportation during seasonal flooding and increase connectivity with neighboring communities. These improvements have already changed lives in Carauari, where business has taken responsibility for acting on the insights of the Index and taking the necessary actions to mobilize partners to generate impact.

In Europe, the Social Progress Imperative has supported the European Commission, in a partnership including the Orkestra Basque Institute for Competitiveness, for the creation of a Social Progress Index for 272 regions of the European Union. This index is being used to monitor the Commission's 2014–2020 action program and identify best practices within regions that can be scaled and applied elsewhere. We are also working with countries and regions of the EU — including some of the highest performing regions in Scandinavia, as well as in lower performing regions in Southern and Eastern Europe — to use the Index to help tackle challenges such as environmental quality, social inclusion, disaffected youth, and other needs.

In India, policymakers will be able to act on new insights about priority areas for investment and development thanks to a multi-year endeavor to assess progress in 28 states and one territory, 50 cities, and 562 districts, launched in 2016 by the Institute for Competitiveness India in association with government think tank NITI Aayog. Beyond its utility for India's state governments and national leaders, the India Social Progress Index will also equip the corporate sector with a comprehensive outline of the thematic areas where their legally-mandated CSR funds can be directed. By sparking cross-learning and competitive opportunities across the states, the India Index has the potential to improve quality of life for more than 1.3 billion people.

These are just a few examples of how the social progress partner network is making social progress a central component of policy planning and a leading concern for businesses (see the Supplemental Section for a full discussion of social progress measurement efforts at the regional and country level). As the Social Progress Network continues to grow, new agents of change will use our existing indexes and create new ones to target their actions and generate impact. It has never been enough simply to measure progress — together with our partners, we are driving it.

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2101 L Street NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20037  
[socialprogressimperative.org](http://socialprogressimperative.org)  
[@socprogress](https://www.instagram.com/socprogress)