

A photograph of two young women standing outdoors in a snowy environment. The woman on the left has voluminous curly hair and is wearing a grey parka with a fur-lined hood. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a blue parka with a blue knit scarf. Both are smiling and looking towards the right. A semi-transparent blue circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text.

YOUTH PROGRESS REPORT 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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About the European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. We represent over 100 youth organisations, which bring together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe.

About the Social Progress Imperative

The Social Progress Imperative is a US-based nonprofit focused on redefining how the world measures success, putting things that matter to people's lives at the top of the agenda. Established in 2012, they strive to improve the lives of people around the world by fostering research and knowledge sharing on social progress and using data to catalyze action.

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FOREWORD

When we talk about climate change or COVID-19, many people tend to say: “We are all experiencing its consequences, we are all in this together, we are all in the same boat”. But that is only partly true. Yes, we are all affected, but by no means are we all in the same boat. We are rather in the same sea: some in a yacht, others in a rowing boat, many may have a life jacket on, but the vast majority are trying to stay afloat with their bare arms.

Inequality of opportunity is a reality, as is inequality in capacity and means to deal with stresses and shocks. That is true when we look at the scramble for COVID-19 vaccines, which leaves large swaths of the world behind or forgotten. And it also applies for the climate crisis, as the ones who are least responsible for climate change are bearing the brunt of the burden: people in developing countries, young people, and future generations.

What COVID-19 has done is to further multiply and expose existing inequalities. The poorest and most marginalised in our societies suffer the most due to a lack of access: to health care, to stable income, to adequate technology to be able to access online schooling, to non-overcrowded dwellings, and beyond. It is about time that we look at progress in a different way, one that takes into account these issues.

Since the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is in theory widely accepted that we need to look beyond economic indicators and GDP, and look at other, more holistic measures of progress. Yet the practice is falling behind.

The Youth Progress Index is a concrete tool to policy makers and advocates to support decision-making on policy and investments affecting youth. Not only does it provide an invaluable insight into young people’s quality of life and wellbeing around the world, it also gives concrete pointers where some of the key aspects to improve are, taking into account the megatrends of climate change, digital revolution, and a global pushback on civic space. And as you will see when reading this report, that only partly relates to financial means. More than anything else, it is about political choices.



Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Youth Progress Index enables public authorities and civil society organisations to systematically identify and prioritise the most pressing needs of young people, remove barriers to their wellbeing and prosperity, and provide the resources needed to shape a fairer society for youth. It offers a practical framework for evidence-based policy making, and data to support civil society advocacy. Overall the Youth Progress Index offers a framework to drive faster and more sustainable progress for young people.

The Youth Progress Index 2021 fully ranks 150 countries, and 18 additional countries partially. It comprises 58 social and environmental indicators. It covers a 10 year time series with data from 2011 to 2020. If the world were a country, it would have a score of 65.78 out of 100.

Overall, the Youth Progress Index has a strong positive relationship with economic performance. Above \$10,000 (GDP per capita), however, GDP becomes less of a determining factor of youth progress. For countries with higher levels of wealth, therefore, improving country scores requires looking beyond economic activity. For example, the data clearly demonstrate that economic development does not address the challenges and issues related to environmental quality, personal rights

and inclusiveness. The large variations of scores on the Youth Progress Index for countries with similar levels of GDP, and vice-versa, show that political choices made have a huge impact. For each and every component, there are countries from around the world that others can learn from.

In addition to the Index, this report looks at mega-trends which impact youth: digitalisation, COVID-19, a changing labour market, and a shrinking civic space. Young people face the emerging trend of new technologies disrupting labour markets across the world and posing new challenges in terms of their access to social and economic rights. Targeted policy measures are needed to tackle the widening digital divide within and across countries. At the same time, the digitalisation of society gives lawmakers new tools, including social media, to communicate with and query a broader and diverse range of people about policy. These new forms of participation offer great opportunities for more inclusive politics - if digital rights are safeguarded. Young people need to be supported to ensure they are in a strong position to participate in the transition to a more digital society, and hold governments to account.





We also zoom in on the impact of the economic crisis caused by Covid on youth employment, with youth unemployment rising at least twice as much compared to adults. In addition, there is a global lack of quality jobs available to youth. All findings indicate the urgent need for governments to address the quality of jobs available to youth and improve access to social protection, including in the COVID-19 pandemic recovery plans.

A free civil society and a thriving civic space is essential for young people to realise their political rights and their full potential. Yet the last few years have witnessed a persistent silencing of young people's voices and a narrowing of their civic space, and this trend was accelerated massively in the last year. Emergency laws and other extraordinary measures adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have acted to restrict freedoms and access to fundamental rights in unprecedented speed. Moreover, civil society has been largely left out of the design and implementation of governments' COVID-19 strategies. This should not continue to be the case. Civil society organisations, including youth organisations, should be included in the decision-making around policy and investment decisions to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. There is no question about it: there is a strong

positive relationship between governments' respect of freedom of peaceful assembly and youth progress.

In the last chapter of this report, we focus on sustainable development. After all, the climate crisis is putting positive developments in youth progress at risk by undermining the foundations on which our society is built. Given these impacts, we cannot look at youth progress as a snapshot, but have to consider how sustainable progress is. Hence we produced a sustainability-adjusted-version of the Index. When comparing the performance of countries in the Youth Progress Index and its sustainability-adjusted equivalent, we find that the countries in the first tier, meaning the top ranking countries in the Youth Progress Index, have the worst declines in their scores once adjusted with the environmental sustainability component. This means that all the countries at the top of the table progress as a society at a disproportionate environmental cost. Overall, despite a few examples of political steps in the right direction, it is fair to conclude that no country can claim to have succeeded in implementing a model of development that is sustainable both socially and environmentally, and does not put at risk the livelihoods of future generations.

What is also clear from the intensive data collection and analysis done for this report, is that national and supranational statistical agencies need to step up the efforts to collect more sex and age-disaggregated data, including youth-specific data. More data is needed, including on sensitive topics such as civic space, and data that allow for an intersectional analysis. Quality data are needed to lead to informed policies and investments that support youth, and to identify good practices of countries that successfully advance youth progress.

The Youth Progress Index aims at giving that push in the right direction, as it allows policy makers to identify the strengths and gaps in the situation of youth, and it does so by putting the wellbeing of youth and the planet at the center.



YOUTH PROGRESS INDEX AMBASSADORS



Niklas Nienass

**Member of the European Parliament and
co-chair of the interest group on youth**

Niklas Nienass is Member of the European Parliament for Alliance 90/The Greens. As a child of the German reunification and a committed European, Mr Nienass aims for a strengthening of European solidarity and cohesion, both on a material as well as on a cultural level. Thus, Mr Nienass is the coordinator for the group in the Committee on Regional Development, member in the Committee on Culture and Education and substitute member of the Committee on Institutional Affairs. In addition, he is initiator of the Cultural Creators Friendship Group as well as founding member of the RUMRA & Smart Village Intergroup and the youth interest group.



Yasmine Ouirhrane

**Founder of We Belong and Young European
of the year 2019**

Yasmine is the founder of We Belong, a platform and podcast that amplifies the voice of the New Daughters of Europe. She is also an appointed expert for the European Union and the African Union and an advocate for Social and Gender Justice in Europe. She delivered dozens of recommendations to international institutions, provided workshops on access to education, equal opportunities and social entrepreneurship and she was recognised Young European of the Year 2019 by the Schwarzkopf Foundation, EDD Young Leader by the European Commission, Women Deliver Young Leader and a member of the Gender Innovation Agora at UN Women.

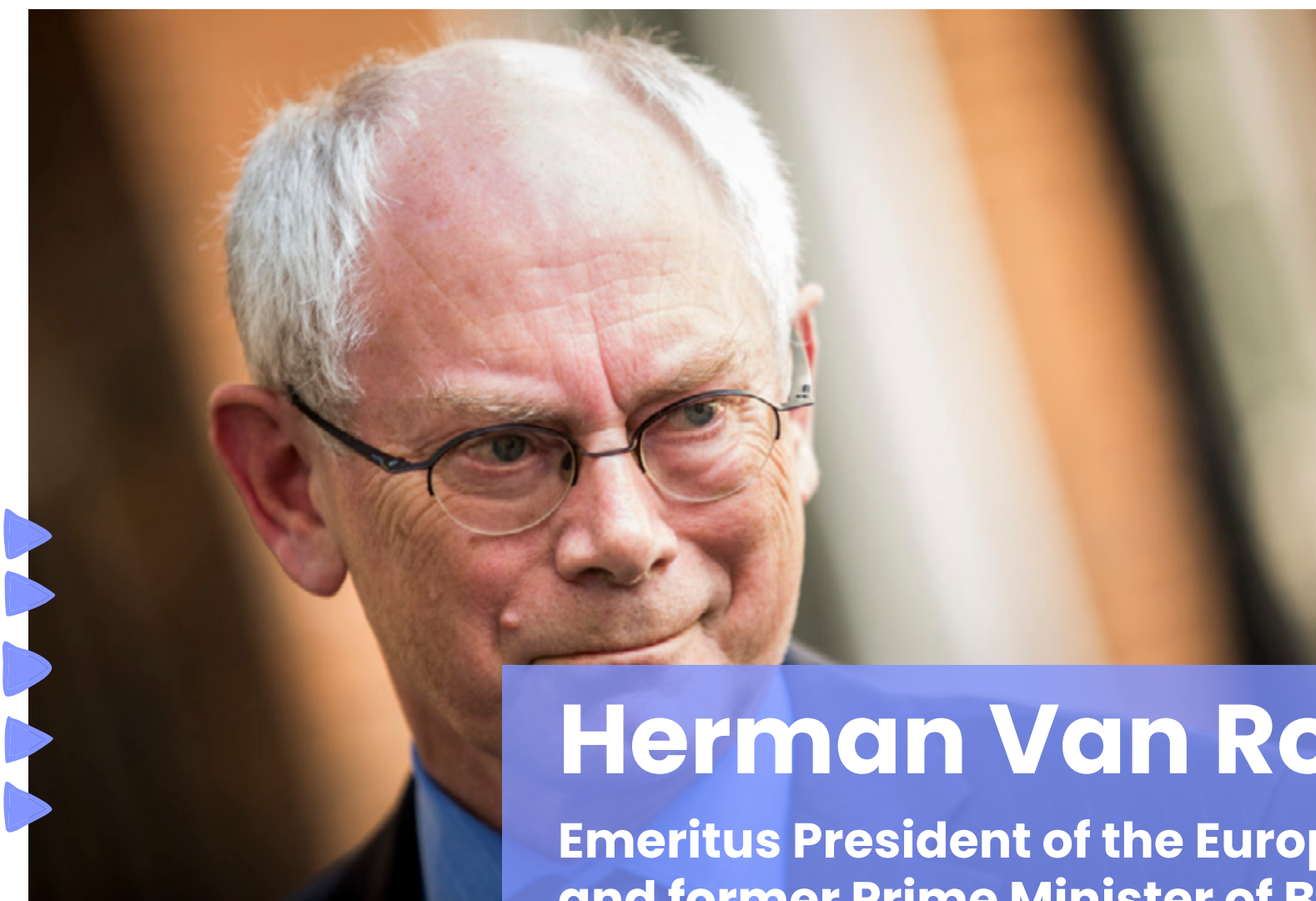


Matjaž Gruden

**Director of Democratic Participation,
Council of Europe**

Matjaž Gruden is Director of Democratic Participation at the Council of Europe, which includes Council of Europe activities and programmes in the area of education, including education for democratic citizenship, youth cooperation, culture and cultural heritage, landscape and biodiversity. The Directorate also includes the Platform for the protection of Journalists, the Eurimages film fund and the North-South Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity.

Matjaž Gruden previously served as Director of Policy Planning, Deputy Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General, political adviser and speechwriter for the Secretary General and President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Prior to his career at the Council of Europe, he was a diplomat at the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, posted in Brussels.



Herman Van Rompuy

**Emeritus President of the European Council
and former Prime Minister of Belgium**

Herman Van Rompuy is Emeritus President of the European Council, a position in which he served from 2009 to 2014. At the time of his election as first full-time President of the European Council, Mr Van Rompuy was Prime Minister of Belgium.

Prior to that he had served in Belgium as Speaker of the House of Representatives (2007-2008) and in several government positions, including as Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Budget (1993-1999), and Secretary of State for Finance and Small Businesses (1988). He has been Minister of State since 2004.

A former economist at the National Bank of Belgium, Herman Van Rompuy began his political career in 1973 as national Vice-President of his party's youth movement. He has held various responsibilities within his party, including as President of the Flemish Christian Democrats (1988-1993), and in the Belgian Parliament, serving in turn as Senator (1988-1995) and Member of Parliament (1995-2009).

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the structural weaknesses of our social and economic systems. Existing gaps, pressure points and inequalities have been exacerbated by the pandemic and must be addressed in the aftermath, while long standing issues like the climate crisis, social and economic inequalities, call for bold action. Despite their relative resilience to the virus, young people around the world have been among the hardest hit by shutdowns and economic shocks, from job and income loss to higher levels of mental health issues and negative impacts on their education. They are coming of age with fewer and different opportunities than generations in the recent past, and they face challenges that are global in scale and not of their own making. Today's political leaders owe young people a better quality of life in the present, and a real chance at building a better future.

Young people and social progress

Policymakers at all levels, from global to local, face the challenge of building back better. This means designing policies that balance the social, health, environmental and economic needs of the population. It also means implementing policy agendas and reforms that embed resilience, so they

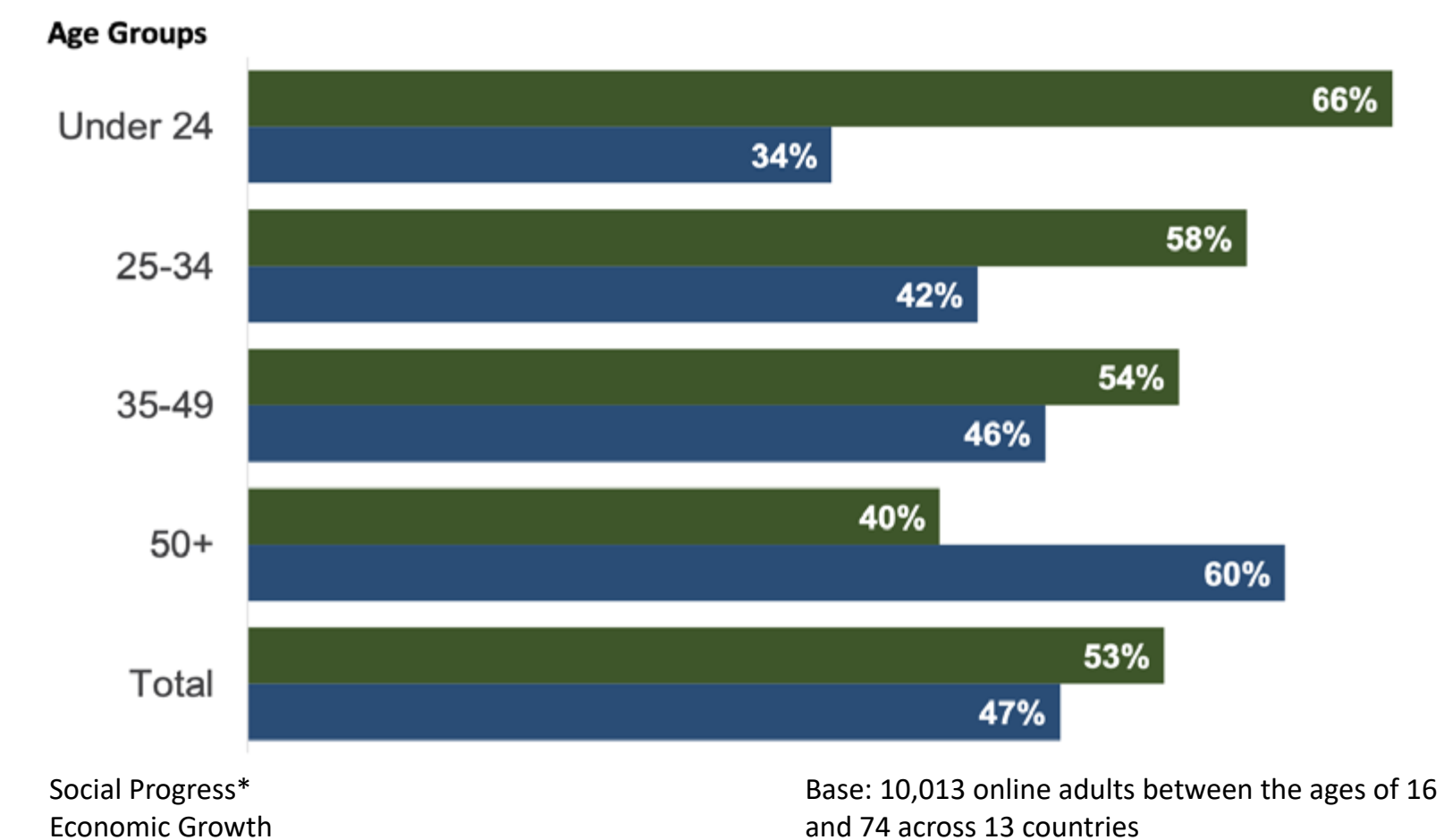
are prepared for future crises, whether related to health, climate, the economy, armed conflict and beyond.

Sustainable development and the well-being of populations should be the driving force of policy agendas. This means prioritising issues that really matter to people: their health, clean air, quality education, quality jobs, safe neighbourhoods, inclusion in their communities, and open and transparent governments. Social progress should not come at the expense of the environment or of future generations. When we measure progress, we need to factor in environmental sustainability and thus add the current and future weight of heavily polluting practices, over-consumption and high greenhouse gas emissions into the calculation, so not to reward governments and communities that rely on these.

Sustainable development concerns everyone, but as success or failure in achieving climate neutrality has an even greater impact on young people who will have to live with the consequences, they should be at the center of policy reform discussions. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the environment are top of the list of concerns of young people in the European Union according to a recent survey by the

Covid-19 Response Priorities by Age Group

Imagining when the Covid-19 pandemic is over... which should your country prioritise more?





European Environmental Bureau¹. Young people are the most affected by today's policy and investment decisions and, as a generation, are more likely to prioritise long-term social and environmental progress. For example, even though young people are least likely to suffer severe health consequences of the COVID-19 virus, they were more likely than other age groups to ask for a prioritisation of social progress in rebuilding efforts. According to a survey by IPSOS with the Social Progress Imperative, two in three respondents under 24 (66%) wanted their country to focus on improving social outcomes, compared with just two in five (40%) of those over 50, who are more at risk.

¹ #ClimateOfChange, 2021. Pan-European Survey. Main multi-country report.
Available at: <https://eeb.org/library/pan-european-survey-climate-to-priority-for-youth/>

Looking beyond Gross Domestic Product: towards a more holistic approach to measuring progress

It is increasingly accepted in political, academic and economic circles that Gross Domestic Product (GDP)² is insufficient or even ill-suited as a measure of societal progress. The main drawback of only focusing on economic measures is that it does not tell the full story, as underlying non-economic developments or inequalities are excluded. This often results in policies that focus on economic growth and on improving the economy at the expense of the environment, rather than focusing on improving actual quality of life, including of young people, in a more measured, comprehensive, and sustainable way. GDP measures the sum total of all goods and services traded on the market, irrespective of whether that actually contributes to the wellbeing of people and the planet. For example, when there is an oil spill and experts need to clean up the

mess, GDP will increase. Yet GDP remains the preferred measure of progress for politicians and other leaders, partly due to the lack of meaningful, available, and widely accepted alternatives.

More insights into access to education, healthcare, housing, quality of jobs and environmental sustainability, provide a more comprehensive picture of progress in a given country or community than mere performance in terms of GDP. The United Nations (UN) has taken significant steps in promoting a more holistic approach to individual and social progress. For the UN, progress requires countries to be sustainable economically, environmentally, and socially. This vision resulted in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which focus, to a great extent, on improving the overall social and economic well-being of all. In this light, increasing the level of opportunity for young people to influence decision-making and to shape politics in a way that policies take into account the planets' limits and the wellbeing of future generations, is essential to the success of the 2030 Agenda. However, identifying ways to monitor and measure countries' success in achieving the SDGs, and in achieving them for all sections of society, remains a huge challenge when we aim for evidence-based policy-making.



² Gross domestic product (GDP) is the most common measure of the size of an economy. GDP sums up the monetary value, or prices, of all registered final goods and services produced in an economy during a given period of time (such as a quarter or a year) within a given territory (such as Europe).



Rationale for a Youth Progress Index

The Youth Progress Index, using the Social Progress Index (SPI) methodology, measures factors that matter to and can impact the daily lives of young people: do they have sufficient food to eat? Do they have access to housing? And access to the labour market and quality jobs? Can they read and write? Can they exercise their socio-economic and political rights? Do they live in a community where they feel included and are not discriminated against? Is their future and the future of their children protected from the dangers of environmental destruction? Can they influence politics and hold their political representatives to account, and are they represented in parliament? Do they have the opportunities to live up to their potential, contribute to thriving societies, and shape their future?

The Youth Progress Index is a crucial step in rethinking the nature of progress and building a fairer society. It enables public authorities and civil society organisations to systematically identify and prioritise

the most pressing needs of young people, remove barriers to their wellbeing and prosperity, and provide the resources needed to shape a fairer society for youth. It offers a practical framework for evidence-based policy making, and data to support civil society advocacy. Overall the Youth Progress Index offers a framework to empower young people, and drive faster and more sustainable progress for young people.

Addressing the megatrends and key challenges young people face

Governments and policies need to ensure that young people are able to take part in the decisions that will shape the future of our societies and they should address the main challenges that young people face, now and in the future.

Young people are the most exposed to an increasingly digital world, which has a significant impact on their social life, employment, the future of their work, and their relationship with politics and the media. In this context, it is essential that they are included and can contribute to shaping the future of a digital society. Moreover, they face yet another unemployment crisis, accelerated by the Covid pandemic, and a labour market and economy that are rapidly changing to adapt to digitisation and other mega trends, demographic changes and climate change. While this requires increased involvement and debate, citizens in many countries across the world are facing governments'

pushback on their civic space, limiting their freedom of expression and association.

In this report, we look at these trends and their relationship with young people's capacity to advance social progress.





CHAPTER 1

YOUTH PROGRESS INDEX 2021

The Youth Progress Index (YPI), first released in 2018, is the most comprehensive measure of the quality of life of young people in more than 150 countries around the world. Using global data and based on the rigorous methodology of the Social Progress Index, the YPI asks and answers the most important questions about the wellbeing of the rising generation.

Framework and methodology

The Youth Progress Index is built on the framework and methodology of the Social Progress Index – a robust and holistic measurement framework for social and environmental performance that is used by leaders in government, business, and civil society in 45 countries, to benchmark success and accelerate progress across the world. In this chapter, we discuss the principles underlying our measurement approach, and how we define social progress for youth, as well as operationalise it, through the rigorous, multi-layered framework of the Social Progress Index.

Principles of the Social Progress Index

The Social Progress Index, first released in 2013, measures a comprehensive set of components of social and environmental performance, and aggregates them into an overall framework. The Index was developed based on extensive discussions with experts and stakeholders around the world including policymakers, social advocates, and academics. The SPI was also influenced by prior contributions to the field by Amartya Sen and members of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress.





The Social Progress Index follows four key design principles:

1. Exclusively social and environmental indicators: its aim is to measure social progress directly, rather than use economic proxies or outcomes. By excluding economic indicators, we can, for the first time, rigorously and systematically analyse 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: SPI’s purpose is to measure the outcomes that matter to the lives of real people, not the inputs. For example, we measure the health and wellness achieved by a country’s people, not how much a country spends on health-care or the effort expended.

3. Holistic and relevant to all countries: SPI creates a holistic measure of social progress that encompasses a comprehensive view 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 is a practical tool that helps leaders and practitioners in government and civil society implement policies and programmes that drive faster social progress. To do so, we measure outcomes in a granular way that focuses on specific areas that can be addressed directly.

The Social Progress Framework

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.”

This definition reflects an extensive and critical review and synthesis of both the academic literature and practitioner experience across a wide range of development topics. The Social Progress Index framework focuses on three distinct (though related) questions:



Basic Human Needs: Does a country provide for its people's most essential needs?

Foundations of Wellbeing: Are the building blocks in place for individuals and communities to enhance and sustain wellbeing?

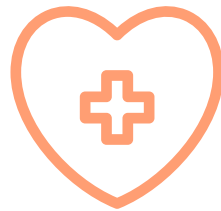
Opportunity: Is there opportunity for all individuals to reach their full potential?

These three questions reflect the three broad dimensions of the Social Progress Index framework. Each dimension is broken down further to elucidate the key elements that make up social progress in that area, forming the 12 components of the model. The concepts underlying these components have remained unchanged since the first publication of the Social Progress Index in 2013.

Basic Human Needs

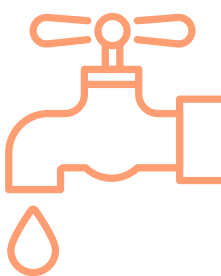


Nutrition and Basic Medical Care



Do people have enough food to eat and are they receiving basic medical care?

Water & Sanitation



Can people drink water and keep themselves clean without getting sick?

Shelter



Do people have adequate housing with basic utilities?

Personal Safety

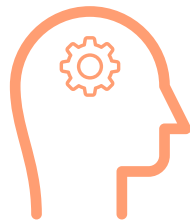


Do people feel safe?

Foundations of Wellbeing



Access to Basic Knowledge



Do people have access to an educational foundation?

Access to Information & Communications



Can people freely access ideas and information anywhere in the world?

Health & Wellness



Do people live long and healthy lives?

Enviromental Quality

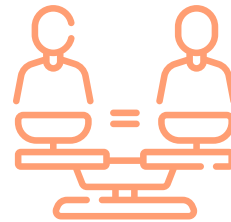


Is this society using its resources so they will be available to future generations?

Opportunity



Personal Rights



Are people's rights as individuals protected?

Personal Freedom & Choice



Are people free to make their own life choices?

Inclusiveness



Is no one excluded from the opportunity to be a contributing member of society?

Access to Advanced Education



Do people have the opportunity to access the world's most advanced knowledge?

Youth Progress Index: a focus on youth data

The Youth Progress Index is the first Social Progress Index to look at a subgroup of the population defined by its age, rather than a population defined by its geographical location. It therefore asks the same universally applicable questions as the Social Progress Index, but the answers to these questions focus as much as possible on the lived experience of young people.

When building the Youth Progress Index, we therefore followed the following principles:

- 1. When possible indicators were disaggregated by age.
- 2. Specific indicators relevant for youth were added.
- 3. Remaining indicators relevant for all age groups were based on the Global Social Progress Index.

Following the methodology of the Social Progress Index, the Youth Progress Index score and its corresponding rank define a country's overall level of youth progress



Basic Human Needs

Nutrition and Basic Medical Care

- Undernourishment (% of pop.)
- Maternal mortality rate
- Child mortality rate
- Child stunting (% of children)
- Youth deaths from infectious diseases

Water and sanitation

- Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene attributable deaths
- Populations using unsafe or unimproved water sources
- Populations using unsafe or unimproved sanitation
- Youth satisfaction with water

Shelter

- Access to electricity (% of pop.)
- Youthhousehold air pollution attributable deaths
- Usage of clean fuels and technology for cooking (% of pop.)
- Youth affordable housing

Personal Safety

- Homicide rate
- Percieved criminality
- Youth traffic deaths
- Women safe walking alone
- Assaulted youth
- Youth stolen money or property

List of indicators of the Youth Progress Index 2021. Youth-specific or youth-relevant indicators are highlighted in orange.

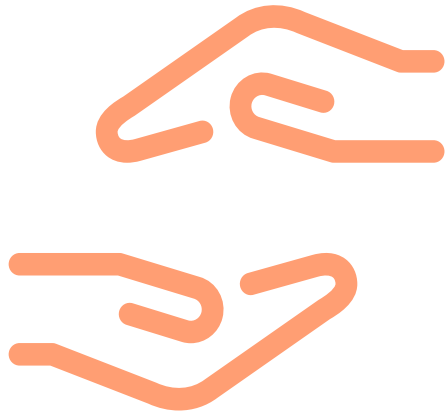
and how it compares to all countries in the world. There are five core steps for calculating the Index, which are outlined in detail in the Methodology Note in the Annex.

For the purposes of the Youth Progress Index, “youth” is considered to be individuals in the transition period between childhood and adulthood. The specific age bracket might be longer or shorter depending on the specific social context³.

It should also be stressed that “youth” are not a coherent group, and that many subgroups of young people, such as young women, LGBTQI youth, or young people with disabilities, may face greater challenges. This transition phase between the dependency of childhood and the responsibility of adult life is a crucial and often challenging phase. A young person may have difficulty finding a good quality job, accessing quality education or health-care, and is at risk of multiple forms of discrimination based on different aspects of their identity.

There is a serious lack of data on the particular issues faced by subgroups of the youth population. Data on minority groups, people with disabilities, LGBTQI,

³ No universal definition of “youth” exists in the international community, and various institutions/organisations/ youth practitioners define “youth” with varying parameters, such as: Under 24; 12 – 24; 10 – 29; anything under 30 or 35. Despite the lack of a cohesive definition, it is generally acknowledged the transitional period extends until well-after an individual has achieved legal “adult” status; meaning that a society’s obligation to educate and engage its young people does not end when they turn 18.



Foundations of Wellbeing

Access to Basic Knowledge

- Women with no schooling
- Primary scholl enrollment (% of children)
- Secondary school attainment (% of population)
- Gender parity in secondary attainment
- Access to quality education

Health and Wellness

- Youth life expectancy (years)
- Youth premature deaths from non-communicable diseases
- Access to essential services
- Access to quality healthcare

Access to Information and Communications

- Mobile telephone subscriptions (subscriptions/100 people)
- Internet users (% of pop.)
- Access to online governance
- Media censorship

Enviromental Quality

- Youth outdoor air pollution attributable deaths
- Particulate matter
- Youth satisfaction with air quality
- Species Protection Index

List of indicators of the Youth Progress Index 2021. Youth-specific or youth-relevant indicators are highlighted in orange.

women and girls – are either non-inclusive or not collected at all, or at least not in a standardised format covering a sufficient number of countries. That is the reason why few of these indicators are present in the framework. For example, the Gallup World poll survey asks respondents whether “... the city or area where you live [is] a good place or not a good place to live for gay or lesbian people?” This question essentially omits the particular discrimination faced by young transgender and intersex people. It is however the best proxy that is available to understand the challenges faced by young LGBTQI communities. Unfortunately, there is no such proxy available for people with disabilities. This lack of data makes any intersectional analysis challenging to include within the Youth Progress Index.



Opportunity

Personal Rights

- Political rights
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of religion
- Access to justice
- Property rights for women
- **Percent of young members of parliament**

Inclusiveness

- **Openness towards gay and lesbian people**
- Discrimination and violence against minorities
- Equality of political power by gender
- **Youth opportunities to make friends**
- **Youth openness towards immigrants**
- **Youth community safety net**

Personal Freedom and Choice

- **Early marriage (% of women)**
- Satisfied demand for contraception (% of women)
- Corruption
- **Youth freedom over life choices**
- **Youth perception of corruption**
- **Youth not in employment and not in education**

Access to advanced education

- **Years of tertiary schooling**
- Women with advanced education (%)
- Quality weighted universities (points)
- Citable documents

List of indicators of the Youth Progress Index 2021. Youth-specific or youth-relevant indicators are highlighted in orange.

YPI 2021 IN NUMBERS

The Youth Progress Index 2021 fully ranks 150 countries, and 18 additional countries partially. It comprises 58 social and environmental indicators. It covers a 10 year time series with data from 2011 to 2020.

Our analysis finds that 65 countries have improved their Youth Progress performance significantly over the past 10 years, with another 65 countries having seen some improvement. 10 countries have stalled, and 6 countries have declined

COUNTRY	RANK	YPI SCORE
Norway*	1	95.80
Denmark*	2	94.62
Finland*	3	94.03
Switzerland*	4	93.14
Sweden*	5	92.81
Iceland*	6	92.47
New Zealand	7	91.70
Canada	8	91.30
Austria*	9	91.08
Australia	10	90.90
Netherlands*	11	90.62
Germany*	12	90.21
Ireland*	13	89.94
United Kingdom*	14	89.11
Luxembourg*	15	88.94

COUNTRY	RANK	YPI SCORE
Singapore	16	88.81
Japan	17	88.30
France*	18	87.46
Spain*	19	87.14
Portugal*	20	86.62
Estonia*	21	85.47
Korea, Republic of	22	85.22
United States	23	84.98
Belgium*	24	84.70
Czechia*	25	84.65
Italy*	26	84.39
Slovenia*	27	83.97
Malta*	28	83.07
Cyprus*	29	81.14
Poland*	30	80.76
Israel	31	80.23
Greece*	32	80.09
Costa Rica	33	79.86
Croatia*	34	79.69
Lithuania*	34	79.69
Latvia*	36	79.68
Slovakia*	37	79.59
Uruguay	38	79.48
Hungary*	39	76.94

COUNTRY	RANK	YPI SCORE
Chile	40	75.97
Argentina	41	75.50
Serbia*	42	75.37
Armenia*	43	74.33
Mauritius	43	74.33
Romania*	45	73.67
Kuwait	46	73.36
Bulgaria*	47	73.35
Malaysia	48	73.12
Panama	49	72.33
United Arab Emirates	50	72.29
Montenegro*	51	71.90
Belarus	52	71.36
Georgia*	53	71.22
Kazakhstan	54	70.58
Vietnam	55	69.61
Jamaica	56	69.58
Ecuador	57	69.48
Brazil	58	69.43
Republic of North Macedonia	59	69.21
Ukraine*	60	69.06
Paraguay	61	69.01
Sri Lanka	62	68.70
Russia*	63	68.63

* Council of Europe member state

COUNTRY	RANK	YPI SCORE
Albania*	64	68.49
Colombia	65	68.18
Moldova*	66	68.17
Thailand	67	68.11
Bosnia and Herzegovina*	68	67.99
Mexico	69	67.79
Peru	70	67.29
Bahrain	71	67.21
China	72	67.15
Saudi Arabia	73	66.28
Kyrgyzstan	74	66.22
Tunisia	75	65.77
Indonesia	76	65.66
Turkey*	77	65.57
Bhutan	78	65.54
Jordan	79	65.39
Dominican Republic	80	65.15
Bolivia	81	65.06
Uzbekistan	82	64.87
Azerbaijan*	83	64.44
West Bank and Gaza	84	63.88
Philippines	85	63.73
Iran	86	63.33
Nicaragua	87	63.06

COUNTRY	RANK	YPI SCORE
Mongolia	88	62.44
El Salvador	89	61.57
Morocco	90	60.96
South Africa	91	60.86
Lebanon	92	59.88
Egypt	93	58.72
Botswana	94	58.57
Algeria	95	58.31
Honduras	95	58.31
Ghana	97	58.29
Turkmenistan	98	57.66
Tajikistan	99	57.17
India	100	56.89
Nepal	101	55.86
Namibia	102	55.54
Gabon	103	55.34
Guatemala	104	55.00
Bangladesh	105	54.93
Venezuela	106	54.58
Cambodia	107	54.49
Iraq	108	54.27
Kenya	109	53.07
Myanmar	110	53.05
Libya	111	52.51

COUNTRY	RANK	YPI SCORE
Senegal	112	51.35
Tanzania	113	51.29
Laos	114	49.09
Rwanda	115	48.85
Zimbabwe	116	48.74
Malawi	117	47.20
Benin	118	47.00
Zambia	119	46.65
Côte d'Ivoire	120	46.10
Gambia, The	121	46.00
Nigeria	122	45.94
Cameroon	123	45.84
Pakistan	123	45.84
Syria	123	45.84
Uganda	126	45.33
Togo	127	45.09
Eswatini	128	44.97
Ethiopia	129	44.83
Congo, Republic of	130	43.57
Burkina Faso	131	42.96
Mozambique	132	42.74
Lesotho	133	42.63
Sierra Leone	134	42.07
Mauritania	135	41.17

* Council of Europe member state

COUNTRY	RANK	YPI SCORE
Mali	136	40.97
Liberia	137	39.99
Madagascar	138	39.62
Angola	139	39.38
Yemen	140	39.12
Haiti	141	37.92
Congo, Democratic Republic of	142	35.44
Somalia	143	35.39
Niger	144	34.66
Burundi	145	34.48
Guinea	146	34.33
Afghanistan	147	31.24
Chad	148	26.44
Central African Republic	149	22.03
South Sudan	150	20.03

* Council of Europe member state

IF THE WORLD WERE A COUNTRY

If the world were a country, it would have a score of 65,78 and be ranked between Kyrgyzstan and Tunisia in 75th position.

A typical young citizen of the world is most likely to live in a big city where air pollution is a serious risk to their health, with an Environmental Quality score of 38,67. They face social exclusion, with an Inclusiveness score of 54,17. In addition to age-based discrimination, they face multiple discrimination based on other aspects of their identity, whether gender, ethnicity, or sexual preferences. Overall, they face barriers in terms of their opportunities to realise their potential and take part in society. They are under-represented in politics and generally face barriers in accessing their personal rights (55,23), and have restricted personal freedoms (59,67).

Figure 1 World average scores

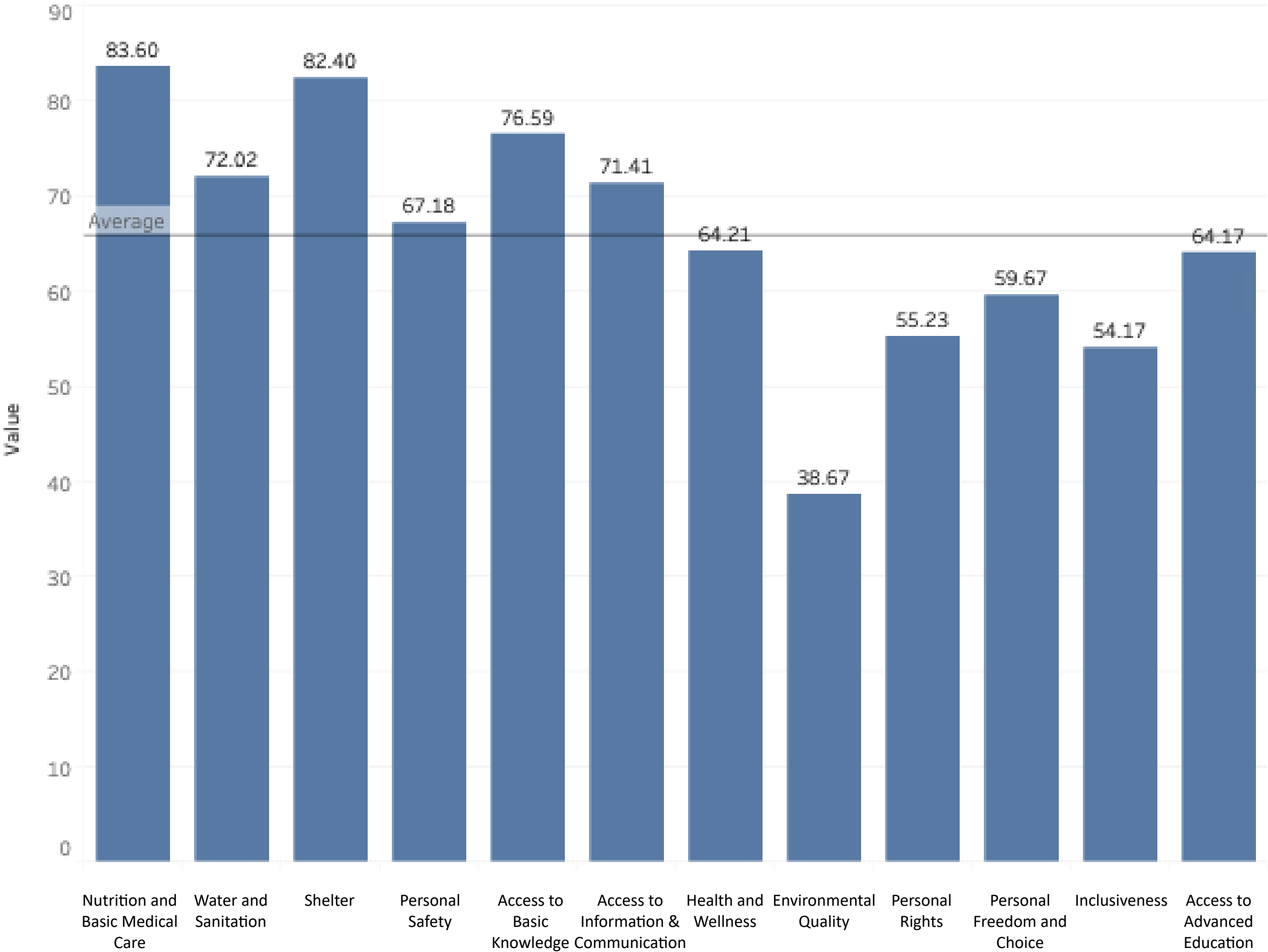
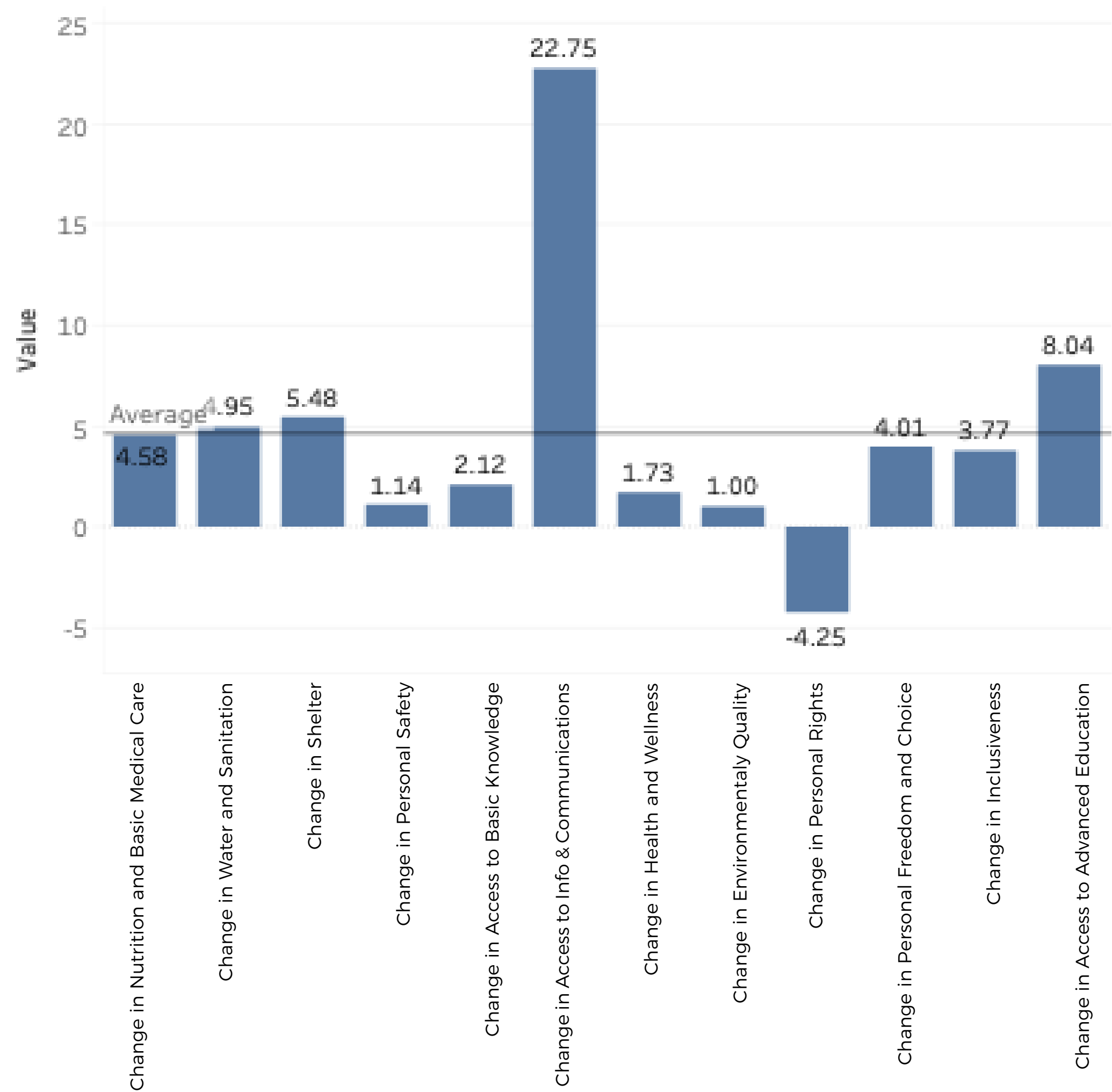


Figure 1 shows the World as a country's performance on each component of the Youth Progress Index. The horizontal line is the overall YPI score of the World as a country.

Figure 2 World Change



A typical young citizen of the world is most likely to live in a big city where air pollution is a serious risk to their health, with an Environmental Quality score of 38,67. They face social exclusion, with an Inclusiveness score of 54,17. In addition to age-based discrimination, they face multiple discrimination based on other aspects of their identity, whether gender, ethnicity, or sexual preferences. Overall, they face barriers in terms of their opportunities to realise their potential and take part in society. They are under-represented in politics and generally face barriers in accessing their personal rights (55,23), and have restricted personal freedoms (59,67).

Over the last 10 years, a typical young citizen of the world has seen huge improvements in their Access to Information and Communications (+22,75), with a rapid spread of new technologies, broadband, and the internet. However, they have faced increased barriers in accessing their Personal Rights (-4,25).

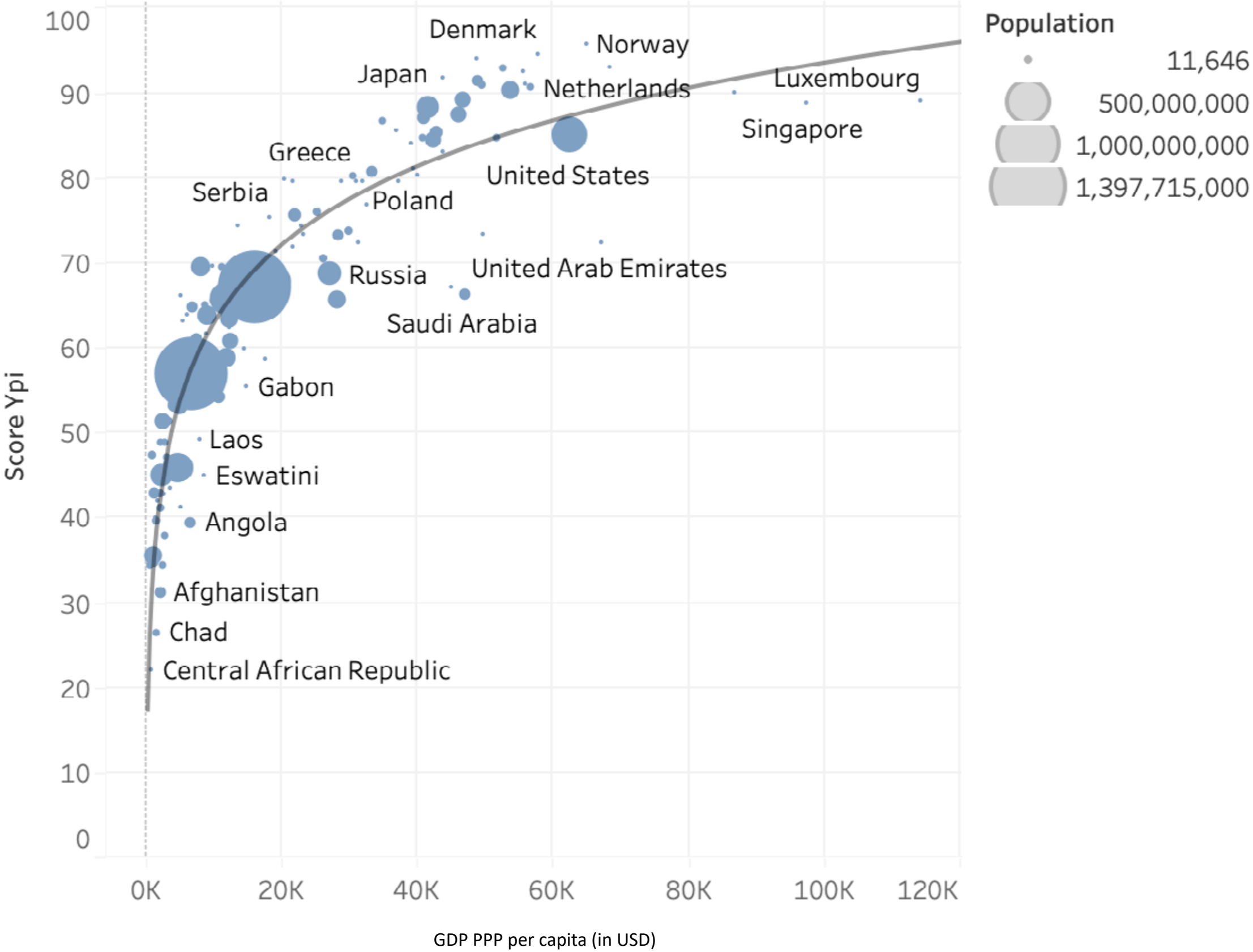
Figure 2 shows the evolution of the World as a country's performance on each component of the Youth Progress Index.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE EXAMINE THE LINK BETWEEN THE YOUTH PROGRESS INDEX AND GDP?: REVEALING INSIGHTS AND IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICES

By not including economic indicators, the Social Progress Index model allows an independent assessment of the relationship between social and economic performance. By comparing countries' performance on the Youth Progress Index with levels of GDP per capita (PPP)⁴, we can identify patterns and relationships that can help to understand the effects of economic activity on different aspects of young people's lives, which can guide policy priorities and implementation.

Overall, the Youth Progress Index has a strong positive relationship (R-squared = 0.859) with economic performance (measured by GDP pc: PPP)⁵. Figure 1.3 shows that at lower levels of GDP per capita (\$0-\$10,000), a small increase in GDP results in a significant increase in the Youth Progress Index scores. Above \$10,000, however, GDP becomes less of a determining factor of youth progress. For countries with higher levels of wealth therefore, improving country scores requires looking beyond economic activity.

Figure 3 YPI vs GDP



⁴ Purchasing power parity (PPP) is a popular metric used by macroeconomic analysts to adjust GDP for prices in national currencies of the same good or service in different countries.

⁵ R-squared is a statistical measure of how close the data are to the fitted trend line. The closer the value is to 1, the more the model explains variability in the data.

Figure 4 Basic Human Needs vs GDP

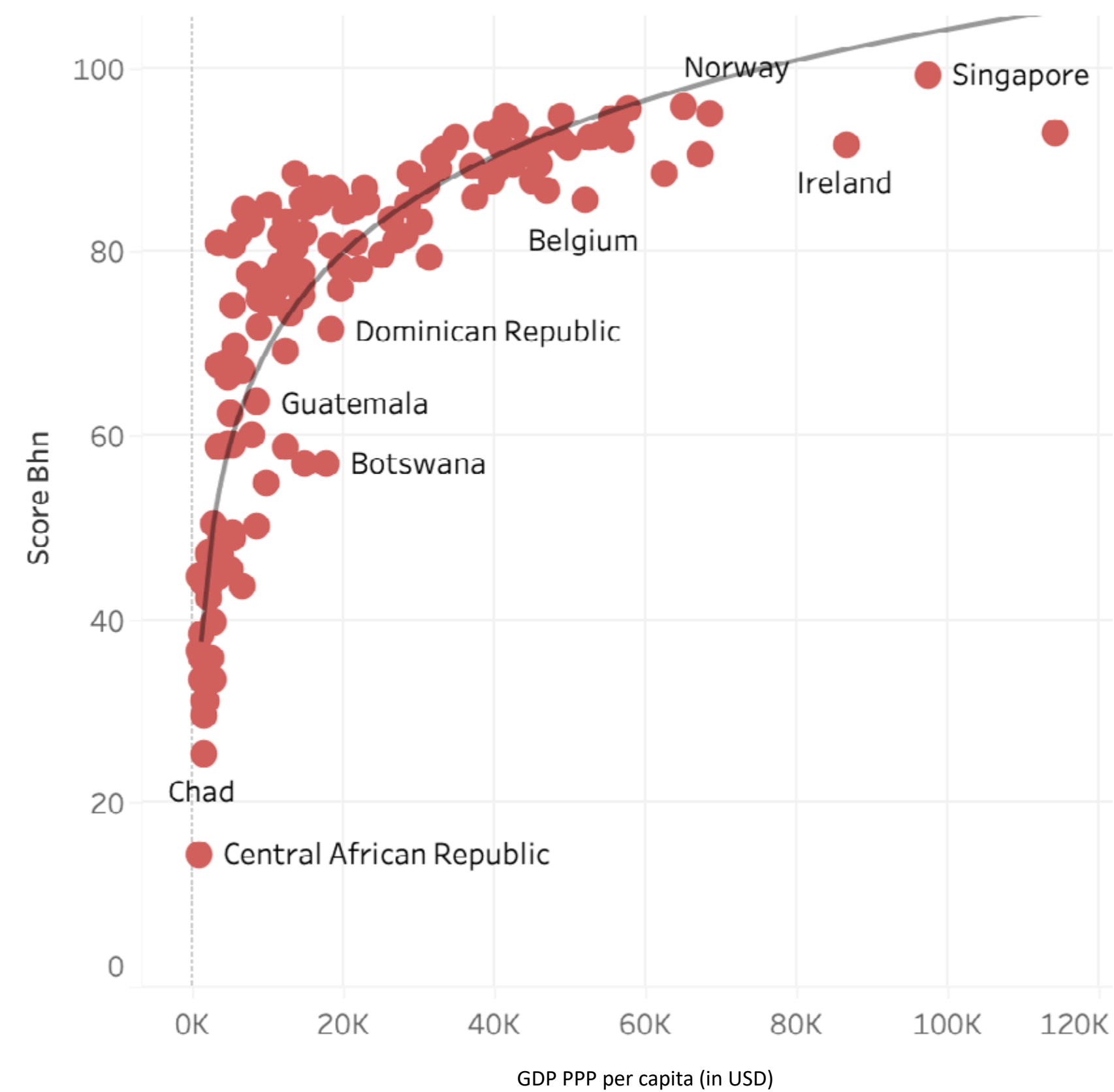
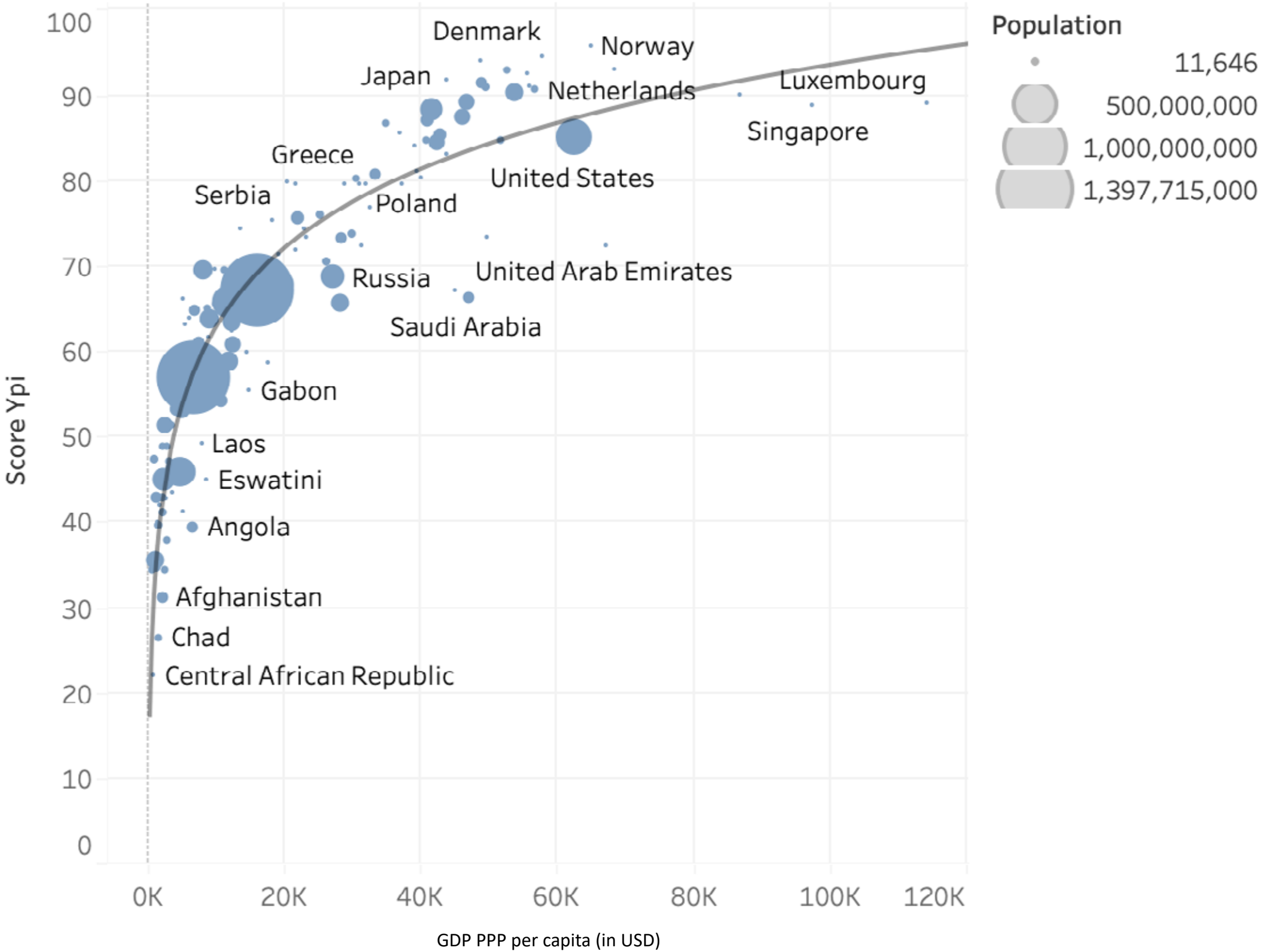


Figure 5 Opportunity vs GDP



At component level, the relationship with GDP is particularly weak for Environmental Quality (R-squared = 0.234), Personal Rights (R-squared = 0.208), and Inclusiveness (R-squared = 0.433), meaning that economic development does not address the challenges and issues measured within these components.

Figure 6 Environmental Quality vs GDP



Figure 7 Personal Rights vs GDP

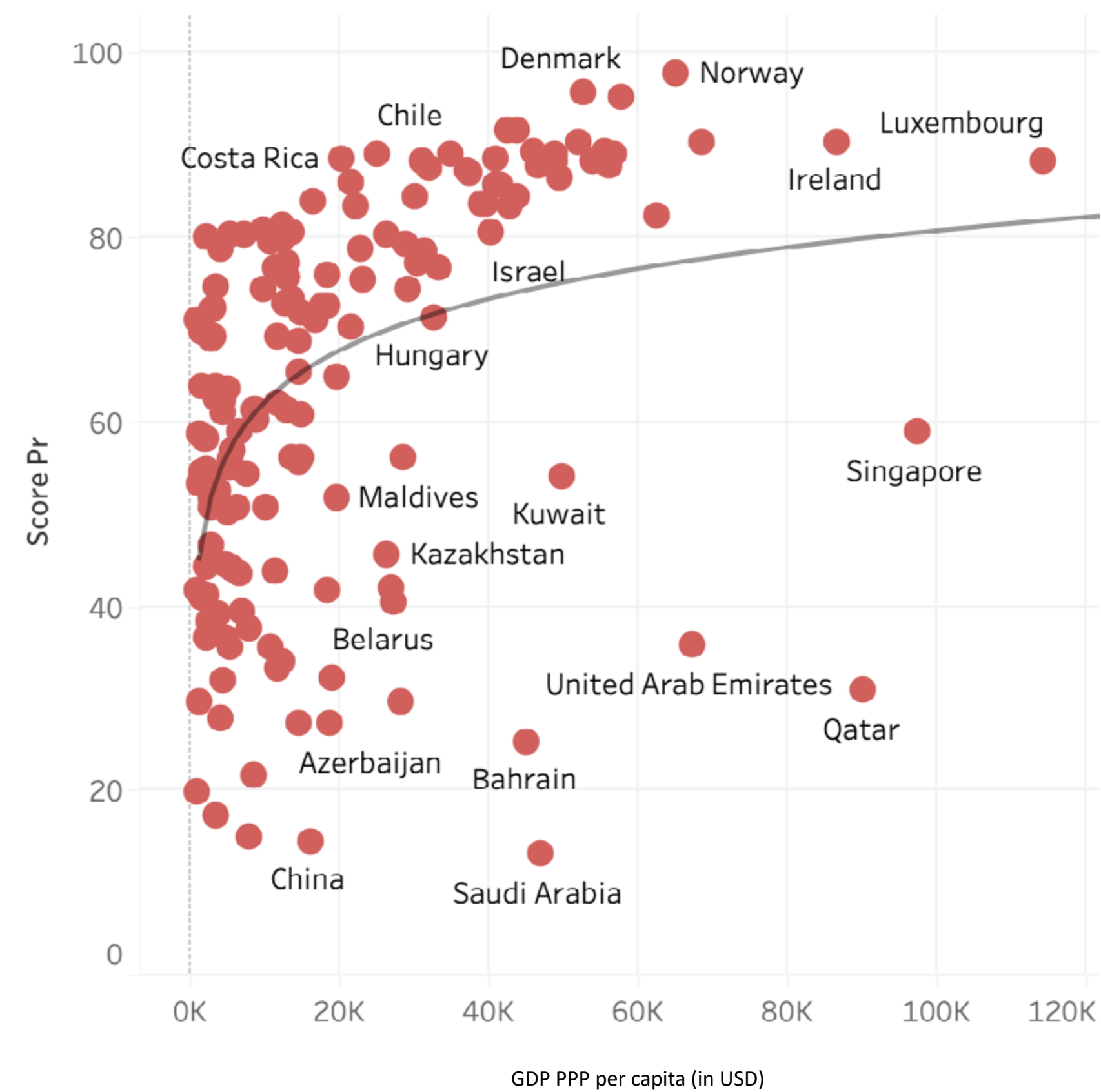
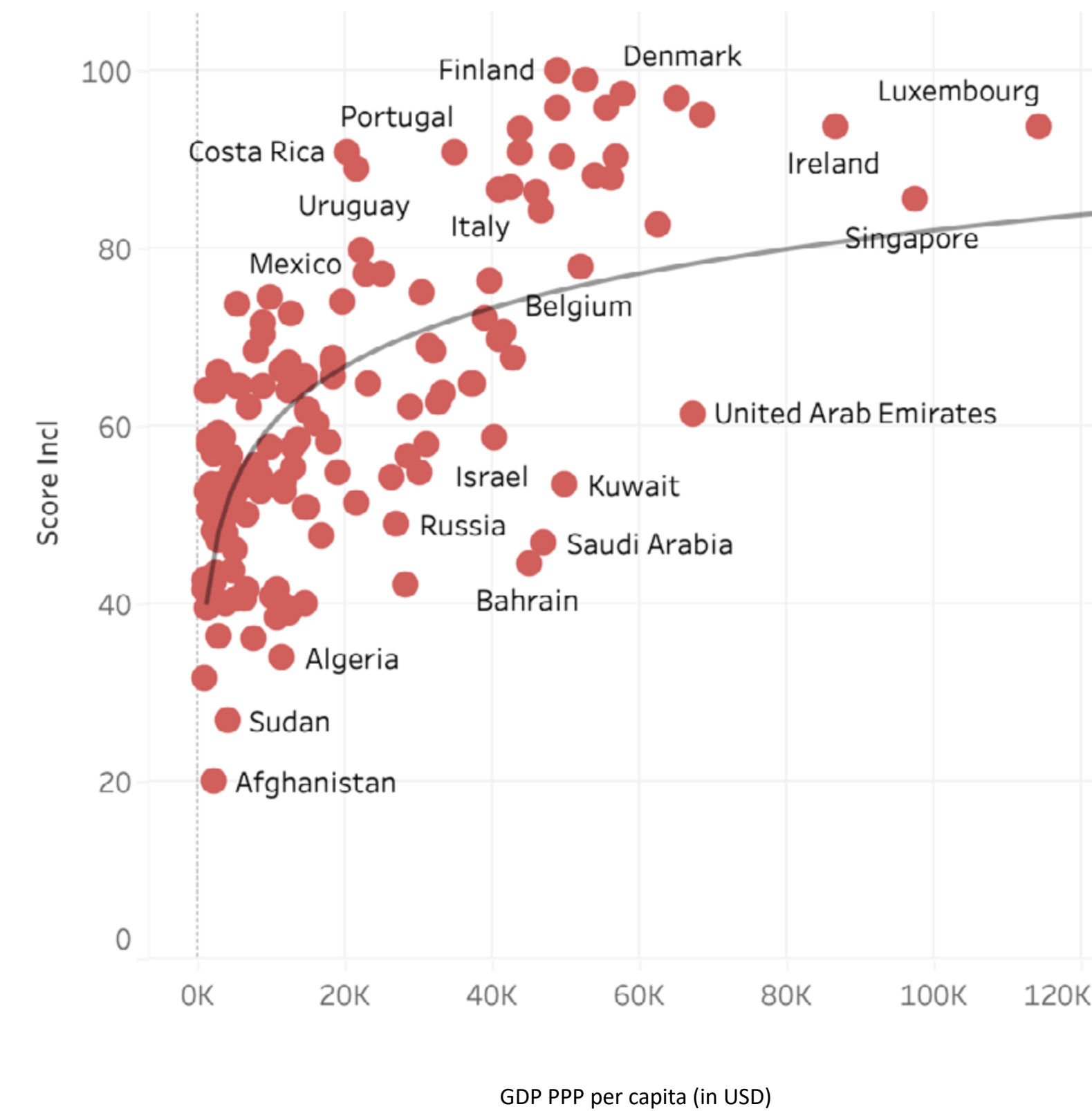


Figure 8 Inclusiveness vs GDP



It is clear that GDP is not the sole determinant of youth progress, as there are countries with similar levels of GDP, but with hugely different YPI scores. The Youth Progress Index shows that countries with the highest levels of GDP are not necessarily the top performers with regards to youth progress, and similarly the poorest countries in economic terms are not always those that perform worst.

Generally speaking, there are two scenarios that offer further analysis:

- Countries that achieve similar levels of GDP, but have vastly different youth progress outcomes;
- Countries that achieve similar levels of youth progress at very different levels of GDP.

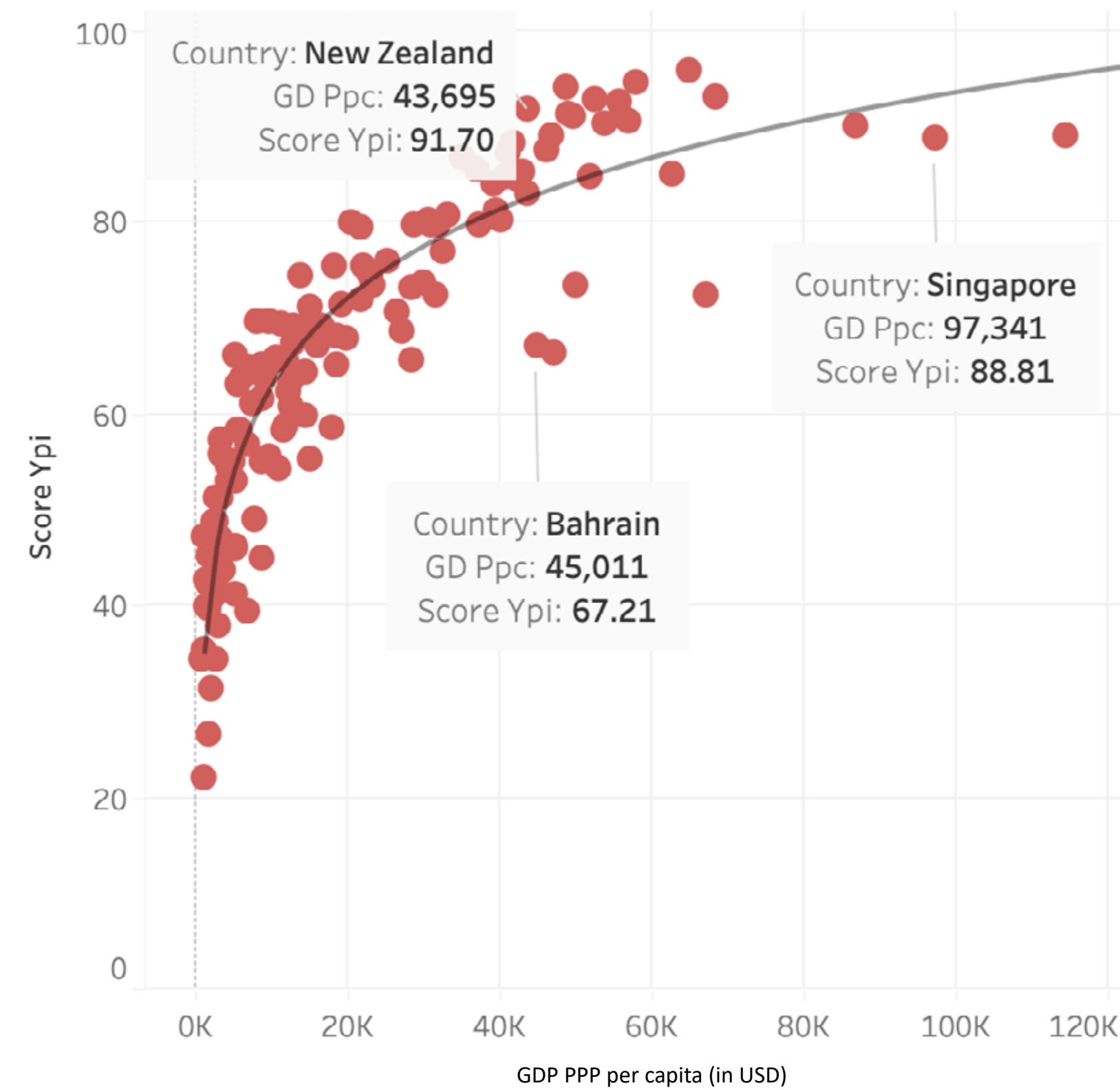
Figure 9 Environmental Quality vs GDP



New Zealand (91,70), for example, has a fairly similar YPI score to Singapore (88,81), with nearly half the GDP per capita. On the other hand, New Zealand also has a much higher YPI score than Bahrain (67,21) on similar levels of GDP.

Both situations can provide valuable information to inform policy and decision-making. Identifying countries with similar levels of GDP and different outcomes of youth progress, and vice-versa, enables us to identify lessons learned, and emulate good practices.

Figure 10 YPI vs GDP pairs



Assessing Countries' Relative Strengths and Weaknesses

The component, dimension, and overall Youth Progress Index scores are scaled from 0 to 100 to provide an intuitive scale for the interpretation of absolute performance, benchmarking a country against the best and worst-possible scenarios in terms of youth progress performance. However, it is also useful to consider relative performance, comparing the level of youth progress among countries of similar levels of economic development. For example, a lower-income country may have a low score on a certain component, but could greatly exceed typical scores for countries with similar GDP 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 have developed a methodology to present a country's strengths and weaknesses on a relative basis, comparing a country's performance to that of its economic peers. How we define the group of a country's economic peers is explained in the Annex.

Overall, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Nepal are the three countries that overperform the most when considering what would be expected given their level of economic development. On the other side of the spectrum, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates are the worst underperformers, and could be expected to do better in terms of providing for their young people's quality of life.

Figure 1.1 YPI Over and Underperformance

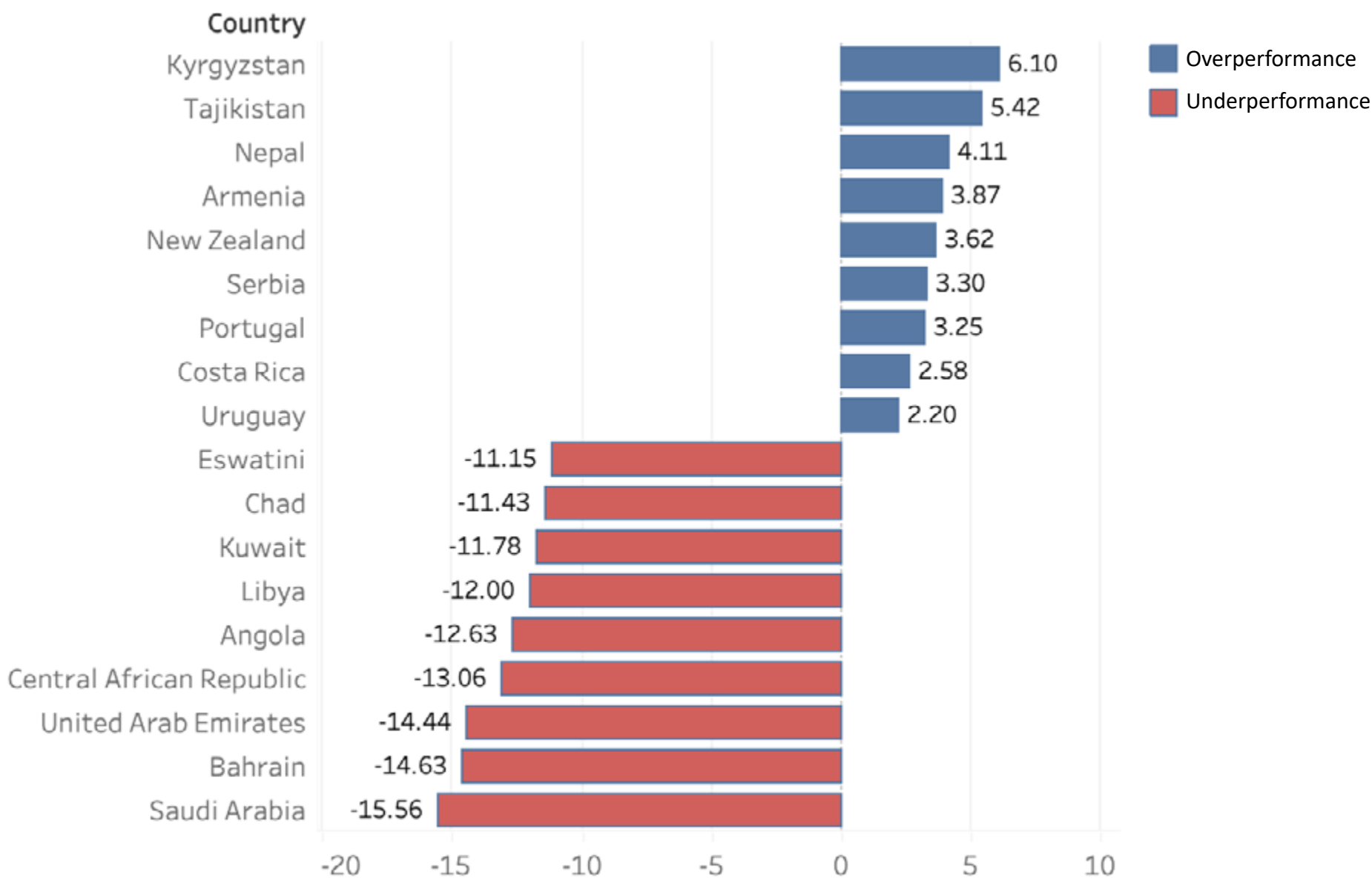
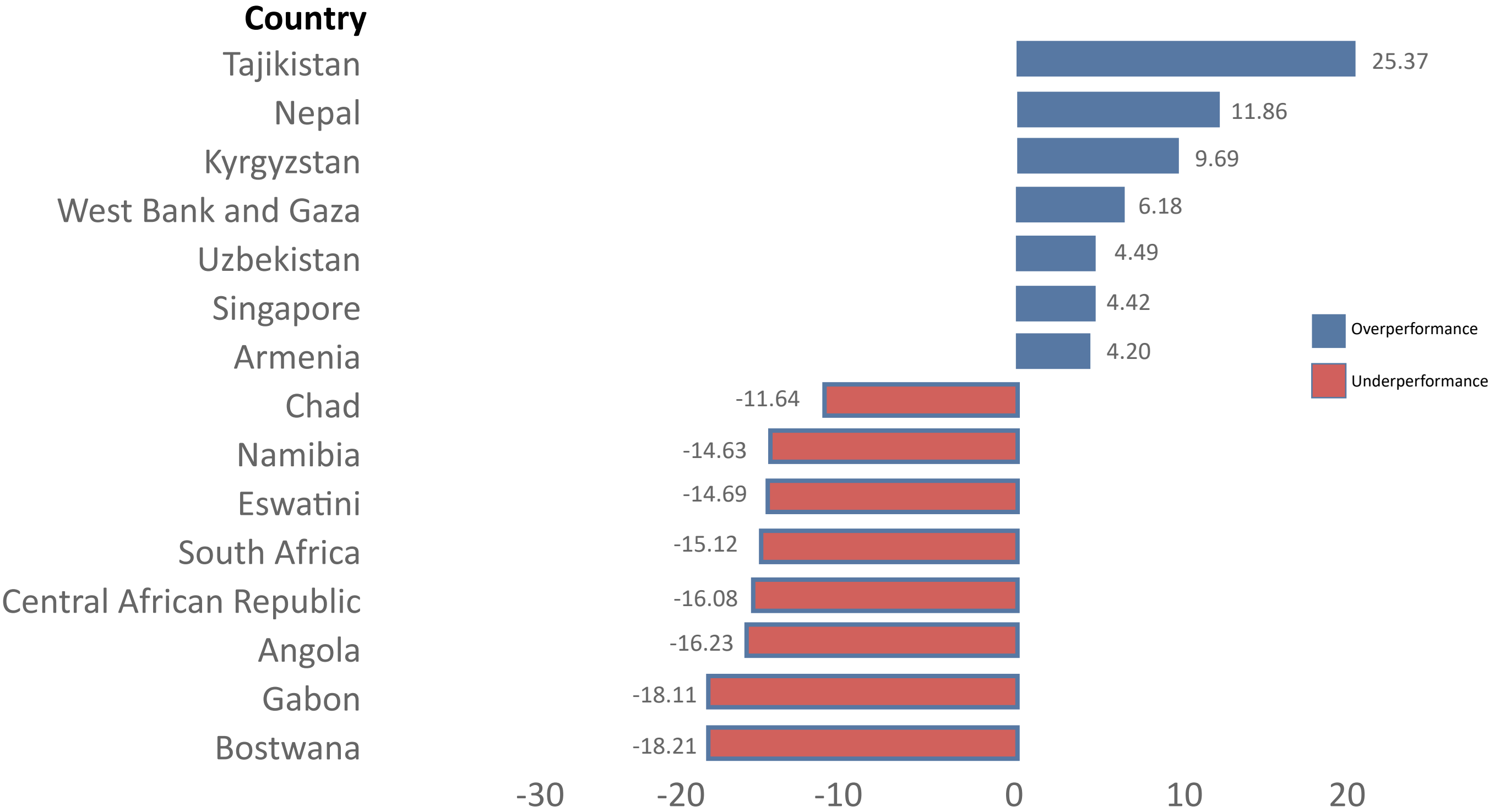


Figure 1.11 shows overperformers and underperformers on the Youth Progress Index. On the horizontal axis, distance to the range of expected YPI scores is measured. For underperformers, distance to the lower bound of that range is shown. For overperformers, distance from the upper bound of that range is presented.

Figure 12: Basic Human Needs Over and Underperformance



When looking at the level of dimensions, Tajikistan, Nepal, and Kyrgyzstan, are again the three countries that over perform their expected scores in Basic Human Needs; Botswana, Gabon, and Angola are the worst underperformers.

In Foundations of Wellbeing, Kyrgyzstan, Jamaica and Uruguay are the highest overperformers, meaning that at their level of economic development, they are the most successful in achieving positive wellbeing outcomes for their youth. The worst underperformers in this regard are Equatorial Guinea, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates.

Figure 13 Foundations of Wellbeing Over and Underperformance

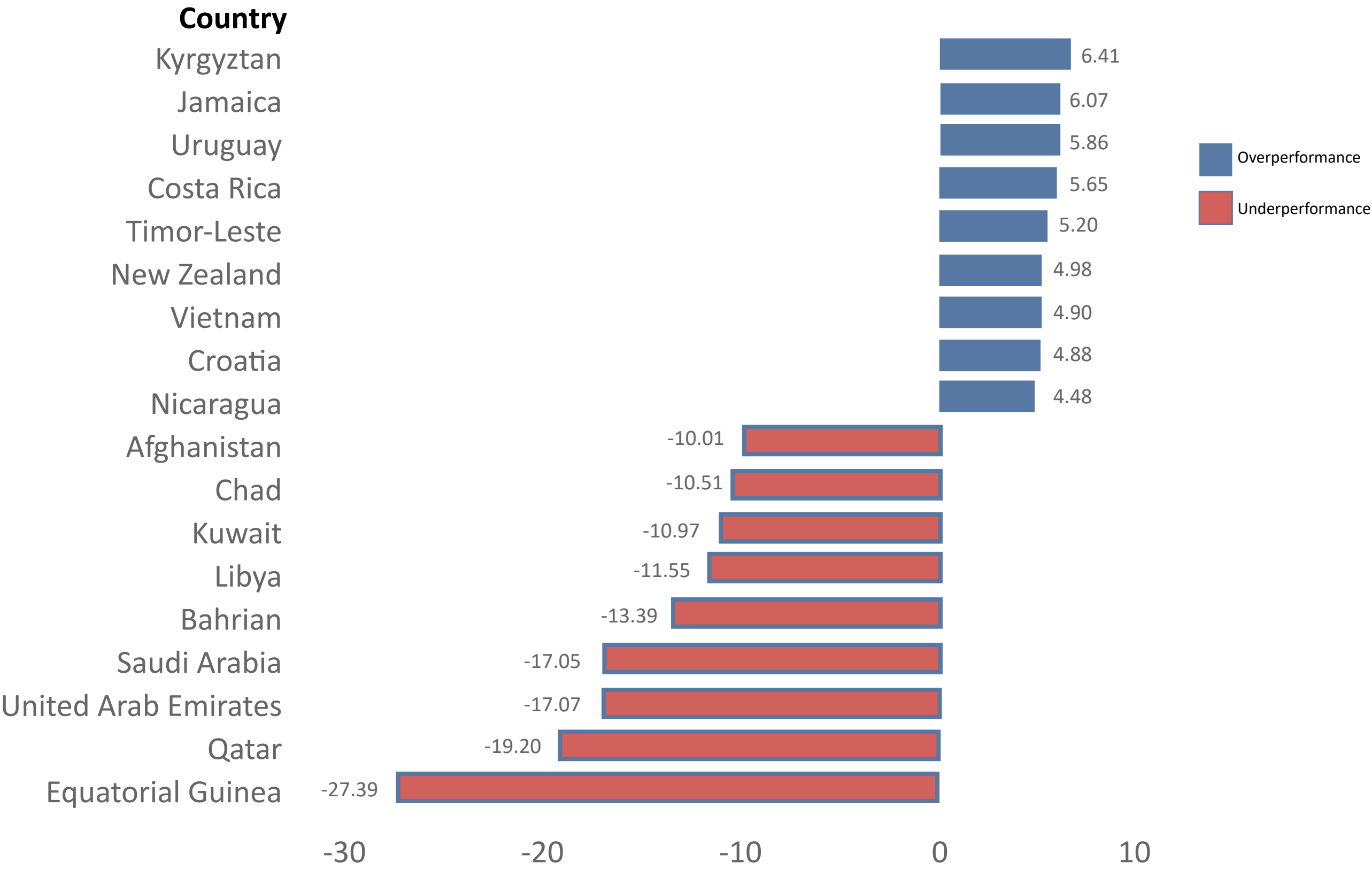
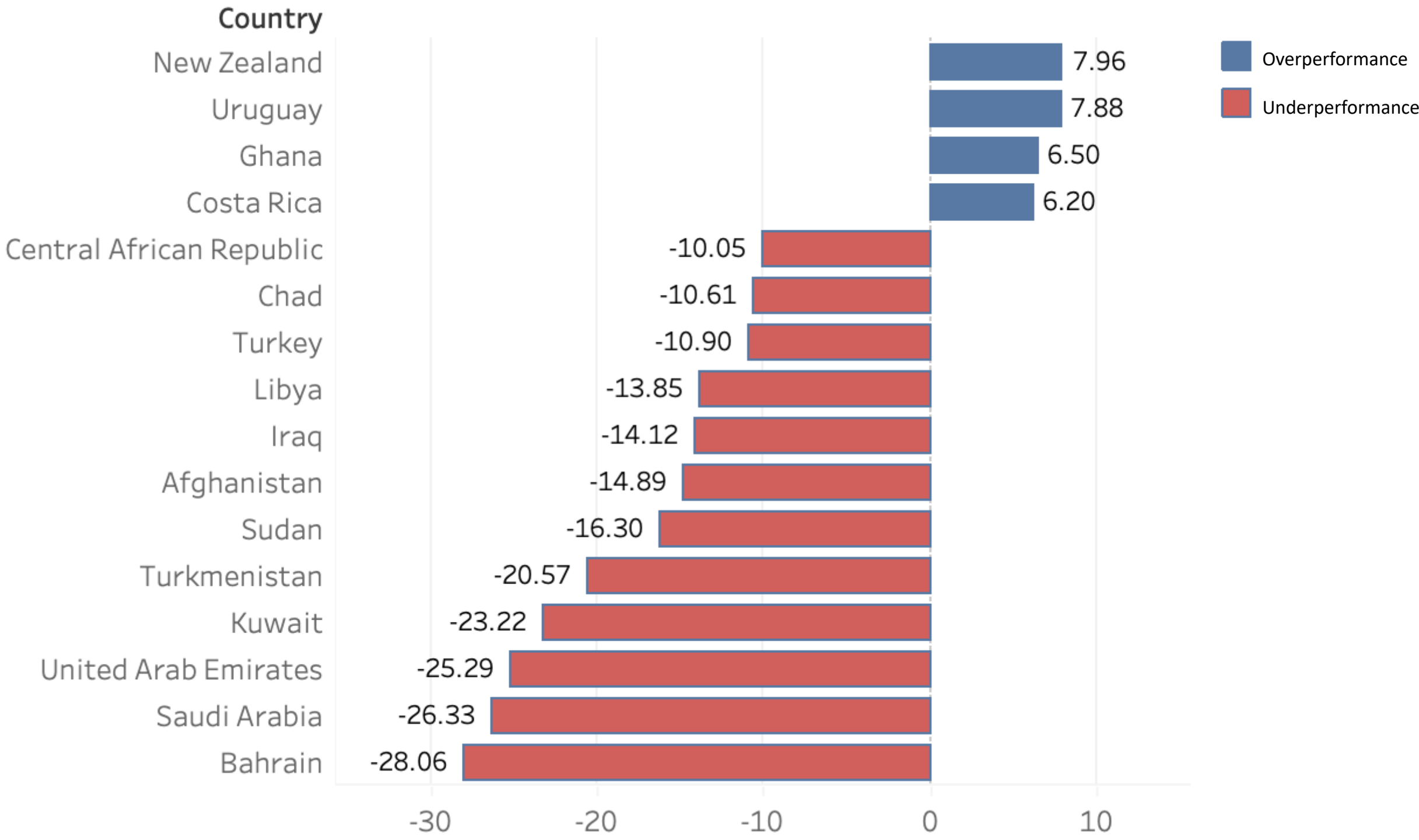


Figure 14 Opportuntiy Over and Underperformance



In the Opportunity dimension, the highest overperformers are New Zealand, Uruguay, and Ghana; the worst underperformers are Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

For those components where we found a weak relationship with GDP per capita, namely Environmental Quality, Personal Rights, and Inclusiveness, highlighting overperformers allows us to identify countries where further research could be conducted to find good practices. In Environmental Quality, the top overperformers are Finland, Nicaragua, New Zealand, and Costa Rica. In Personal Rights, they are Ghana, Cabo Verde, Gambia, The, Sao Tome and Principe.

Figure 15 Environmental Quality Over and Underperformance

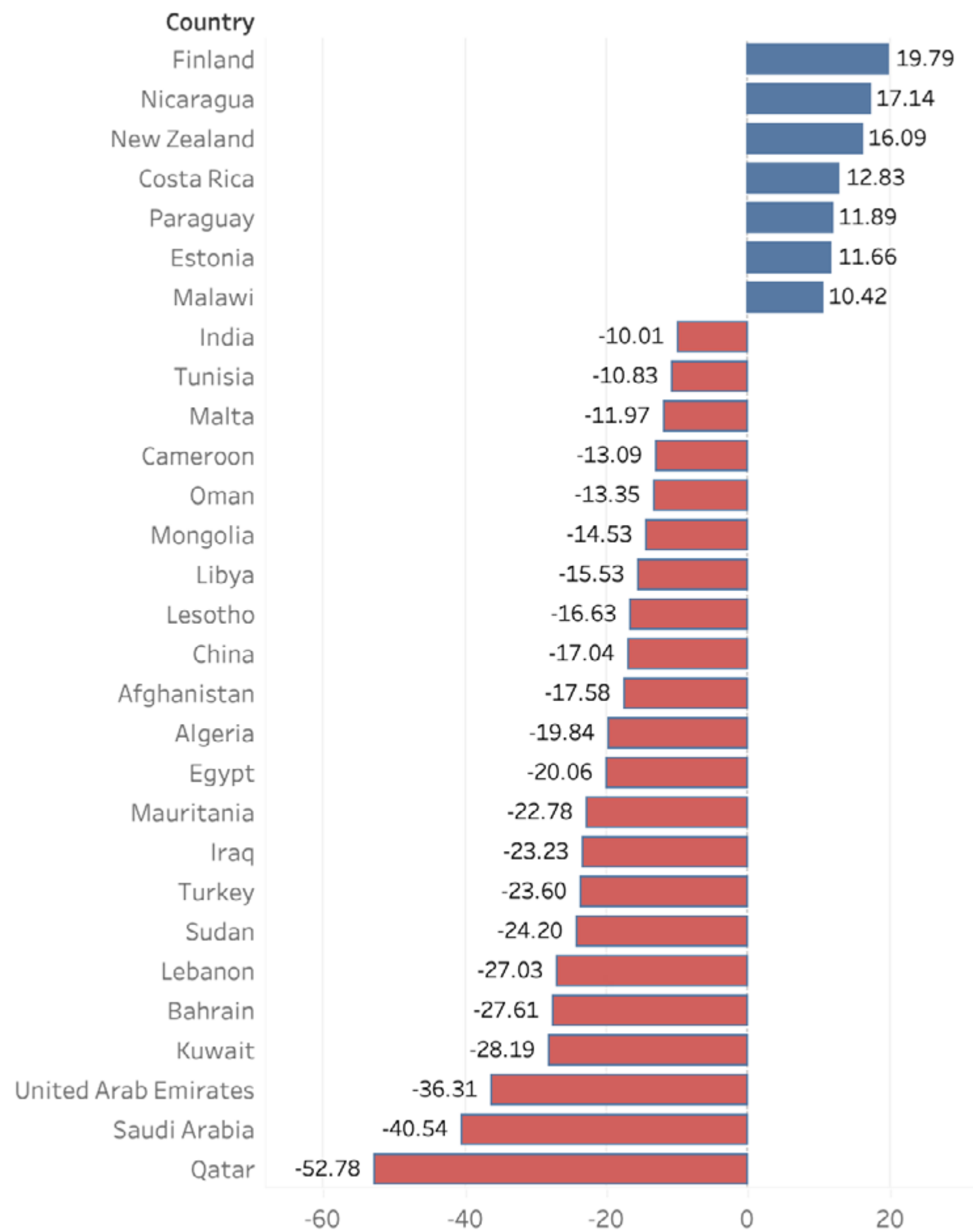


Figure 16 Personal Rights Over and Underperformance

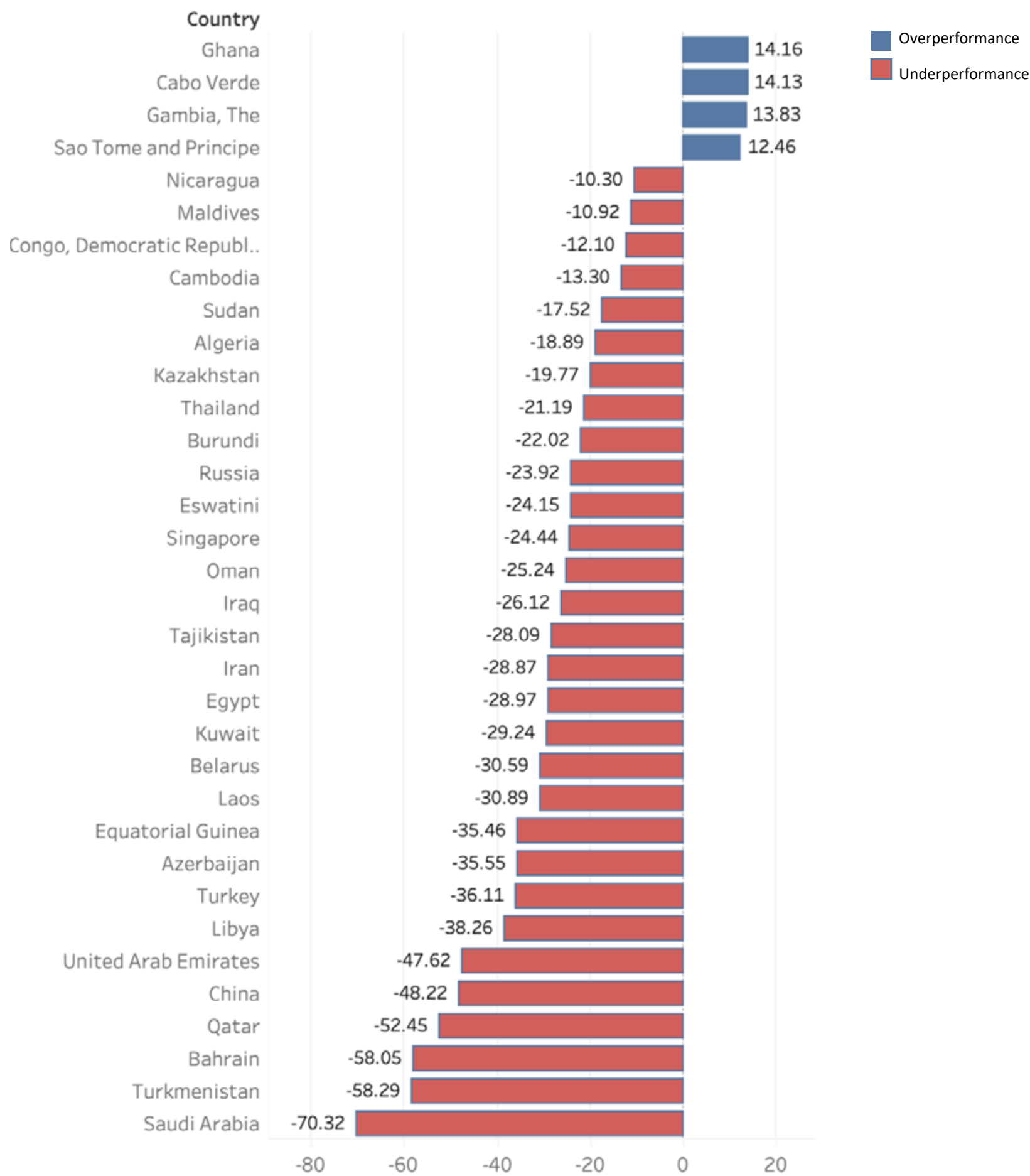
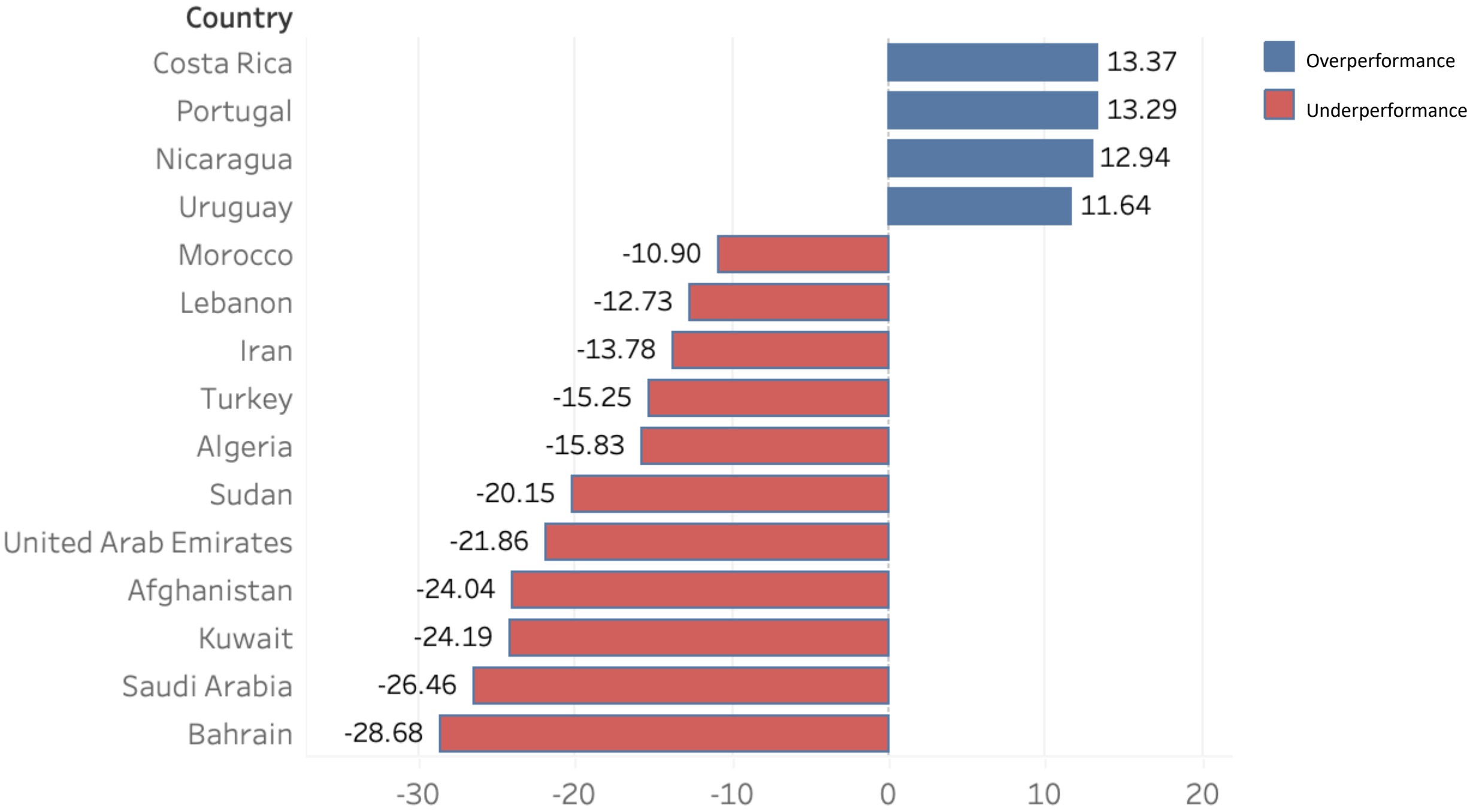


Figure 17 Inclusiveness Over and Underperformance

In Inclusiveness, the top overperformers are Costa Rica, Portugal, Nicaragua and Uruguay.



FOCUS ON THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

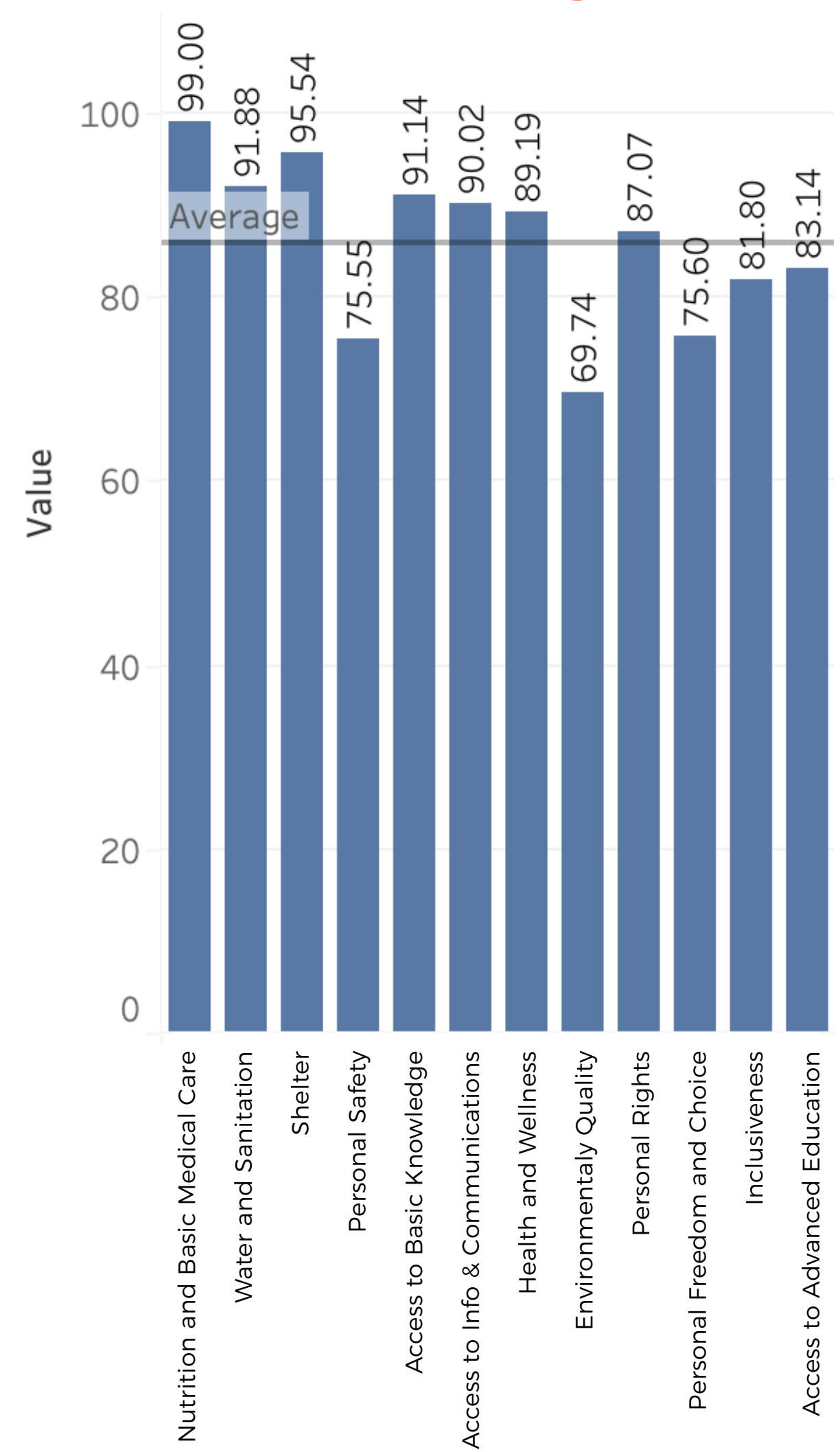
EU Member States performance

Overall, European Union Member States do well in terms of their performance on the Youth Progress Index. All 27 Member States fall within the first 47 positions of the global ranking. This means that compared to the rest of the world, they provide a generally good quality of life for young people, and that young people in Europe are more likely to see their rights realised.

RANK	COUNTRY	YPI SCORE
1	Norway	95,80
2	Denmark	94,62
3	Finland	94,03
4	Switzerland	93,14
5	Sweden	92,81
6	Iceland	92,47
7	New Zealand	91,70
8	Canada	91,30
9	Austria	91,08
10	Australia	90,90
11	Netherlands	90,62
12	Germany	90,21
13	Ireland	89,94
14	United Kingdom	89,11
15	Luxembourg	88,94
16	Singapore	88,81
17	Japan	88,30
18	France	87,46
19	Spain	87,14
20	Portugal	86,62
21	Estonia	85,47
22	Korea, Republic of	85,22
23	United States	84,98

RANK	COUNTRY	YPI SCORE
24	Belgium	84,70
25	Czechia	84,65
26	Italy	84,39
27	Slovenia	83,97
28	Malta	83,07
29	Cyprus	81,14
30	Poland	80,76
31	Israel	80,23
32	Greece	80,09
33	Costa Rica	79,86
34	Lithuania	79,69
35	Croatia	79,69
36	Latvia	79,68
37	Slovakia	79,59
38	Uruguay	79,48
39	Hungary	76,94
40	Chile	75,97
41	Argentina	75,50
42	Serbia	75,37
43	Armenia	74,33
44	Mauritius	74,33
45	Romania	73,67
46	Kuwait	73,36
47	Bulgaria	73,35

Figure 18 EU27 Average scores



If the EU27 were a country, it would have a YPI score of 85,81 and be ranked in between Estonia and Portugal in the 21st position. Overall, EU Member States provide high levels of Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Shelter, Water and Sanitation, as well as Access to Basic Knowledge. They face challenges, however, in Personal Safety, Environmental Quality, Personal Freedom and Choice, and Inclusiveness.

Figure 18 shows the average scores of the EU27 as a whole on each component of the Youth Progress Index. The grey line shows the level of the EU27 on the YPI as a whole.

The European Union over the last 10 years

Having data over 10 years enables us to further analyse the evolution of the EU's overall performance from 2011 to 2020.

Overall, young people in the EU have seen improvements in the Foundations of Wellbeing and Opportunity dimensions, but stagnation in Basic Human needs. There have even been signs of decline in the last 3 years in some of the indicators for Basic Human Needs and Foundations of Wellbeing.

The most significant improvements have been seen in Access to Information and Communications, and the worst declines were in Water and Sanitation.

Figure 19 EU 2011–2020

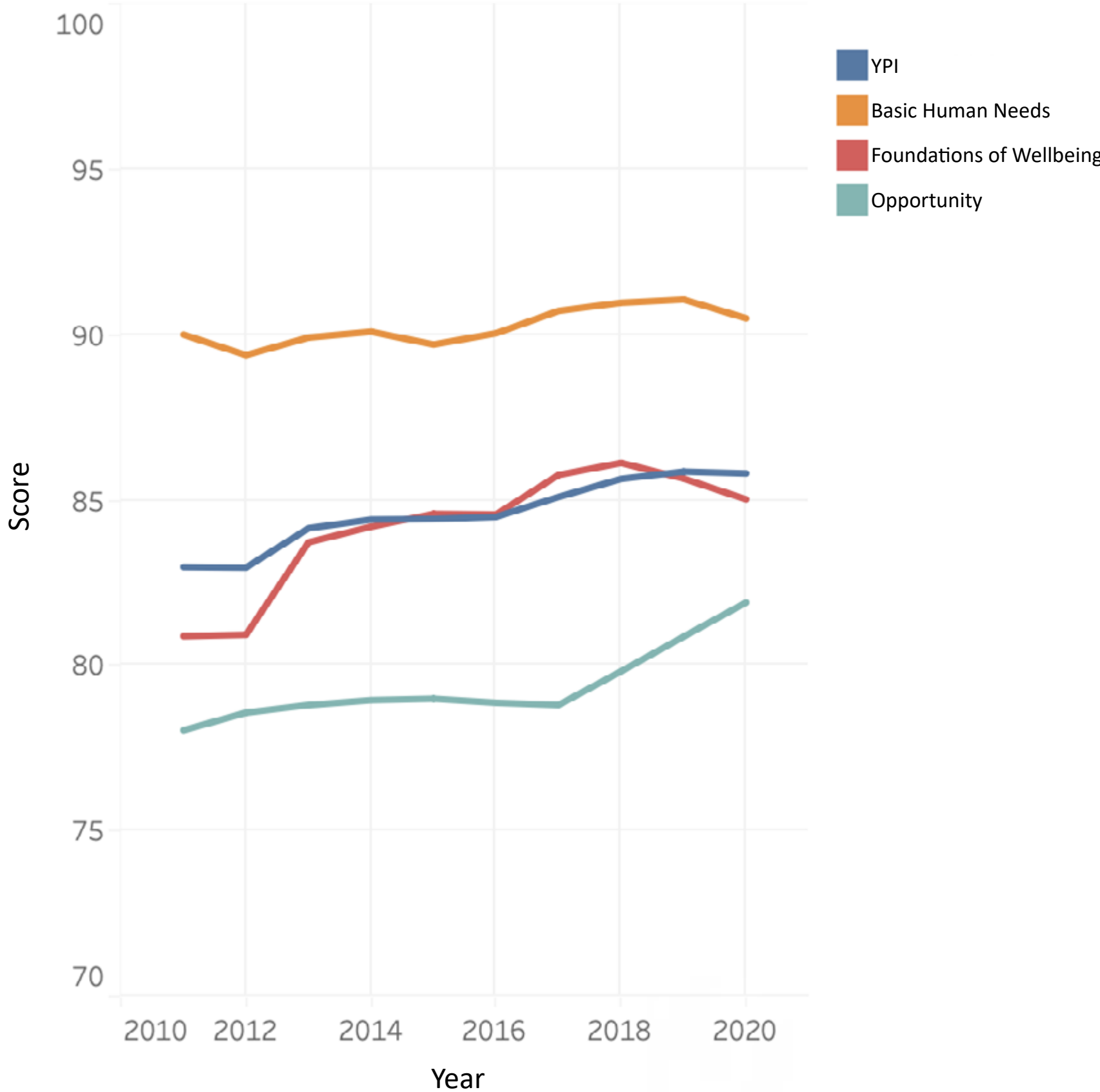
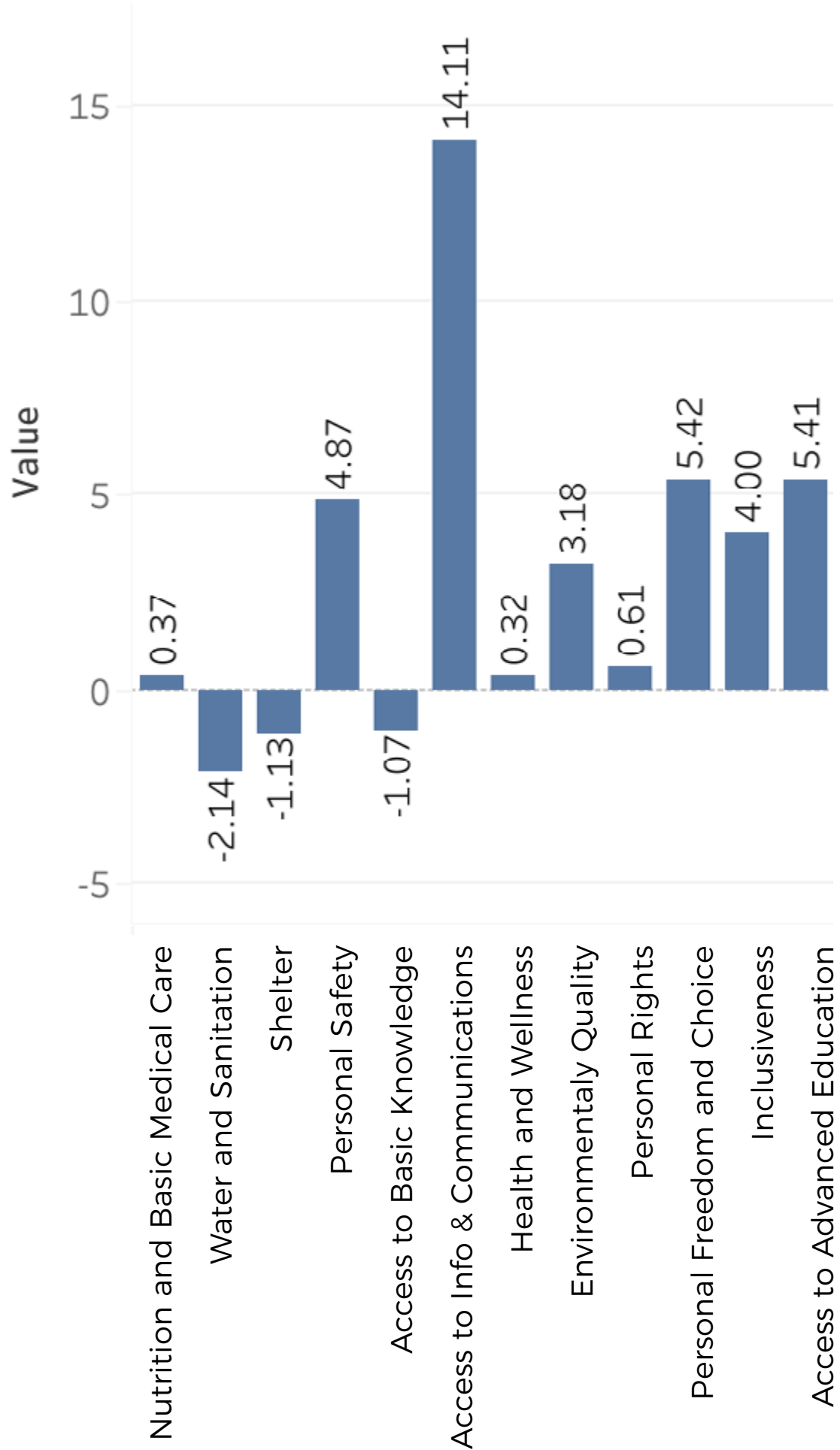


Figure 20 EU27 2011–2020 by component



YPI vs GDP: Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses

When analysing EU Member States’ performance on the Youth Progress Index against their GDP per capita (PPP), we find a strong relationship ($R\text{-squared} = 0.579$), meaning that countries with higher levels of income per capita generally perform better on the Youth Progress Index. Similarly to our global analysis, we can identify countries that achieve vastly different youth progress outcomes despite similar levels of GDP, as well as countries that achieve similar levels of youth progress at very different levels of GDP.

Figure 21 YPI vs GDP (EU)

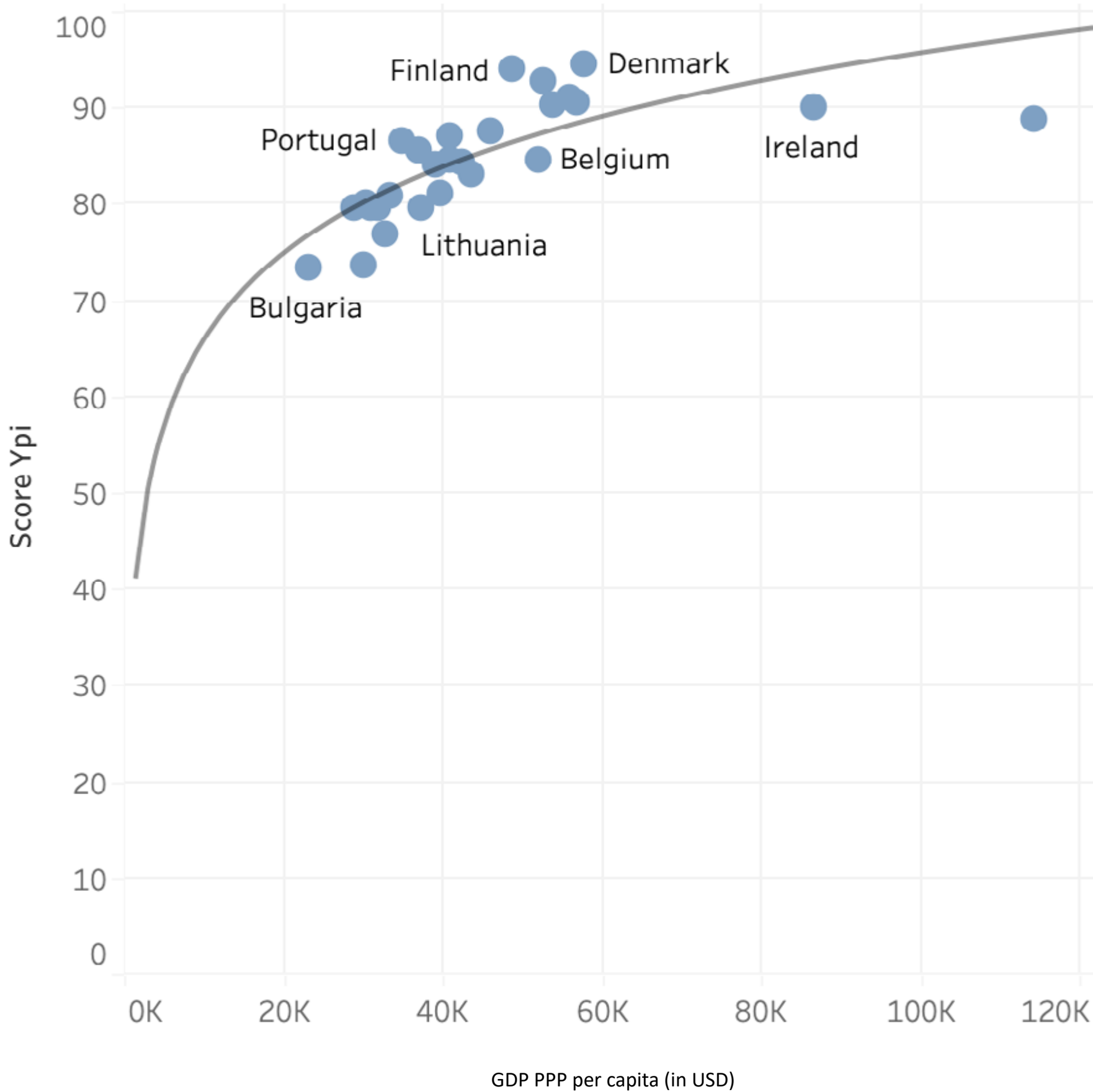
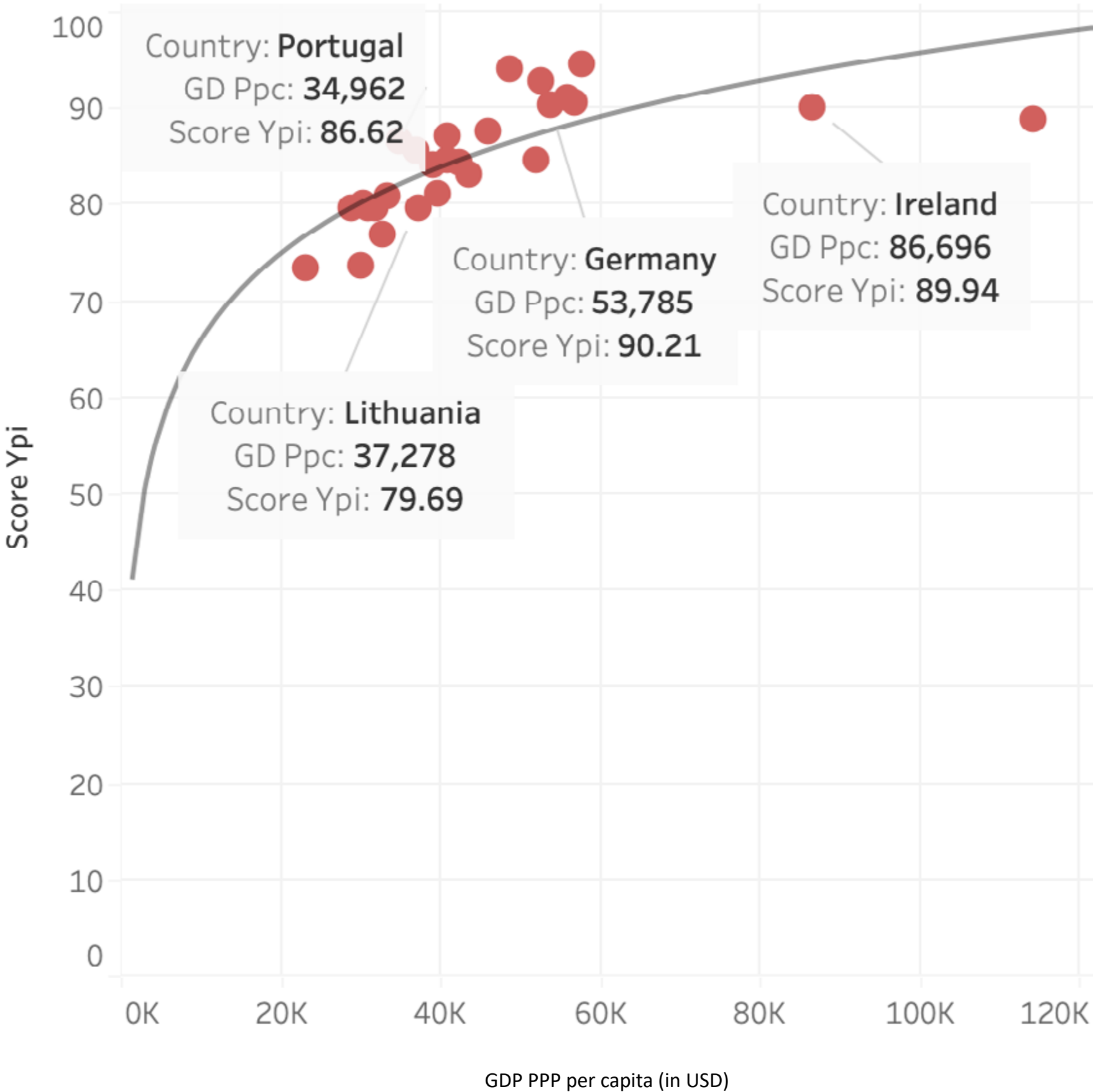


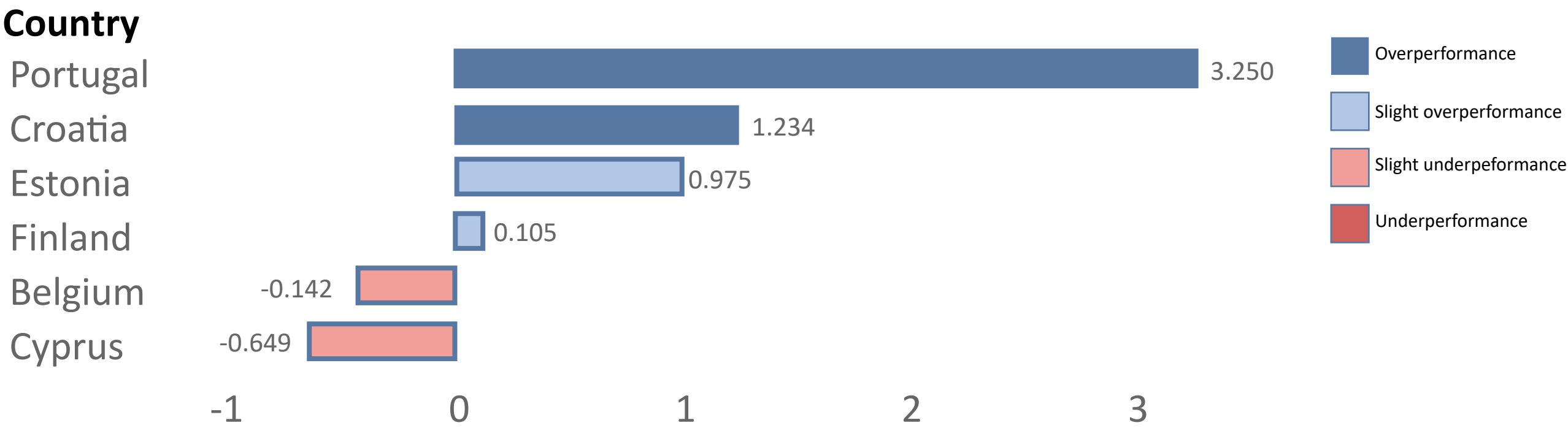
Figure 22 YPI vs GDP pairs (EU)



Portugal (86.62) and Lithuania (79.69), for example, have similar levels of GDP per capita but with different levels of Youth Progress, with Portugal achieving significantly higher social outcomes for its youth. Similarly, Germany (90.21) and Ireland (89.94) achieve similar scores on the Youth Progress Index, despite Ireland having significantly higher levels of GDP per capita.

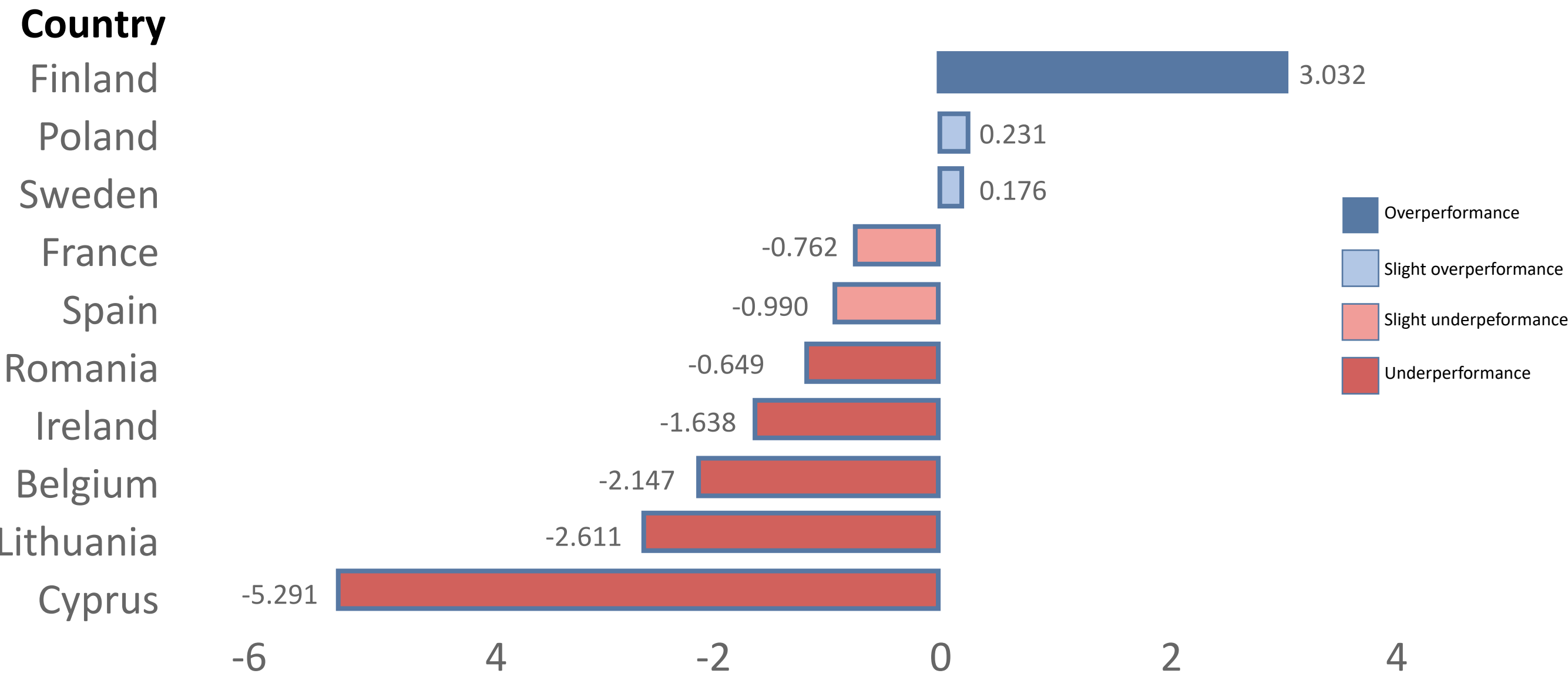
Portugal, Croatia and Estonia are overperformers in the overall Youth Progress Index, meaning that they provide better overall quality of life to their young people compared to their economic peers (based on a global comparison) in terms of GDP per capita⁶. Cyprus and Belgium are underperformers of the Youth Progress Index, meaning that they could be expected to do better considering their level of economic development.

Figure 23 YPI Over and Underperformance



⁶ For the relative performance analysis of EU Member States, we also highlight weak overperformers and weak underperformers. These are the countries that overperform or underperform the range of expected scores by less than one point.

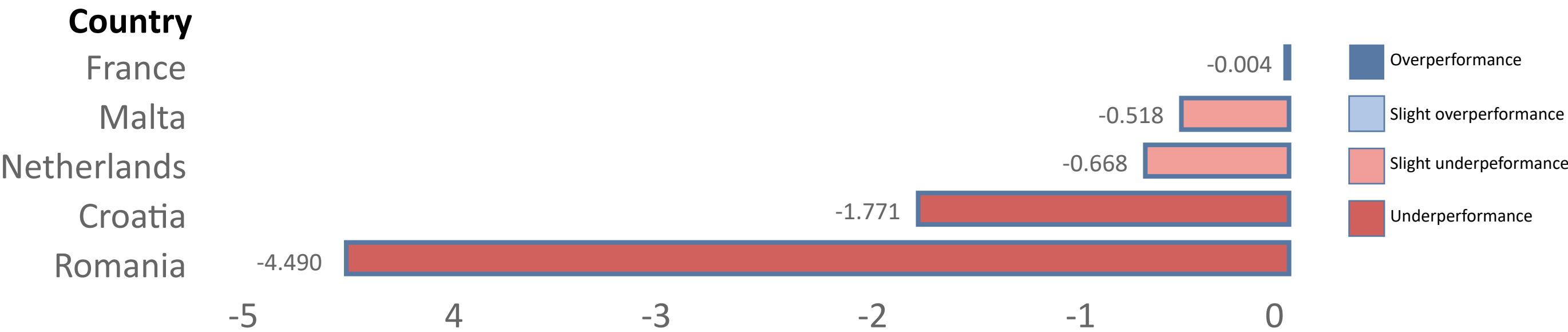
Figure 24 Water and Sanitation Over and Underperformance



In terms of specific components, Finland is the highest overperformer in providing young people with access to clean water and sanitation. Cyprus, Lithuania, and Belgium are the worst underperformers.

Romania, Croatia and the Netherlands could be expected to provide young people with better quality housing and shelter given their economic means.

Figure 25 Shelter Over and Underperformance



In Belgium, personal safety is significantly worse than young people could expect given the countries' economic wealth. Young people in Lithuania and Italy could also expect to feel higher levels of personal safety.

Figure 26 Personal Safety Over and Underperformance

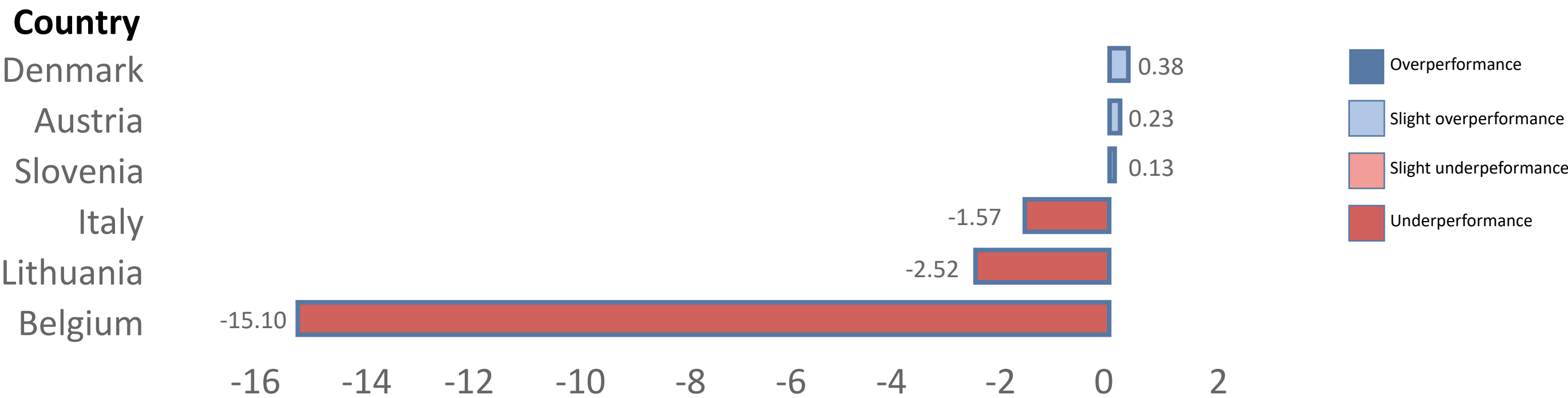
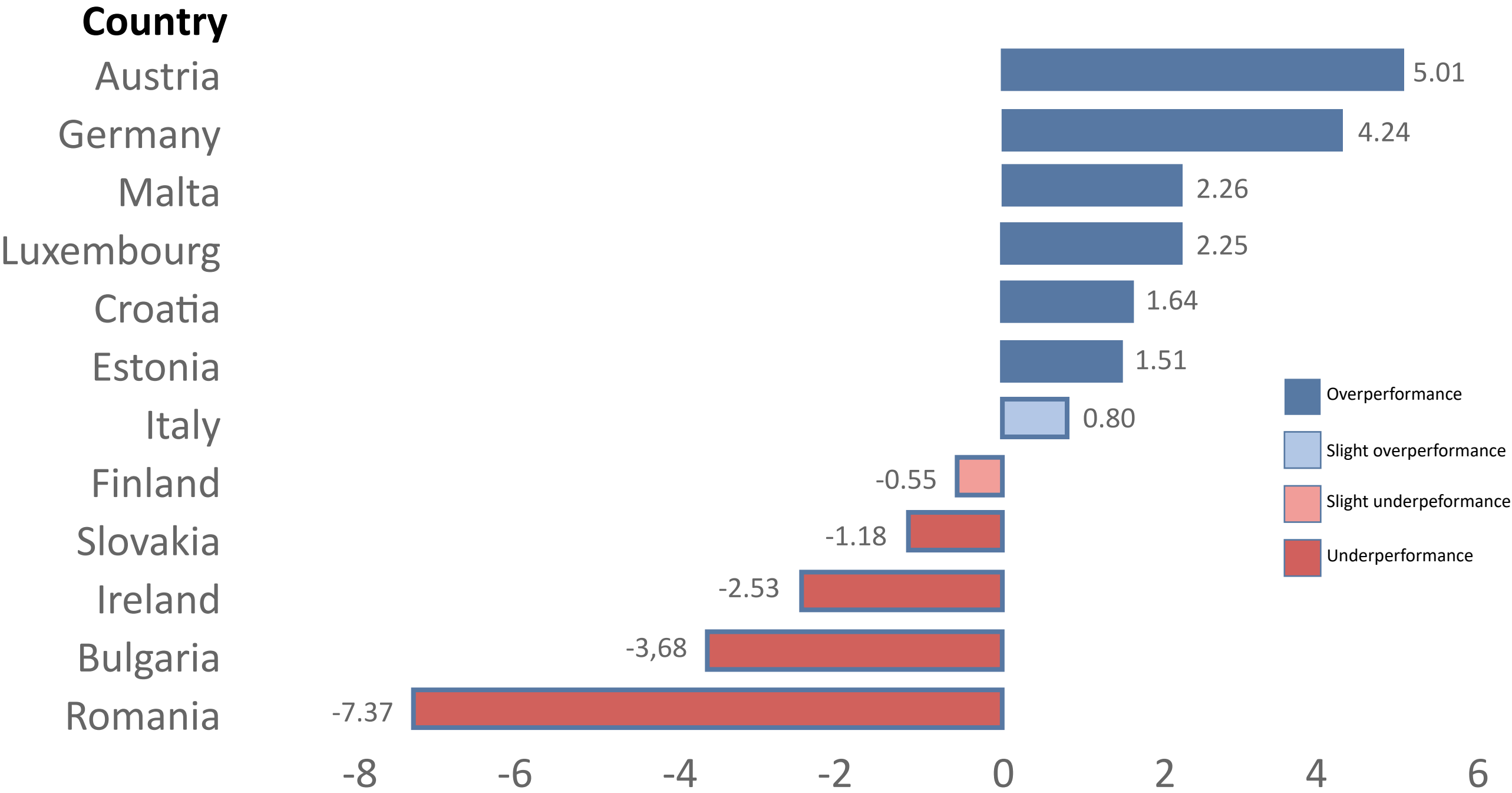


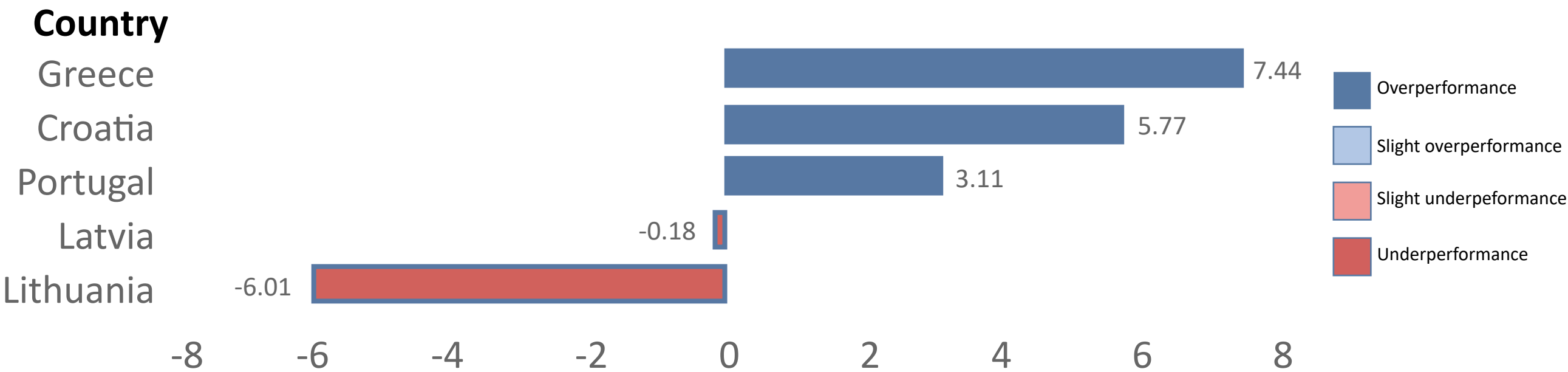
Figure 27 Access to Basic Knowledge Over and Underperformance



Austria, Germany, Malta and Luxembourg are success stories in providing access to basic knowledge and education, with Romania, Bulgaria and Ireland the worst underperforming countries.

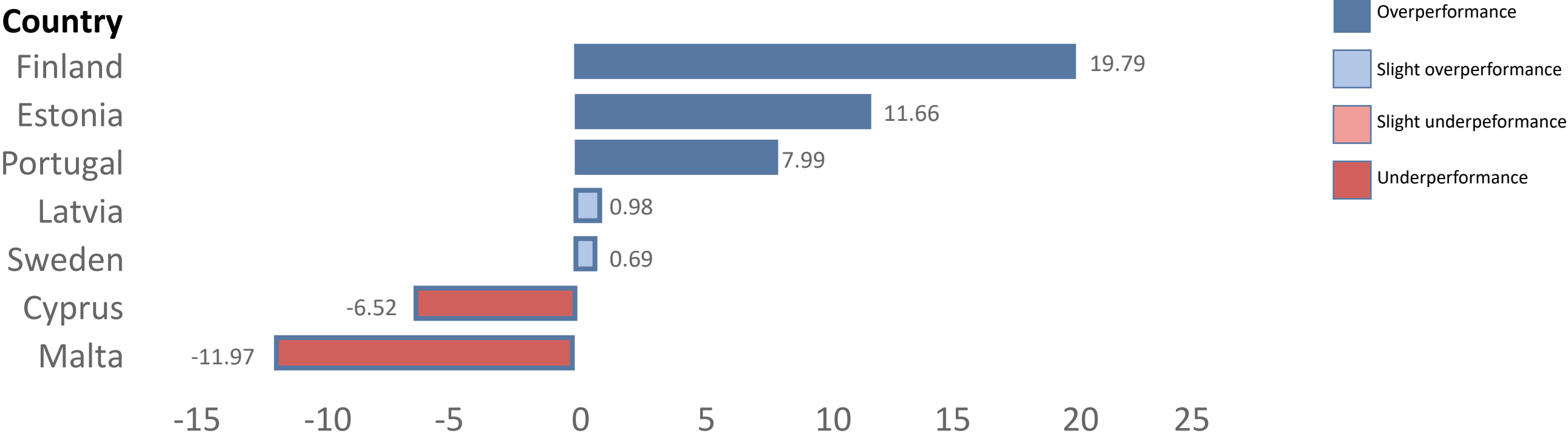
Greece, Croatia and Portugal are the EU countries that are most successful at providing higher levels of health and wellness to their young people given their economic means. Lithuania is the worst underperformer.

Figure 28 Health and Wellness Over and Underperformance



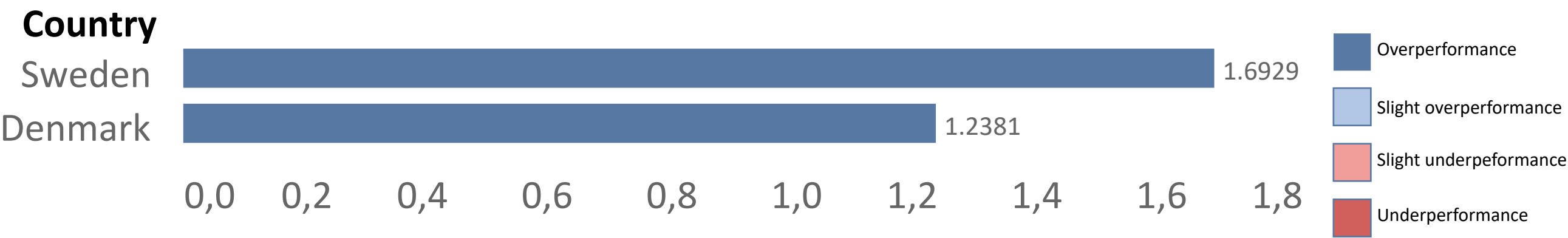
Environmental quality is better than expectations in Finland, Estonia, and Portugal, but Cyprus and Malta should do better given their economic means.

Figure 29 Environmental Quality Over and Underperformance



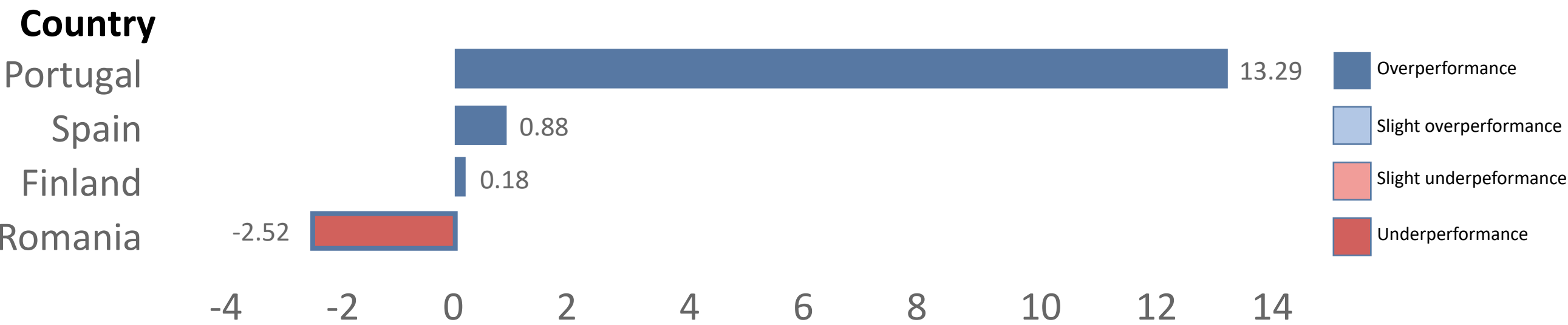
Sweden and Denmark have a positive story to tell in terms of ensuring young people have access to their personal and political rights.

Figure 30 Personal Rights Over and Underperformance



Finally, Portugal is the highest overperformer in terms of Inclusiveness, with Romania being the worst underperformer.

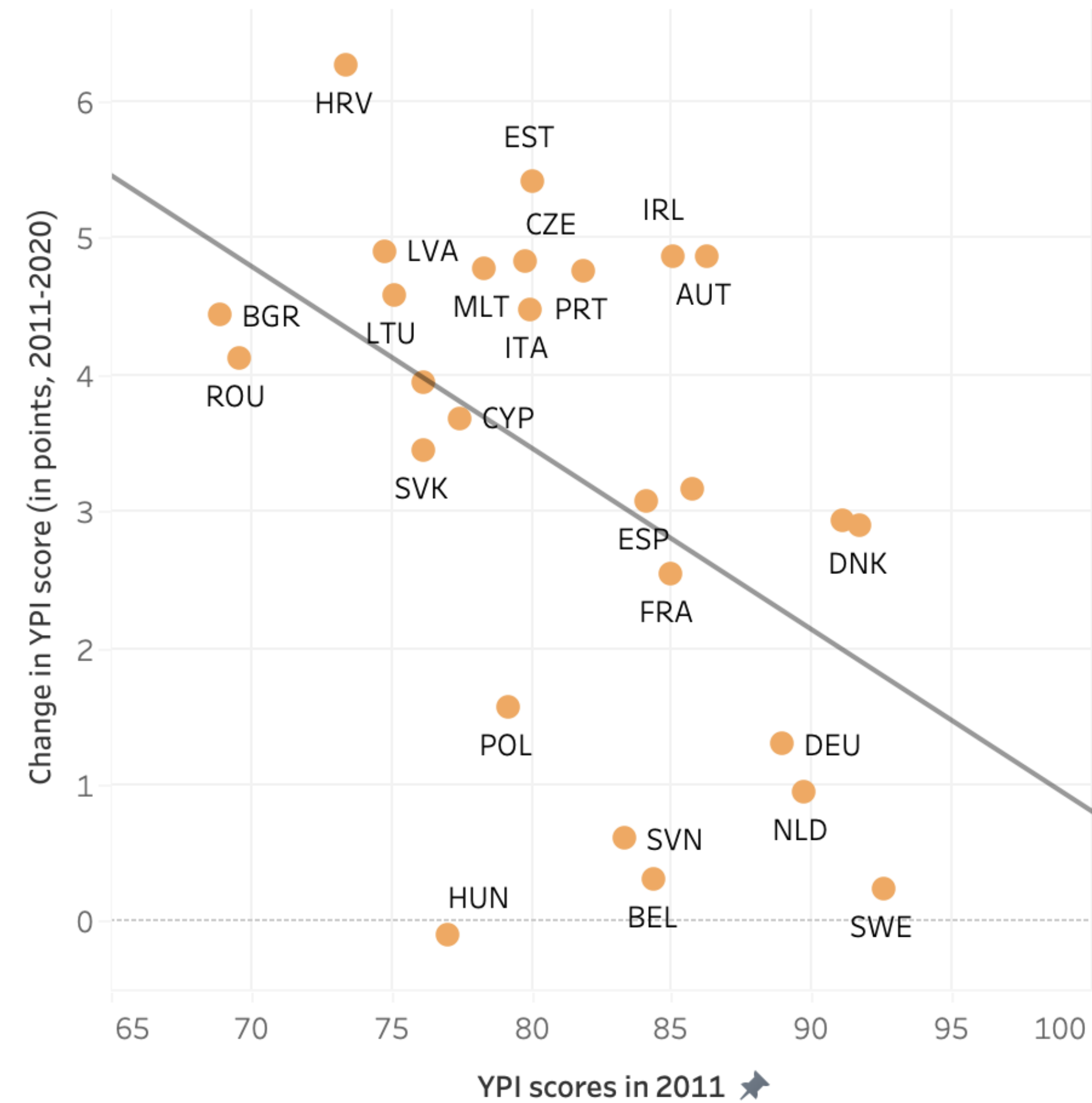
Figure 31 Inclusiveness Over and Underperformance



Analysing the performance of EU Member States over the last 10 years also enables us to identify areas where the EU has seen some form of convergence or divergence.

There has been some convergence in the Youth Progress Index overall, particularly due to increased convergence in Access to Information and Communications, Personal Freedoms and Choice, and Access to Advanced Education⁷. There have been no areas of divergence among EU Member States.

Figure 32 YPI scores since 2011 (EU)



⁷ 7 Graphs showing the convergence in these three components can be found in the Annex.



CHAPTER 2

THEMATIC SPOTLIGHTS: YOUTH & DIGITALISATION, THE LABOUR MARKET, AND CIVIC SPACE

In addition to the Youth Progress Index, in this report, we look at three major social issues that affect young people and their capacity to contribute to decision making processes: their role and position in the transition to a digital society, issues relating to their relationship with the labour market, and the impact of a shrinking civic space. We thus identify a number of variables and data that offer some form of proxy to measure developments within these areas, and analyse them against countries' scores on the Youth Progress Index.

While many of these additional variables and corresponding datasets are not ideal, as very often they do not represent a holistic overview of the realities in those areas, we can only rely on what currently exists and is measured. Measuring civic space, for example, is a challenging exercise, as part of the shrinking of civic space includes restrictions of information and data collection that would provide any evidence of the existence of such restrictions, and any tendency of government pushback against civil society organisations. In this chapter, we therefore rely on a selection of indicators from V-Dem Institute's Varieties of Democracy⁸ that look at general issues around civic space, such as polarisation and peaceful assembly, mobilisation for mass events and associations, and online freedom of expression. They do not cover

all aspects that comprise the concept of shrinking civic space, but still offer the possibility of analysing how this trend affects young people and their capacity to advance social causes. However, an independent and more systematic data collection on this and other issues covered in this report would be needed and should be ensured by competent authorities to be able to measure developments in those areas.

Calculating the correlation coefficients of these additional variables against country scores on the Youth Progress Index and its components allows us to explore the relationship between these trends and young people's capacity to advance their social progress, identify good practices and assess societies' resilience to future crises, whether health-related, economic, environmental or democratic.



⁸ Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). Available at: <https://www.v-dem.net/en/>

TRANSITION TO A DIGITAL SOCIETY: IMPACT ON YOUTH?

More and more aspects of our everyday lives are being affected by digital technologies. For youth in Europe to flourish in the emerging digital revolution, new policies, rights, laws, and consumer protections must guarantee that democratic norms, basic human rights, inclusion, and participation are safeguarded in the socio-digital landscape. Young people need to be included in the decisions that will shape the role digitalisation plays in our lives, and in the governance of digital tools.

Young people face the emerging trend of new technologies disrupting labour markets across the world, and posing new challenges in accessing their social and economic rights. Advancements in digitalisation, robotisation, and automation are taking place at an unprecedented rate, leading to a “Fourth Industrial Revolution”⁹. As technology begins to replace humans in performing certain tasks, millions of jobs risk disappearing. It is estimated that 20-40% of jobs specifically undertaken by young people will no longer be performed by humans in the future¹⁰. Therefore, job scarcity and worker displacement are likely to grow, while competition over a limited set of jobs and poorer working conditions both increase. On the other hand, the digital revolution may also create new job opportunities for young people, especially in some emerging sectors where new skills

are required, and young people should be proactively supported to be able to access those opportunities.

The digitalisation of the workplace is already having significant impacts on youth. The emergence of platform work, primarily taken on by young people, has led to the growth of new non-standard forms of work that often include precarious working conditions such as low wages, no basic rights like paid sick leave, and lack of access to social protection. Other examples include the effects of digital tools on people’s work-life balance. Use of emails, smartphones, instant messaging have blurred the line between our private and personal lives as employees become accessible to employers at any time or place. Increased use of technology in the workplace raises concerns about the production of data, the ownership of this data, and workers’ right to privacy. Technology that tracks the productivity of employees can be used unjustly and violate their rights. These challenges highlight that policies must be put in place to ensure that young people’s social and economic rights are protected in the rapid digitalisation in the labour market.

Digital skills, it can be assumed, will become more and more important, and countries where young people have the



⁹ European Youth Forum, 2019. “Pineapple Report: Youth in Europe face the Fourth Industrial Revolution”. Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/181213-ThePineappleReport.pdf>

¹⁰ European Youth Forum, 2019. “The Future of Work and Youth”. Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Future%20of%20Work%20-%20online%20version%202.pdf>

Figure 33: Basic digital skills and Opportunity

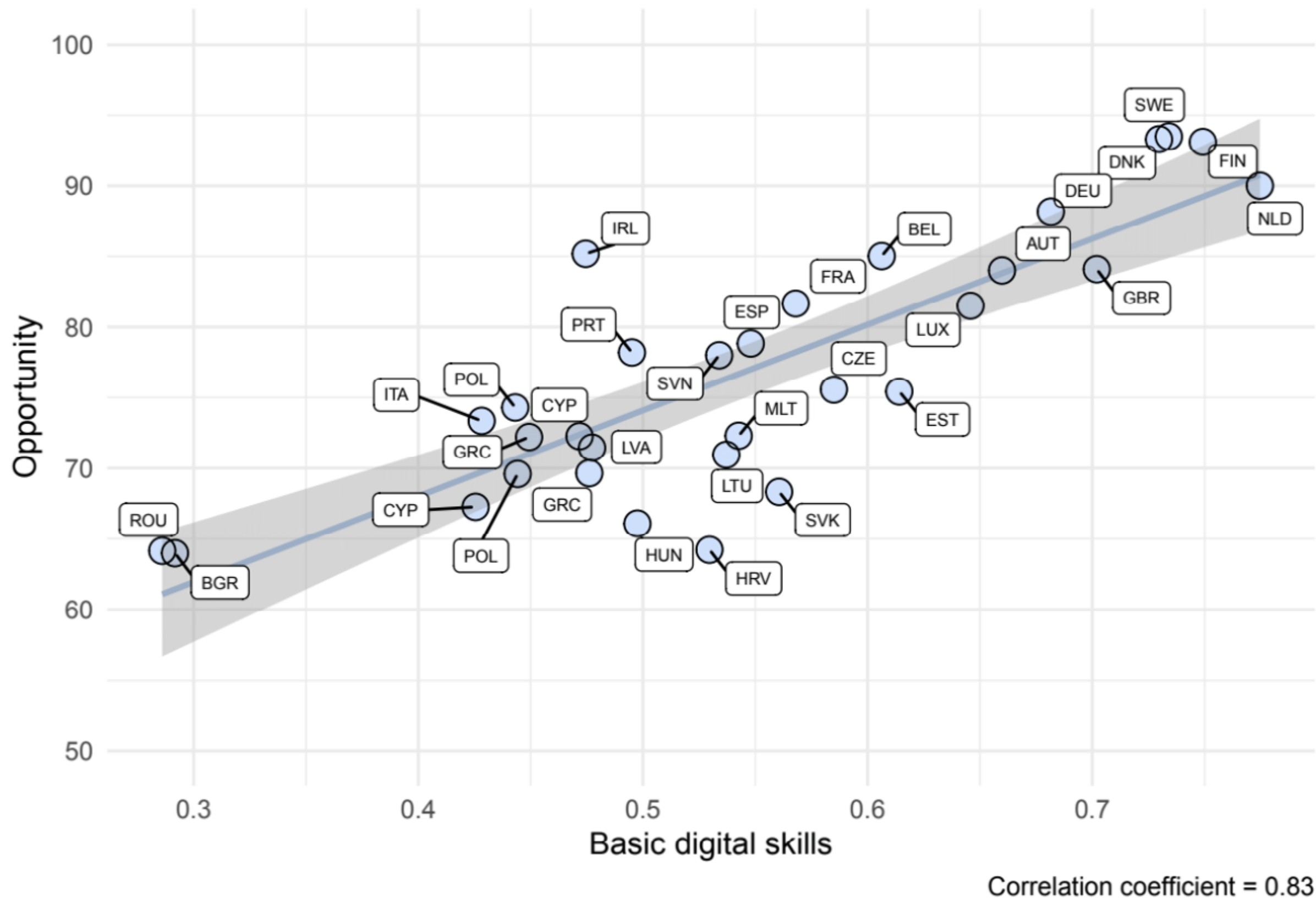


Figure 33 shows the relationship between levels of basic digital skills in a population (on the X axis) as measured in the European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)¹¹, and their corresponding performance on the Opportunity dimension of the Youth Progress Index (Y axis).

highest level of digital skills will be the best prepared for the digital age. This premise is confirmed when analysing the relationship between levels of basic digital skills and Opportunity in the Youth Progress Index. We find a strong relationship between these two variables, which points to a continued global digital divide caused by varying access to digital infrastructure and skills to use it among youth, where young people in countries with higher levels of youth progress will continue to be in a better position to fully embrace the opportunities provided by new technologies. If the trend is not reversed with targeted policy measures, we will have a widening digital divide that increases inequalities even further.

Furthermore, also within countries with high levels of youth progress, digital tools and platforms are not necessarily being developed to better include disadvantaged groups of young people, who would normally require specific approaches reflecting their diverse needs¹². The impacts are not only felt in the labour market, but also in access to education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, youth faced significant disruption in their access

¹¹ The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-economy-and-society-index-desi>

¹² Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, 2020. "Social inclusion, digitalisation and young people". Available at https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/053120+-Study+on+SID+Web.pdf/0057379c-2180-dd3e-7537-71c468f-3cf9d?fbclid=IwAR34n763ROD8XTkGeUVk-vHCL8dVBXZQchd-SL4SqCfG_ykpRm9JPX94Yt7c

to education, but this was felt much more strongly by those from poorer or more marginalised backgrounds. According to the OECD, 1 in 5 young people from disadvantaged schools do not have access to a computer for schoolwork, impacting on the ability to continue learning¹³. To address these structural inequalities, policies must endorse intersectionality and include a diverse set of stakeholders into all levels of decision making.

At the same time, the digitalisation of society gives lawmakers new tools to communicate with and query a broader and diverse range of people about policy, including social media tools. These new forms of participation offer great opportunities for more inclusive politics, especially considering that many young people prefer alternative forms of participation to those of a more conventional nature like voting in elections¹⁴. This does require legislation to safeguard digital rights, such as laws to protect privacy and personal data, and policies to enhance digital and media literacy skills, and avoiding that young people are exposed to misinformation and unethical behaviour.

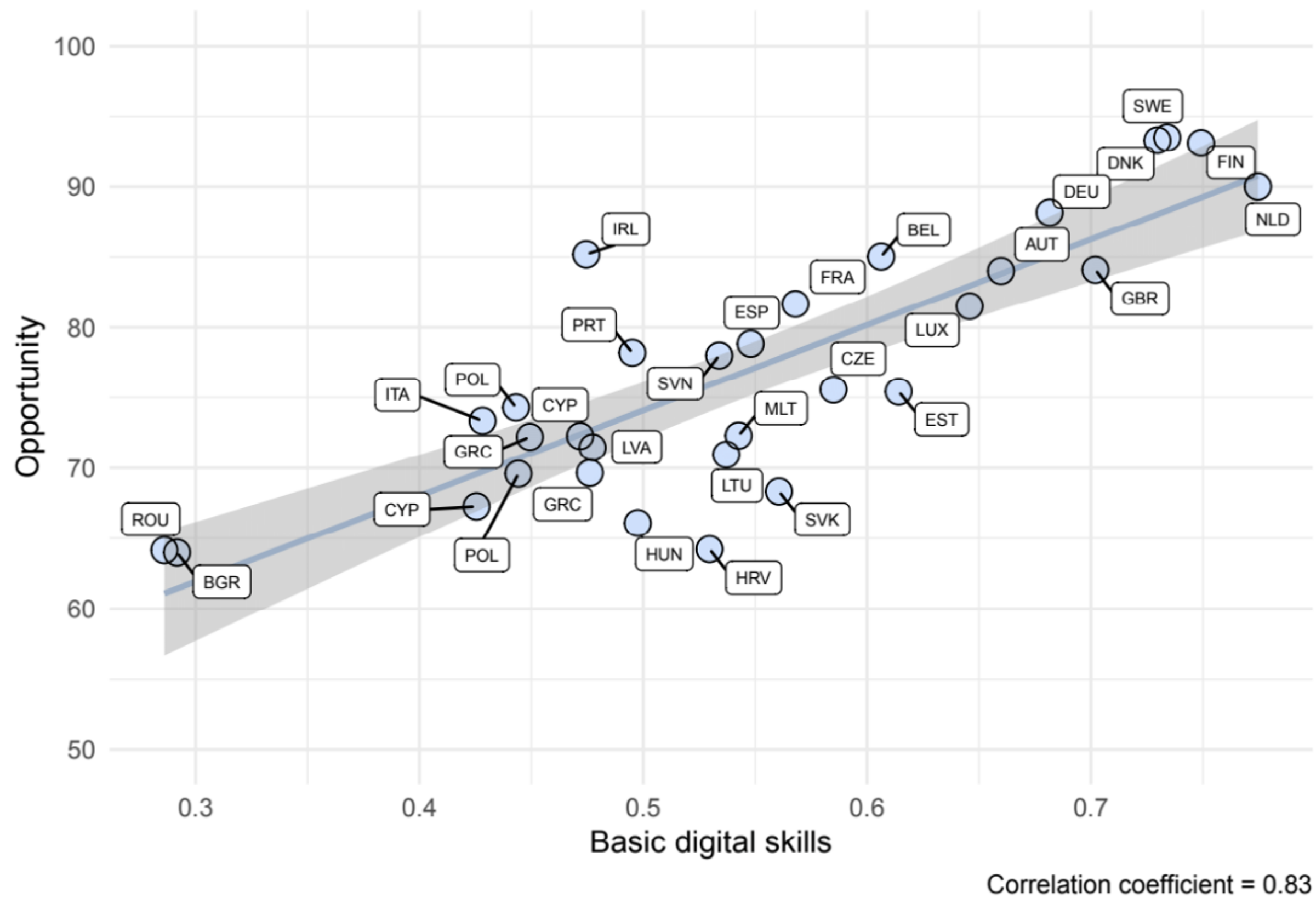
This is important as our analysis finds a strong reverse relationship between



¹³ OECD, 2020. "Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?" Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e5cb8a-en>.

¹⁴ European Youth Forum, 2015. "Young people and democratic life in Europe: what's next after the 2014 European elections?" Available at: https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/YFJ_YoungPeopleAndDemocraticLifeInEurope_BI_web-9e4bd8be22.pdf

Figure 34: Domestic dissemination and Inclusiveness



domestic governmental dissemination of false information, and youth progress, and especially with levels of Inclusiveness for youth. This means that the higher levels of governmental spreading of misinformation, the worse the social outcomes for youth (lower scores on the horizontal axis correspond to higher levels of governmental spreading of misinformation). This should serve as an alarm bell to governments who actively work to control and influence political discussions online via the spread of false information, as by doing so, they may be putting at risk the inclusiveness and progress of the societies they govern.

Young people need to be supported to ensure they are in a strong position to participate in the transition to a more digital society, and hold governments to account. Digital literacy and citizenship education training, which together equip young people with the skills and competences to navigate this new digital society, must be supported and made accessible to all, especially to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, and approached in a holistic way from both formal and non-formal education perspectives. Digital literacy training improves one's ability to navigate and participate responsibly in modern information environments. Likewise, citizenship education, including its digital

dimension, honest critical thinking, personal autonomy, and the ability to deconstruct social realities embedded in political discourse online and offline and power dynamics. Both are learned effectively in experiential, hands-on environments.



YOUTH & THE LABOUR MARKET: A QUICK LOOK AT THE DATA

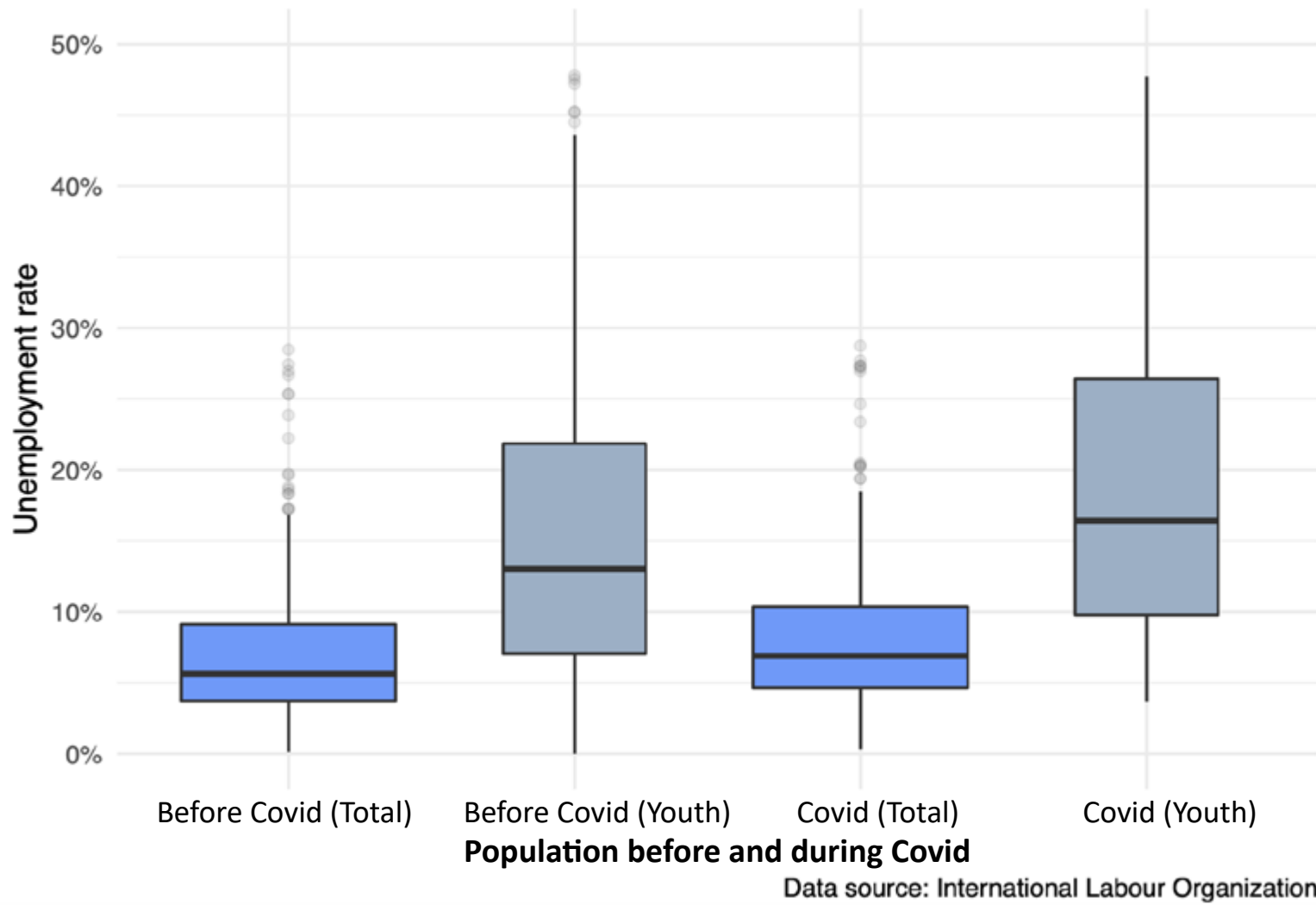
Young people continue to be disproportionately affected by unemployment since the 2008 financial and economic crisis. In the crisis' aftermath, employers began to cut entry-level positions affecting young people's transition to employment. Meanwhile, austerity measures led to the cutting of key social services that both support young people to enter into the labour market and protect them from poverty. Additionally, decision-makers relaxed labour laws to stimulate employment leading to the proliferation of poor quality, non-standard forms of work, which form the basis of much of the type of work that young people do. It is no surprise then that the global youth unemployment rate was estimated by the ILO at 13.6% in 2020, as young people remained practically three times as likely as adults (25 years and older) to be unemployed¹⁵. The youth NEET rate (Not in Education, Employment or Training), furthermore, has not decreased significantly in any region since 2005, suggesting that Target 8.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely a substantial reduction in the proportion of NEET youth by 2020, has been missed.

This highlights the need for greater focus and investment in combating youth un- and under-employment. Quality transitions to employment for young people are crucial and have impacts through the

whole lifecycle. In fact, a lack of quality employment opportunities in the early stages of a young person's career can lead to a number of scarring effects, including lower employment and earnings prospects decades later, as well as lower pensions¹⁶.

Due to their existing precarious situation in the labour market, young people have also been more vulnerable to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected their employment activity, income levels and financial security. Young people have been the most likely to lose working hours or lose their jobs entirely, as young workers are often the first to be let go during periods of economic shocks¹⁷. Between 2019 and 2020, unemployment among adults rose by 1.5 percentage points (5.5% in 2019 and 7% in 2020), while unemployment among young adults rose by 3.5 percentage points (13% in 2019 and 16.5% in 2020), more than twice as much.

Figure 35: Covid impact on youth employment



¹⁵ International Labour Organization, 2020. "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020". Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf

¹⁶ OECD, 2016. "Society at a Glance". Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/19991290>

¹⁷ International Labour Organisation, 2020. "Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being". Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/youth-covid-19-impacts-jobs-education-rights-and-mental-wellbeing>

Figure 36: Informal employment and Youth Progress



These shocks have had a substantial impact on objective and subjective well-being. According to a global survey conducted by the European Youth Forum, the ILO and other partners, loss of income has for example affected young people's right to housing. Moreover, more than one in every two young people are showing signs of depression and anxiety since the pandemic began. It is young people who have seen their employment or education affected who are most likely to show signs of mental distress¹⁸.

Even among young people who are employed, the quality of their job remains a major concern and has contributed to the precarity that youth face today. Of the 429 million young workers worldwide, around 55 million, or 13 per cent, are suffering extreme poverty, while 71 million of them, or 17 per cent, live in moderate poverty¹⁹.

The poor quality of many jobs held by young people manifests itself in precarious working conditions, low wages, and a lack of legal and social protection. The fact that three in four young workers worldwide were engaged in informal employment in 2016 shows the scale of the problem. Informal employment, which is higher in developing countries and the global south, is also a significant barrier to young people in advancing their social progress, as the two variables show a strong relationship.

¹⁸ International Labour Organisation, 2020. "Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being". Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/youth-covid-19-impacts-jobs-education-rights-and-mental-wellbeing>
¹⁹ International Labour Organization, 2020. "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020". Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf

In addition, higher levels of social protection are strongly associated with social conditions for a more inclusive society for youth. This is because the risk of poverty makes it more difficult for young people to access their rights as they struggle to make ends meet. This also hinders their ability to take part in discussions on the future of their societies, and to advance social progress.

Figure 37: Social protection and Inclusiveness

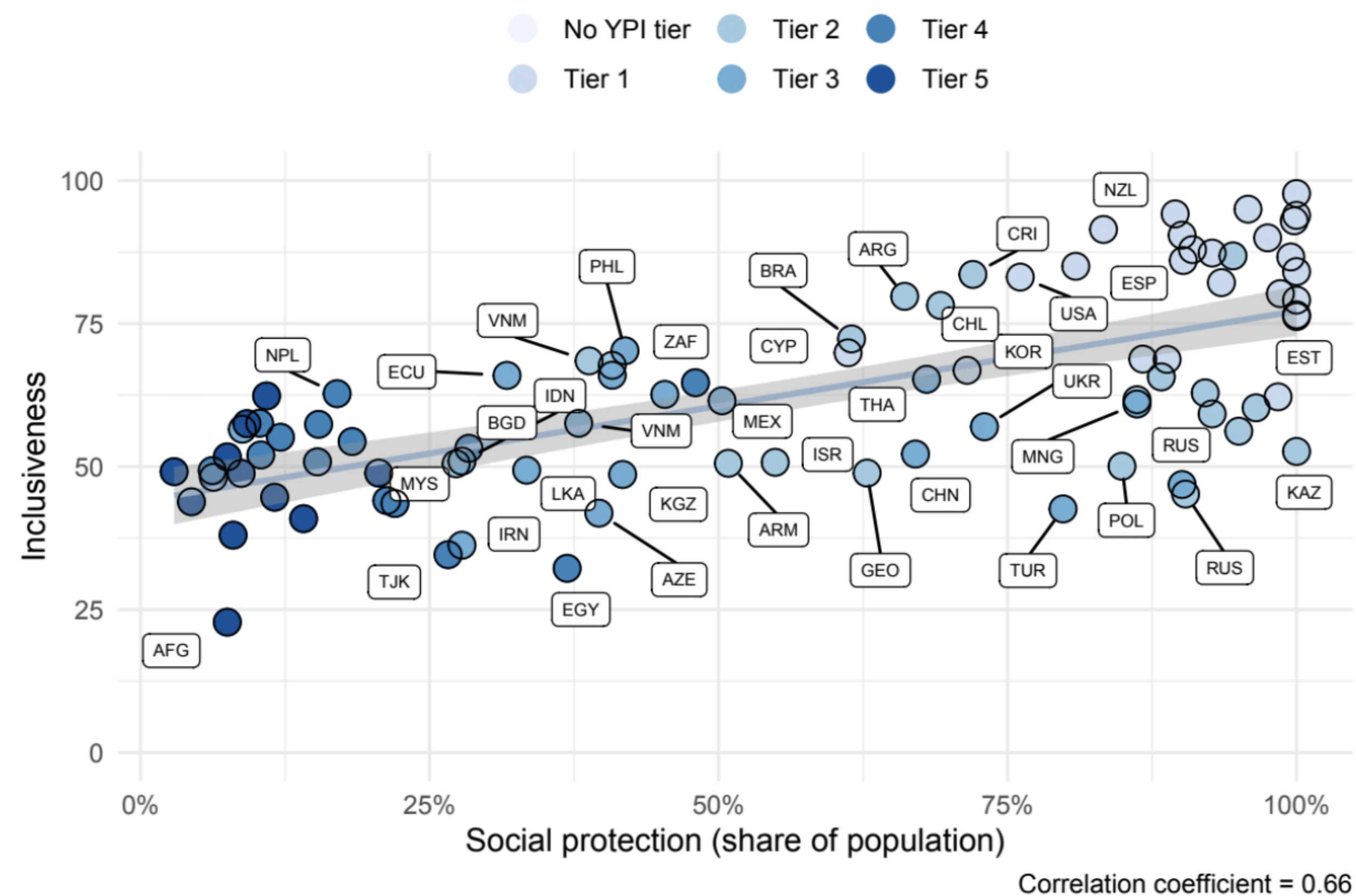
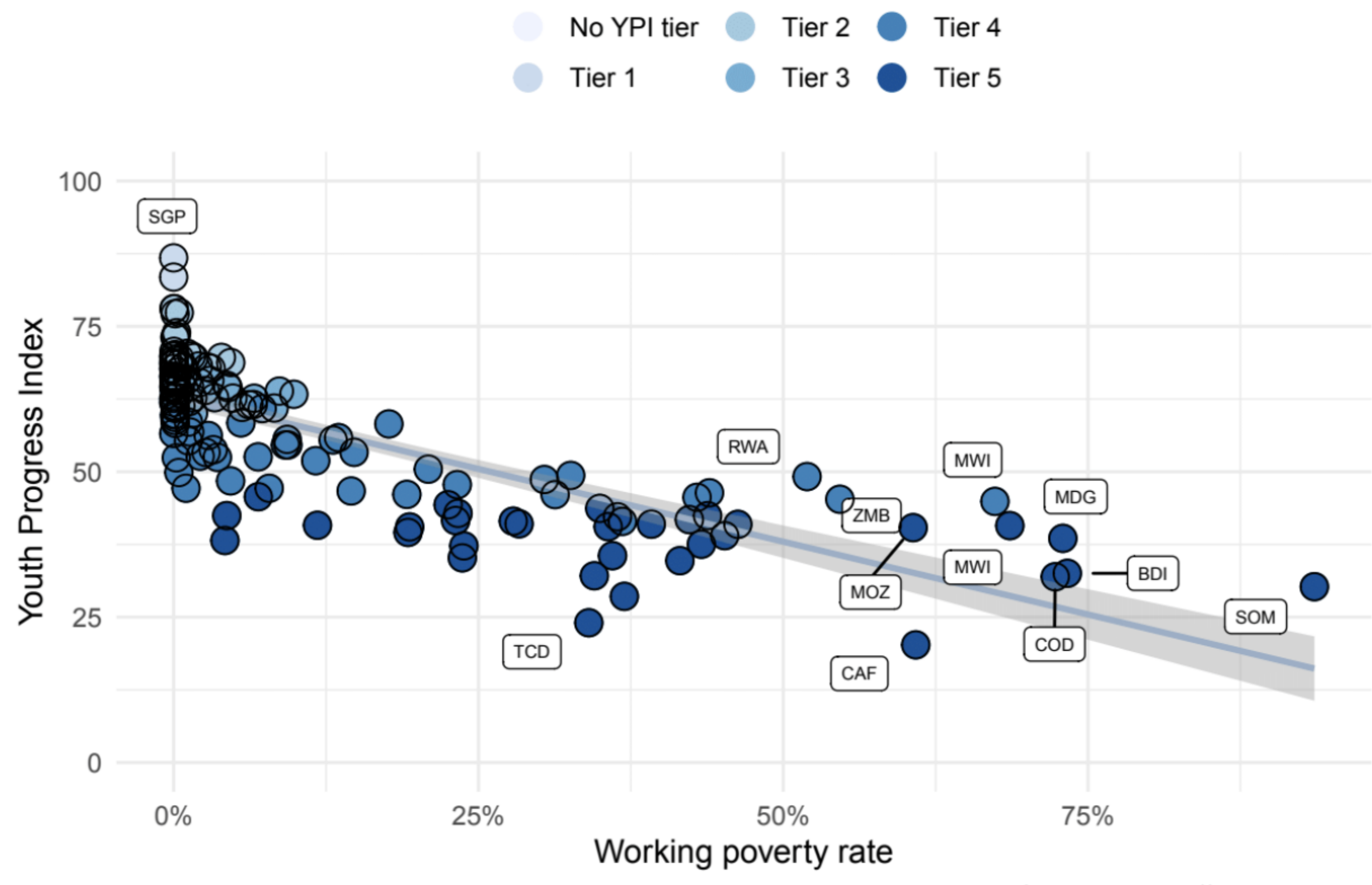


Figure 38: Working poverty and Youth Progress



We also find a strong negative relationship between working poverty²⁰ and youth progress, meaning that the higher levels of working poverty in a society, the lower the level of Youth Progress.

²⁰ The working poor are working people whose incomes fall below a given poverty line due to low-income jobs and low familial household income.

These findings indicate the need for governments to address the quality of jobs available to youth and improve access to social protection, to ensure they do not fall into working poverty and can fulfil their potential. This is important not only in developing countries, which tend to have large numbers of young people working in the informal economy, but also in high-income and emerging countries, where an increasing number of young people are engaged in new forms of work, especially in the gig economy.

As we move towards the process of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the current precarious situation of young people in the labour market highlights the need to learn the lessons from the 2008 crisis and ensure young people are not worse off. Quality jobs and strong welfare systems need to be at the core of the recovery to protect the social and economic inclusion of youth. This is also fundamental in preparing for the future challenges that trends like digitalisation and climate change, as well as other unexpected shocks, may bring to our economies and labour markets. Policies have the power to shape our labour markets to ensure young people's rights are met. Youth-specific, inclusive and forward-looking policy interventions are crucial to ensure that young people are not left behind²¹.



²¹European Youth Forum, 2019. "The Future of Work and Youth". Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Future%20of%20Work%20-%20online%20version%202.pdf>

CIVIC SPACE AND YOUTH PROGRESS

Civic space is the place, regardless of whether it is online or offline, where people exercise their rights to freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly. It allows us to discuss issues and participate in public decision-making. Ultimately, a healthy civic space allows democracy and society to thrive. In fact, an open civil society is also one of the most important safeguards against tyranny, oppression, and other anti-democratic tendencies.

Civil society organisations amplify the voices of minority and other at-risk groups by raising the visibility of the key issues they face with a variety of audiences. Youth civil society organisations that engage young people in civic life are particularly important, as they advocate for youth rights and address youth-specific issues, and empower young people to be agenda-setters and agents of change. As young people are more sensitive to issues of sustainability, a thriving civic space can therefore be presumed as critical in enabling young people to drive social progress²².

The last few years have witnessed a persistent silencing of young people's voices and a narrowing of their civic space. The global authoritarian pushback against democracy and human rights, including hate speech, fake news, populism,

conflicting diversity and other phenomena headed under the banner of 'uncivil society', contributes to this tendency of a shrinking of civic space²³. Changes in legal status, funding restrictions for organisations, disproportionate reporting requirements, bureaucratic obstacles and smear campaigns, are just some of the barriers youth and other civil society organisations are facing.

As a result of increasingly hostile conditions for civil, political and social engagement across the globe, youth is prevented from freely participating in political processes. A free civil society, and a thriving civic space, is essential for young people to realise their political rights and their full potential. A shrinking civic space for youth negatively impacts young people's socio-economic outcomes, as well as their political and community engagement, and subsequently can potentially undermine the very stability of our societies. Our analysis supports this premise, finding a strong positive relationship between government's respect of freedom of peaceful assembly and youth progress, especially when looking at the YPI's Inclusiveness component.

Therefore, it's crucial that decision makers at all levels not only proactively protect, respect and fulfil young people's civil and



²² A study conducted in 2020 by Ipsos and commissioned by the #ClimateOfChange project found that young Europeans consider climate change and environmental degradation as top priorities: <https://eeb.org/library/pan-european-survey-climate-to-priority-for-youth/>

²³ European Youth Forum, 2020. "Safeguarding Civic Space for Young People in Europe". Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/safeguarding-civic-space-young-people-europe>

political rights, but also ensure enabling conditions for civil society organisations to carry out their work freely and independently. It is only through a safe and healthy civic space that social progress can thrive.

Figure 39: Peaceful assembly and Inclusiveness

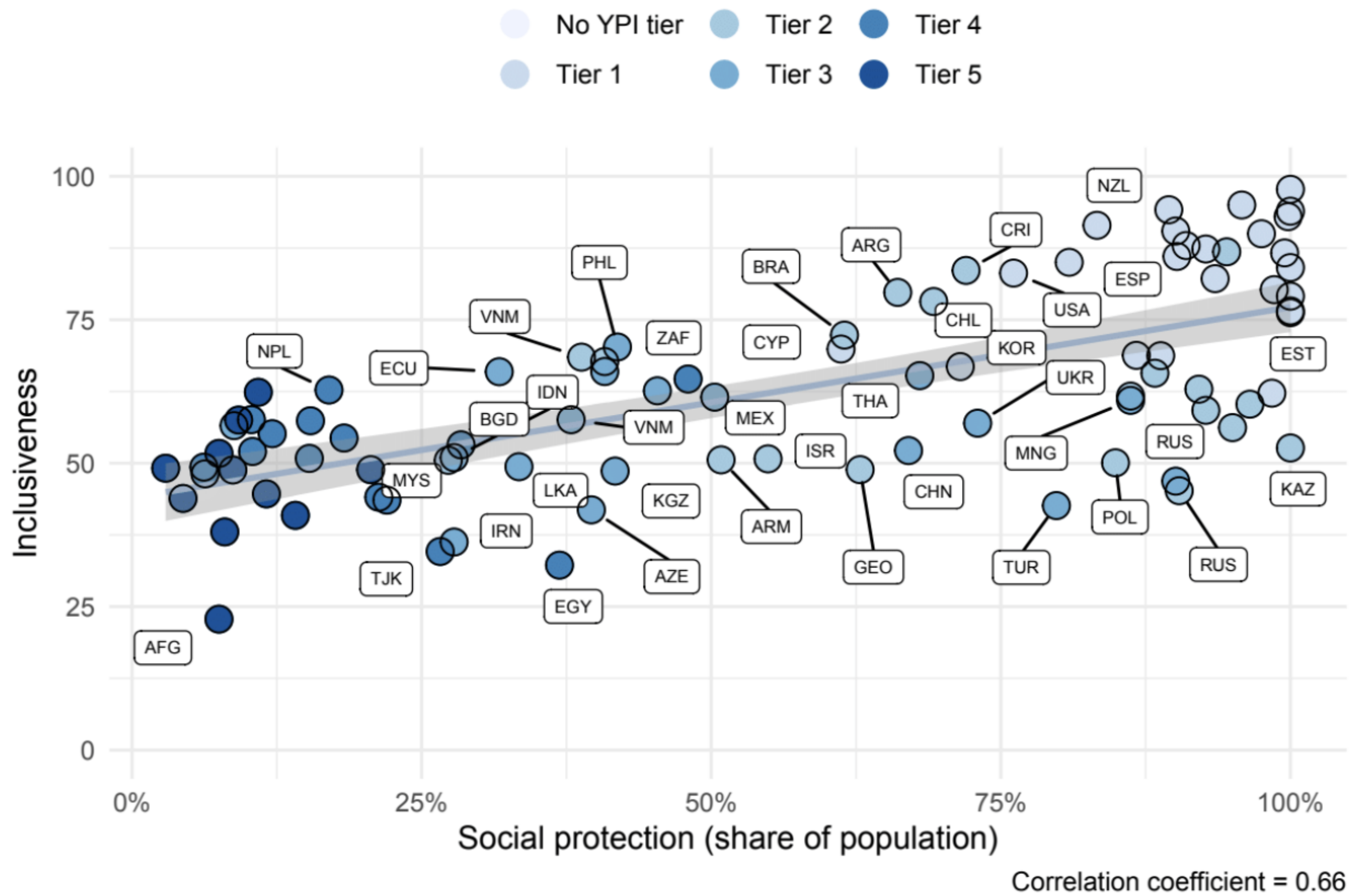
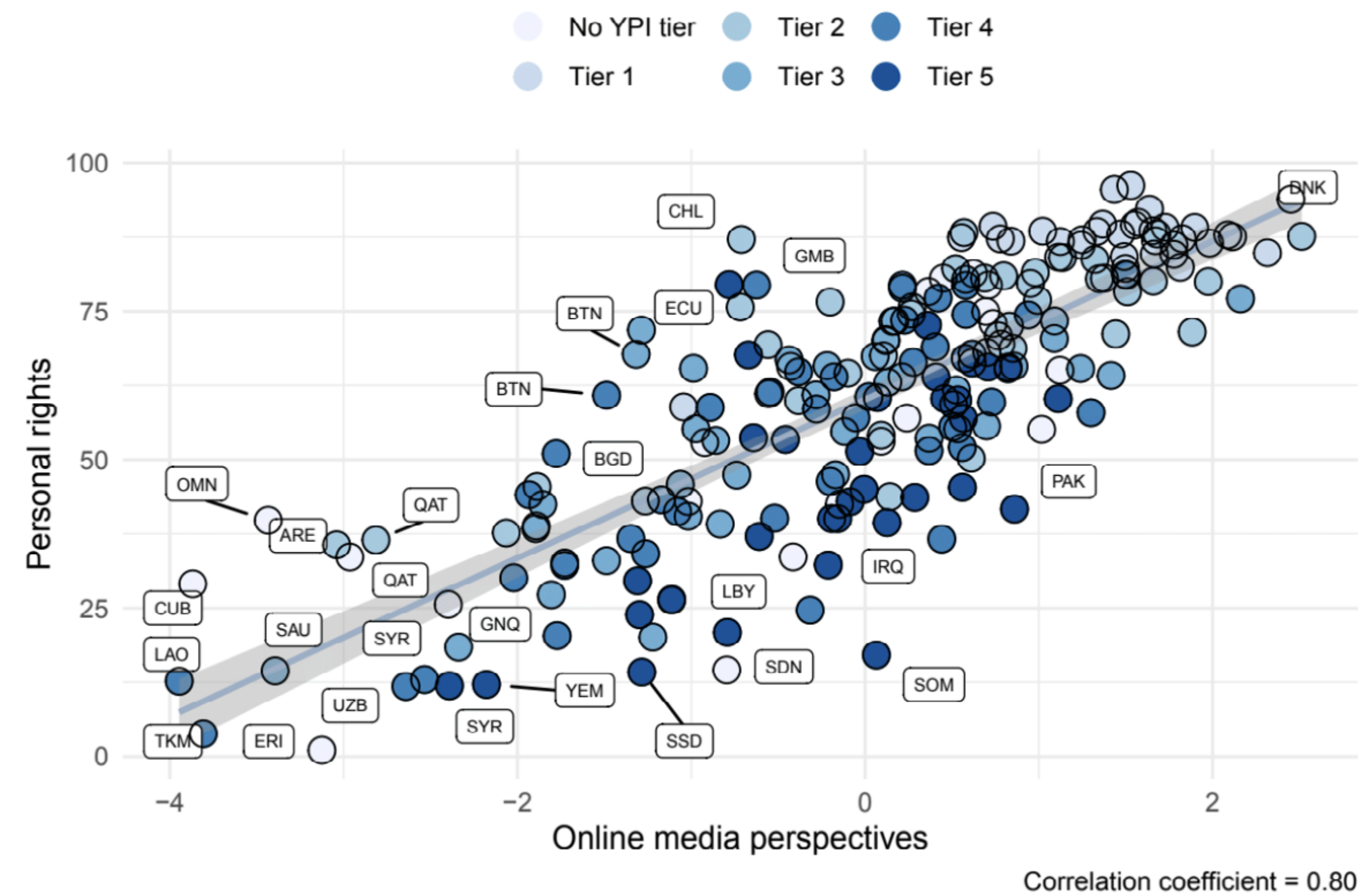


Figure 40: Online media perspectives and Personal



The positive relationship between respect for fundamental freedoms and youth progress is also replicated in the online world, where we can identify a strong positive relationship between data on the existence of a wide range of political perspectives in online media in countries, and the realisation of Personal Rights, which is a component of the Youth Progress Index.

COVID-19 and governments' respective measures to address it have furthermore unleashed a global parallel crisis for civic space. Emergency laws and other extraordinary measures adopted in response to the pandemic have acted to restrict freedoms and access to fundamental rights in unprecedented speed. Many meetings, political, professional and social, have moved online. Governments have also moved public hearings and meetings online. The shift to all-virtual participation however, threatens to reinforce the digital divide, further excluding low-income, rural, and migrant communities among other already marginalised groups²⁴. In addition, the lockdown by definition greatly diminishes all kinds of activism to highlight political shortcomings, such as protests or stunts or marches.

While the nature of the crisis has required swift action, the premise that rights-curtailing measures should not last longer than absolutely necessary is violated by authorities at all levels across the globe. Moreover, civil society has been largely left out of the design and implementation of governments' COVID-19 strategies²⁵. This should not continue to be the case. Civil society organisations, including youth organisations, should be included in the decision-making around policy and investment decisions to recover from the

COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, so they can play their role as actors of change and advance social progress. Moreover, civil society organisations, including youth organisations, have been on the forefront of dealing with many aspects of this crisis, reinventing their ways of community support, education and political participation and activism. Their learnings from the crisis are vital to be heard for the recovery.

It is often also a problem that democratic systems around the world do not function in ways that are tailored to the specific participation needs of young people. Training and awareness raising of policy officials therefore would greatly help with widening the space for meaningful civic participation of young people. This applies both to offline and online means: as previously discussed, digital means of participation offer a great deal of opportunities to involve groups of young people who face certain barriers (e.g. geographical distance, work status, mobility needs, etc.) in democratic processes, but such participation mechanisms have to be applied properly and proportionately. Young people's participation in deliberation processes, without fear of any retribution over their expressed opinions, is crucial for creating policies that serve all citizens of our societies and allow young people to shape the agenda and drive



²⁴ ICNL. "COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker". Available at: <https://www.icnl.org/coronavirus-response>

²⁵ Civil Society Europe, 2021. "Participation of civil society organisations in the preparation of the EU National Recovery and Resilience Plans". Available at: https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CSE-ECNL-Participation-of-CSOs-in-the-preparation-of-the-EU-NRRPs_spread.pdf.



social progress further.

Beyond being included in political discussions globally, young people also need to be regarded as implementers, with adequate funding and policy support behind them. Youth organisations report issues around their access to sustainable funding opportunities and feel the burden of high thresholds, heavy bureaucracy and market indicators applied to their work. Moreover, receiving foreign funding is often utilised as a source of smear campaigning or blacklisting of organisations which further shrinks the space of operations for youth organisations and subsequently, hinders the progress for young people overall.

A strong civic space is a necessary precondition for young people to take part in shaping the future and contribute to social progress, and youth organisations have an essential role to play in that space.



CHAPTER 3

SUSTAINABILITY-ADJUSTED INDEX

INTRODUCTION

As described above, the Social Progress Index captures questions of environmental sustainability in the Environmental Quality component. But it is clear that sustainability is one of the greatest challenges facing every society, above all the youngest generations, who will bear the most devastating consequences of an existential crisis they did not create. As a result, we have developed a new, sustainability-adjusted version of the Youth Progress Index, to better weigh an issue that looms large in any discussion of young people and their current and future wellbeing.

To account more fully for environmental sustainability, we explore how the results of the Youth Progress Index (scores and rankings) change once environmental sustainability is factored into countries' performance in a more significant way. The framework of the sustainability adjustment is captured in Figure X.

The content of the sustainability adjustment dimension is based on the planetary boundaries framework (Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015; Hickel, 2020)²⁶. The components reflect the critical areas in which the planetary boundaries have already been crossed.

These are:

- Climate change, using GHG emissions

- per capita as a proxy.
- Biodiversity loss, using two variables: terrestrial biome protection index and biodiversity habitat index.
- Land-system changes, using an indicator of tree cover loss.
- Material consumption, using material footprint per capita.

We selected the four most relevant politically and globally understood as indicators of global environmental damage, but there are some additional others that exist (chemical loadings or freshwater use and ocean acidification, for example). The methodology is described more in the Annex.

The climate crisis is putting positive developments in youth progress at risk by undermining the foundations on which our society is built. With regards to basic human needs, the climate crisis and biodiversity loss are already putting stress on food-producing systems and water sources. These crises are also undermining the foundations of wellbeing through impacts on environmental quality and health as well as the rights of young people to a sustainable future. Given these impacts, we cannot look at youth progress as a snapshot but have to consider how sustainable progress is.

YPI			SUSTAINABILITY
Basic Human Needs	Foundations of Wellbeing	Opportunities	
Nutrition and Basic Medical Care	Access to Basic Knowledge	Personal Rights	
Water Sanitation	Access to Info and Communications	Personal Freedom and Choice	
Shelter	Health & Wellness	Inclusiveness	
Personal Safety	Enviromental Quality	Access to Advanced Education	

Figure 41 Sustainability-adjusted YPI

Figure 41 shows the framework of the Sustainability-Adjusted Youth Progress Index, with the fourth dimension and its 4 environmental components highlighted in fourth column in light yellow.

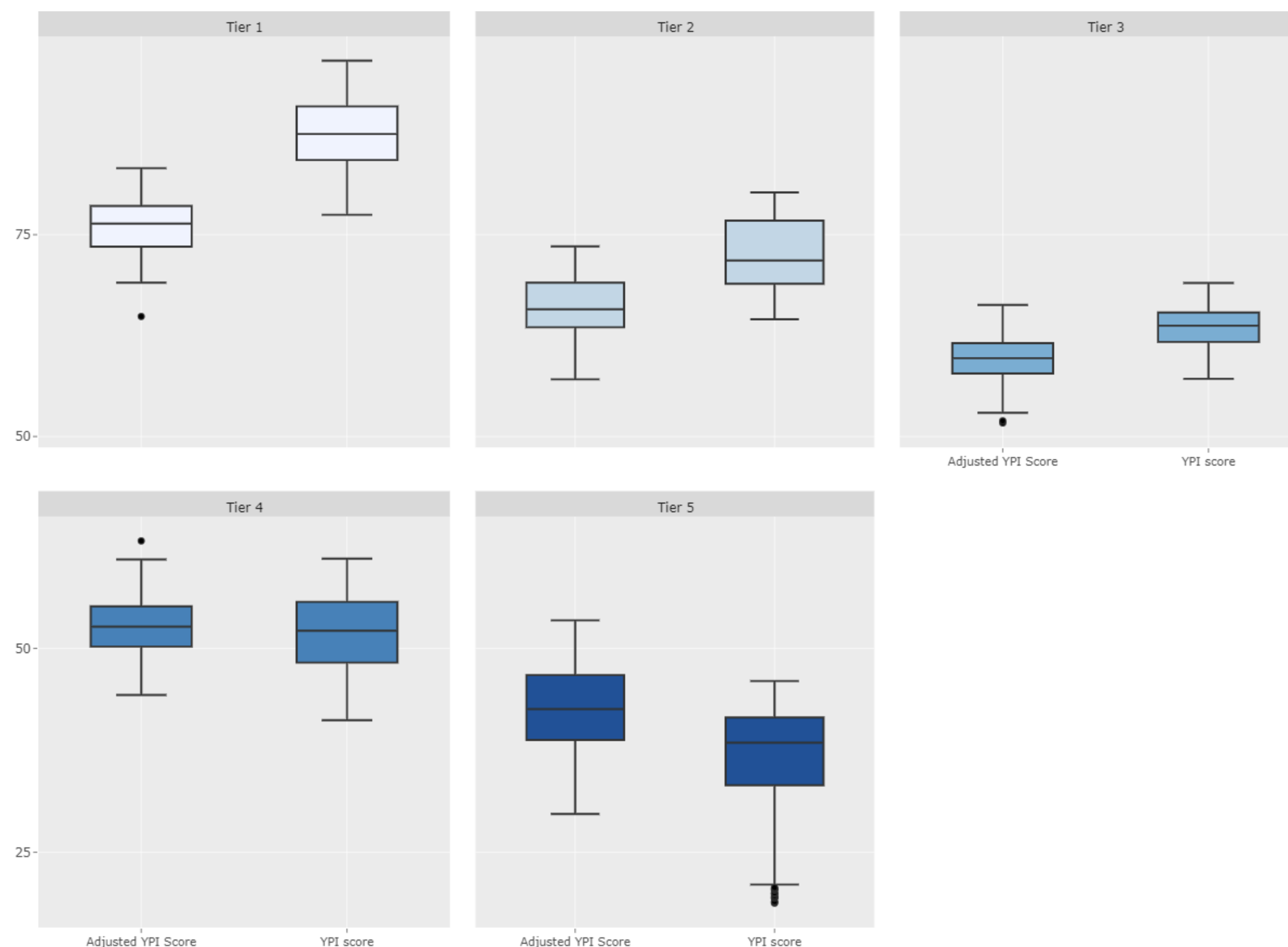
²⁶ Hickel, J., 2020. The sustainable development index: Measuring the ecological efficiency of human development in the anthropocene. *Ecological Economics* 167.
Steffen, W., Richardson, K, Rockström, J., Cornell, S. E., Fetzer, I., Bennett, E. M., Biggs, R., et al., 2015. Planetary boundaries: guiding human development on a changing planet. *Science* 347 (6223).
Rockström, J., Steffen, W., Noone, K., Persson, A., Chapin, S. F., Lambin, E., Lenton, T. M., et al., 2009. Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity. *Ecology and Society* 14 (2).

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

When comparing the performance of countries in the Youth Progress Index and its sustainability-adjusted equivalent, we find that the countries in the first tier, meaning the top ranking countries in the Youth Progress Index, have the worst declines in their scores once adjusted with the environmental sustainability component. Countries in the second and third tier also decline, although a lot less, whereas countries in tier 4 remain more or less at the same level, and countries in tier 5 see their scores improve. This does not mean that countries in tier 5 should be seen as champions of environmental sustainability, however, but rather that they do not contribute significantly to global environmental damage and climate change in the same way that countries in the first tier do.

Figure 42 shows changes in score between the Youth Progress Index and its equivalent once the Sustainability-adjustment component is factored in on average for countries grouped per the 5 tiers of the Youth Progress Index ranking.

Figure 42: YPI score with and without sustainability adjustments



When we look in more detail at the changes in country scores on the Youth Progress Index and its sustainability-adjusted equivalent, we can see that the 20 countries that suffer the biggest negative change in their score are all Tier 1 countries in the YPI ranking. This means that all the countries at the top of the table progress as a society at a disproportionate environmental cost²⁷.

While contributing the least to the problem, countries in the lower tiers are suffering disproportionately from the impact of the climate crisis. The majority of countries ranking low in the YPI are located in the global South and more prone to risks due to their unfavourable geographical location. They also lack the resources to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis. The climate crisis is a matter of justice beyond country-level. Those who are most responsible for it rarely feel the worst impacts. It is those who are already vulnerable to extreme weather events, natural disasters and rising sea levels – often those who are socially marginalised due to their economic status, age, race and gender – who bear the brunt.

The sustainability-adjusted YPI leads us to question not only how we define progress, but in particular its underlying development model. As highlighted above, GDP

growth to some extent is necessary to make youth progress, but only up to a certain level. Moreover, GDP growth also generally leads to environmental degradation and higher greenhouse gas emissions. Research shows that it is highly unlikely that a long-lasting, absolute decoupling of economic growth from environmental pressures and impacts can be achieved at a sufficient and global scale²⁸. Societies, in particular in the global North, need to rethink what is meant by growth and progress and their meaning for global sustainability.

One approach for re-thinking our development model was developed by economist Kate Raworth in her book titled 'Doughnut Economics'²⁹. It depicts a vision for society in which the needs and rights of all are met within the means of the planet - the safe and just space for humanity in the doughnut. In other words, a vision where everyone, including future generations, are able to fulfil their needs and realise their rights, while ensuring that this does not overshoot Earth's natural resources and fundamental life-supporting systems such as a stable climate and fertile soils. The core of her argument is that we need to switch to a model of a regenerative and redistributive economy. The analysis shows that we must climax growth at the system's peak of success, not failure. At higher levels



²⁷ Finland is an interesting case study of a country that over-performs significantly in the Environmental Quality component of the YPI, while performing badly in the sustainability-adjusted Index. This is because these two variables measure different things: Finland performs well in terms of short-term pollution and providing clean air for the people of Finland, but this positive performance is not replicated when looking at indicators of longer-term impact on the environment, such as greenhouse gas emissions or material footprint.

²⁸ E.g., European Environmental Bureau, 2019. "Decoupling Debunked". Available at: <https://eeb.org/library/decoupling-debunked/>

²⁹ Raworth, K., 2017. *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-century Economist*. London: Random House.



of economic development, GDP adds comparatively little to youth progress, but undermines its sustainability by contributing to the climate crisis. In nature, all organisms experience a period of growth followed by maturity. Right now, no such distinctions exist for the global economy. For countries at a high level of GDP, this means abandoning economic growth as the primary goal of policy making in order to increase the space for countries in the global South to develop economically, and hence reap the low hanging fruits in terms of youth progress. Countries with low GDP and YPI, in turn, must find ways to leapfrog in the YPI score without massively increasing consumption and hence their footprint and contribution to the climate crisis³⁰.

In doing so, countries that are in the top 40 countries on the YPI and suffer relatively low changes on the sustainability adjustment, including Malta, Costa Rica, Croatia and Armenia can serve as case studies for good practices. Costa Rica, for instance, gets more than 98 percent of its energy from renewable sources. Forest cover now stands at more than 53 per cent after painstaking work to reverse decades of deforestation and around a quarter of the country's land has been turned into protected parks and reserves. Its National Decarbonization Plan, launched in 2019,

comprises bold mid- and long-term targets to reform transport, energy, waste, and land use, and the aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Overall however, despite a few examples of political steps in the right direction, it is fair to conclude that no country can claim to have succeeded in implementing a model of development that is sustainable both socially and environmentally, and does not put at risk the livelihoods of future generations. Countries that aim at moving to a more sustainable model of progress should aim at achieving high levels of social progress, as measured by the Youth Progress Index, while factoring in the sustainability-adjustment. This can only be achieved through a paradigm shift to a new development model that does not rely on economic growth.

³⁰ For a more extensive argument on the shortcoming of current economic models and GDP as a measure of progress, see, e.g. European Youth Forum (2018). Policy Paper on Sustainable Development. Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/policy-paper-sustainable-development>

ADJUSTED RANK	SPI COUNTRY CODE	NORMAL RANK	YPI TIERS	INCOME GROUP	NORMAL SCORE	ADJUSTED SCORE	SCORE CHANGE
1	NOR	1	Tier 1	High income	95,80	82,61	
2	DNK	2	Tier 1	High income	94,62	81,5	
3	FIN	3	Tier 1	High income	94,03	80,48	
4	MLT	28	Tier 1	High income	83,07	80,07	
5	AUT	9	Tier 1	High income	91,08	79,77	
6	SWE	5	Tier 1	High income	92,81	79,75	
7	CHE	4	Tier 1	High income	93,14	79,71	
8	DEU	12	Tier 1	High income	90,21	79,28	
9	NLD	11	Tier 1	High income	90,62	79,24	
10	NZL	7	Tier 1	High income	91,7	79,17	
11	JPN	17	Tier 1	High income	88,3	78,4	
12	GBR	14	Tier 1	High income	89,11	78,17	
13	AUS	10	Tier 1	High income	90,9	78,08	
14	CAN	8	Tier 1	High income	91,3	77,84	
15	FRA	18	Tier 1	High income	87,46	77,46	
16	IRL	13	Tier 1	High income	89,94	77,37	
17	ESP	19	Tier 1	High income	87,14	76,47	
18	LUX	15	Tier 1	High income	88,94	75,98	
19	PRT	20	Tier 1	High income	86,62	75,43	
20	ITA	26	Tier 1	High income	84,39	75,15	

Figure 43 above shows the top 40 countries as ranked in the sustainability-adjusted Youth Progress Index. The 20 countries that have the worst negative impact on their score are highlighted in orange.

ADJUSTED RANK	SPI COUNTRY CODE	NORMAL RANK	YPI TIERS	INCOME GROUP	NORMAL SCORE	ADJUSTED SCORE	SCORE CHANGE
21	SVN	27	Tier 1	High income	83,97	74,71	-9,26
22	BEL	24	Tier 1	High income	84,70	74,74,69	-10,01
23	EST	21	Tier 1	High income	85,47	74,52	-10,95
24	KOR	22	Tier 1	High income	85,22	74,45	-10,77
25	CZE	25	Tier 1	High income	84,65	74,44	-10,21
26	CRI	33	Tier 2	Upper middle income	79,86	73,55	-6,31
27	CYP	29	Tier 1	High income	81,14	72,35	-8,79
28	HRV	34	Tier 2	High income	79,69	72,31	-7,38
29	SGP	16	Tier 1	High income	88,81	71,97	-16,84
30	ARM	43	Tier 2	Upper middle income	74,33	71,76	-2,57
31	USA	23	Tier 1	High income	84,98	71,74	-13,24
32	GRC	32	Tier 2	High income	80,09	71,68	-8,41
33	LVA	36	Tier 2	High income	79,68	71,57	-8,11
34	POL	30	Tier 1	High income	80,76	71,57	-9,19
35	ISR	31	Tier 2	High income	80,23	70,82	-9,41
36	LTU	35	Tier 2	High income	79,69	70,78	-8,91
37	SVK	37	Tier 2	High income	79,59	70,73	-8,86
38	HUN	39	Tier 2	High income	76,94	69,45	-7,49
39	CHL	40	Tier 2	High income	75,97	67,80	-8,17

Figure 43 above shows the top 40 countries as ranked in the sustainability-adjusted Youth Progress Index. The 20 countries that have the worst negative impact on their score are highlighted in orange.



CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In 2019, there were about 1.2 billion young people between 15 to 24 years old in the world, or 16 per cent of the global population. Around 2065, according to the UN, the world's youth population is projected to reach its peak, at just under 1.4 billion persons (13%).

Young people will thus remain a significant part of the population, who have a crucial role to play as agents of change. Yet they also remain a segment which is rarely listened to, or actively ignored, especially when they are not yet at voting age. Positively, an increasing number of policy makers and institutions are increasingly aware of existing needs for participation of a diversity of young people and youth organisations in democratic decision-making processes. Yet even then, there is often a large gap between the acknowledgement of young people's role, and putting that realisation into practice and actually taking their view into account. Young people and youth organisations need to be given the space to participate in society and democratic exchanges and hold governments to account, via respect for freedom of information and expression, respect for the right of assembly and association, and quite simply respect for the rule of law and human rights overall. Our analysis found a strong positive relationship between government's respect of

freedom of peaceful assembly and youth progress.

Young people also need to be supported to ensure they are in a strong position to participate in the transition to a more digital society. The term 'digital native' is only true for a select privileged few. Blind tech-utopianism has proven itself an untrustworthy guide. Digital literacy and citizenship education training, which together equip young people with the skills and competences to navigate this new digital society, must be supported and made accessible to all, and approached in a holistic way from both formal and non-formal education perspectives. These are crucial in today's modern society, and no one is impacted more by digitalisation than youth.

Yet a lot of work remains to be done, in all member states included in the Index. The Youth Progress Index 2021 demonstrates that of the three dimensions, the largest strides are still to be made for the Opportunity dimension, which looks at indicators such as freedom of expression, personal freedom and choice, political rights, community safety nets and more. While the cross-checking of GDP per capita versus position on the Youth Progress Index clearly demonstrates that initially, a large win can be made with every increase





in GDP in terms of access of young people to basic human rights, that relationship is much weaker for the other dimensions. For countries to improve their scores, it is a question of looking beyond policies aimed at generating economic growth.

The novelty of this edition of the Youth Progress Index is to also include a Sustainability-Adjusted Index, which aims to act as an eye opener. By including four environmental indicators with a weight of 25%, looking at climate change, material footprint, biodiversity loss and land-system change, the order of the Index's ranking shifted quite significantly. It is fair to conclude that no country can claim to have succeeded in implementing a model of development that is sustainable both socially and environmentally, and does not put at risk the livelihoods of future generations. So that begs the question even more to rethink how we look at progress: should we consider something as progress at all, if it impacts so negatively on our planet's future, and on the future well-being of the very generation that we are researching? In this report, we shed some light on the alternative 'Doughnut' thinking, which starts from the planetary capacity.

Such a new approach would also lead to a larger focus on quality rather than quantity on a number of fronts. When

looking at the impacts of the pandemic, research found that youth unemployment rose twice as much. Even among young people who are employed, the quality of their job remains a major concern and has contributed to the precarity that youth face today. Our data analysis found that countries that have introduced more substantial social protections for workers generally perform better on the Youth Progress Index. Therefore quality jobs and strong welfare systems need to be at the core of the recovery to protect the social and economic inclusion of youth.

Having gone through the intensive data collection and analysis for this report, we cannot but repeat once again our decade-old key message: we need more sex and age-disaggregated data, including youth-specific data. And we need more data, including on sensitive topics such as civic space. However contradictory it may sound, data must be apolitical, be purely evidence-driven rather than policy-driven, to reveal interesting insights and lead to better policy. This is a clear message to national and supranational statistical agencies. Quality data are needed to lead to informed policies and investments that support youth, and to identify good practices of countries that successfully advance youth progress.

The Youth Progress Index aims at giving that push in the right direction, as it allows policy makers to identify the strengths and gaps in the situation of youth. In short, the data from the Youth Progress Index can help identify paths for improvements to reach the Sustainable Development Goals' targets.

Let us all put the wellbeing of people and planet at the heart of policy making and policy agendas. We need that change, and fast.





ANNEXES

METHODOLOGY NOTE

Calculating the Index

There are five core steps for calculating the Index. First, missing values for each indicator are addressed. Some indicators then need to be inverted so that higher values show better performance. Subsequently, all indicators are standardised to make them comparable in scale.

The scores are then calculated as such:

- The overall Youth Progress Index score is a simple average of the three dimensions: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity.
- Each dimension, in turn, is the simple average of its four components.
- Each component of the framework comprises between three and five specific outcome indicators. Each component is calculated as a weighted average of these indicators, where the weights are determined by a statistical method called principal component analysis (PCA).

PCA is used in the index creation for two main purposes:

- First, it evaluates the fit of indicators within each component. Indicators within each component should conceptually measure similar things (that is also the reason we cluster them together) and they should, together, reflect one underlying factor that answers the guiding question for that component.
- Second, it is used to calculate component scores. PCA combines indicators in a way that captures the maximum amount of variance in the data, while reducing redundancy between indicators. It essentially assigns each indicator a weight, a method that is selected over equal weighting to ensure that indicators are meaningfully contributing to a component score, while accounting for similarities between them.

Identifying GDP peers

We define the group of a country's economic peers as the 15 countries closest in GDP PPP per capita. Each country's GDP per capita is compared to every other country for which there is full Youth Progress Index data, and the 15 countries with the smallest difference on an absolute value basis are selected for the comparator group.

Once the group of comparator countries is established, the country's performance is compared to the median performance of countries in the group.

If the country's score is greater than (or less than) the average absolute deviation from the median of the comparator group, it is considered a strength (or weakness).

Scores that are within one average absolute deviation are within the range of expected scores and are considered neither strengths nor weaknesses.

We call countries with scores above the range of expected scores (i.e. with strengths) "overperformers".

Countries with scores below the range of expected scores (i.e. with weaknesses) are called "underperformers".

Calculating correlations between YPI scores and additional variables: Civic Space, Digitalisation, Labour Market

Calculating the correlation coefficients³¹ of additional variables against country scores on the Youth Progress Index and its components allows us to explore the relationship between these trends and young people's capacity to advance their social progress, identify good practices and assess societies' resilience to future crises, whether health-related, economic, environmental or democratic. For further analyses, we used several variables covering each theme covered in this report (civic space, digitalisation and labour market) that had the strongest relationship (positive or negative) with YPI scores (see Figure 1). To define a relationship as "strong", we set a threshold as the absolute value of the correlation coefficient to be at least 0.5. This condition was met for all selected variables.

³¹ Correlation coefficient measures the strength of association between two variables. It takes values between -1 and 1 (including these values) and the closer it is to them, the stronger is the relationship between two variables. Positive values of the correlation coefficient indicate a positive relationship between two variables (the variables go in the same direction), while negative values suggest a negative relationship between two variables (the variables go in the opposite direction).

Figure 44: YPI score v.s. civic space, digitalisation and labor market variables

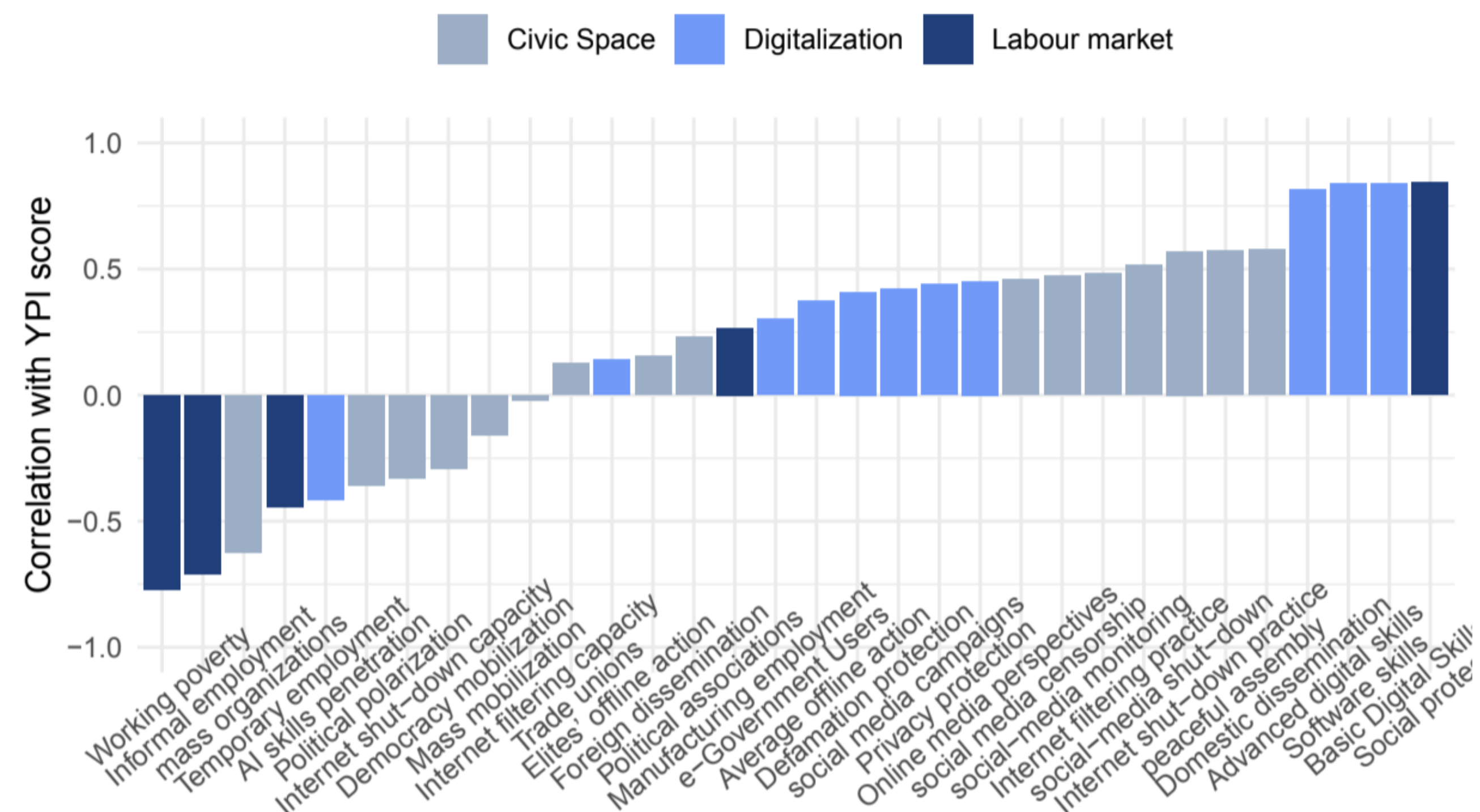


Figure 44 shows the correlation coefficient of all the additional variables that were analysed against Youth Progress Index scores.

Sustainability-Adjusted Index

The sustainability adjustment dimension consists of four components identified on the basis of the planetary boundary framework. These components are climate change, biodiversity loss, land-system changes and material consumption. To proxy climate change, GHG emissions per capita indicator is used. Material footprint per capita is employed to measure material consumption and tree cover loss indicator is applied to approximate land-system changes. To capture biodiversity loss in a more complex way, two indicators are used: terrestrial biome protection index and biodiversity habitat index.

For each component, we first invert (where needed) and standardize the indicators³² and then calculate the scores (values scaled 0-100) using the min-max transformation method³³. For the biodiversity loss component, we obtain the component's scores as the weighted average of the two indicators with weights derived from the Environmental Performance Index (EPI). To get the sustainability dimension scores, we apply the weighted average of the components' scores, where the three components (climate change, material consumption and biodiversity loss) receive equal weights (30%), while the land-system changes component receives a lower weight of 10%.

The adjustment dimension scores are then factored into the calculation of the adjusted index, which is obtained as a simple average of the four dimensions: basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing, opportunity and environmental sustainability. This means that the environmental sustainability dimension has 25% weight on the adjusted index.

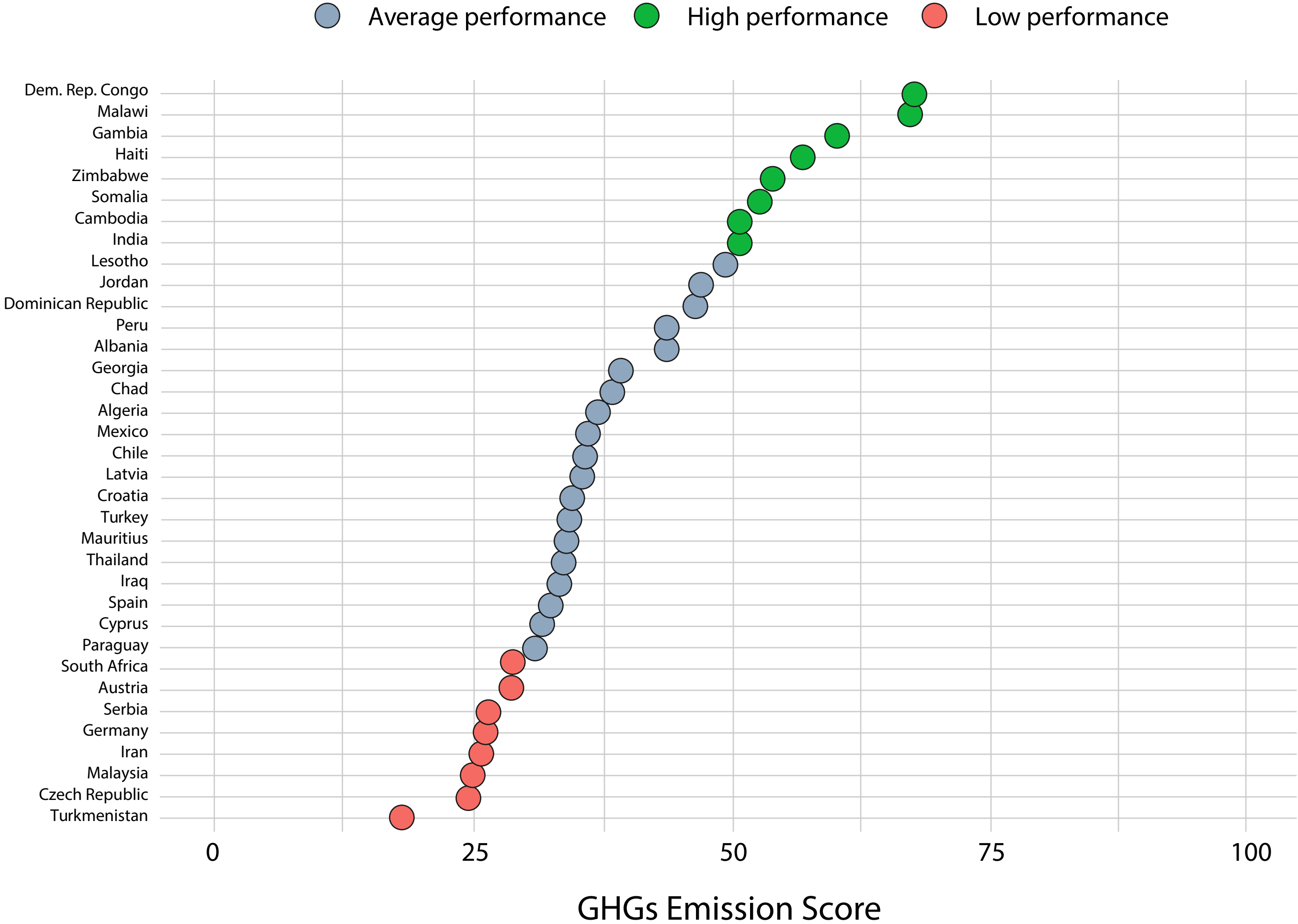
32 Because of the highly skewed distribution of the GHG emissions per capita indicator and material footprint per capita indicator, we applied a logarithmic (ln) transformation to these two variables.

33 For the footprint, GHG and tree cover loss indicators, the minima (the best possible values in this context) were set at 0. This was also the case for the biome protection index, where zero was the worst possible value. For the biodiversity habitat index, the minimum was kept at 0.15. The maxima for the footprint, GHG and tree cover loss indicators (the worst possible values) were derived from the data over the 2000-2019 period. Because these indicators were highly skewed and contained significant outliers, the maxima were set as caps of 60 (for GHG emissions), 120.808 (for the material footprint) and 0.04 (for the tree cover loss). The maxima for the biome protection index and the biodiversity habitat index (the best possible values) were set at 17 and 0.9, respectively.

ADDITIONAL GRAPHS AND FIGURES

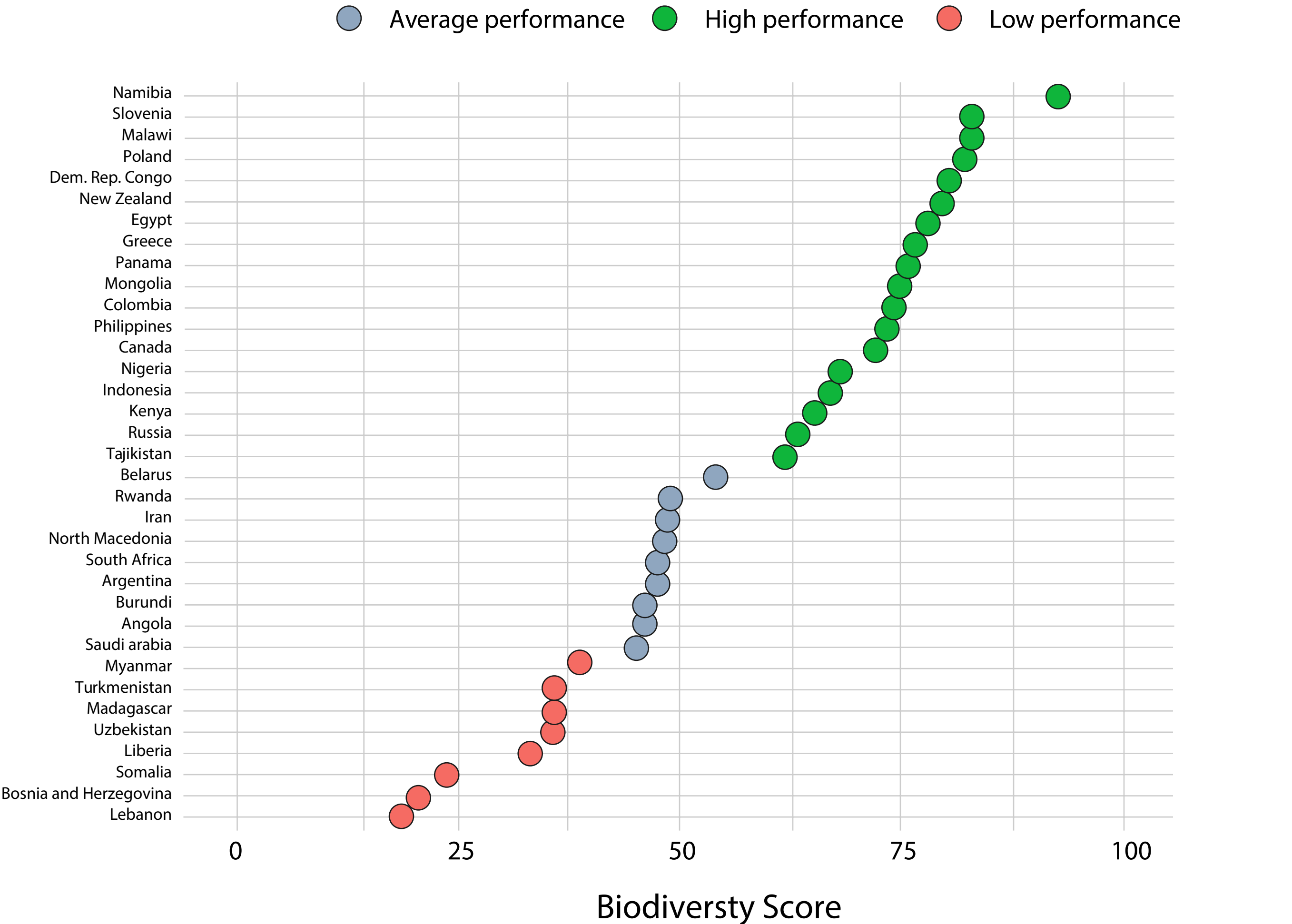
The additional graphs below show selected 35 countries with low, average and high performance in each of the sustainability adjustment components. The horizontal axis measures the score (0-100) of the component and the dots indicate the performances of the selected countries in that component. Green dots are assigned to countries with high performance, blue dots to countries with average performance and red dots are assigned to countries with low performance.

Figure 45 GHGs Emission Score



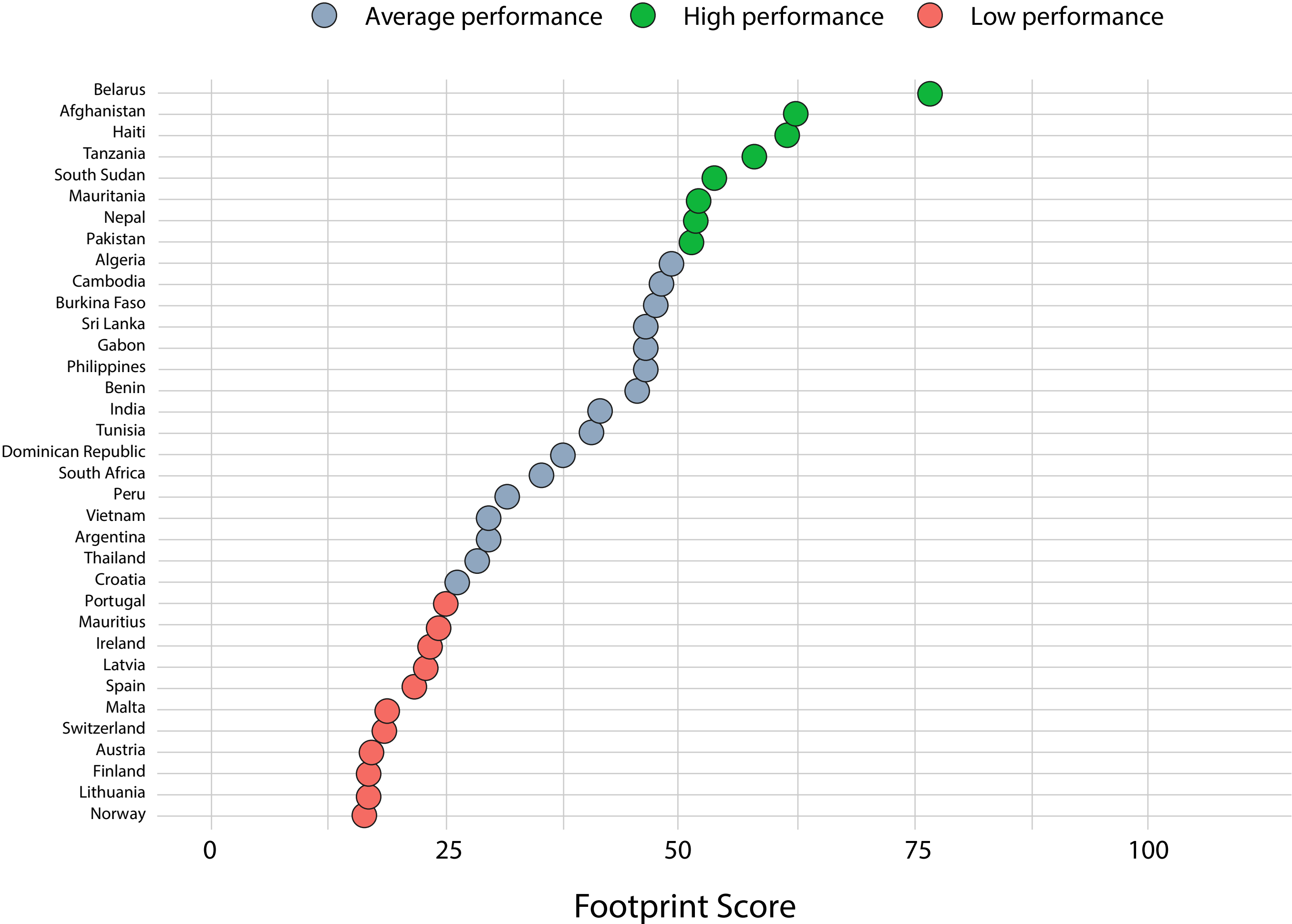
Sample size = 35 countries

Figure 46: Biodiversity performance

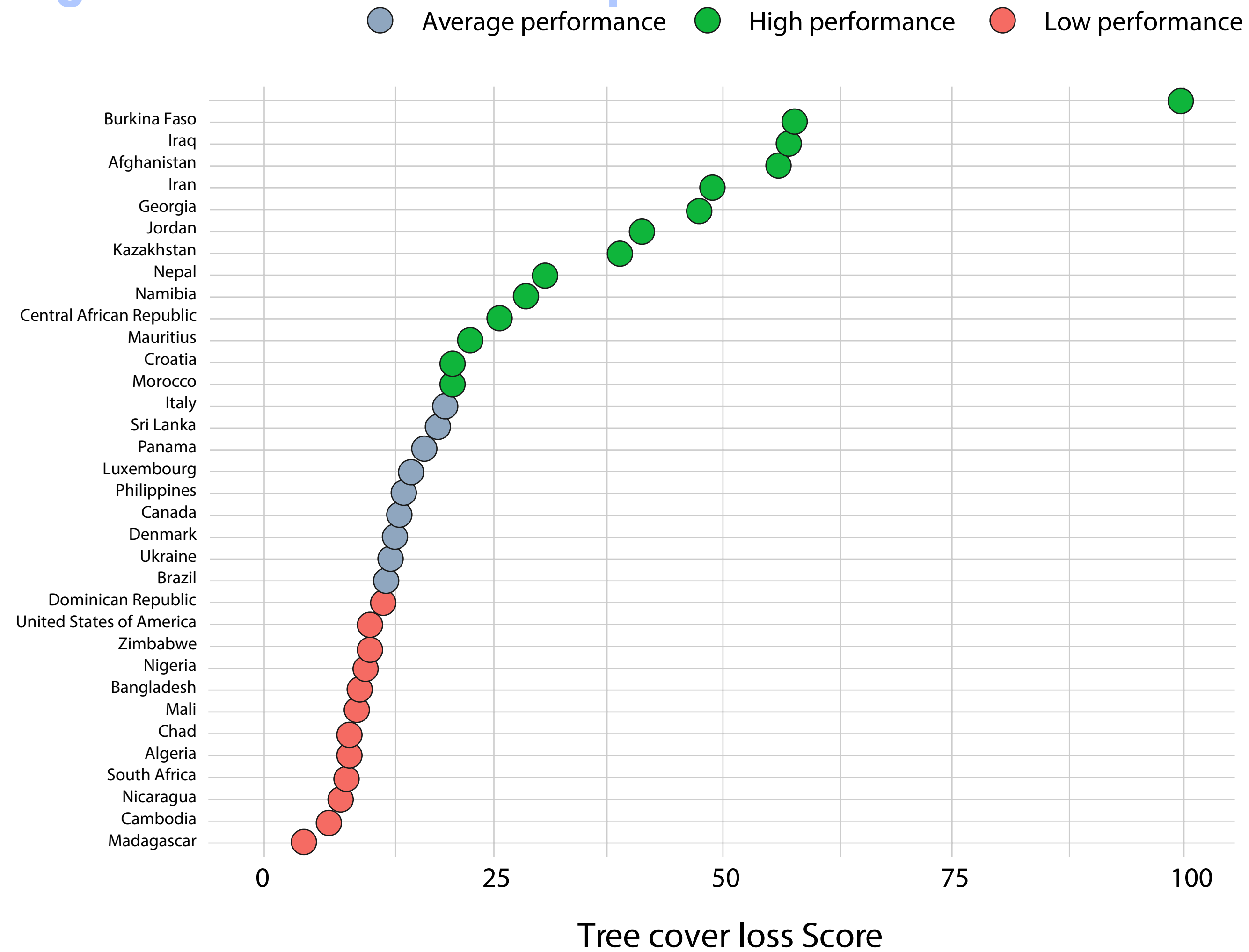


Sample size = 35 countries

Figure 47: Ecological Footprint Performance



Sample size = 35 countries

Figure 48: Tree cover loss performance

Sample size = 35 countries

The three graphs below show the convergence of EU Member States in the areas of Access to Information and Communications, Personal Freedom of Choice, and Access to Advanced Education.

Figure 49 Access to Info and Communications

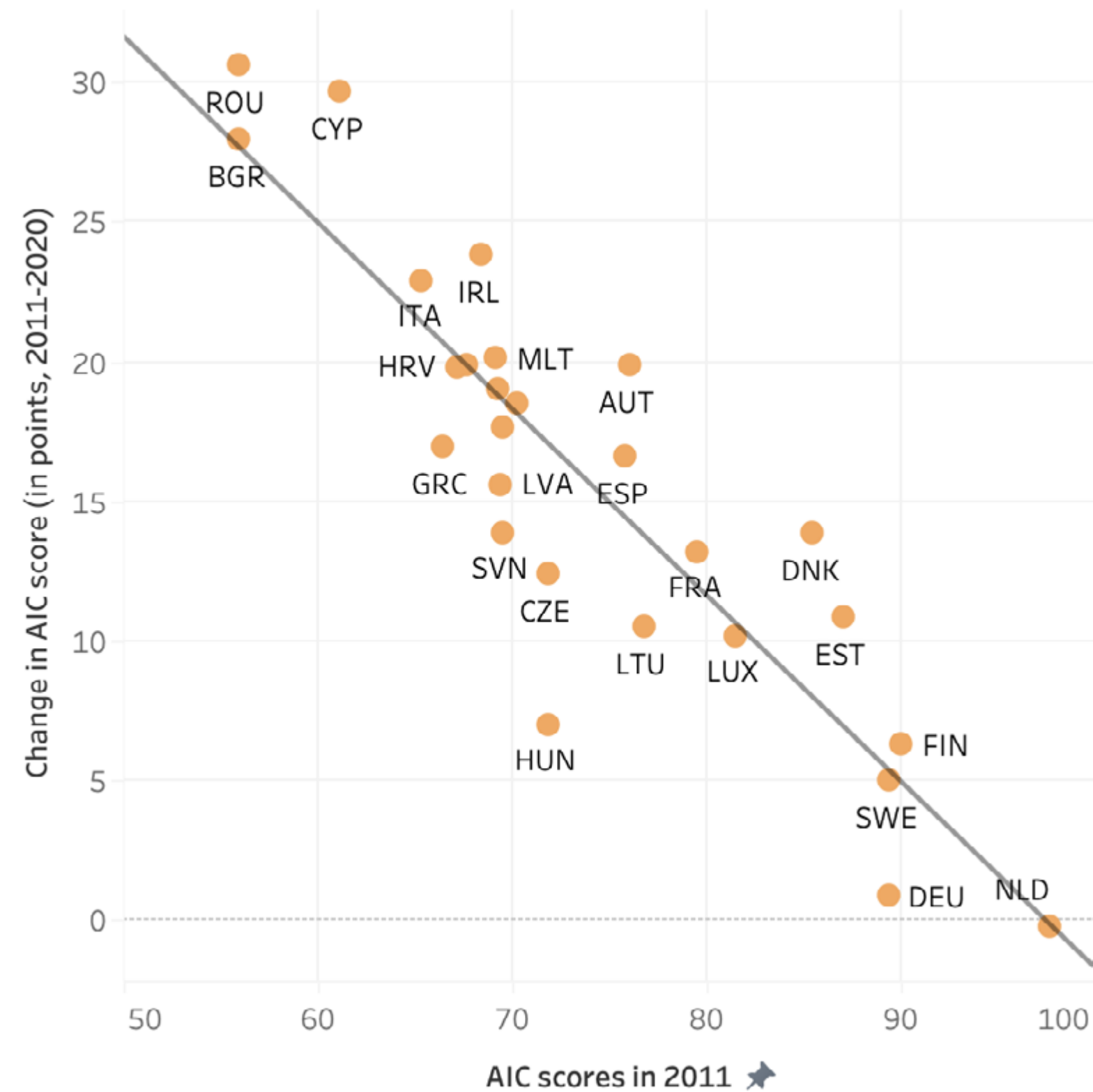


Figure 50 Personal Freedom and Choice

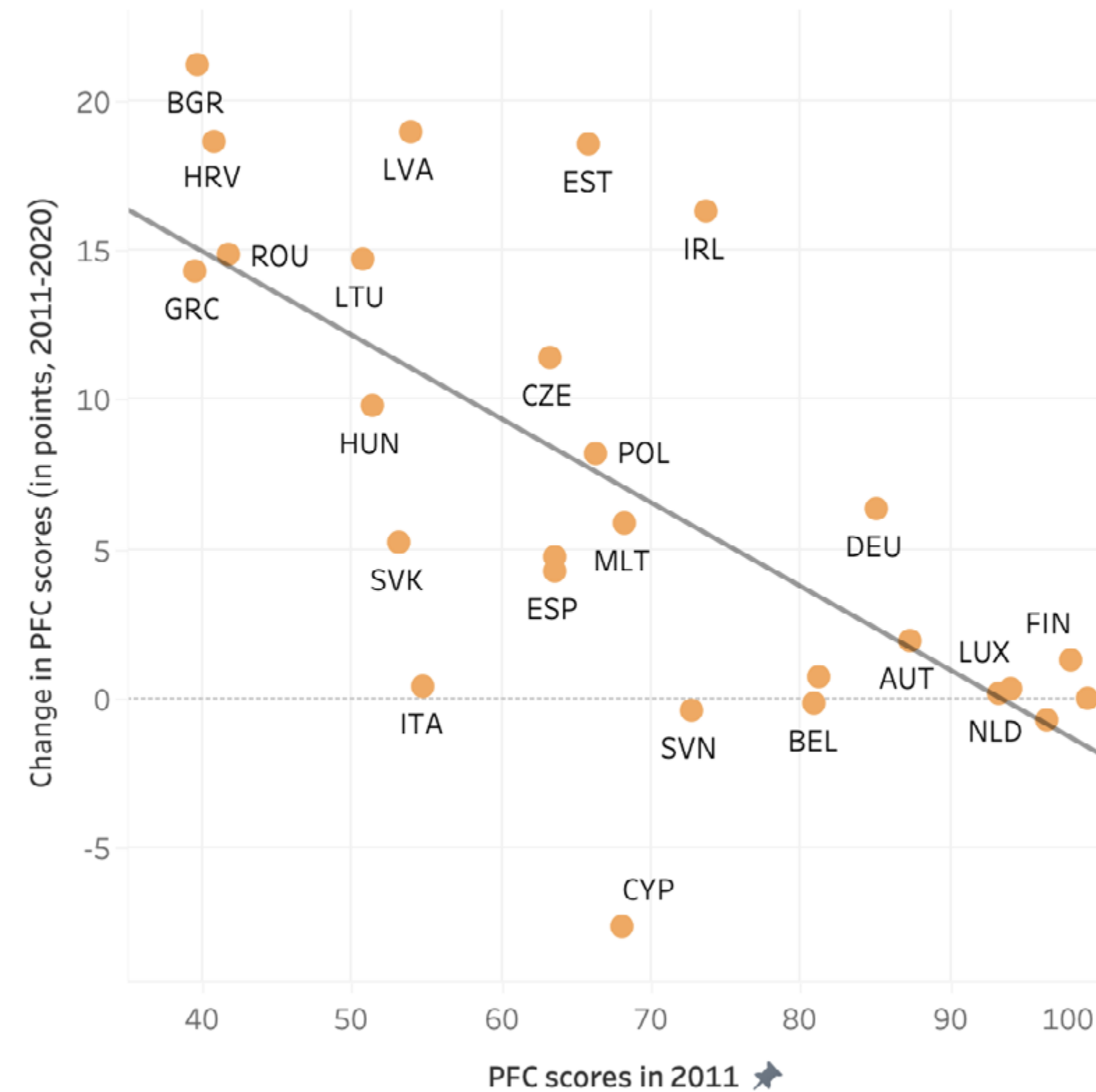
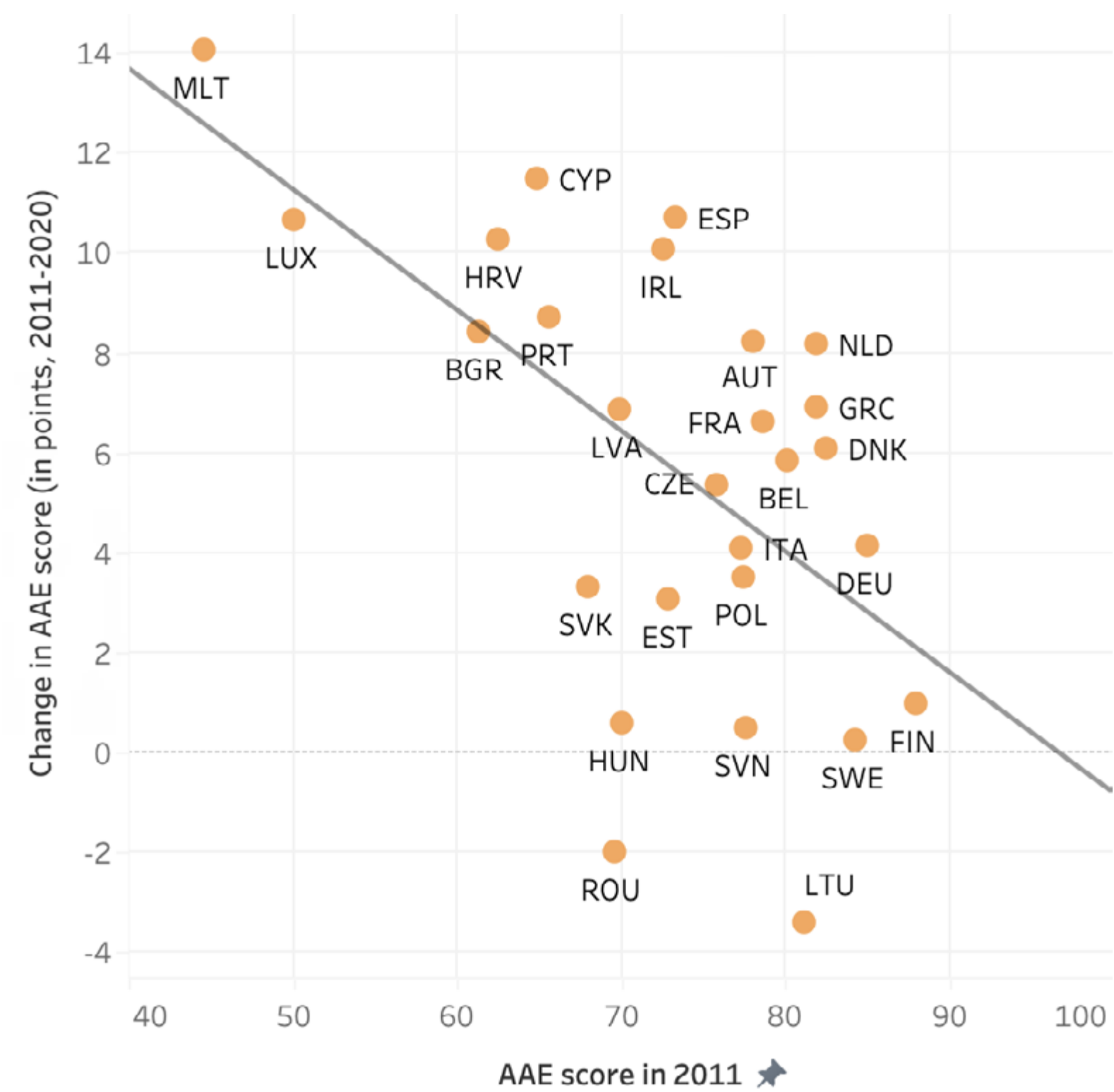
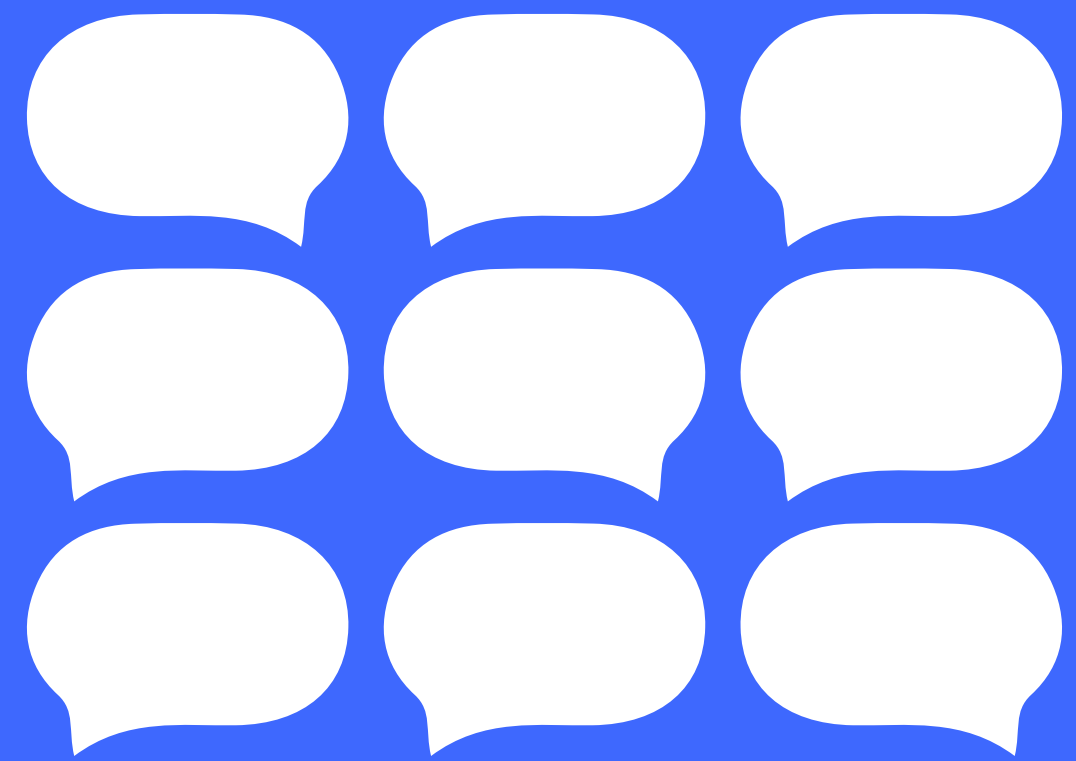


Figure 51 Access to Advanced Education





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youth forum

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