



The Commonwealth

Fast Facts:

The Youth Development Index

Overview

With 1.8 billion people between the ages of 15 and 29, the world is home to more young people today than ever before. Close to 87% of them live in developing countries.

Young people make up approximately one-quarter of humanity, but in many countries, especially in South Asia and Africa, one in three people is a young person.

Demographic trends and projections make it clear that the proportion of young people in the global population is declining and it is predicted to fall below 20% by 2075.

The next few decades, therefore, are an unprecedented window of opportunity for the world, and developing countries in particular, to reap the promise of this 'demographic dividend'.

The Youth Development Index

The Global Youth Development Index (YDI) and report provides an evidence-based overview of the condition of youth across the world, focusing on opportunities for their development.

The index is a composite index of 18 indicators that collectively measure progress on youth development in 183 countries, including 49 of the 53 Commonwealth countries.

It looks at five themes, or domains, measuring levels of Education, Health and Well-being, Employment and Opportunity, Political Participation and Civic Participation among young people. The domains were selected on the basis of their impact on the development of young people.

By compiling the available stock of global youth-related datasets into one comprehensive and harmonised measure, the YDI enables users to gain a better understanding of youth development in a single snapshot.

The YDI score is a number between 0 and 1. For a country to receive a perfect score of 1, it would represent the highest possible level of youth development attainable. This scoring system is the same as the one underpinning the Human Development Index produced by the United Nations.

The index is guided by the Commonwealth definition of youth as people between the ages of 15 and 29.

State	Global Rank	2016 YDI Overall Score
Germany	1	0.894
Denmark	2	0.865
Australia	3	0.838
Switzerland	4	0.837
United Kingdom	4	0.837
Netherlands	6	0.836
Austria	7	0.826
Luxembourg	8	0.825
Portugal	9	0.816
Japan	10	0.815
New Zealand	11	0.813
Slovenia	12	0.811
Sweden	13	0.810
Canada	14	0.809
Ireland	15	0.806
Norway	16	0.804
Belgium	17	0.802
South Korea	18	0.797
France	19	0.795
Malta	20	0.794

What is youth development?

The Commonwealth defines youth development as: "Enhancing the status of young people, empowering them to build on their competencies and capabilities for life. It will enable them to contribute to and benefit from a politically stable, economically viable, and legally supportive environment, ensuring their full participation as active citizens in their countries."



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Highlights

- Three-quarters of the world's 1.8 billion young people aged 15 to 29 live in countries where youth development is categorised as 'low' or 'medium'.
- Germany achieved the top rank for youth development, according to the YDI, and the Central African Republic had the lowest score. Australia, in third position, is the highest-ranked Commonwealth country.
- The ten countries with the lowest youth development are all from sub-Saharan Africa, which, according to the United Nations, is the only region that will have a more youthful population in 2050 than it does currently.
- The YDI shows that inequalities in health, education and employment of young people in countries are still deep and widespread, and prospects for girls and young women are much worse in comparison with their male peers.
- Globally, youth development tends to be highest in countries where young people represent a relatively smaller share (less than 20%) of the population. High youth development also correlates with high levels of national income.
- Many developing countries have significantly youthful populations today but, overall, the world population is ageing. In developing countries the median age of the population is expected to increase by more than ten years to reach 35 in 2050. Therefore, most countries have only a few decades left to achieve the all-round progress in youth development that is necessary to turn their 'youth bulge' into a 'demographic dividend'.

Analysis

Countries that register high levels of human development (according to the United Nations Human Development Index) tend to be among the highest-ranking countries. This indicates that investment in the education, health and employment sectors - the domains weighted most strongly in the YDI - is critical to achieving high levels of youth development. Contrastingly, most countries that have lower YDI scores tend not to have made similar investments and have lower HDI scores.

Moreover with few exceptions, a country's regime type has a clear relationship with its performance in

the YDI. Full democracies and high-income countries have the highest levels of youth development, while authoritarian regimes recorded the lowest average YDI score. These results reflect the strong intersection between social, governmental and political structures and mechanisms that support youth development.

The income level of a country can also affect many of the factors of youth development, and not surprisingly, high-income countries tend to be very high YDI countries and low-income countries tend to have low YDI scores. Only one country in the YDI top 30, Costa Rica, is not classified as high income.

Furthermore, the YDI shows that youth development tends to be most sluggish in countries in which young people represent a large share of the population or are experiencing a 'youth bulge'. However, there are significant exceptions to this pattern - there are at least 12 countries in the High and Very High YDI categories where young people make up more than one-quarter of the total population, for example, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Qatar, Colombia, Tajikistan and Jamaica. This demonstrates that high levels of empowerment, achievement and social inclusion are possible for large populations of youth.

Key Shifts

- The three countries showing the greatest decline in their YDI scores between 2010 and 2015 are Pakistan, Angola and Haiti. Young people in all three countries have been severely affected by civil unrest, armed conflict and natural disasters.
- While starting off the lowest base, sub-Saharan Africa showed the greatest relative improvement in youth development between 2010 and 2015 among all regions. The three countries which showed the greatest improvement in their YDI scores between 2010 and 2015 are Kenya, South Africa and Niger.
- Youth participation in formal political processes and institutions is declining in most parts of the world. This decline does not, however, mean that they now care less about politics. Youth are more engaged with civic and political affairs today than ever before, as can be seen in the rising tide of youth-led protests, political consumerism and single-issue campaigns on all continents.
- Of the 183 countries included in the YDI, 142 (78%) recorded at least slight improvements in their YDI scores between 2010 and 2015.



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Inequality

- Deep inequalities in levels of youth development persist among countries, with the largest gaps being in the domains of Education and Health and Well-being:
- Gross secondary enrolment rate in Very High YDI countries is on average more than double that of low YDI countries.
- The proportion of youth infected with HIV is on average eight times higher in Low YDI countries compared with Very High YDI countries.
- The youth mortality rate is on average five times higher in Low YDI countries than in Very High YDI countries.

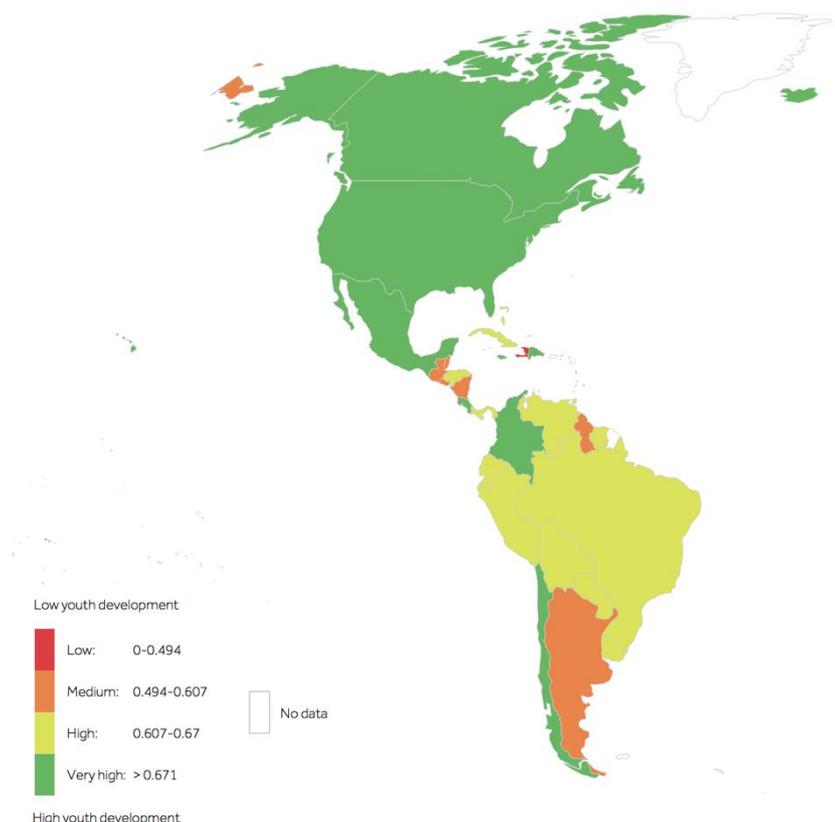
Young Women

- Of the 183 countries in the 2016 YDI, only 40% had achieved gender parity in secondary enrolment by 2013. Gender disparities widen at the tertiary level where only 4% of countries have achieved gender parity in enrolment.
- The proportion of young people who have been online for at least five years is on average 11 times higher in Very High YDI countries compared to Low YDI countries. Young women in low-income countries are less likely to be 'digital natives' compared with young men.
- An overwhelming majority of illiterate youth in the world, especially in West and Central Africa and South Asia, continue to be female. Three out of five illiterate young persons are female. In some countries, female literacy rates among youth are as low as 15% whereas the lowest male literacy rate is 35%.
- Young males are more likely than their female counterparts to have an account at a formal financial institution everywhere except in high-income countries.
- Unemployment levels are up to 10% higher for young women than young men, and young women are on average twice as likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) as compared to young men.
- HIV prevalence rates tend to be higher among young women globally compared to young men.

Regional Comparisons

- Of the nine world regions, North America has the highest level of youth development, followed in order by Europe and Asia-Pacific, South America, Central America and Caribbean, Russia and Eurasia, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- All of the ten lowest-ranked countries in the 2016 YDI are from Sub-Saharan Africa. However the region recorded the largest improvement in its overall youth development levels between 2010 and 2015, followed by Asia-Pacific, Central America and the Caribbean, then Europe.

Figure 6.1 2016 YDI overall score





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Top 5 countries by region:

Asia-Pacific

Australia (3rd), Japan (10th), New Zealand (11th), South Korea (18th), Hong Kong (27th)

Central America and the Caribbean

Costa Rica (21st), Barbados (29th), Jamaica (46th), Mexico (49th), Dominican Republic (51st)

Europe

Germany (1st), Denmark (2nd), Switzerland (4th), United Kingdom (5th), Netherlands (6th)

Middle East and North Africa

Israel (31st), Bahrain (41st), Saudi Arabia (54th), Kuwait (56th), Qatar (75th)

North America

Canada (14th), United States (23rd)

Russia and Eurasia

Uzbekistan (53rd), Kazakhstan (61st), Turkey (62nd), Kyrgyz Republic (64th), Mongolia (72nd)

South Asia

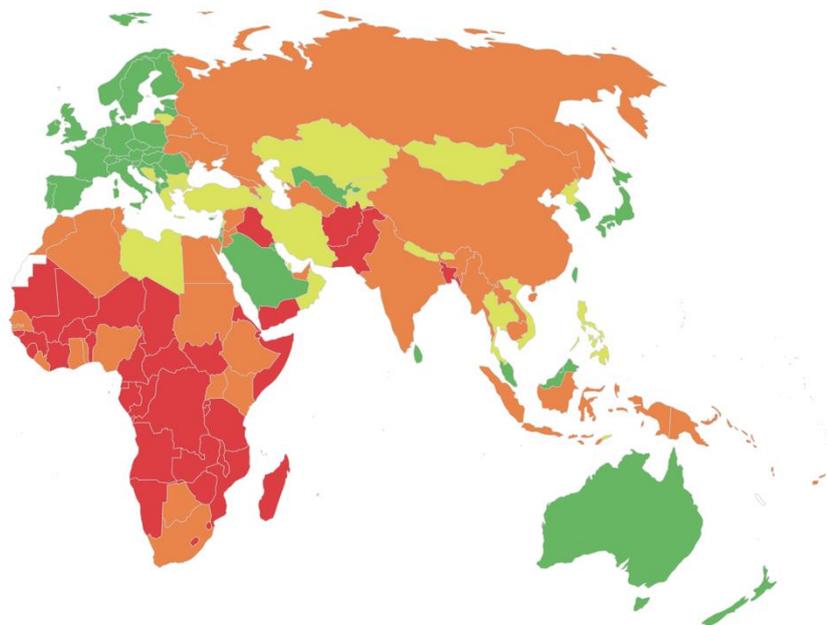
Sri Lanka (31rd), Maldives (63rd), Butan (69th), Nepal (77th), India (133rd)

South America

Chile (24th), Colombia (36th), Uruguay and Peru (joint 59th), Brazil (84th)

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mauritius (69th), Ghana (117th), Liberia (119th), Seychelles (123rd), Kenya (125th)



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- Close to 640 million out of 1.8 billion young people in the world, or one in three young people between the ages of 15 and 29, live in Commonwealth countries.
- Of the 49 Commonwealth countries in the YDI, 45 (92%) improved their YDI scores from 2010 to 2015. Only one country (Pakistan) recorded a drop in its YDI score in the same period.
- There was a 5% increase in the average YDI score for the Commonwealth between 2010 and 2015. In the same period, the global YDI score improved by 3%.
- Two Commonwealth countries (Australia and United Kingdom) are in the top 10 countries, and two (Zambia and Mozambique) are in the lowest ranked ten.
- The majority (55%) of Commonwealth countries are still in the Low or Medium YDI category.



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Domain 1: Education

Education opens up opportunities and improves life chances. However, there are still vast numbers of young people who lack basic literacy skills, and opportunities are restricted for a range of groups such as girls and young women, rural youth and young people with disabilities. Therefore those involved in youth development should prioritise improving access to quality education for all.

This domain seeks to capture the progress the world has made in improving young people's access to education and their familiarity with information and communication technologies.

Highlights

- Netherlands is ranked the highest for youth education with a YDI score of 0.994.
- The best performing Commonwealth country for youth education is Canada at 16th place with a YDI score of 0.969.
- Between 2010 and 2015, Education registered the lowest improvement among all the domains, at 2%.
- North America and Europe are leading the world in this regard, with nearly 100% youth literacy and secondary enrolment rates, followed by South America, Russia and Eurasia, Central America and the Caribbean, and Asia-Pacific.
- South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, which together account for just over 40% of the world's youth population, are the only regions whose average scores in the Education domain are below the global average.
- Except Japan, all the top ten countries in this domain are in Europe. In contrast, the ten lowest-ranked countries are all from Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Four countries that rank among the top ten in the Education domain are also ranked in the top ten in the overall YDI. Similarly, four of the lowest-ranked countries in this domain are also in the same category in the overall YDI.

Indicators:

- Enrolment in secondary education (Source: UNESCO)
- Literacy rate (UNESCO)
- Digital native rate (International Telecommunications Union)

Table 2.6 Highest and lowest-ranked countries in the Education domain compared with their overall 2016 YDI score

Ten highest-scoring countries	Education rank	Overall YDI rank	Ten lowest-scoring countries	Education rank	Overall YDI rank
Netherlands	1	6	Mali	174	174
Finland	2	25	Mauritania	175	172
Latvia	3	30	South Sudan	176	160
Denmark	4	2	Liberia	177	119
Estonia	5	47	Côte d'Ivoire	178	181
Iceland	6	25	Guinea	179	155
Japan	7	10	Chad	180	182
Germany	8	1	Burkina Faso	181	155
Lithuania	9	78	Central African Republic	182	185
Norway	10	16	Niger	183	180



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Domain 2: Health and Well-being

Although young people are often thought to be in the prime of health, many die from injury, road accidents, suicide, violence, communicable diseases (including HIV) and non-communicable diseases.

Moreover, a large number suffer from illnesses and conditions that hinder their ability to grow and develop to their full potential.

In order to develop positively, young people require access to good healthcare and, crucially, should engage in healthier practices to guard against premature death and diseases, and to ensure they will be healthy in adult life.

This domain seeks to measure access to, and quality of, health care available to young people in every country, as well as the level of youth well-being.

Highlights

- Israel is ranked the highest for youth health and well-being with a YDI score of 0.904.
- The best performing Commonwealth country for youth health and well-being is Cyprus at 4th place with a YDI score of 0.870.
- Between 2010 and 2015, the global Health and Well-being average score improved by approximately 3%, mostly because of progress in Sub-Saharan Africa, which experienced a rise of nearly 12% in this score.
- For the world on the whole, moderate improvements were recorded in the past five years for indicators relating to youth mortality, alcohol abuse and mental disorders. Drug abuse was the only indicator that deteriorated between 2010 and 2015.
- Sub-Saharan Africa is still significantly behind the rest of the world in this domain. It is the only region in the world with an average score significantly lower than the global average.
- High-scoring YDI regions such as North America and Europe are also not doing well in this regard, owing to high drug abuse and mental disorder rates on the two continents.
- Among all the regions, MENA is the best performer in Health and Well-being, followed by Europe, and Central America and the Caribbean.

Indicators:

- Youth mortality rate (Source: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation)
- Mental disorder rate (Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries and Risk Factors Study - GBD)
- Alcohol abuse rate (GBD)
- Drug abuse rate (GBD)
- HIV rate (World Bank)
- Score on Global Well-being Index (Gallup World Poll)

Table 2.7 Highest and lowest-ranked countries in the Health and Well-being domain compared with their overall 2016 YDI score

Ten highest-scoring countries	Health and Well-being rank	Overall YDI rank	Ten lowest-scoring countries	Health and Well-being rank	Overall YDI rank
Israel	1	31	Cameroon	174	163
Kuwait	2	56	Gabon	175	169
Netherlands	3	6	Mozambique	176	177
Cyprus	4	38	Malawi	177	162
Costa Rica	5	21	Central African Republic	178	183
Federal States of Micronesia	6	64	South Africa	179	126
Qatar	7	75	Namibia	180	155
Cuba	8	57	Botswana	181	142
Singapore	9	43	Lesotho	182	171
Italy	10	37	Swaziland	183	146



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Domain 3: Employment and Opportunity

Opportunities to gain employment in secure and meaningful jobs, or pursue financial independence, are a key feature of a well-functioning society. Without access to employment or dignity of labour young people are unable to develop skills, become established as independent citizens or maintain an adequate standard of living and quality of life. For this reason, measures of employment and financial independence are important indicators of youth development.

This domain seeks to assess the extent to which young people are in employment, their ability to access finance and economic opportunities, or whether they are in education or training that could lead to gainful employment.

Highlights

- Netherlands is top ranked for youth employment and opportunity with a YDI score of 0.910.
- The best performing Commonwealth country for youth employment and opportunity is Canada at 10th place with a YDI score of 0.806.
- Young people are at least twice as likely as adults to be unemployed. In many developed countries, the ratio of youth-to-adult unemployment is even higher. Youth unemployment is one of only two indicators to deteriorate from 2010 to 2015.
- Average scores in the Employment & Opportunity domain improved by just over 3% between 2010 and 2015, with most of the progress taking place in South Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, and the MENA region.
- Significant improvements were recorded in young people having an account at a financial institution and adolescent fertility rate.
- The youth-to-adult unemployment ratio was the only indicator in the domain to deteriorate between 2010 and 2015, partially reflecting the slowdown in the global economy after the financial crisis in 2008.
- North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific are the best-performing regions in this domain.
- Five of the highest-ranked countries in Employment and Opportunity domain rank in the top ten rankings for the overall YDI, the highest crossover ratio among all the domains, signifying the importance of this domain to youth development.

Indicators:

- Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rate (Source: International Labour Organization, World Bank, OECD)
- Youth unemployment ratio (United Nations data)
- Adolescent fertility rate (World Bank)
- Existence of a national youth policy (World Bank Findex)

Table 2.8 Highest and lowest-ranked countries in the Employment and Opportunity domain compared with their overall 2016 YDI score

Ten highest-scoring countries	Employment and Opportunity rank	Overall YDI rank	Ten lowest-scoring countries	Employment and Opportunity rank	Overall YDI rank
Netherlands	1	6	Egypt	174	138
Germany	2	1	Honduras	175	93
Japan	3	10	Belize	176	100
Denmark	4	2	Bangladesh	177	146
Mongolia	5	71	Afghanistan	178	167
Austria	6	7	Trinidad and Tobago	179	84
Slovenia	7	12	Tanzania	180	168
Switzerland	8	4	Yemen	181	152
Iceland	9	25	Niger	182	180
Canada	10	14	Iraq	183	145



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Domain 4: Civic Participation

Civic engagement and community development can take many forms, including through sport, religious groups, music, drama and the arts. Data for such participation are not easily available for global comparison.

Civic engagement is a key marker of human development and full incorporation into society, and complementary to political participation.

This domain seeks to measure the extent to which youth interact positively with their communities.

Highlights

- Liberia is ranked the highest for youth civic participation with a YDI score of 1.000.
- The best performing Commonwealth country for youth civic participation is Canada at 3rd place with a YDI score of 0.957.
- With an approximately 7% rise, the Civic Participation domain registered the largest improvement between 2010 and 2015 among all YDI domains.
- This is attributed to the increase in the indicator that measures the number of young people in the past five years who have ‘helped a stranger’.
- Almost all of this improvement was concentrated in Europe, Central America and Caribbean, and Asia-Pacific. Civic Participation scores worsened for South Asia, Russia and Eurasia, and South America.
- North America, Central America and Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, then Europe are the best-performing regions and have better-than-global-average scores for youth civic participation.
- South America, Russia and Eurasia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, fared the worst in this domain.
- Four countries in the top ten of the Civic Participation domain rank below 100 in the overall YDI (possibly due to the domain’s lower weight in the YDI calculation).

Indicators:

- Volunteered time (Source: Gallup World Poll)
- Helped a stranger (Gallup World Poll)

Table 2.9 Highest and lowest-ranked countries in the Civic Participation domain compared with their overall 2016 YDI score

Ten highest-scoring countries	Civic Participation rank	Overall YDI rank	Ten lowest-ranked countries	Civic Participation rank	Overall YDI rank
Liberia	1	119	Slovakia	174	45
USA	2	23	Palestine	175	126
Canada	3	14	Cambodia	176	136
Australia	4	3	Turkey	177	62
Jamaica	5	46	Democratic Republic of the Congo	178	175
Kenya	6	125	China	179	118
New Zealand	7	11	Rwanda	180	148
Cuba	8	57	Paraguay	181	90
Malawi	9	162	Lithuania	182	78
Libya	10	82	Burundi	183	153



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Domain 5: Political Participation

The participation of young people in the political life of their communities shows the extent to which they are empowered and engaged in the political process and have a voice in the development of their communities. Participation promotes social integration, combats exclusion, promotes youth development, and - by giving young people a stake in their society - creates bonds between generations.

The Political Participation domain in the YDI mainly seeks to convey whether the policy environment in a country supports youth development and encourages participation of young people in decision making.

Highlights

- Germany is ranked the highest for youth political participation with a YDI score of 1.000.
- The best performing Commonwealth country for youth political participation is South Africa at 3rd place with a YDI score of 0.983.
- The Political Participation domain registered an improvement by nearly 6% between 2010 and 2015, largely due to the significant increase in the number of countries that have introduced a youth policy.
- Gains were the largest in North America, Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. The MENA region was the only region to experience sharp deterioration between 2010 and 2015 in this domain.
- The top performing regions in the Political Participation domain are South America, Central America and the Caribbean, and South Asia, with the lowest levels of political participation found in the MENA region, Asia-Pacific and - surprisingly - North America.
- North America, the highest-scoring YDI region overall, fares relatively badly in this domain, to a large extent because neither the USA nor Canada has a national youth policy - a key indicator for this domain of the YDI.
- Many countries that did well in the Political Participation domain have a low rank in the overall YDI.

Indicators:

- Existence of a national youth policy (Source: Youth Policy Labs)
- Existence of voter education conducted nationally (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network)
- Voiced opinion to official (Gallup World Poll)

Table 2.10 Highest and lowest-ranked countries in the Political Participation domain compared with their overall 2016 YDI score

Ten highest-scoring countries	Political Participation rank	Overall YDI rank	Ten lowest-scoring countries	Political Participation rank	Overall YDI rank
Germany	1	1	Sao Tome and Principe	174	150
Colombia	2	36	Equatorial Guinea	174	179
South Africa	3	126	Comoros	176	158
UK	4	4	Oman	177	99
Chile	5	24	United Arab Emirates	178	107
Costa Rica	6	21	Qatar	179	75
Guatemala	7	101	Chad	180	182
Uganda	8	135	Singapore	181	45
Namibia	9	155	Algeria	182	126
Barbados	10	28	China	183	118

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