



EF EPI

EF English Proficiency Index

A Ranking of 113 Countries and Regions by English Skills

www.ef.com/epi

EF SET

EF Standard English Test

Take the free test at
www.efset.org

2023

Table of Contents

04	Executive Summary
06	EF EPI 2023 Ranking of Countries and Regions
08	EF EPI 2023 City Scores
10	EF EPI 2023 Facts and Figures
12	English and the Economy
13	English and Innovation
14	English and Work
16	English and Society
17	English and the Future
18	Europe
20	Asia
22	Latin America
24	Africa
26	Middle East
28	Proficiency Detail
40	Conclusions
42	Recommendations
44	Appendix A: About the Index
46	Appendix B: EF EPI Proficiency Bands
47	Appendix C: CEFR Levels and Can-Do Statements
48	Appendix D: EF EPI Country and Region Rankings

Executive Summary

Learning a language isn't about translating words; it's about coming to understand other cultures. As we learn, we come to understand the broader context, see things from new perspectives. These are valuable skills which, along with empathy and innovation, remain beyond the reach of AI.

The same benefits come with any additional language we learn but English is in a unique position in the modern world, not because of the language itself but because so many people speak it. The larger the English-speaking population, the more useful speaking English becomes.

The value of a shared language is most perceptible in the workplace, where English opens up opportunities for individuals and boosts both diversity and efficiency for organizations. But in fact, as we face the climate catastrophe, war and other global challenges together, the need for international communication, cross-cultural understanding and human empathy in all areas of our lives has never been greater. It is in this context that we continue to gather data about English proficiency and publish this annual report investigating how and where English proficiency is developing around the world.

To create the 2023 edition of the EF English Proficiency Index, we have analyzed the results of 2.2 million adults who took our EF SET English tests in 2022, with a particular emphasis on proficiency trends around the world since the publication of the first EF EPI in 2011.

An illusion of global stability

The population-weighted worldwide average English proficiency level among adults has not changed since 2011, but looking back over the past decade, the picture is not one of a world in which everyone's English stays about the same. Instead, gains in one group are offset by losses in another, as circumstances change and priorities shift. We're a long way from the catastrophic predictions of worldwide English hegemony, but we're also no nearer to equalizing access to the opportunities speaking English affords.

Young people's English is declining in some places

Our youngest age group (18-20) has declining English proficiency. However, this is a case where what looks like a worldwide trend is actually only a trend in a few large countries. In most places, youth English proficiency has been stable, or if it has declined, that drop aligns neatly with the interruption of education systems during the pandemic. It is not yet clear if learning loss due to COVID will self-correct over time, but in subsequent cohorts we would expect to see a rebound. The more difficult challenge is for those countries experiencing a longer decline among the youngest cohort, where education systems are teaching English less well than before. Readers can consult country-specific proficiency trends by age group on the EF EPI website.

English proficiency is rising in the workforce

Working adults have been improving their English since 2015, the first year in which we reported scores by age group. These gains are happening too quickly to be explained entirely by younger, more proficient English speakers aging up. Adults are building proficiency in the workplace too, either through sanctioned training schemes or personal development on the side. This finding coincides with increasing demand for professional English courses over the past decade as companies and employees seek to bridge the gap between the requirements of a globalized workplace and the English skills learned in mainstream education.

The gender gap is widening again

Worldwide over the past decade, men's English proficiency has improved while women's has declined slightly, inverting their relative positions. Although the majority of countries do not have a significant gender gap, of those that do, 38 favor men and only 5 favor women. The workplace would seem like an obvious culprit: if people are building proficiency at work, that's an area where women are still underrepresented, especially in higher paying, more international jobs. But the gender gap among those aged 18-25 is three times as wide as among working adults, indicating a problem engendered by educational systems themselves or a societal problem schools are failing to address. This is surprising given progress in equalizing access to education, female overrepresentation in higher education and girls' overall better academic results. Countries with high and rising levels of gender-based skill imbalance will need to investigate further.

Is East Asia turning away from English?

Adult English proficiency has been waning in East Asia the past 4 years, and in Japan for an entire decade. That decline accelerated this year with both Japan and China experiencing significant changes. During the same period, the number of university students from East Asia enrolled in US universities dropped significantly (-20% for South Korea in 2023 compared to 2020; -30% for China). Pandemic-related travel restrictions played a role, but declining English proficiency is likely symptomatic of broader political and demographic shifts as well as growing confidence questioning Western cultural hegemony in education.

The Middle East looks stuck

The average level of English proficiency in the Middle East has improved over the past decade, but only due to the addition of higher proficiency countries to the index. At a national level, we've seen few significant changes, apart from Lebanon—the past two years have been devastating and this is reflected in their test scores.

The region has some of the narrowest age-related proficiency differences in the world, with all age groups testing at similar levels. This is typical of a population with stable skills, as any effective educational reform would be reflected among the young, and any effective workplace training scheme would raise levels in working adults. Stability would not be problematic if proficiency levels were higher, but as it is, the level of English in the region is insufficient for most professional and higher education settings.

Latin America is improving, except its young people

In regard to English, Latin America is a region in flux. Central America's level has improved more than any other region in the world over the past decade at an average pace of 6 points a year. South America has also improved steadily. On the other hand, Mexico has seen a significant decline and both Mexico and Argentina are drivers of the worldwide drop among 18–20-year-olds since 2015. The region as a whole saw a larger-than-average erosion in youth English proficiency during the pandemic, from which it has not yet recovered.

Europe plateaus

Despite dominating the top of the index, Europe is in a bit of a slump this year with a number of high and very high proficiency countries reporting slightly lower scores. Starting from an already high base, the longer-term trend in Europe has been one of steady improvement, both in and outside the EU. Still, several of Europe's largest economies (France, Spain, Italy) have not reached the same proficiency level as their neighbors, and some of the highest proficiency countries in Northern Europe have gender gaps in favor of men of more than 40 points.

The rest of Asia is predominantly stable

South and Southeast Asia have seen a slight drop in their level of English on average, although many countries in the region have stable or modestly rising scores. The regional averages are impacted by India's level of English proficiency, which has been declining slowly over several years. In addition, the progress Thailand was making until 2020 has been erased by the pandemic. English proficiency in Central Asia is low and stable, with higher-than-average gender gaps in favor of men in almost every country.

North Africa is improving

English proficiency in North Africa has been improving steadily over the past decade, although the pace of improvement has slowed since 2021. It's too early to say if proficiency will settle at this new level or continue rise. Universities appear to be contributing to these gains as proficiency is highest among 20-25 year olds. Discussions continue around the roles of English and French in the education systems of the region.

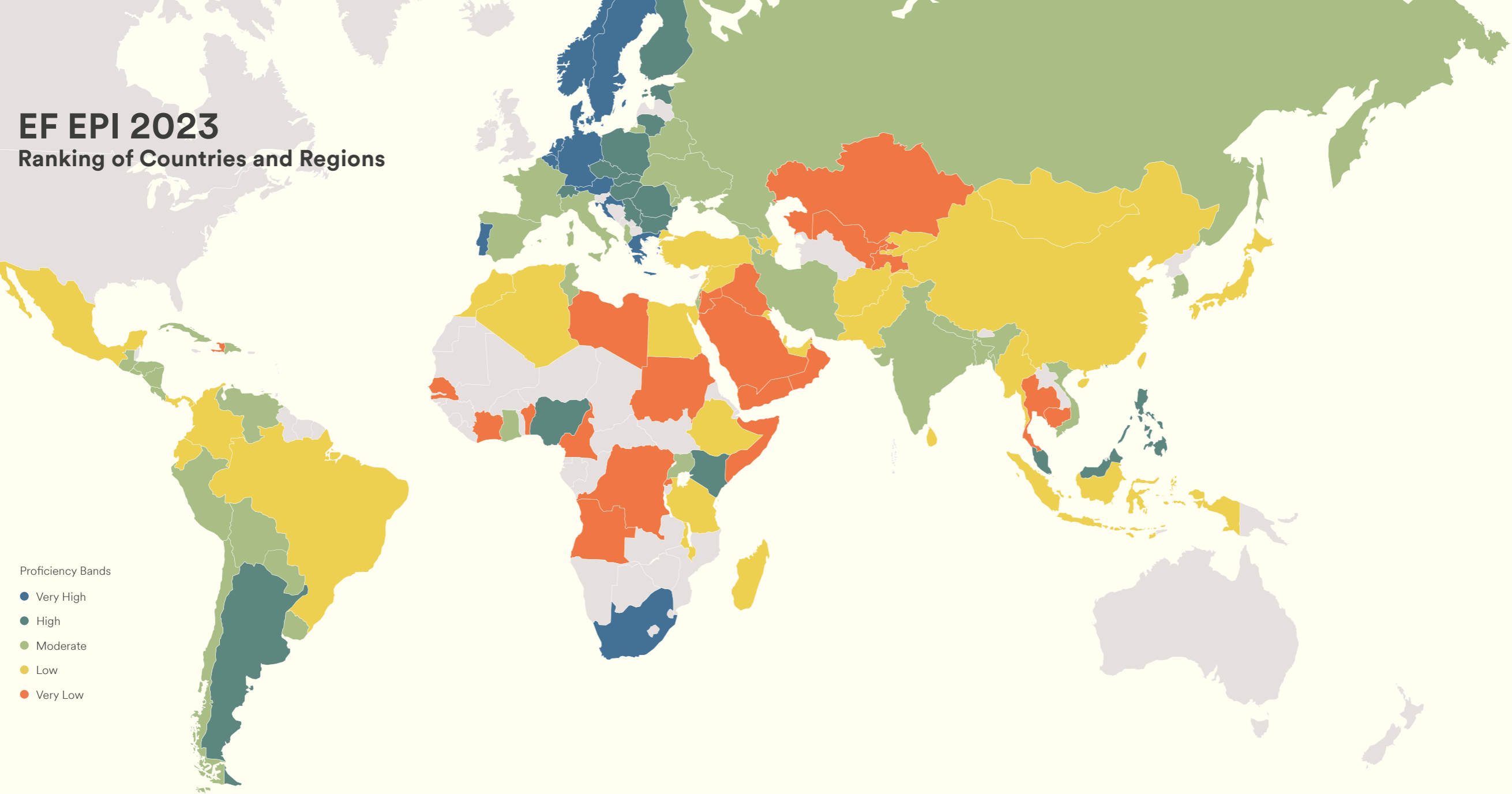
Across Africa, English proficiency levels are largely stable with all age groups testing at similar levels in most countries. The gap between men and women in Africa is the narrowest of any region and, with few exceptions, gender gaps are narrow at the national level as well.

Language is an essential part of sharing perspectives and building understanding. This is true of all languages, but because English is spoken by people around the world, it's uniquely positioned to draw us closer across borders. More people deserve the opportunity to be part of that conversation.

EF EPI 2023

Ranking of Countries and Regions

- Proficiency Bands
- Very High
 - High
 - Moderate
 - Low
 - Very Low



Very High Proficiency

01	Netherlands	647
02	Singapore	631
03	Austria	616
04	Denmark	615
05	Norway	614
06	Sweden	609
07	Belgium	608
08	Portugal	607
09	South Africa	605
10	Germany	604
11	Croatia	603
12	Greece	602

High Proficiency

13	Poland	598
14	Finland	597
15	Romania	596
16	Bulgaria	589
17	Hungary	588
18	Slovakia	587
19	Kenya	584
20	Philippines	578
21	Lithuania	576
22	Luxembourg	575
23	Estonia	570
24	Serbia	569
25	Malaysia	568
26	Czech Republic	565
27	Nigeria	562
28	Argentina	560
29	Hong Kong (China)	558
30	Switzerland	553

Moderate Proficiency

31	Honduras	544
32	Georgia	541
33	Belarus	539
34	Ghana	537
35	Italy	535
35	Moldova	535
35	Spain	535
38	Costa Rica	534
39	Albania	533
39	Uruguay	533
41	Bolivia	532
41	Russia	532
43	Cuba	531
43	France	531
45	Paraguay	530
45	Ukraine	530
47	Uganda	529

48	Armenia	528
49	South Korea	525
50	El Salvador	524
51	Peru	521
52	Chile	518
53	Guatemala	515
54	Israel	514
55	Dominican Republic	512
56	Venezuela	508
57	Nepal	507
58	Iran	505
58	Vietnam	505
60	Bangladesh	504
60	India	504
62	Nicaragua	503
63	Tunisia	502

Low Proficiency

64	Pakistan	497
65	Lebanon	496
66	Turkey	493
67	Sri Lanka	491
67	Tanzania	491
69	Ethiopia	490
70	Brazil	487
71	Panama	486
71	United Arab Emirates	486
73	Mongolia	482
73	Qatar	482
75	Colombia	480
76	Morocco	478
77	Algeria	475

78	Madagascar	474
79	Indonesia	473
80	Ecuador	467
80	Syria	467
82	China	464
83	Azerbaijan	463
83	Egypt	463
85	Kuwait	461
86	Malawi	460
87	Japan	457
88	Afghanistan	456
89	Mexico	451
90	Kyrgyzstan	450
90	Myanmar	450

Very Low Proficiency

92	Palestine	445
93	Uzbekistan	442
94	Cameroon	438
94	Senegal	438
96	Jordan	431
97	Sudan	430
98	Cambodia	421
98	Haiti	421
100	Oman	418
101	Angola	416
101	Benin	416
101	Thailand	416
104	Kazakhstan	415

105	Somalia	411
106	Iraq	410
107	Côte d'Ivoire	409
108	Saudi Arabia	408
109	Rwanda	405
110	Libya	392
110	Yemen	392
112	Tajikistan	388
113	Democratic Republic of the Congo	385

EF EPI 2023 City Scores

Proficiency Bands

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low



Very High Proficiency

Amsterdam	646
Vienna	640
Copenhagen	639
Stockholm	637
Oslo	629
Berlin	625
Sofia	622
Bern	621
Talinn	621
Helsinki	617
Cape Town	614
Zagreb	612
Athens	611
Vilnius	610
Lisbon	609
Warsaw	605
Bucharest	602
Budapest	600

High Proficiency

Belgrade	594
Bratislava	592
Buenos Aires	592
Brussels	589
Prague	589
Manila	587
Nairobi	586
Paris	579
Lagos	578
Chişinău	573
Kuala Lumpur	564
La Paz	562
Seoul	559
Tirana	559
Madrid	558
Rome	555
Santiago	553
Accra	552
Tbilisi	551
Tegucigalpa	551

Moderate Proficiency

Asunción	549
Minsk	549
Montevideo	549
San José	549
Kiev	547
Beirut	545
Havana	543
Brasília	542
Moscow	542
Hanoi	538
Islamabad	538
Erevan	536
Lima	536
San Salvador	534
Tunis	533
Jakarta	531
Colombo	528
Santo Domingo	528
Kathmandu	527
Caracas	521

Dhaka	521
Guatemala City	521
Tehran	521
Kampala	520
Addis Ababa	515
Dar Es Salaam	515
Beijing	514
Algiers	513
Quito	513
Rio de Janeiro	513
Shanghai	512
Managua	511
Dubai	510
Rabat	506
Ankara	503
Tokyo	503
Jerusalem	500
Medellín	500
Ulaanbaatar	500

Low Proficiency

Panama City	491
Nur-Sultan	485
Bishkek	484
Doha	484
Damascus	477
Cairo	476
Guangzhou	475
Amman	470
Baku	466
Mexico City	462
Kabul	458
Bangkok	457
Delhi	451

Very Low Proficiency

Kuwait City	446
Tashkent	445
Mogadishu	442
Khartoum	440
Muscat	436
Yaoundé	436
Nay Pyi Taw	433
Luanda	428
Port-au-Prince	427
Abidjan	425
Baghdad	425
Phnom Penh	422
Kinshasa	421
Tripoli	410
Kigali	409
Sana'a	408
Riyadh	400
Dushanbe	392

English proficiency scores for over 1200 regions and cities, as well as national and regional gender and age data, are available at www.ef.com/epi.

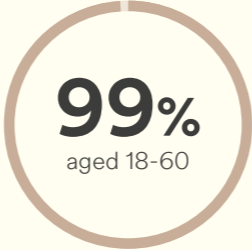
EF EPI 2023 Facts and Figures

Who are the test takers?

2.2M
Total Test Takers



55%
Female

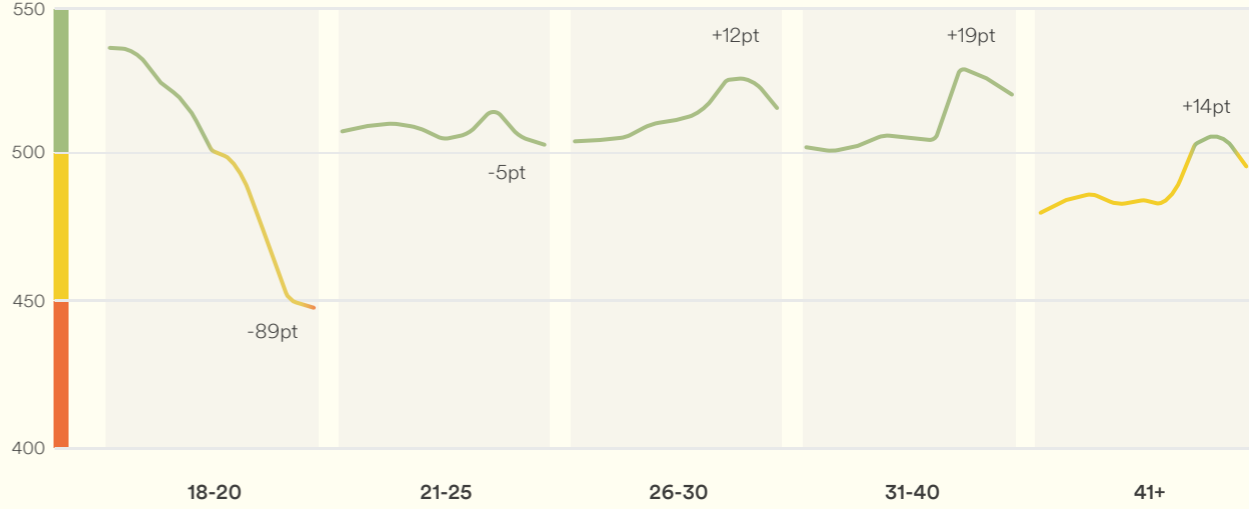


45%
Male

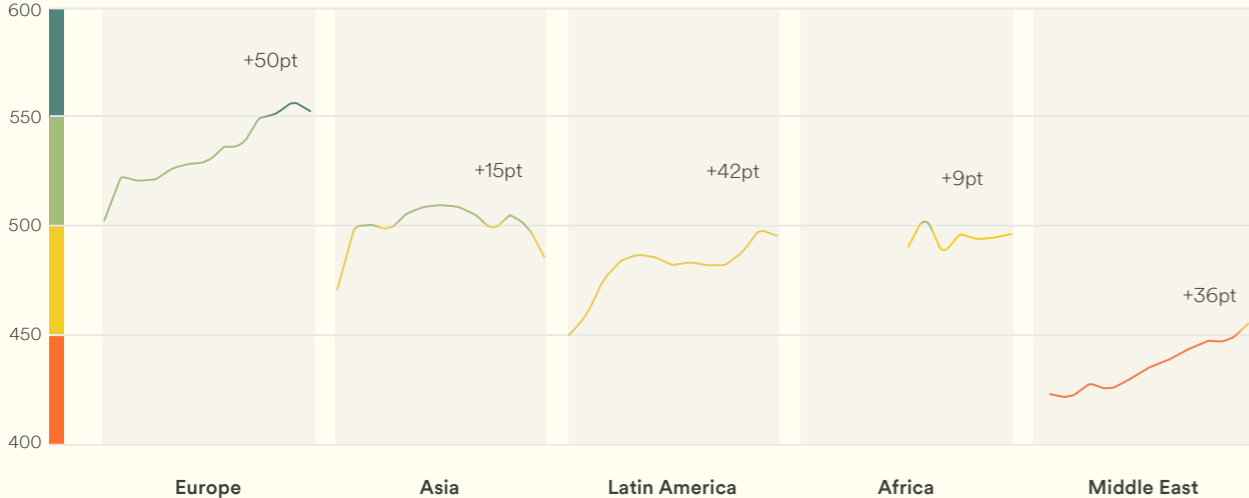
26 Years old
Median Age



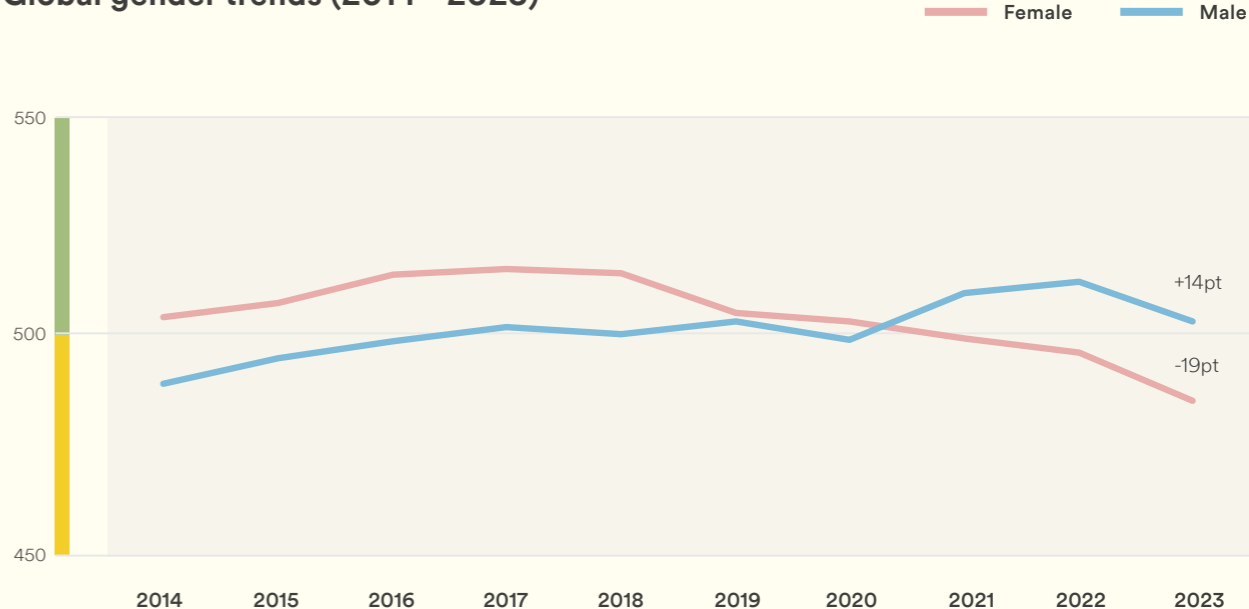
Global age trends (2015 - 2023)



Regional trends (2011 - 2023)



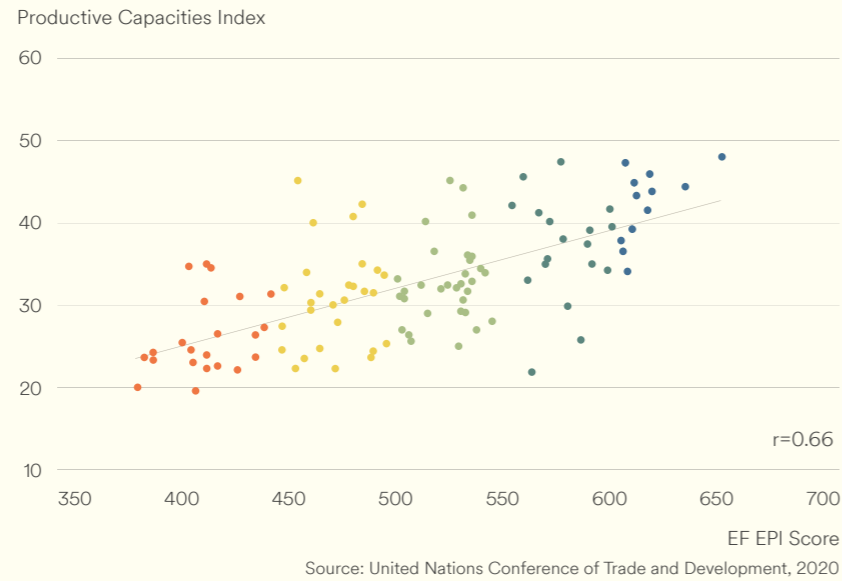
Global gender trends (2014 - 2023)



English and the Economy

Simple measures of wealth and trade correlate consistently with English proficiency, however, those relationships aren't as strong as the ones with more complex indicators of economic balance, productivity, and potential. In this way English is like other skills in a modern workforce: English alone doesn't raise wages or increase trade, but more efficient workforces tend to speak better English.

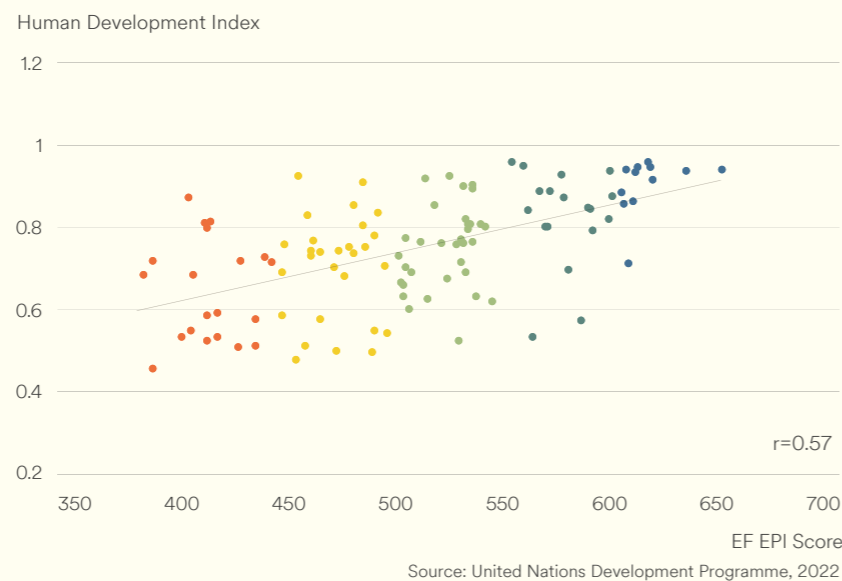
GRAPH A
English and Productivity



Proficiency Bands

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low

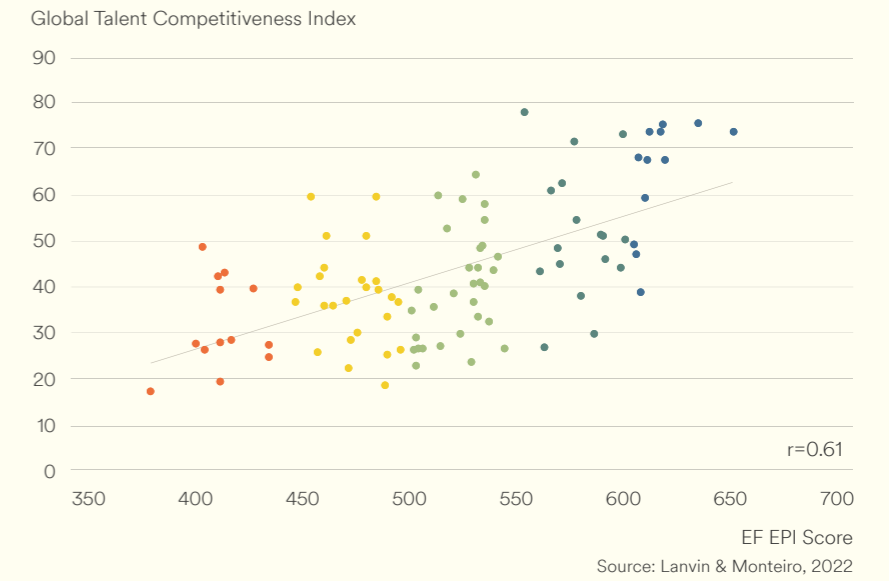
GRAPH B
English and Human Capital



English and Innovation

Throughout history, scholars have learned each other's languages in order to keep up with the latest ideas and participate in academic discussions beyond the confines of their nation's borders. Indeed, innovation and research depends on the frictionless flow of ideas and information. Over the past century, as English has gained traction as a global language, its use has spread into increasingly varied domains, further accelerating innovation. Thanks to the power of AI, we may eventually innovate our way out of linguistic constraints, but until we do, people can only collaborate effectively to drive research forward when they speak the same language.

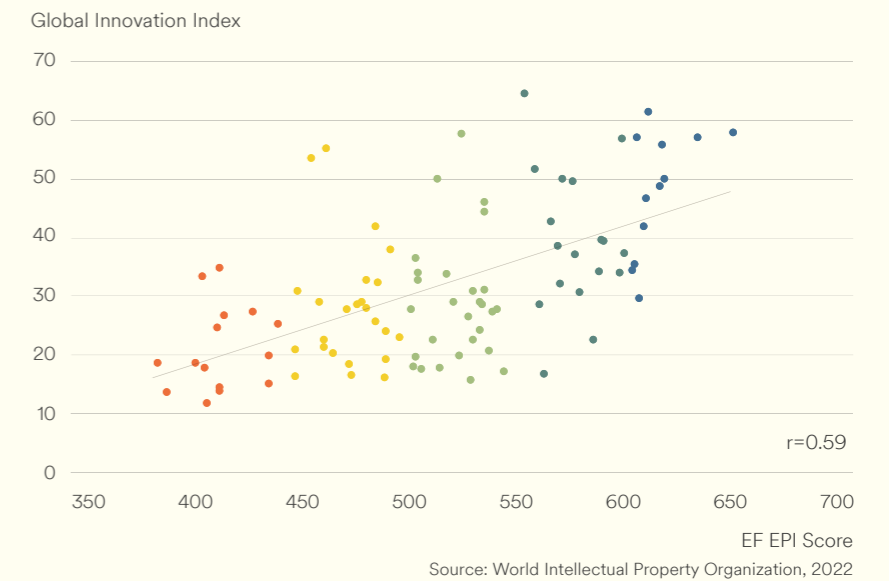
GRAPH C
English and Talent Competitiveness



Proficiency Bands

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low

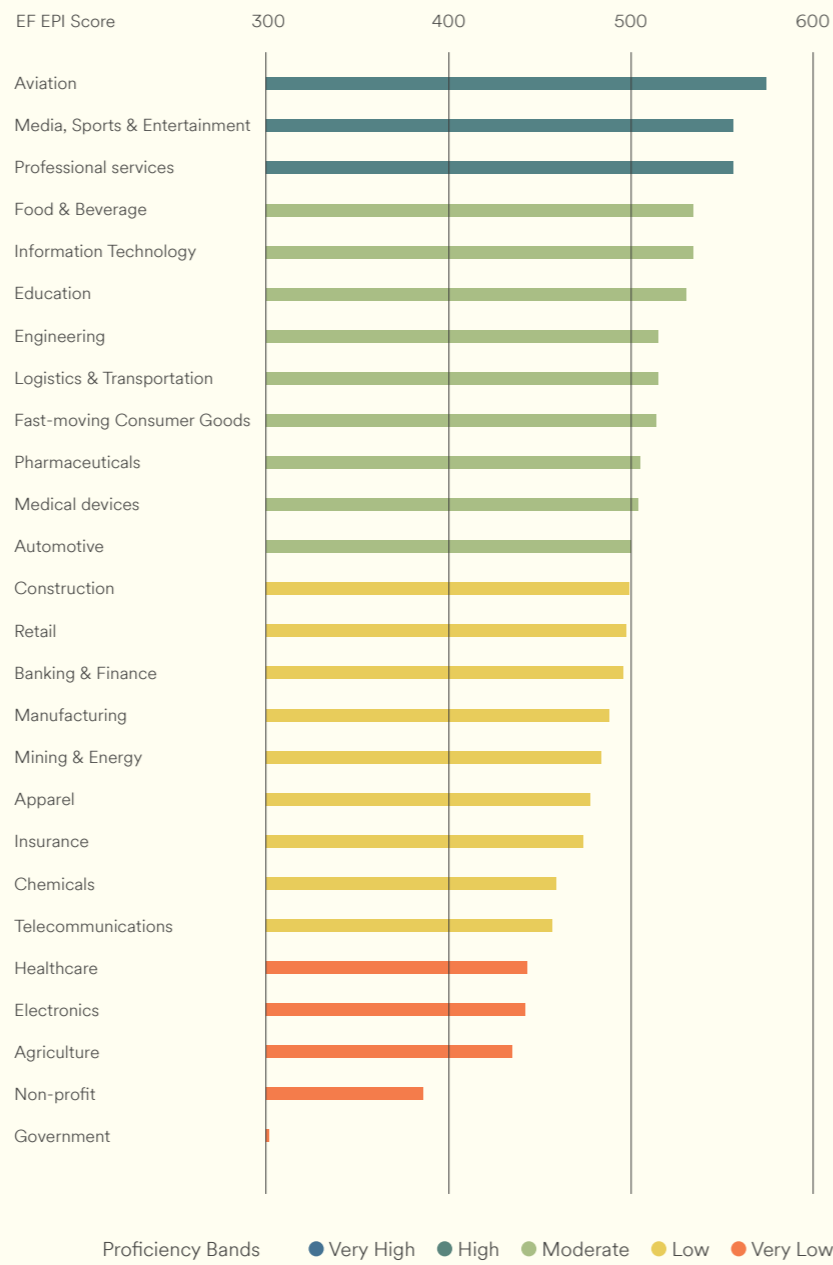
GRAPH D
English and Global Innovation



English and Work

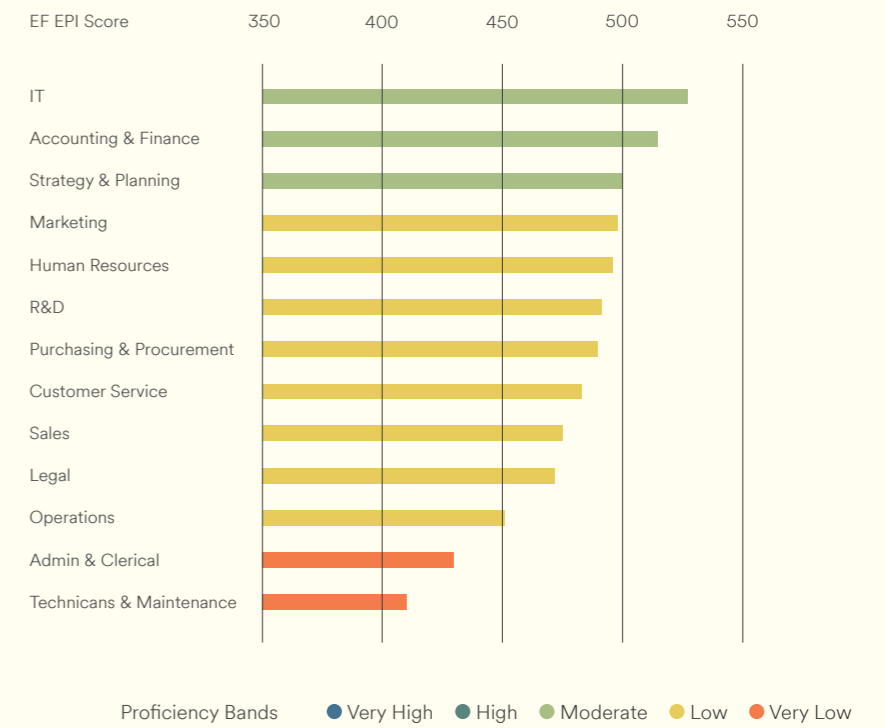
Differences in levels of English proficiency between industries are most likely a direct consequence of hiring practices and varying levels of investment in English training programs. Their persistence in the private sector is somewhat surprising given the level of international integration and competition in all industries. Government and non-profit employers do their staff a disservice by providing them with fewer upskilling opportunities than they would get elsewhere.

EF EPI by Industry



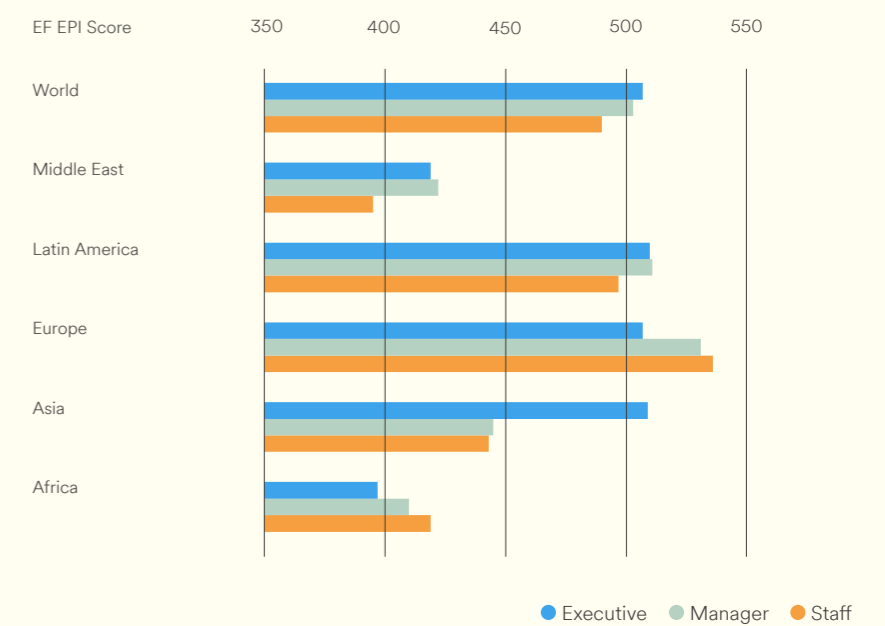
For many professionals, having a lower-than-average level of English proficiency is a barrier to career progression and limits access to information. When a promotion means relocating to a more central office with more international teams, non-English-speakers are stuck. The problem is particularly acute for those in maintenance and clerical roles where English proficiency is weaker and opportunities to speak English at work more scarce. Employers can help by identifying individuals who may be struggling, funding targeted training programs and creating opportunities for teams from different countries to collaborate. Fields like programming, accounting and marketing, which appear near the top of this list, are especially suited to remote work, potentially putting candidates for these roles in competition with a more international pool of applicants.

EF EPI by Job Function



Over the past decade, English proficiency levels have become increasingly homogenous between seniority levels, perhaps as a consequence of the closing proficiency gap between adults of different ages and the internationalization of tertiary education and career paths. Executives are often recruited from a borderless pool of candidates, especially in Asia, Europe and Latin America where proficiency levels in this group are nearly identical. We would also expect to see a closing of the proficiency gap between seniority levels in countries actively prioritizing the hiring and training of local talent.

EF EPI by Seniority

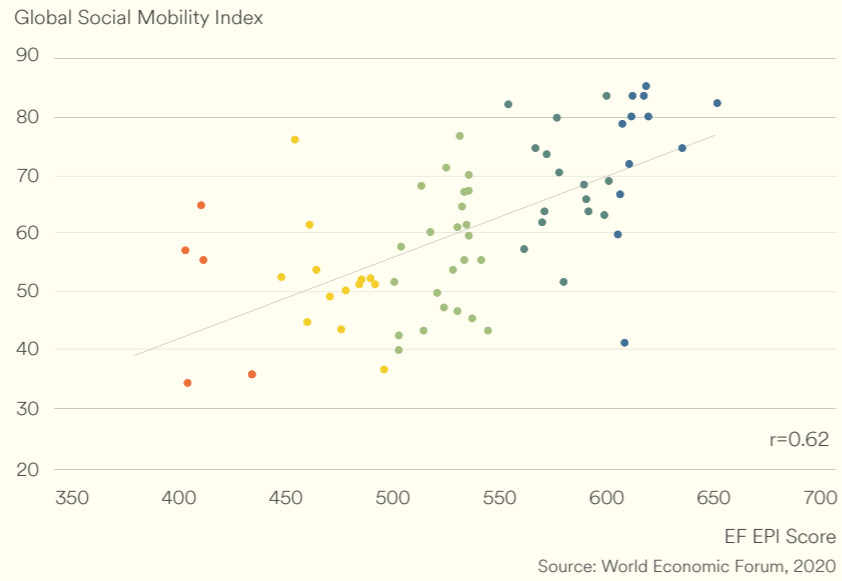


English and Society

For individuals, speaking English opens doors—broader access to information, a higher salary, more varied educational opportunities and greater independence from one's local labor market. Most people who learn English pick up the basics in formal instructional settings. As a consequence, unequal access to good English instruction, like other deficiencies in educational access, is an inequality multiplier, curbing people's potential and transmitting injustice from one generation to the next.

GRAPH E

English and Social Mobility

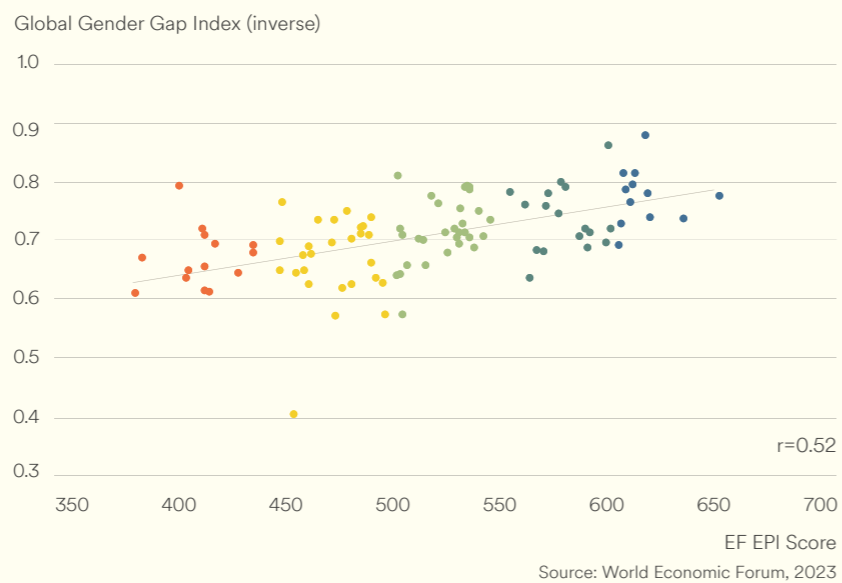


Proficiency Bands

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low

GRAPH F

English and Gender Equality

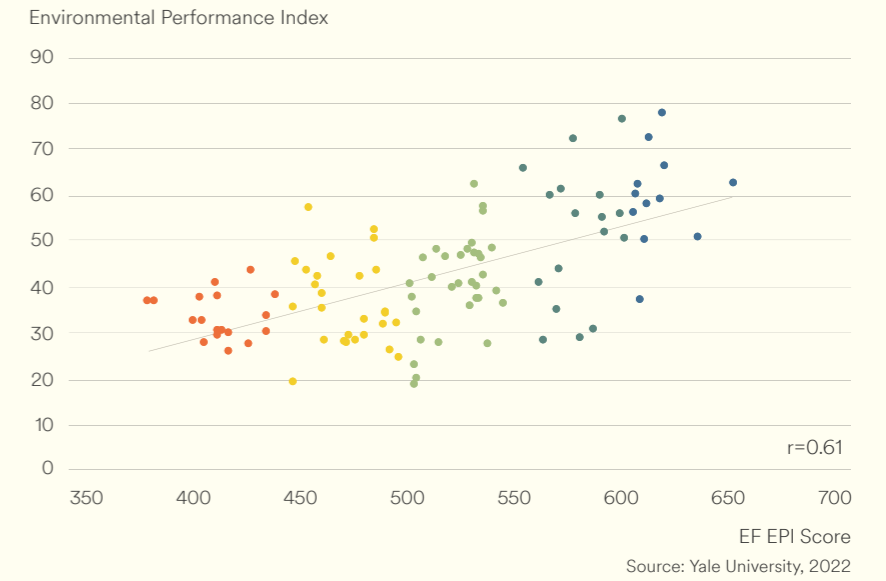


English and the Future

While speaking English allows people to study abroad, work for global companies and tap into international research, it also allows them to engage with people outside their bubble, gaining awareness of their lifestyles and priorities, the injustices they suffer and their dreams for the future. The value of a more interconnected world is difficult to estimate, but global threats like the climate crisis can only be addressed if we raise the level of international solidarity and cooperation.

GRAPH G

English and the Environment

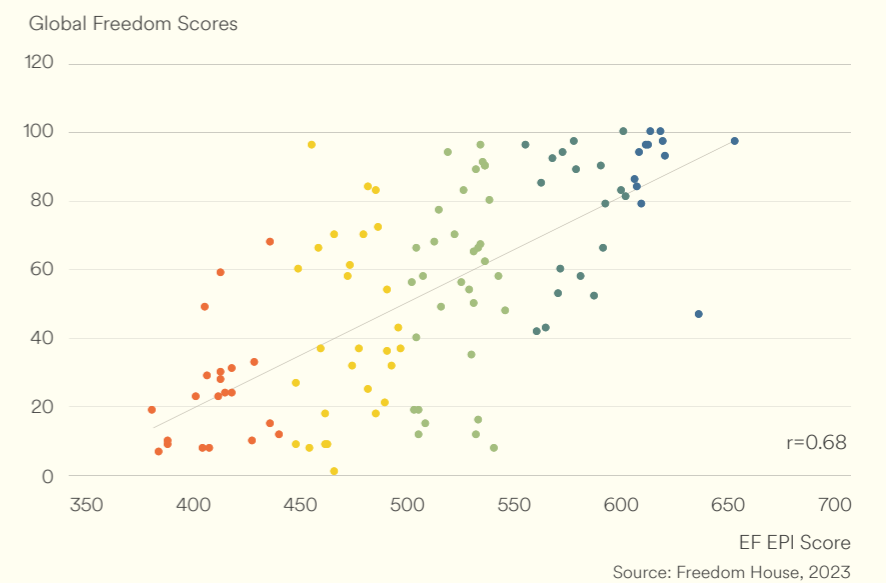


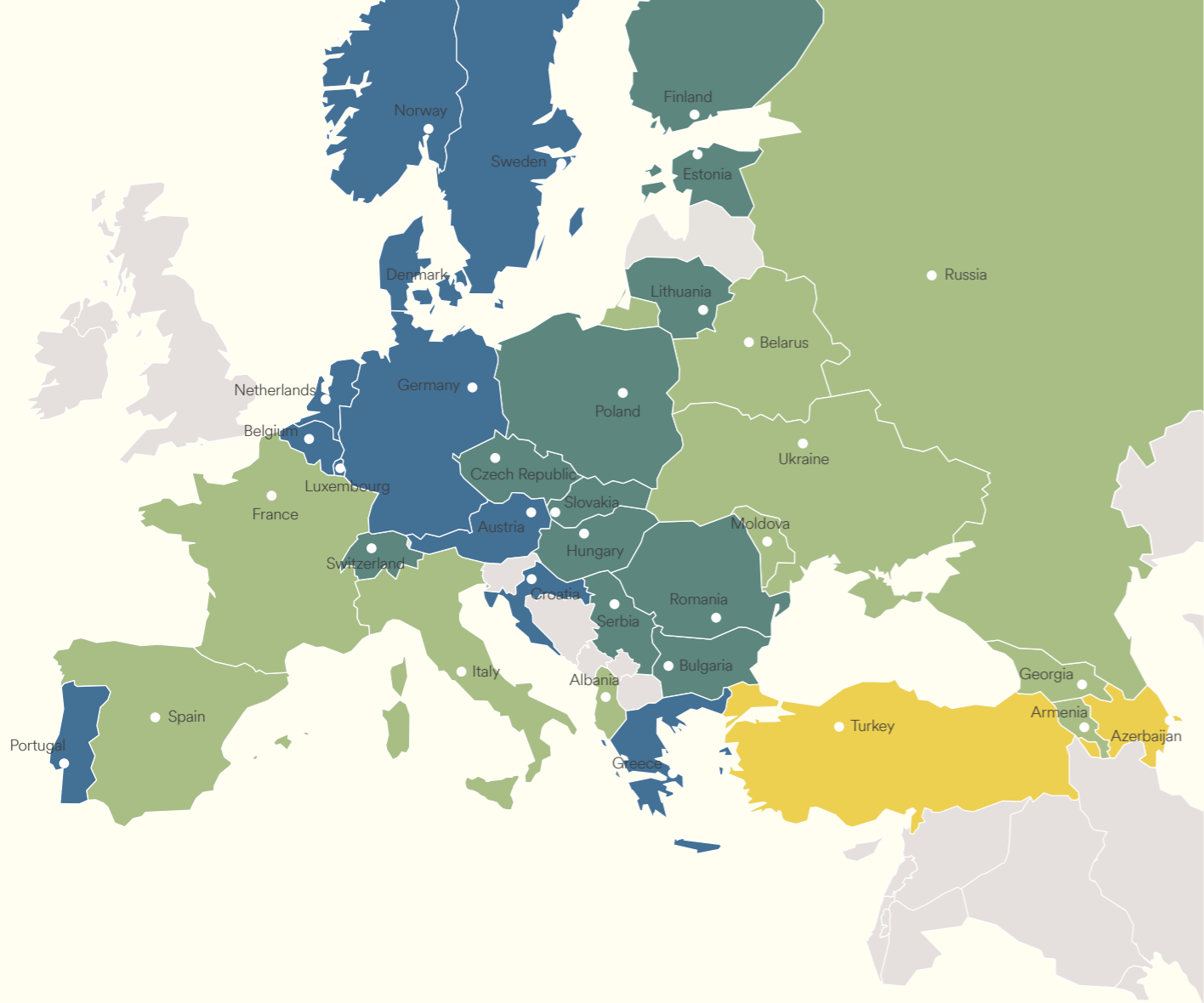
Proficiency Bands

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low

GRAPH H

English and Freedom





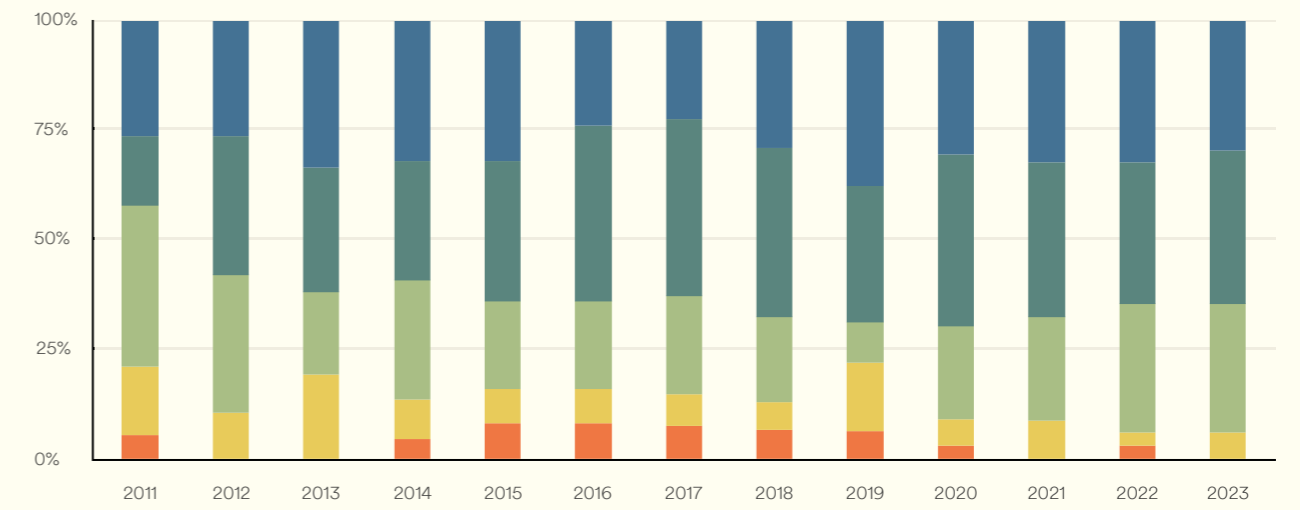
EUROPE

EF EPI Rankings

01	Netherlands	647	15	Romania	596	35	Italy	535
03	Austria	616	16	Bulgaria	589	35	Moldova	535
04	Denmark	615	17	Hungary	588	35	Spain	535
05	Norway	614	18	Slovakia	587	39	Albania	533
06	Sweden	609	21	Lithuania	576	41	Russia	532
07	Belgium	608	22	Luxembourg	575	43	France	531
08	Portugal	607	23	Estonia	570	45	Ukraine	530
10	Germany	604	24	Serbia	569	48	Armenia	528
11	Croatia	603	26	Czech Republic	565	66	Turkey	493
12	Greece	602	30	Switzerland	553	83	Azerbaijan	463
13	Poland	598	32	Georgia	541			
14	Finland	597	33	Belarus	539			

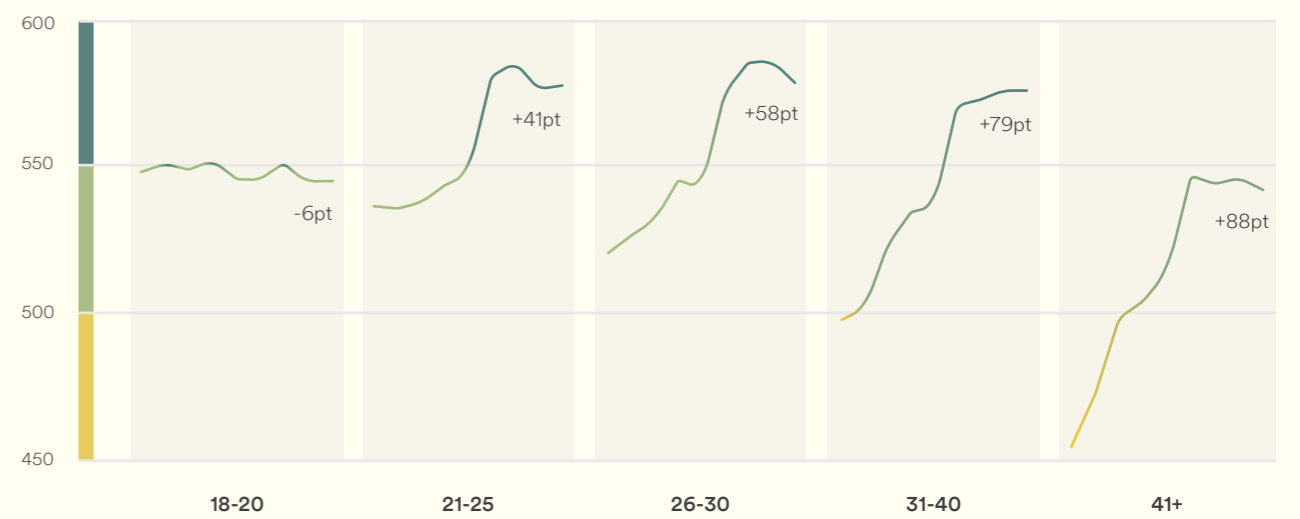
Proficiency Bands ● Very High ● High ● Moderate ● Low ● Very Low

Proficiency distribution (2011 - 2023)

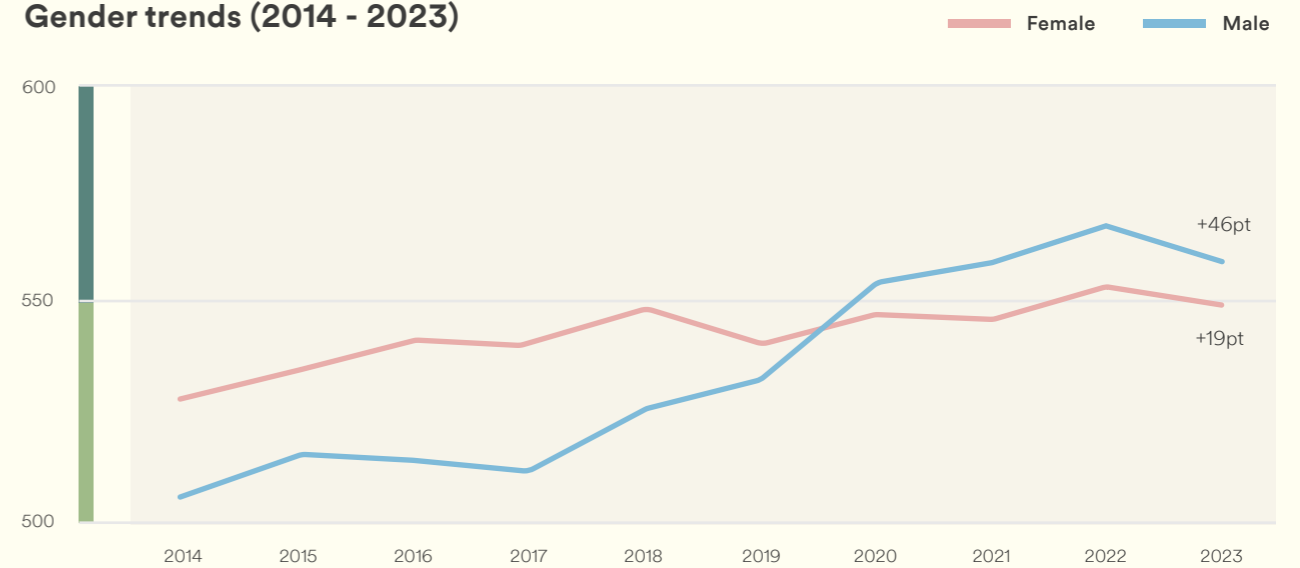


Percentage of European countries in each proficiency band over time

Age trends (2015 - 2023)



Gender trends (2014 - 2023)





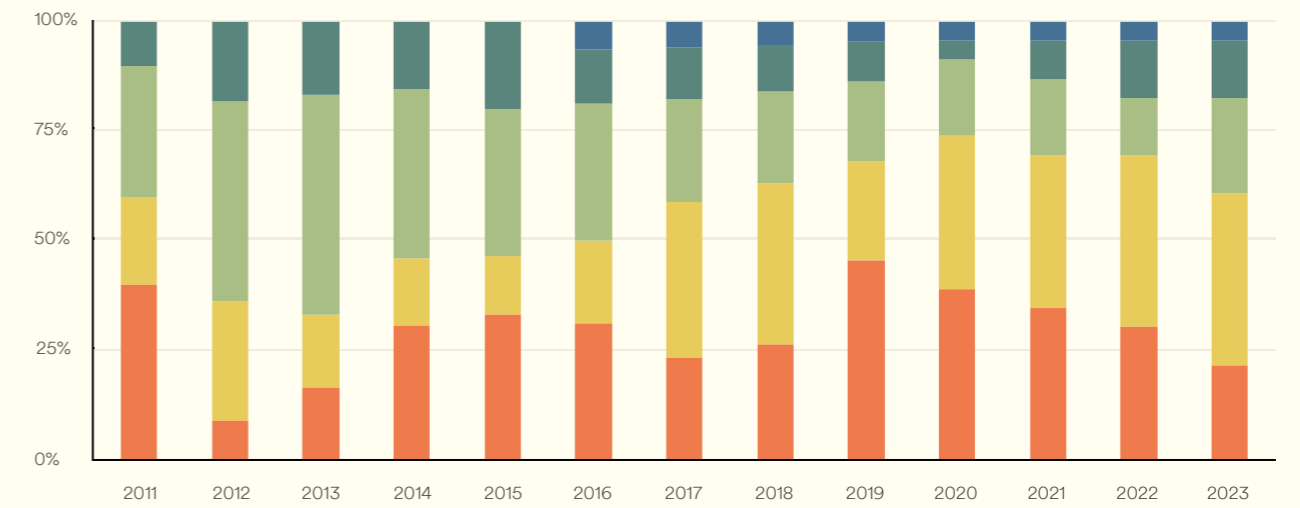
ASIA

EF EPI Rankings

2	Singapore	631	64	Pakistan	497	93	Uzbekistan	442
20	Philippines	578	67	Sri Lanka	491	98	Cambodia	421
25	Malaysia	568	73	Mongolia	482	101	Thailand	416
29	Hong Kong (China)	558	79	Indonesia	473	104	Kazakhstan	415
49	South Korea	525	82	China	464	112	Tajikistan	388
57	Nepal	507	87	Japan	457			
58	Vietnam	505	88	Afghanistan	456			
60	Bangladesh	504	90	Kyrgyzstan	450			
60	India	504	90	Myanmar	450			

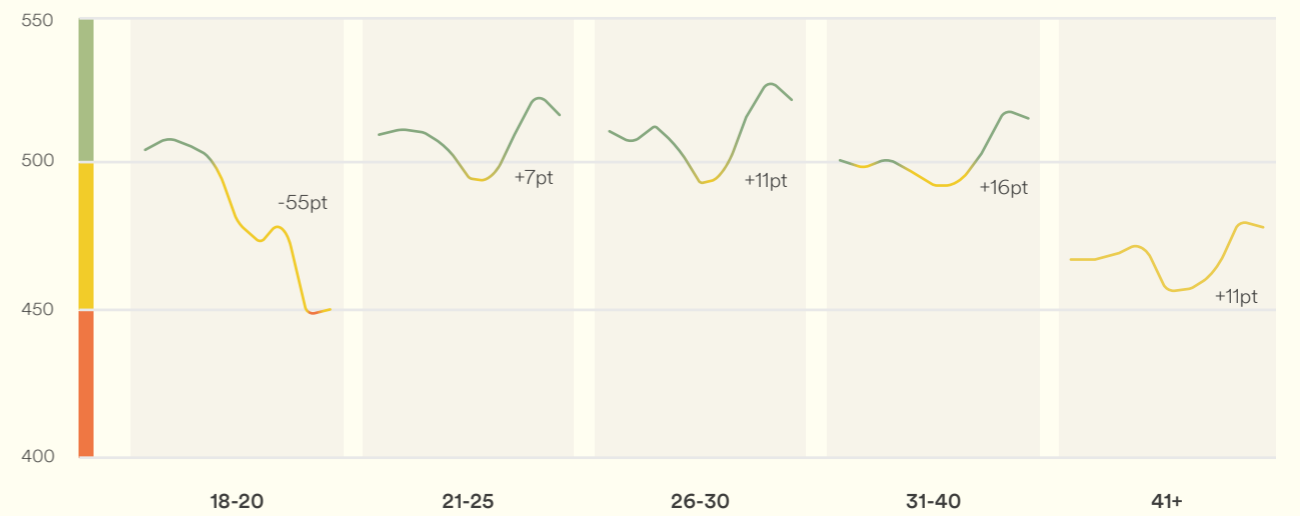
Proficiency Bands: ● Very High ● High ● Moderate ● Low ● Very Low

Proficiency distribution (2011 - 2023)

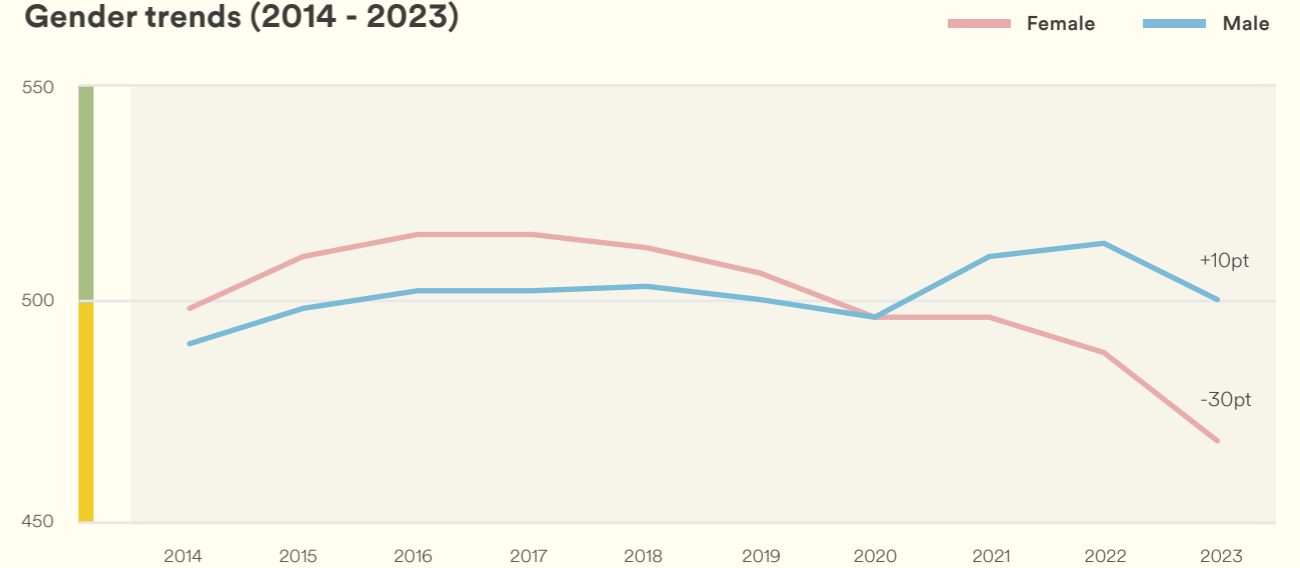


Percentage of Asian countries and regions in each proficiency band over time

Age trends (2015 - 2023)



Gender trends (2014 - 2023)



LATIN AMERICA

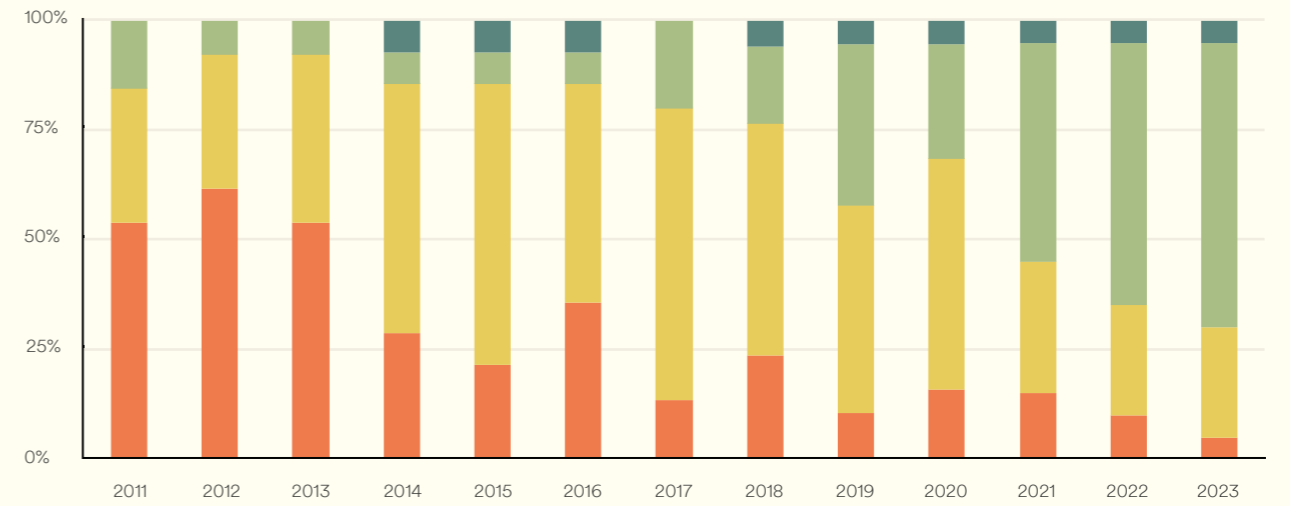


EF EPI Rankings

28	Argentina	560	53	Guatemala	515
31	Honduras	544	55	Dominican Republic	512
38	Costa Rica	534	56	Venezuela	508
39	Uruguay	533	62	Nicaragua	503
41	Bolivia	532	70	Brazil	487
43	Cuba	531	71	Panama	486
45	Paraguay	530	75	Colombia	480
50	El Salvador	524	80	Ecuador	467
51	Peru	521	89	Mexico	451
52	Chile	518	98	Haiti	421

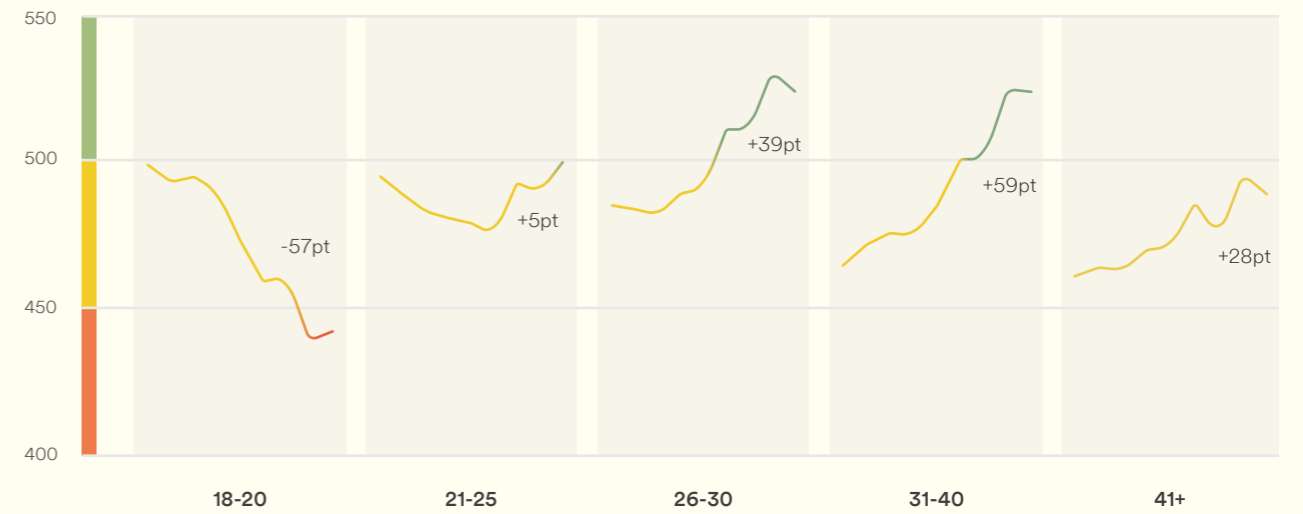
Proficiency Bands ● Very High ● High ● Moderate ● Low ● Very Low

Proficiency distribution (2011 - 2023)

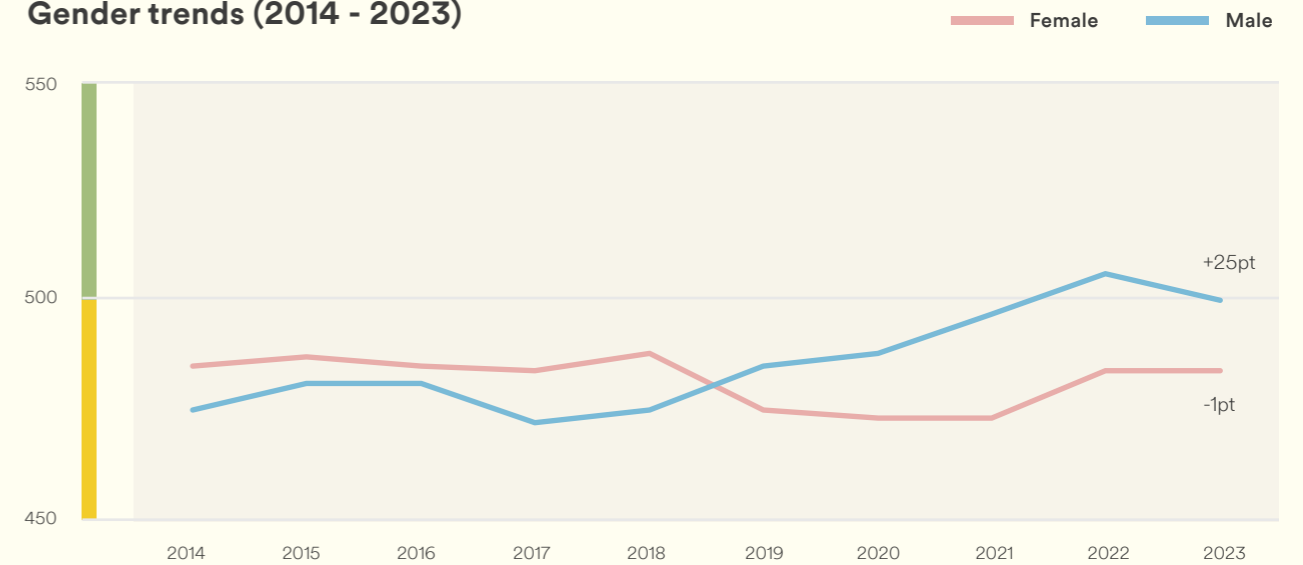


Percentage of Latin American countries in each proficiency band over time

Age trends (2015 - 2023)



Gender trends (2014 - 2023)



AFRICA

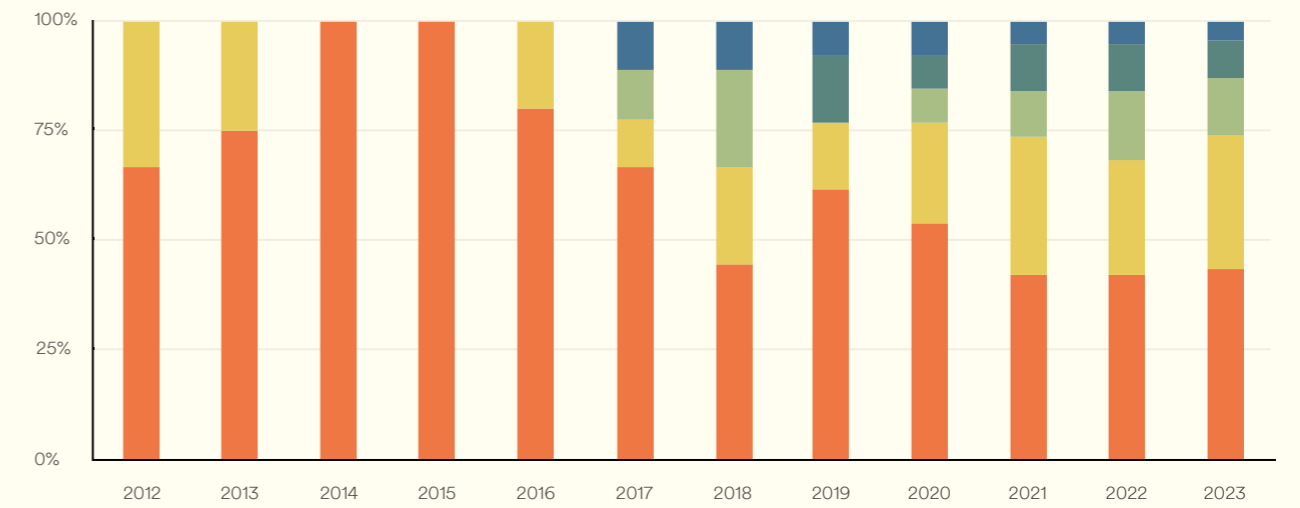


EF EPI Rankings

9	South Africa	605	78	Madagascar	474	109	Rwanda	405
19	Kenya	584	83	Egypt	463	110	Libya	392
27	Nigeria	562	86	Malawi	460	113	Democratic Republic of the Congo	385
34	Ghana	537	94	Cameroon	438			
47	Uganda	529	94	Senegal	438			
63	Tunisia	502	97	Sudan	430			
67	Tanzania	491	101	Angola	416			
69	Ethiopia	490	101	Benin	416			
76	Morocco	478	105	Somalia	411			
77	Algeria	475	107	Côte d'Ivoire	409			

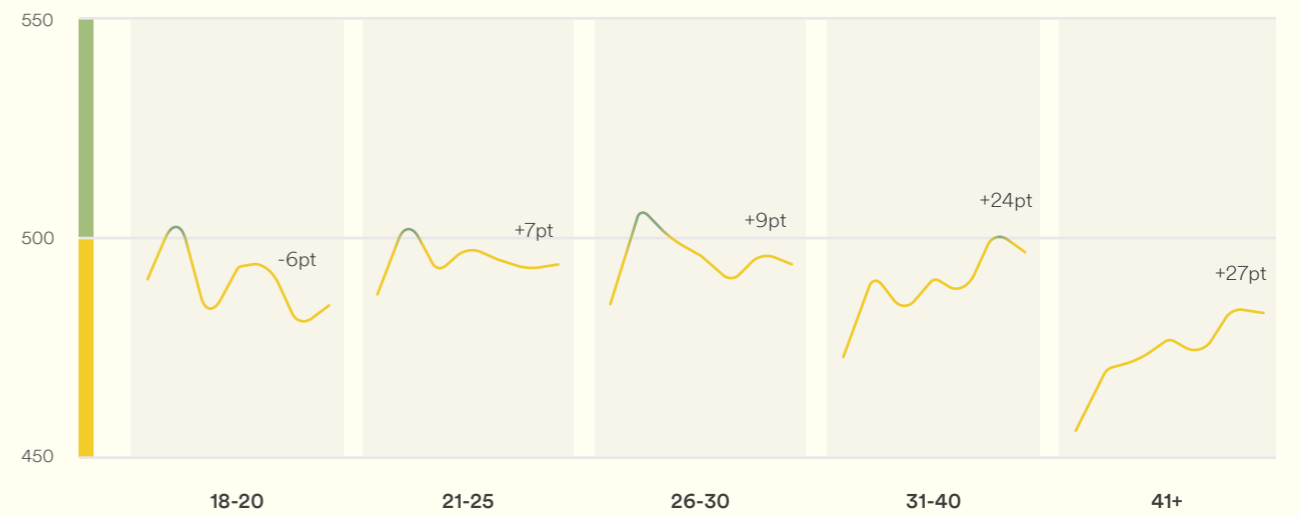
Proficiency Bands: ● Very High ● High ● Moderate ● Low ● Very Low

Proficiency distribution (2012 - 2023)

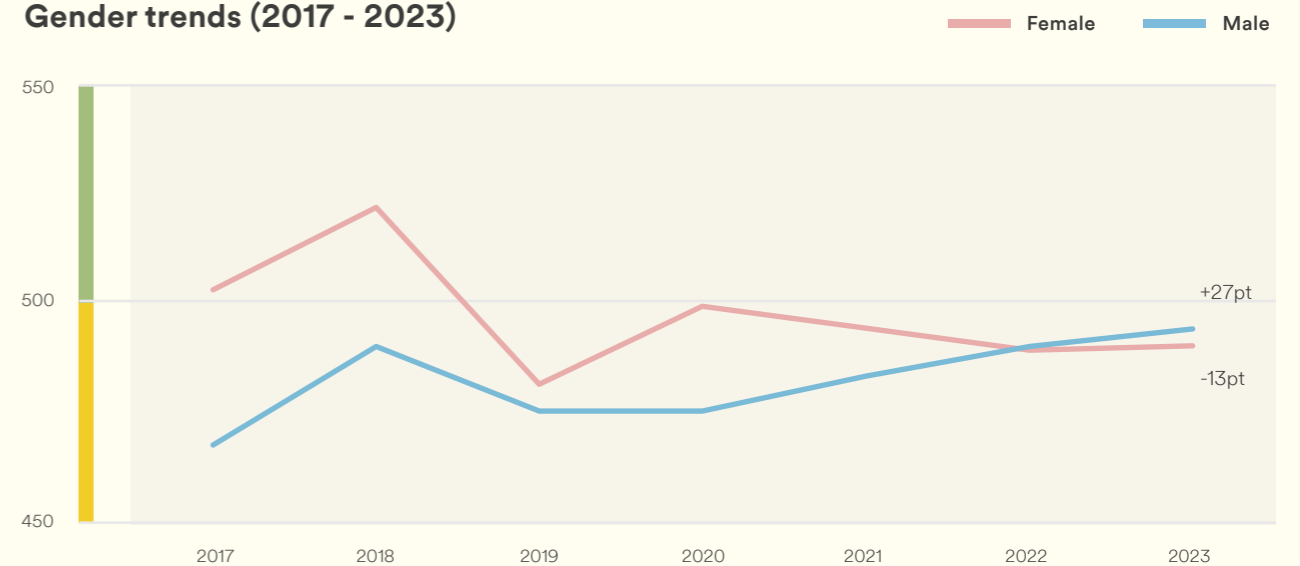


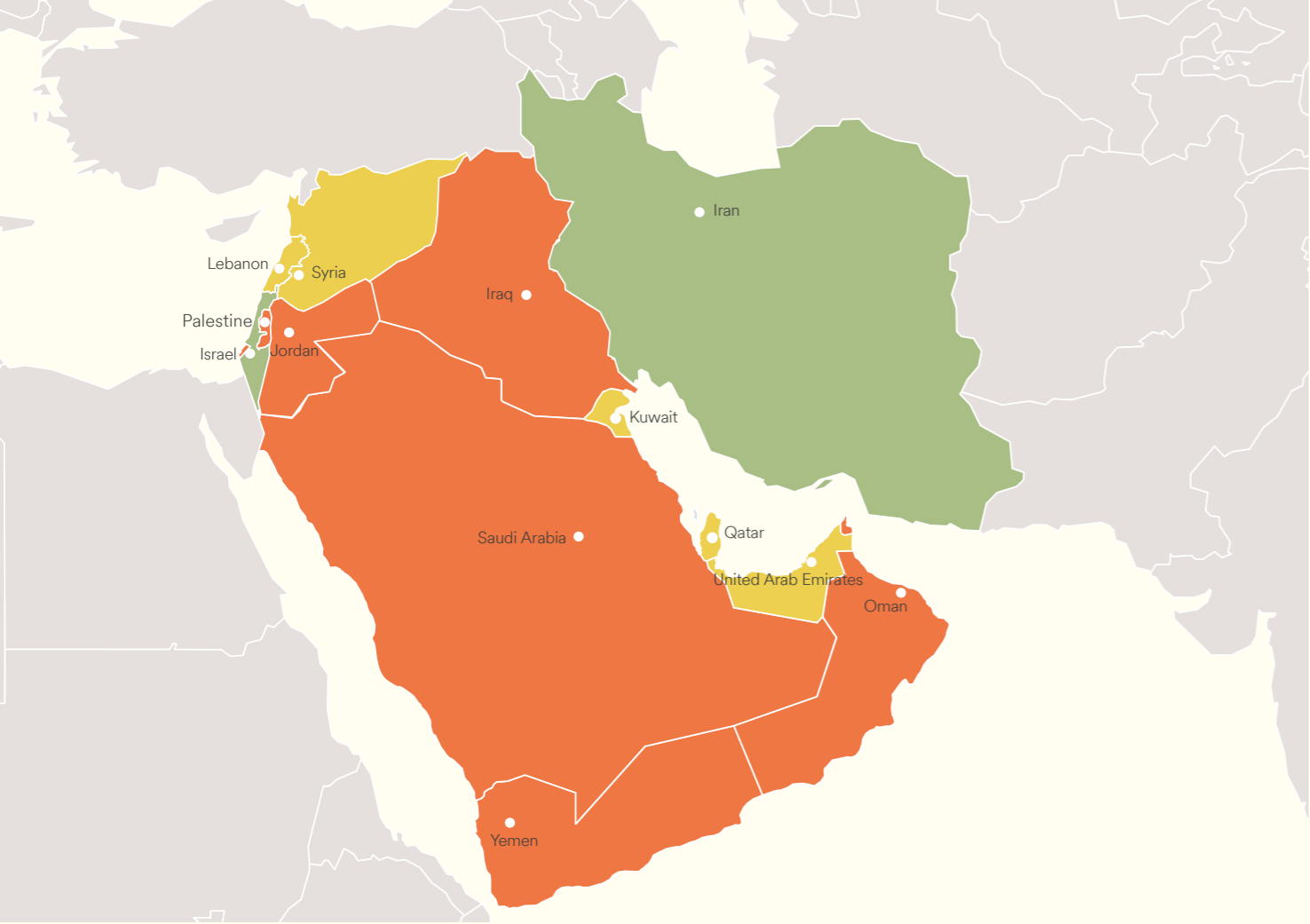
Percentage of African countries in each proficiency band over time

Age trends (2017 - 2023)



Gender trends (2017 - 2023)





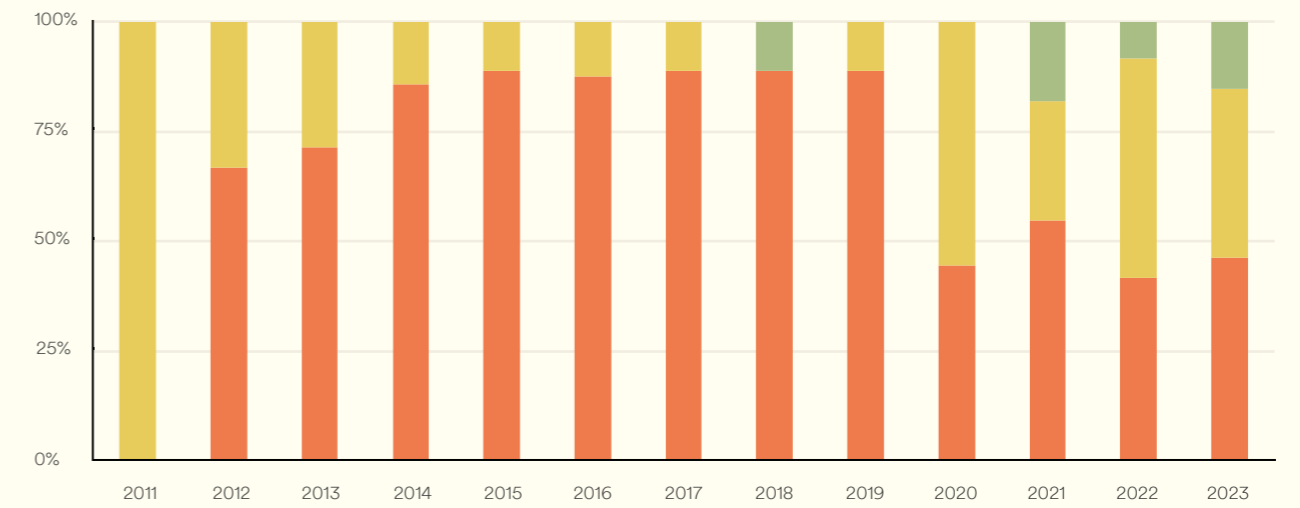
MIDDLE EAST

EF EPI Rankings

54	Israel	514	92	Palestine	445
58	Iran	505	96	Jordan	431
65	Lebanon	496	100	Oman	418
71	United Arab Emirates	486	106	Iraq	410
73	Qatar	482	108	Saudi Arabia	408
80	Syria	467	110	Yemen	392
85	Kuwait	461			

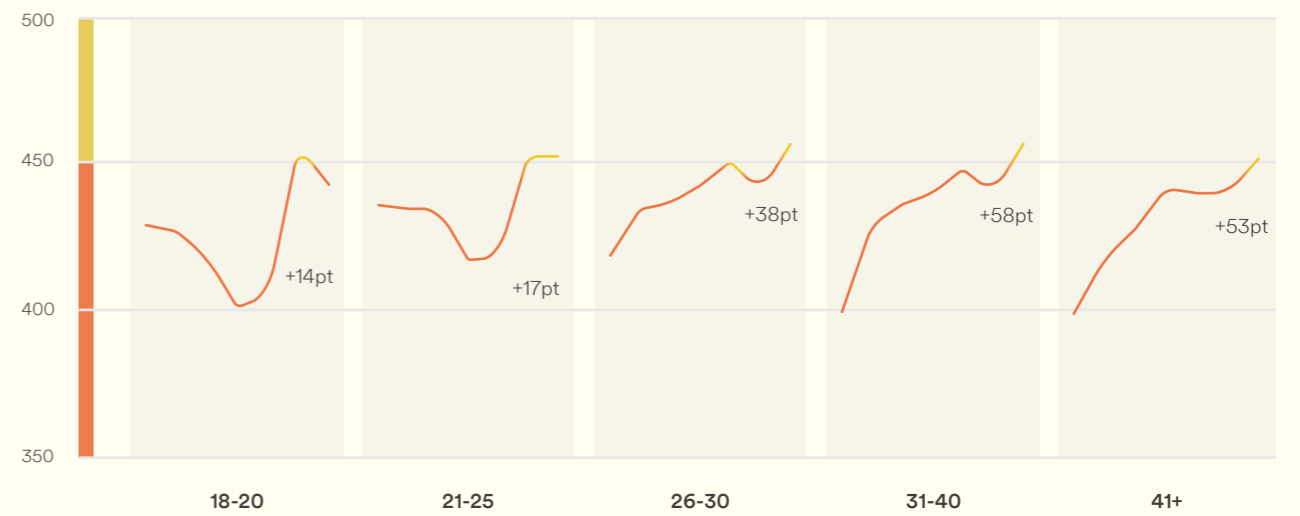
Proficiency Bands ● Very High ● High ● Moderate ● Low ● Very Low

Proficiency distribution (2011 - 2023)

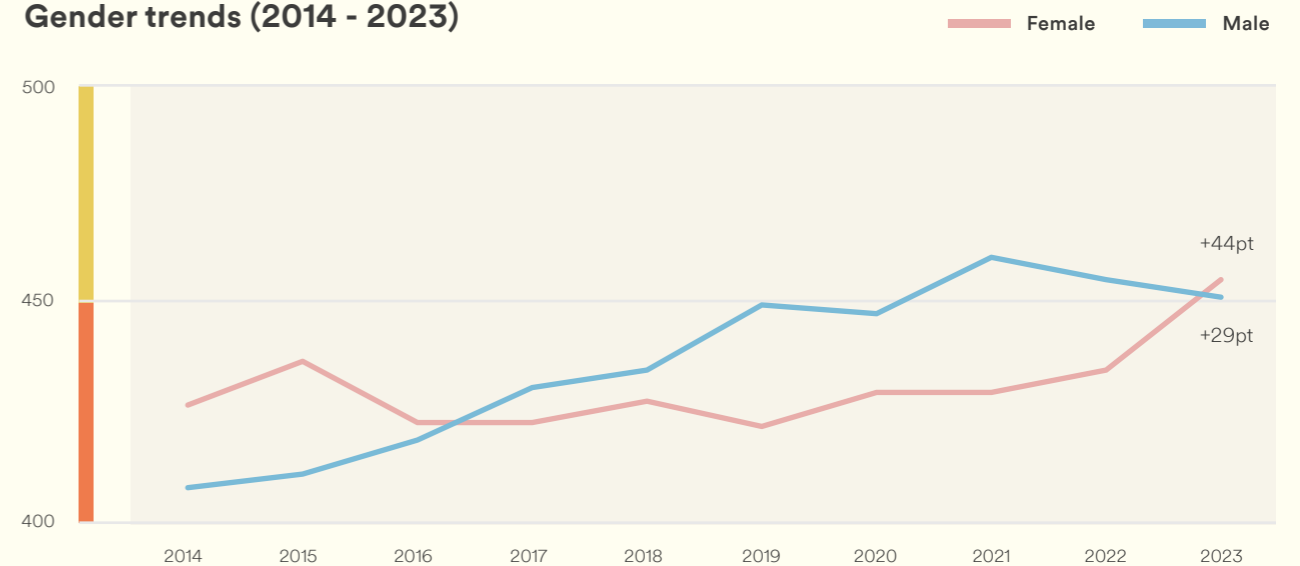


Percentage of Middle Eastern countries in each proficiency band over time

Age trends (2017 - 2023)

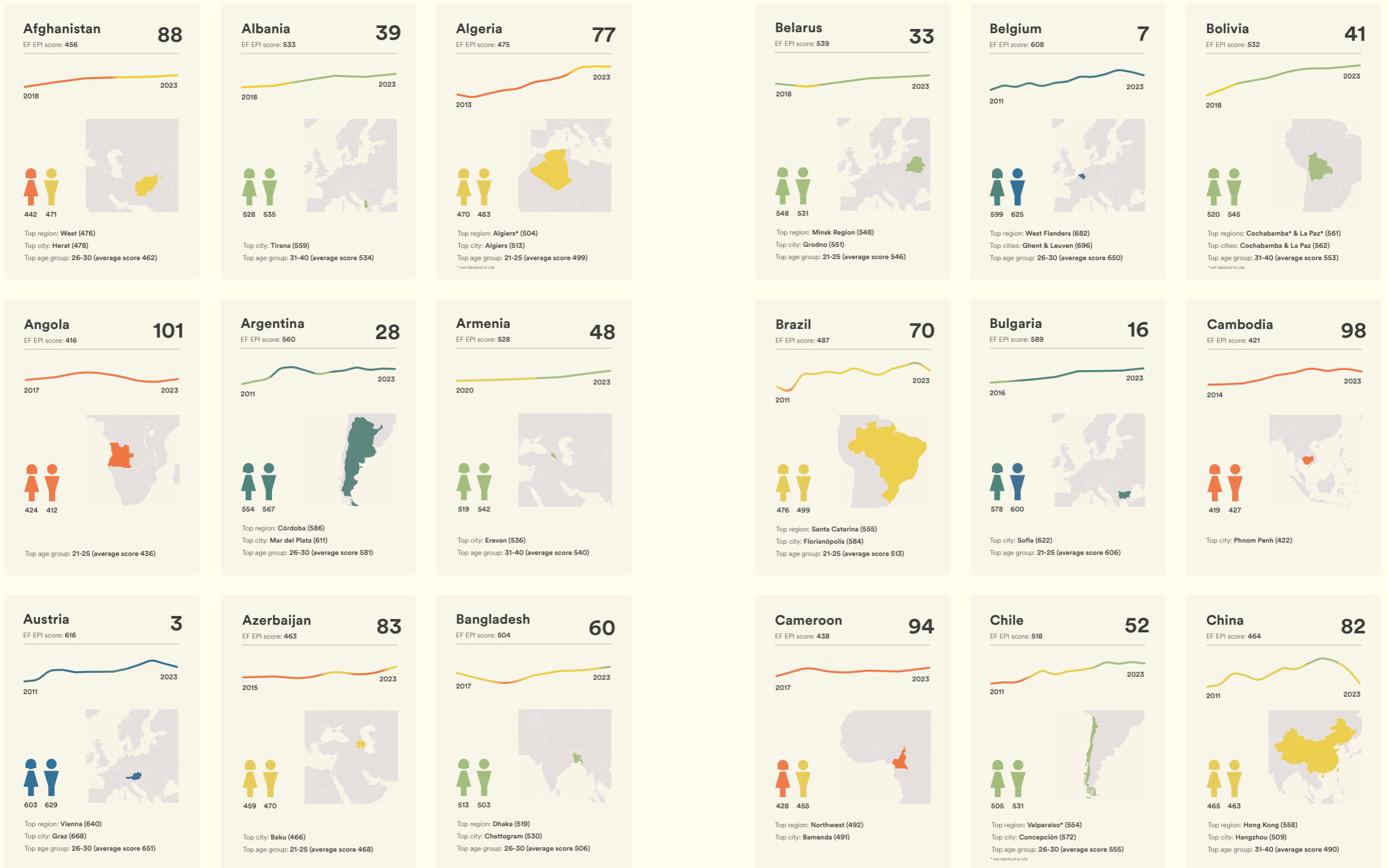


Gender trends (2014 - 2023)



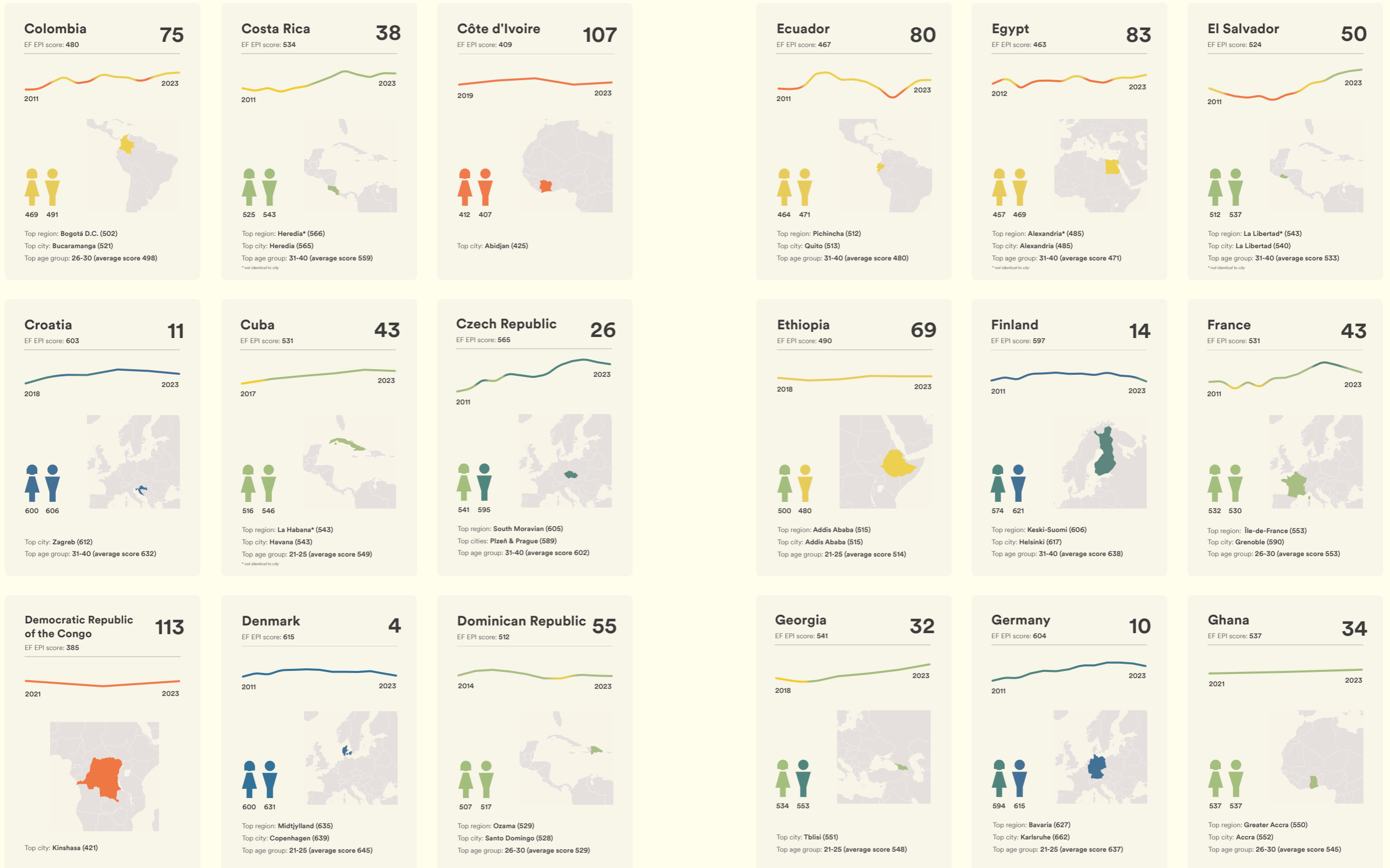
Proficiency Detail

For full details, please visit: www.ef.com/epi



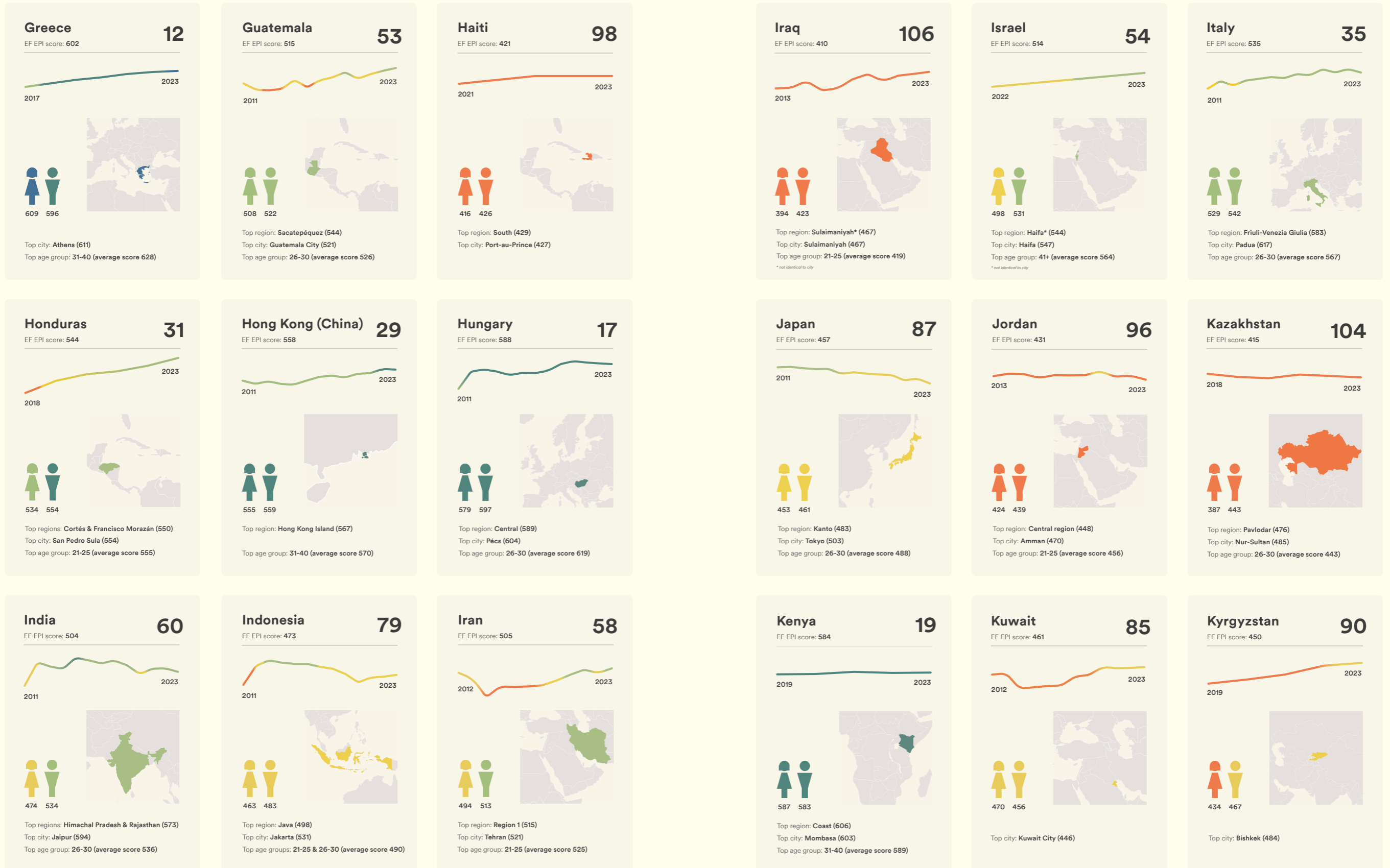
Proficiency Detail

For full details, please visit: www.ef.com/epi



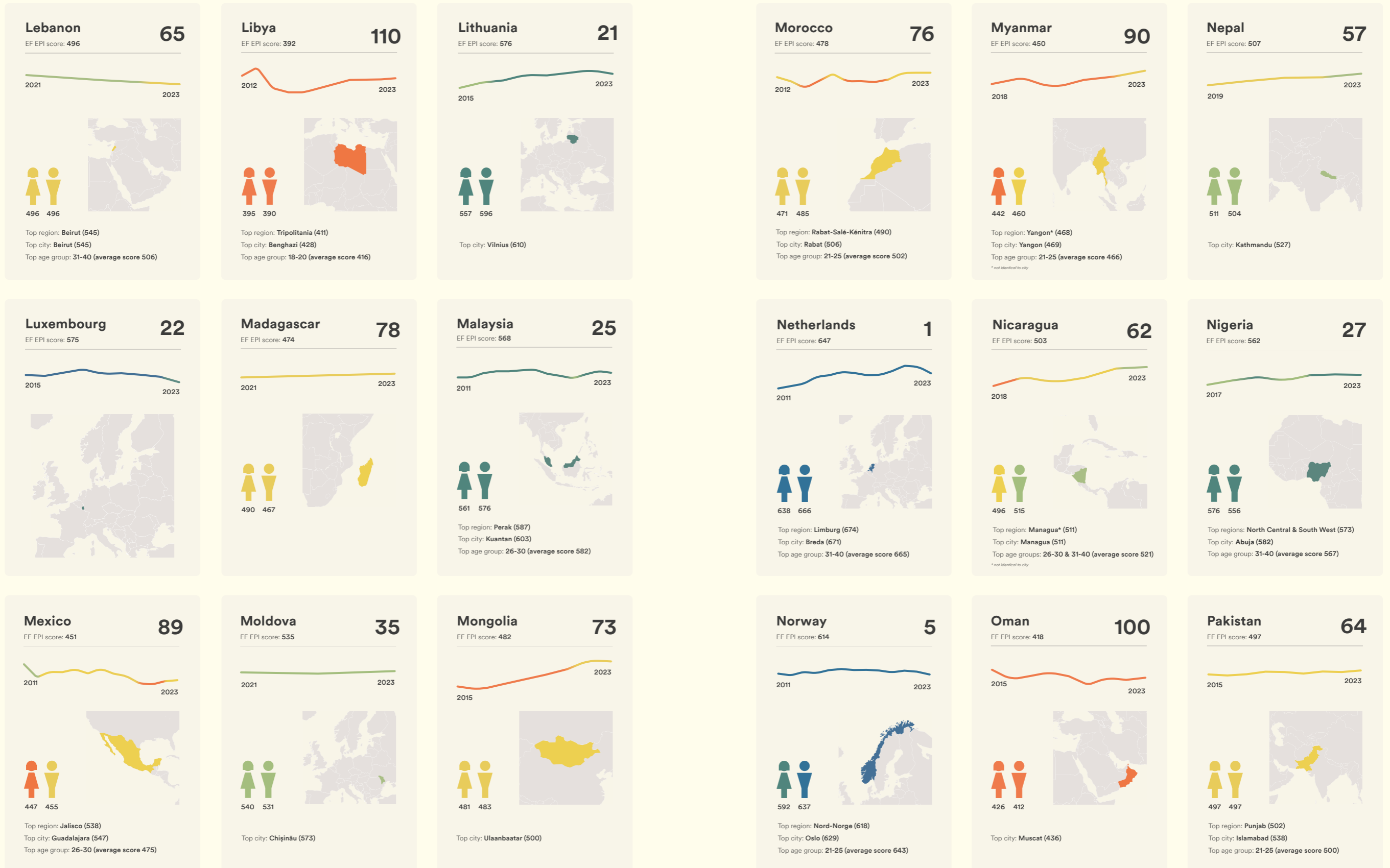
Proficiency Detail

For full details, please visit: www.ef.com/epi



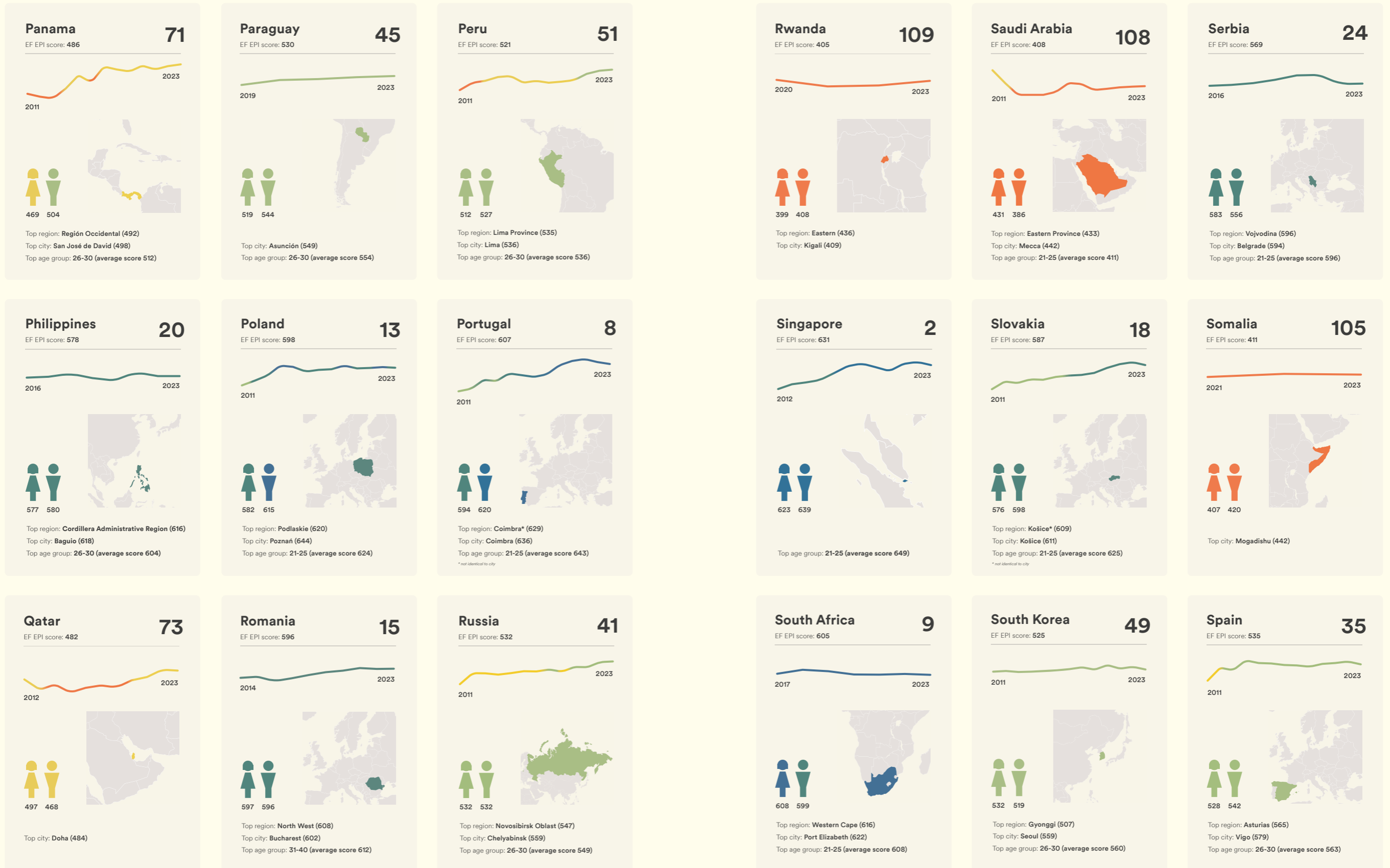
Proficiency Detail

For full details, please visit: www.ef.com/epi



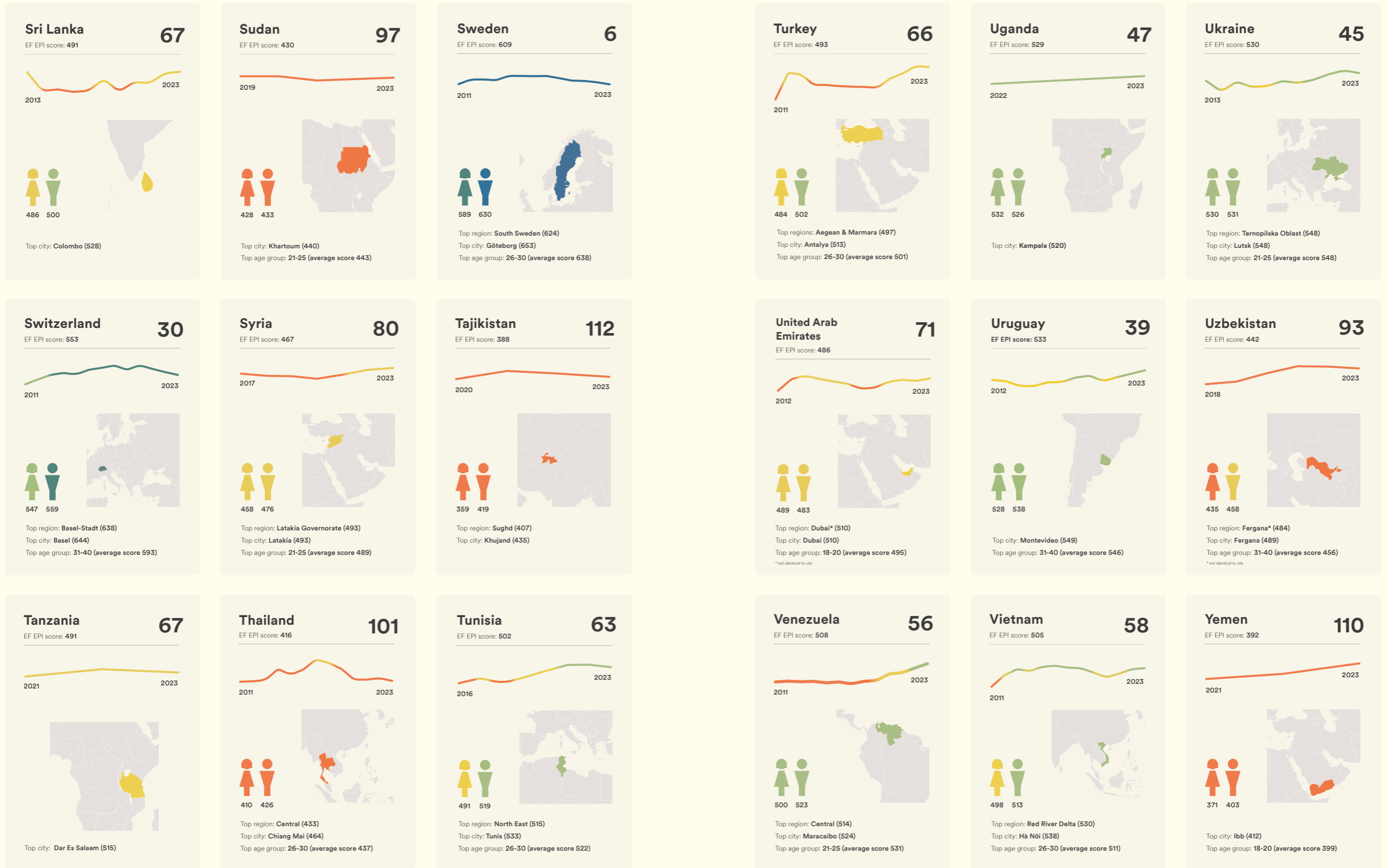
Proficiency Detail

For full details, please visit: www.ef.com/epi



Proficiency Detail

For full details, please visit: www.ef.com/epi



Conclusions

After a decade of surging demand and unprecedented investment, worldwide English proficiency levels haven't changed—a reminder of both the challenge of language acquisition and the lasting potential for progress; but this superficial stability hides variation at the regional and national level, as well as gains and losses in specific age and gender groups. To the extent that these changes are consequences of policy, our data can help validate or interrogate those decisions.

Teaching English to those who need it now...

Contrary to popular belief, adults can learn languages to a high level; however, the amount of training and practice required are usually underestimated. In an optimal learning environment, it takes an adult about 150 hours of instruction and practice to improve by one CEFR level. That means a beginner with two hours of English instruction a week would need three years to reach a B1 level. Adult language training programs rarely last that long. Approaching adult training with realistic expectations helps organizations and individuals align investment with goals.

Adult English instruction can take several forms, but the most effective large-scale solutions give the learner an on-demand communication-based experience at a reasonable price by blending guided self-study and with teacher-led instruction. AI has the potential to supercharge such platforms. Learners can work together on authentic documents, and what they

produce can be corrected by AI, then those corrections can be explained again and again in different ways with no irritation or fatigue. Immersive interaction with generative AI can feel a lot like a real-life language exchange, if real life were peopled by chatty, helpful folks with nowhere else to be. AI course managers can prompt learners to revise tasks at the right time for optimal retention and spot people who are losing motivation.

However, research on educational outcomes indicates that student-teacher bonds are among the most highly predictive measures of achievement. Organizations that develop a culture of language learning will reap the benefits of that motivating social environment. For those learning English on their own, the learning platform itself has to create that momentum. Most people need to feel that others care about their success in order to succeed, which is why the arrival of MOOCs hasn't turned us all into rocket scientists. The availability of information isn't enough.

...and to those who will need it later

Teaching English well in schools and universities is the most effective way to build adult proficiency over time. Ambitious curriculum reform starts with teacher training. Teachers, like other adults, can learn English to a high level, but they need time, motivation, training, and practice. The same language learning solutions used in companies can be used by teachers to strengthen their English skills, but with the same caveat: social cues about the importance of the project will inevitably influence its success.

Teachers may not be integrated into a team like office workers. Successful professional development projects pay particular attention to creating learner cohorts with strong ties who can reinforce each other's motivation.

In addition to English skills, teachers who weren't trained in communicative methods need professional development and mentoring in that area. When language classes are large, students rarely get enough time to practice speaking English. Techniques to address that challenge deserve particular attention. Those who have been teaching for years using other methods may need extra encouragement to change their habits.

In English classes at schools and universities, technology of course has a role as well. One of the most interesting possibilities is to teach students how to use English-language media and participatory social spaces to improve their skills autonomously. Many English teachers already use media in class with the aim of giving lessons a modern feel. Helping students master the tools to turn their entertainment experiences into educational ones would be a powerful shift in perspective, given how many young people interact with English-language media every day. In the same way, generative AI can be used as a personal language coach and copy editor if students are taught how to use it for those purposes.

The influence of tests

In many countries, graduation and university entrance exams help concentrate class time on the education system's desired outcomes. If one of those goals is to teach young people how to communicate in English, important exams must test those skills. Major assessments which test mainly translation, vocabulary or grammar will inevitably push teachers to use most of their class time on those subjects. Assessments that leave English out entirely send a clear message about its importance relative to other academic subjects.

For students wanting to study in an English-language university, earning the required score on a standardized English test like TOEFL is a major source of stress and expense. On top of the test fees, students may need to travel to a test center, sometimes in another country, sometimes accompanied by a parent. Although these English tests are useful to admissions teams, filtering large numbers of potential international applicants automatically, they may want to reconsider their blanket use for the same reason many universities are moving away from standardized national testing like the SAT. These tests are prohibitively expensive and, like all standardized tests, cannot hope to measure subtle variations in student profiles.

Leveraging linguistic diversity

To reach their full potential, all children need to learn to read and write in their first language. Where English is a common medium of instruction but rarely spoken at home, a careful approach to its introduction is called for, with the aim of developing full multilingualism among pupils rather than devaluing home languages in the face of English. The same applies to any situation where children speak a different language at home than the one used in school. Educational outcomes are better when young children learn to read and write in their mother tongue, and a multilingual workforce literate in all its languages is more versatile than a monolingual one.

Although English has historic ties to a few countries, the vast majority of English speakers today are not from those places. There is no international body that sets norms for the English language, and indeed that is part of its appeal as a global lingua franca—because it belongs to no one, it can belong to everyone. But, like other languages such as French and Russian, English does get caught up in politics sometimes, from knee-jerk linguistic protectionism to broad nationalistic agendas. This is unfortunate.

For individuals, the advantages of speaking English are extensive. Why else would parents invest so much in bilingual preschools and English after-school programs, summer immersion abroad and private English tutors? And why would English courses be the top choice in countries with nationalized adult education schemes?

English opens doors. Everyone deserves a fair chance at learning it.

Recommendations

Most organizations and individuals are convinced of the advantages of English proficiency. However, not everyone knows how to get there. Here are our recommendations:

For companies

- Set realistic goals that take into account the hours needed to close the gap between current and target proficiency levels for each individual.
- Build a culture of internationalism and mobility, including in branch offices.
- Use platforms that facilitate frequent contact between teams in different countries.
- Build diverse, multinational teams in all functions, including the back office.
- Test the entire workforce to identify strategic weaknesses in English.
- Train employees using a role-specific English curriculum.
- Leverage technology to bring flexible learning at scale.
- Set minimum standards of English proficiency for different roles, and test that those standards are being met.
- Reward employees who invest time in improving their English.
- Encourage executives and managers to lead by example and share their experiences as English learners.
- Prioritize access to English learning for all employees.

For governments and education authorities

- Consider the hours available in the curriculum and the proficiency level achievable for each major educational milestone.
- Use large-scale assessment of both teachers and students to set benchmarks then track progress over time.
- Adjust entrance and exit exams so that they evaluate communicative English skills.
- Include English in the training regimens for all new teachers.
- Re-train English teachers in communicative teaching methods if they were initially trained using other methods.
- Ensure that English is taught only by people who speak the language well enough to instruct in it.
- Set a minimum level required to teach English, test instructors regularly, and train those who miss the mark.
- Teach children to read and write in their own native language.

- Assess the English skills of all public servants and provide training as necessary, not only for their current jobs, but also for their careers.
- Provide English language instruction in job centers and unemployment reduction programs.
- Give adults access to lifelong learning programs and include English training in the provision.
- Ensure that government-funded adult language courses are long enough and intensive enough for learners to meet their goals.
- Develop standardized micro-credentials that certify course quality and improve skill portability.
- Allow TV shows and movies to be shown in their original language, with subtitles rather than dubbing.

For teachers, schools, and universities

- Teach English using a communication-based methodology.
- Reward successful acts of communication rather than focusing on mistakes.
- Engage students outside the classroom with English-language media and encourage them to share their favorites.
- Give students frequent opportunities to speak English through activities like English clubs, theme days, classroom twinning, school trips, and guest speakers.
- Provide a forum for teachers to share best practices and get advice about teaching English effectively.
- Give teachers of all subjects a straightforward path to improve their English and time in their schedule to do so.
- Include English language requirements for all university majors.
- Allow subject classes to be taught in English if both the students and the professor meet the requisite English level.
- Create a remedial English program to help those who have fallen behind.

For individuals

- Play the long game: plan for the hundreds of hours it takes to move from one proficiency level to the next.
- Be aware of growing competence at different stages and celebrate your successes.
- Study English every day, even if only for a few minutes.
- Study in sessions of maximum 1 hour and take a break when you feel your attention waning.
- Set specific, achievable goals and write them down.
- Memorize vocabulary relevant to your job or field of study and begin using it immediately.
- Practice speaking, even if it's just reading a book aloud.
- Engage with content you enjoy in English when you need a break.
- Watch TV, read, or listen to the radio in English.
- When traveling to an English-speaking country, speak as much as possible.
- Use social media in English and set computers and apps to English to get more built-in exposure to the language.
- Consider online options for regular conversation practice and access to a teacher.

About the Index

Methodology

This edition of the EF EPI is based on test data from more than 2,200,000 test takers around the world who took the EF Standard English Test (EF SET) in 2022.

The EF Standard English Test (EF SET)

The EF SET is an online, adaptive English test of reading and listening skills. It is a standardized, objectively scored test designed to classify test takers' language abilities into one of the six levels established by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The EF SET is available to any Internet user for free. For more information about the research and development of the EF SET, visit www.efset.org/about/.

EF EPI 2023 scores have been found to correlate strongly with TOEFL iBT 2021 scores ($r=0.77$) and IELTS Academic Test 2022 scores ($r=0.59$). These correlations show that, while these tests have different designs and test taker profiles, they reveal similar trends in national English proficiency.

Test Takers

Although the sample of test takers for the EF EPI is biased toward respondents who are interested in pursuing language study and younger adults, the sample is roughly balanced between male and female respondents and represents adult language learners from a broad range of ages.

- Female respondents comprised 42% of the overall sample, male respondents 35% and respondents who did not provide gender information 23%.
- The median age of respondents who provided age information was 26, with 88% of those respondents under the age of 35, and 99% under the age of 60. 29% of respondents did not provide their birth year.
- The median age of male respondents was 26, slightly higher than the median age of female respondents, which was 25.

Only cities, regions, and countries with a minimum of 400 test takers were included in the Index, but in most cases the number of test takers was far greater.

Sampling Biases

The test-taking population represented in this Index is self-selected and not guaranteed to be representative. Only those who want to learn English or are curious about their English skills will participate in one of these tests. This could skew scores lower or higher than those of the general population.

The EF SET is free and online, so anyone with an Internet connection can participate. Almost all of our test takers are working adults or young adults finishing their studies. People without Internet access would be automatically excluded. The EF SET site is fully adaptive and 37% of test takers complete the exam from a mobile device. In parts of the world where Internet usage is low, we would expect the impact of an online format to be strong. This sampling bias would tend to pull scores upward by excluding poorer and less educated people, and those living in areas with little or no Internet connectivity. Nevertheless, open access online tests have proven effective in gathering very large amounts of data about a range of indicators, and we believe they provide valuable information about global English proficiency levels.

Score Calculation

National EF EPI scores are calculated using a three year rolling average. First, we calculate the average EF SET score achieved by all test takers residing in a country during the previous calendar year. Then, we average that score with the published EF EPI score for Y-1 and Y-2. This stabilizes the index and reduces turbulence from sampling variation year over year. We calculate scores for industries, job functions and seniority levels in the same way.

Once national EF EPI scores are calculated, we use them to calculate rollup scores for world regions (Europe, Asia, etc.) as well as global scores. These scores are population weighted by country, so for example, India's score carries a much heavier weight than Thailand's in the calculation of Asia's score. This applies to all scores calculated at the supranational level (world and region scores along with their gender and age group breakdowns).

Scores for subgroups within a country are not population weighted. We calculate these directly based on the previous calendar year's EF SET data then calibrate them against the national score for coherence.

Based on score thresholds, we assign countries, regions, and cities to proficiency bands. This allows recognition of clusters with similar English skill levels and comparisons within and between regions.

CEFR	EF EPI Score	EF EPI Band
C2	700-800	Very high
C1	600-699	Very high
B2	550-599	High
B1	500-549	Moderate
	450-499	Low
A2	400-449	Very low
	300-399	Very low
A1	200-299	Very low
Pre-A1	1-199	Very low

Other Data Sources

The EF EPI does not aim to compete with or contradict national test results, language polling data, or any other data set. Instead, these data sets complement each other. Some are granular but limited in scope to a single age group, country, region, or test taker profile. The EF EPI is broad, examining working-aged adults around the world using a common assessment method. There is no other data set of comparable size and scope, and, despite its limitations, we, along with many policymakers, scholars, and analysts, believe it to be a valuable reference point in the global conversation about English language education.

The EF EPI is created through a different process from the one used by public opinion research organizations such as Euromonitor and Gallup, or by the OECD in skills surveys such as PISA and PIAAC. Those studies select survey participants using age, gender, level of education, income, and other factors. Their survey panels tend to be small, with at most a few thousand participants. Because they have been composed using complex sampling methods, they are considered representative of the entire population.

PISA will include an English as a foreign language assessment for the first time in 2025 which will provide an interesting comparison data set for the EF EPI as it benchmarks skill levels among 15-year-olds.

Another source of data about English proficiency comes from national education systems. Many schools test the English skills of every high school student or university applicant using a standardized national assessment. The results may or may not be made public, but educators and government officials use the data to assess the efficacy of education reform and pinpoint areas for improvement. Unfortunately, those national assessments are not comparable to each other, and they are not administered to adults, so while they give a good indication of English proficiency among high school students in one part of the world, they cannot be used for international comparison, nor can they tell us much about adult English proficiency levels.

EF Education First

EF Education First (www.ef.com) is an international education company that focuses on language, academics, cultural exchange, and educational travel. Founded in 1965, EF's mission is "opening the world through education." Millions of students, companies and organizations have participated in an EF program. The EF English Proficiency Index is published by Signum International AG.

EF EPI Proficiency Bands

About EF EPI Proficiency Bands

The EF English Proficiency Index places the surveyed countries and territories into five proficiency bands, from Very High to Very Low. The bands make it easier to identify countries and regions with similar skill levels and to draw comparisons between and within regions.

In the chart on the right, we give examples of tasks that an individual could accomplish at each proficiency band. The selection of tasks is not meant to be exhaustive, but it is a useful reference for understanding how skills advance across the bands.

It is important to keep in mind that a proficiency band merely indicates the skills of an average test taker. The EF EPI seeks to compare countries and territories, which necessitates overlooking individual strengths and weaknesses.

Proficiency	Sample Tasks
Very High Netherlands Portugal Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use nuanced and appropriate language in social situations ✓ Read advanced texts with ease ✓ Negotiate a contract with a native English speaker
High Argentina Kenya Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make a presentation at work ✓ Understand TV shows ✓ Read a newspaper
Moderate Chile India Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Participate in meetings in one's area of expertise ✓ Understand song lyrics ✓ Write professional emails on familiar subjects
Low China Pakistan Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Navigate an English-speaking country as a tourist ✓ Engage in small talk with colleagues ✓ Understand simple emails from colleagues
Very Low Haiti Saudi Arabia Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Introduce oneself simply (name, age, country of origin) ✓ Understand simple signs ✓ Give basic directions to a foreign visitor

CEFR Levels and Can-Do Statements

Proficient User

C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. • Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. • Can express themselves spontaneously, very fluently, and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. • Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. • Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes. • Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.

Independent User

B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialization. • Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. • Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue, giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. • Can deal with most situations likely to arise while traveling in an area where the language is spoken. • Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. • Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Basic User

A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to most relevant areas (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). • Can communicate during routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar matters. • Can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need.
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. • Can introduce themselves and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where they live, people they know, and things they have. • Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Quoted From the Council of Europe

All countries and regions in the EF EPI fall into bands corresponding to levels A2-C1.

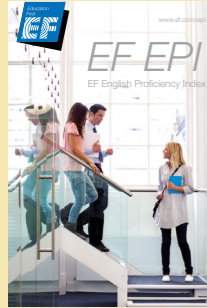
EF EPI Country and Region Rankings

A look at changes
in English skills over
the past year:

	EF EPI 2023 Edition	EF EPI 2022 Edition	Score Change
Netherlands	647	661	-14
Singapore	631	642	-11
Austria	616	628	-12
Denmark	615	625	-10
Norway	614	627	-13
Sweden	609	618	-9
Belgium	608	620	-12
Portugal	607	614	-7
South Africa	605	609	-4
Germany	604	613	-9
Croatia	603	612	-9
Greece	602	598	4
Poland	598	600	-2
Finland	597	615	-18
Romania	596	595	1
Bulgaria	589	581	8
Hungary	588	590	-2
Slovakia	587	597	-10
Kenya	584	582	2
Philippines	578	578	0
Lithuania	576	589	-13
Luxembourg	575	596	-21
Estonia	570	570	0
Serbia	569	567	2
Malaysia	568	574	-6
Czech Republic	565	575	-10
Nigeria	562	564	-2
Argentina	560	562	-2
Hong Kong (China)	558	561	-3
Switzerland	553	563	-10
Honduras	544	522	22
Georgia	541	524	17
Belarus	539	533	6
Ghana	537	529	8
Italy	535	548	-13
Moldova	535	528	7
Spain	535	545	-10
Costa Rica	534	536	-2
Albania	533	523	10
Uruguay	533	521	12
Bolivia	532	525	7
Russia	532	530	2
Cuba	531	535	-4
France	531	541	-10
Paraguay	530	526	4
Ukraine	530	539	-9
Uganda	529	512	17
Armenia	528	506	22
South Korea	525	537	-12
El Salvador	524	519	5
Peru	521	517	4
Chile	518	524	-6
Guatemala	515	505	10
Israel	514	483	31
Dominican Republic	512	514	-2
Venezuela	508	492	16

	EF EPI 2023 Edition	EF EPI 2022 Edition	Score Change
Nepal	507	494	13
Iran	505	489	16
Vietnam	505	502	3
Bangladesh	504	493	11
India	504	516	-12
Nicaragua	503	499	4
Tunisia	502	511	-9
Pakistan	497	488	9
Lebanon	496	513	-17
Turkey	493	495	-2
Sri Lanka	491	487	4
Tanzania	491	496	-5
Ethiopia	490	490	0
Brazil	487	505	-18
Panama	486	482	4
United Arab Emirates	486	476	10
Mongolia	482	485	-3
Qatar	482	484	-2
Colombia	480	477	3
Morocco	478	478	0
Algeria	475	476	-1
Madagascar	474	—	NEW
Indonesia	473	469	4
Ecuador	467	466	1
Syria	467	461	6
China	464	498	-34
Azerbaijan	463	440	23
Egypt	463	454	9
Kuwait	461	459	2
Malawi	460	—	NEW
Japan	457	475	-18
Afghanistan	456	450	6
Mexico	451	447	4
Kyrgyzstan	450	442	8
Myanmar	450	437	13
Palestine	445	—	NEW
Uzbekistan	442	446	-4
Cameroon	438	425	13
Senegal	438	—	NEW
Jordan	431	443	-12
Sudan	430	426	4
Cambodia	421	434	-13
Haiti	421	421	0
Oman	418	412	6
Angola	416	402	14
Benin	416	—	NEW
Thailand	416	423	-7
Kazakhstan	415	420	-5
Somalia	411	414	-3
Iraq	410	404	6
Côte d'Ivoire	409	403	6
Saudi Arabia	408	406	2
Rwanda	405	392	13
Libya	392	390	2
Yemen	392	370	22
Tajikistan	388	397	-9
Democratic Republic of the Congo	385	367	18

Visit www.ef.com/epi to download previous editions of the EF EPI.



EF English Proficiency Index
2011 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2012 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2013 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2014 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2023 Edition



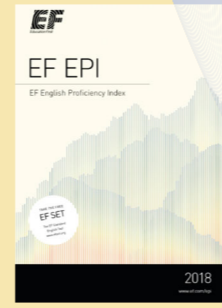
EF English Proficiency Index
2015 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2016 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2017 Edition



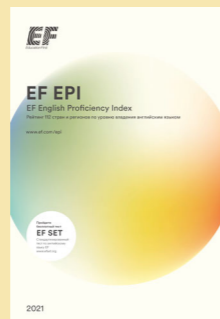
EF English Proficiency Index
2018 Edition



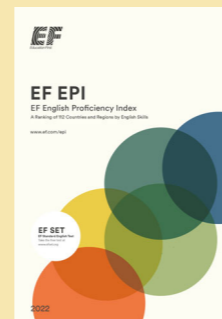
EF English Proficiency Index
2019 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2020 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2021 Edition



EF English Proficiency Index
2022 Edition

