



EF EPI

EF English Proficiency Index

A Ranking of 111 Countries and Regions by English Skills

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2022

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Executive Summary

Over the past two and a half years, we have learned to appreciate connection: the ties that bind us to family and friends, but also chatting with colleagues and neighbors, feeling part of the wider world.

Language enables these connections, and when it comes to connecting beyond borders, English often takes center stage. It lets us work on multinational projects, enjoy media from abroad, travel, engage with new research, participate in global communities... the list goes on.

Perhaps this is why relationships with English can be so fraught. Frustration with the language is not uncommon. Elation too, from a student receiving a coveted university acceptance letter to a waiter serving their first table of tourists, a young person understanding the lyrics of a hit song to an executive negotiating their first contract with a supplier abroad. Organizations and governments invest massively in English instruction. So do individuals, at their own level. For if English leads to international connection, then no English leads to what?

This report investigates how and where English proficiency is developing around the world. To create the 2022 edition of the EF English Proficiency Index, we have analyzed the results of 2.1 million adults who took our EF SET English tests in 2021.

Girls leave school with less English than boys, but women catch up

Over the past decade, we’ve documented steadily rising English proficiency among men while women’s skills have remained stable. For the first time last year, men outpaced women globally. This year, that gap has widened as men’s English proficiency improved and women’s declined slightly. Men now have higher scores than women in every region of the world and in two-thirds of the countries surveyed, although in some cases those gaps are small.

These trends appear to be driven by biased education systems or unequal access to education. The gender gap is widest in the 18-20 cohort and only slightly narrower among those under 26, but once people reach the workplace, the gap disappears. Among adults over 30, there is no gender gap.

Older adults are improving; the youngest are not

Since 2015 when we began collecting age data, English proficiency has risen significantly among all cohorts over 25 with the largest improvement in adults over 40. This is in part a mechanical increase: those who were 24 in 2015 are now over 30, bringing their English skills with them. However, that explains less than half the progress among older adults. The rest comes down to actual learning through increased exposure to English, practice in the workplace, motivation to improve and adult education programs. This is all good news, both for the individuals concerned and for the organizations investing in training adults.

However, there is a second age-related trend that is less rosy. English proficiency among those aged 21-25 has not changed since 2015, and for the youngest cohort, proficiency is declining. Their skill loss since the start of the pandemic is particularly striking, with a drop of nearly 50 points over 2 years, the equivalent of an entire proficiency band. Successful language acquisition requires at least as much practice as instructional time.

Remote classrooms, social distancing, masks that impede communication and a lack of travel opportunities have hit this cohort particularly hard. It remains to be seen if their English proficiency will rebound as they get out into the world again.

English increases economic competitiveness

English is by far the most common language of information exchange across borders, making it a key component for accessing knowledge and expertise as well as developing partnerships and expanding into new markets. We find strong and consistent correlations between English and various measures of trade, innovation, human capital development and competitiveness. Organizations with operational proficiency in English are able to attract more diverse talent and draw on ideas and information from a larger range of sources. Individual English speakers are better equipped to collaborate internationally with partners and within their own organizations.

The largest cities don’t always have the best English

Capital cities and other metropolises have higher average levels of English proficiency than the country as a whole in almost every case; however, it is relatively rare for a country’s top performing city to be its capital, and many cities do not appear to drain English speakers from their surrounding regions. Of the 500 cities included in this year’s index, 130 do not outscore their region and another 130 barely do. This finding is relevant for companies considering where to recruit talent at a reasonable cost, particularly given the massive shift towards remote and semi-remote working arrangements.

Places with higher English proficiency are fairer and more open

There is an increasingly clear relationship between a society’s connectedness to the world, its level of equality and freedom, and its level of English. It is a virtuous cycle. Places that engage heavily with the world (economically, scientifically, diplomatically, etc.) need English, so English becomes a priority. And through their engagement with the world, adults have more exposure to English, which in turn raises proficiency. Places with high levels of inequality find it hard to raise their average English proficiency with entire swathes of the population left out of education and workplace opportunities.

Learning English on pause in Asia

Asia’s regional average declined slightly due to lower scores in China and the Philippines. Most countries surveyed improved somewhat and three moved into a higher proficiency band; however, average scores for South Asia and ASEAN were flat as compared to last year. The rapid improvement in Central Asia recorded since 2018 seems also to have plateaued, with only Kyrgyzstan continuing on its previous trajectory.

Latin American adults are learning English, but what about the kids?

Central and South America have made remarkable progress in acquiring English over the past decade. Their rate of improvement is among the fastest in the world and nearly universal, with most countries having moved up at least one proficiency band since their addition to the index. However, the region now has the widest age-related score difference in the world. Young people have seen their scores fall significantly since 2020. Lengthy school closures during the pandemic seem the most likely cause.

In Africa, mind the gaps

Despite a stable regional score, African countries have some of the widest proficiency gaps in the world between men and women and among different age cohorts. These gaps aren’t apparent in the regional average because they balance each other out, with some countries on the continent where women have much stronger English and others where men do. In the same way, in some countries the youngest adults (18-20) have much higher proficiency while in others young professionals (25-39) do. These gaps between age cohorts are indicative of change on the continent. When schools teach English more effectively, it is among the youngest adults that we see the effect first. Likewise, when workplaces internationalize, working adults improve their English fastest.

In Europe, lower-proficiency groups are catching up

Europe has the highest level of English proficiency of any region. It has also made consistent progress since 2011. Adults over 40 have improved far more quickly than other age cohorts in Europe, but contrary to other regions, younger adults have not lost ground. Recently, large, lower-proficiency countries that border the European Union have contributed most to the rising regional average as progress within the EU has slowed. But there is potential for improvement in the EU as well, as France, Spain and Italy, three of the region’s largest economies, still lag behind their neighbors.

Little progress in the Middle East

Despite well-publicized investments in improving educational outcomes, the level of English in the Middle East has not changed much in the past decade. Indeed, the region has the lowest level of skill variation between age cohorts, indicating that neither schools nor workplaces are helping to improve people’s English. There is one piece of positive news, however: the gender-related proficiency gap is narrowing somewhat in the region.

Languages connect us. They are the medium by which we share ideas, preserve knowledge and create culture. This is true of any language, but English, because so many people speak it, has the potential to be a powerful driver of dialog, diversity and inclusion over the coming decade, if only everyone has an equal opportunity to learn it.

EF EPI 2022

Ranking of Countries and Regions

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

Very High Proficiency

01	Netherlands	661
02	Singapore	642
03	Austria	628
04	Norway	627
05	Denmark	625
06	Belgium	620
07	Sweden	618
08	Finland	615
09	Portugal	614
10	Germany	613
11	Croatia	612
12	South Africa	609
13	Poland	600

High Proficiency

14	Greece	598
15	Slovakia	597
16	Luxembourg	596
17	Romania	595
18	Hungary	590
19	Lithuania	589
20	Kenya	582
21	Bulgaria	581
22	Philippines	578
24	Malaysia	574
25	Latvia	571
26	Estonia	570
27	Serbia	567
28	Nigeria	564
29	Switzerland	563
30	Argentina	562
31	Hong Kong (China)	561

Moderate Proficiency

32	Italy	548
33	Spain	545
34	France	541
35	Ukraine	539
36	South Korea	537
37	Costa Rica	536
38	Cuba	535
39	Belarus	533
40	Russia	530
41	Ghana	529
42	Moldova	528
43	Paraguay	526
44	Bolivia	525
45	Chile	524
45	Georgia	524
47	Albania	523
48	Honduras	522
49	Uruguay	521
50	El Salvador	519
51	Peru	517
52	India	516
53	Dominican Republic	514
54	Lebanon	513
55	Uganda	512
56	Tunisia	511
57	Armenia	506
58	Brazil	505
58	Guatemala	505
60	Vietnam	502

Low Proficiency

61	Nicaragua	499
62	China	498
63	Tanzania	496
64	Turkey	495
65	Nepal	494
66	Bangladesh	493
67	Venezuela	492
68	Ethiopia	490
69	Iran	489
70	Pakistan	488
71	Sri Lanka	487
72	Mongolia	485
73	Qatar	484
74	Israel	483
75	Panama	482
76	Morocco	478
77	Colombia	477
78	Algeria	476
78	United Arab Emirates	476
80	Japan	475
81	Indonesia	469
82	Ecuador	466
83	Syria	461
84	Kuwait	459
85	Egypt	454
86	Mozambique	453
87	Afghanistan	450

Very Low Proficiency

88	Mexico	447
89	Uzbekistan	446
90	Jordan	443
91	Kyrgyzstan	442
92	Azerbaijan	440
93	Myanmar	437
94	Cambodia	434
95	Sudan	426
96	Cameroon	425
97	Thailand	423
98	Haiti	421
99	Kazakhstan	420
100	Somalia	414
101	Oman	412
102	Saudi Arabia	406
103	Iraq	404
104	Côte d'Ivoire	403
105	Angola	402
106	Tajikistan	397
107	Rwanda	392
108	Libya	390
109	Yemen	370
110	Democratic Republic of the Congo	367
111	Laos	364

EF EPI 2022 City Scores

Proficiency Bands

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

Very High Proficiency

Amsterdam	673
Copenhagen	664
Stockholm	637
Zagreb	637
Helsinki	635
Oslo	635
Vienna	632
Lisbon	622
Zurich	622
Bruxelles	620
Warsaw	614
Bucharest	609
Bratislava	607
Budapest	604
Johannesburg	604
Prague	600

High Proficiency

Sofia	598
Berlin	592
Athens	587
Nairobi	585
Paris	585
Seoul	580
Kuala Lumpur	579
Buenos Aires	578
Madrid	572
Manila	567
Belgrade	566
Rome	566
Hong Kong	561
Lagos	559
San José	558
Moscow	550
Santiago	550

Moderate Proficiency

Beijing	549
Shanghai	549
Mumbai	546
Ha Noi	545
Saint Petersburg	542
Kiev	541
Minsk	541
Lima	539
Asunción	538
Havana	536
Rio de Janeiro	536
Tirana	535
Tblisi	533
São Paulo	532
Tegucigalpa	532
Montevideo	530
San Salvador	529
Tunis	528
Accra	527
Santo Domingo	523

Delhi	523
Jakarta	523
Tokyo	522
Guatemala City	517
Addis Ababa	514
La Paz	514
Dhaka	512
Erevan	512
Beirut	509
Caracas	509
Dubai	508
Colombo	507
Ho Chi Minh City	507
Kathmandu	507
Mexico City	507
Ankara	506
Dar Es Salaam	506
Panama City	504
Bogotá	503
Managua	502

Low Proficiency

Istanbul	499
Karachi	499
Quito	495
Ulaanbaatar	492
Tehran	490
Algiers	486
Casablanca	484
Kampala	484
Bangkok	483
Doha	474
Tel Aviv	472

Cairo	471
Baku	469
Damascus	469
Amman	460
Yangon	460
Bishkek	459
Maputo	458
Kabul	455
Nur-Sultan	455
Phnom Penh	453

Very Low Proficiency

Tashkent	445
Kuwait City	443
Tripoli	428
Riyadh	423
Port-au-Prince	422
Khartoum	421
Muscat	420
Baghdad	418
Dushanbe	415
Douala	412
Sana'a	397
Kigali	389
Mogadishu	385
Abidjan	374
Kinshasa	370

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 2022 Facts and Figures

Who are the test takers?

2.1M

Total Test Takers



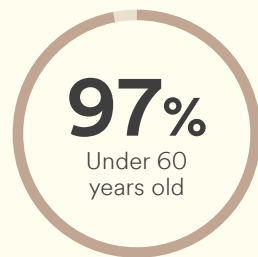
55%

Female



45%

Male



25

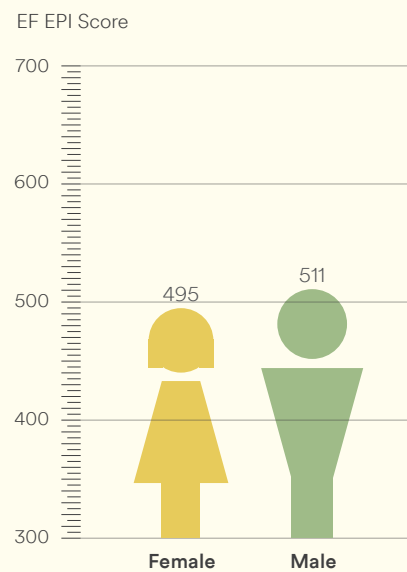
Median Age

EF EPI 2022 regional trends

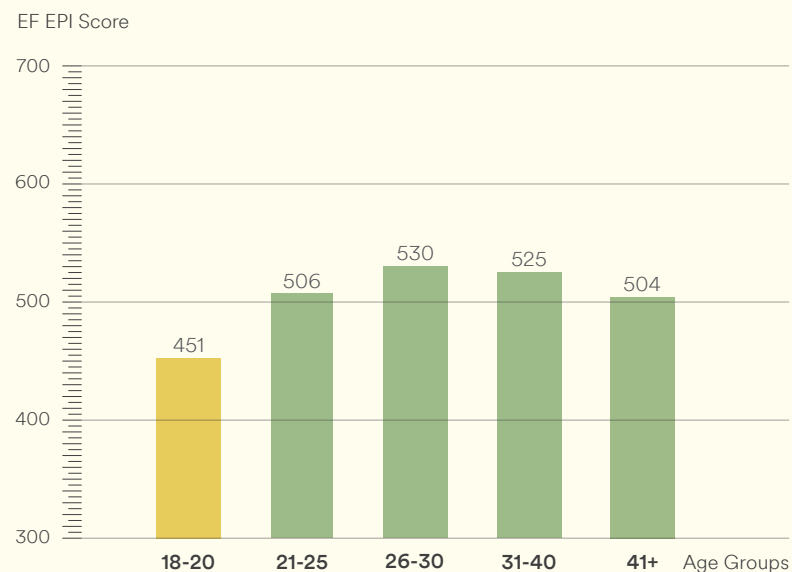
	Europe	Asia	Africa	Latin America	Middle East
Highest Score	Netherlands 661	Singapore 642	South Africa 609	Argentina 562	Lebanon 513
Lowest Score	Azerbaijan 440	Laos 364	Democratic Republic of the Congo 367	Haiti 421	Yemen 370
Improved Band (countries or regions)	2	3	0	3	1
Declined Band (countries or regions)	3	1	0	0	1

How do gender and age affect English proficiency?

Global Gender Gap



Global Generation Gap

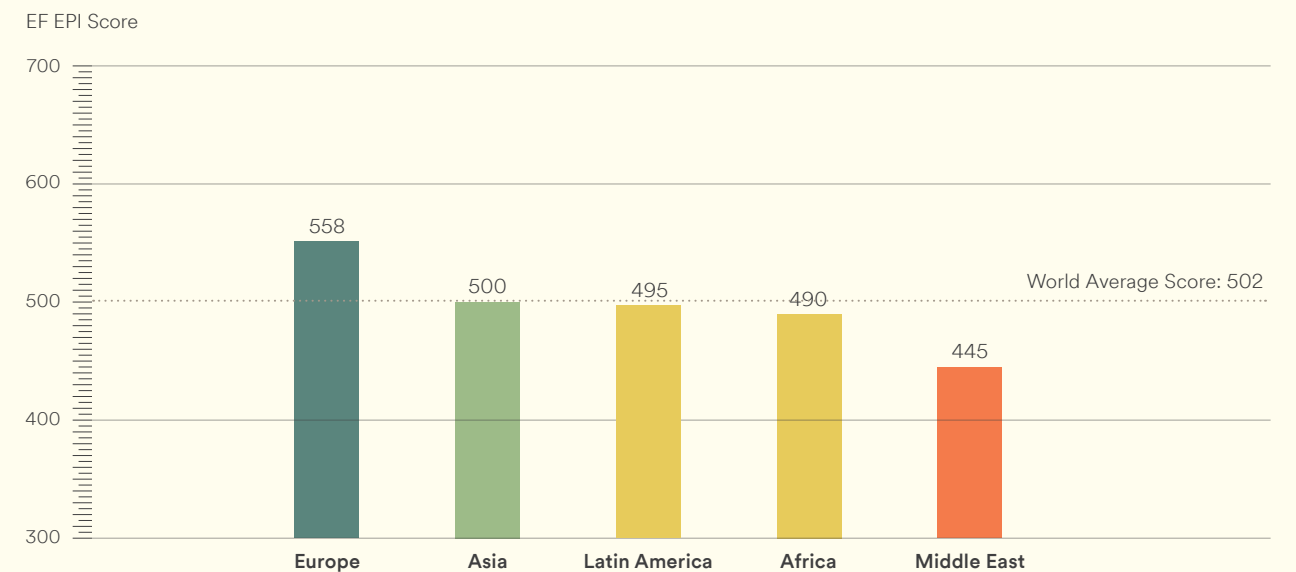


Proficiency Bands

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

EF EPI 2022 regional scores

EF EPI Regional Averages



Proficiency Bands

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

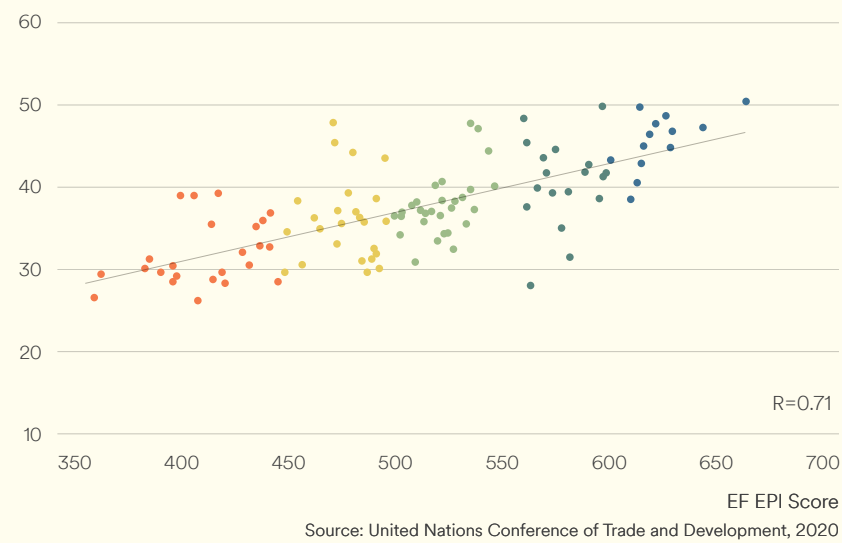
English and the Economy

International trade benefits from smooth communication, and in a globalized world, opportunities for trade abound. Although simple measures of wealth and exchange do correlate to English proficiency, those relationships aren't as strong as the ones with more complex indicators of economic balance, productivity, and potential. In this way English is much like other skills in a modern workforce: English alone doesn't drive trade or increase wages, but English proficiency goes hand in hand with growing economies and efficient workforces.

GRAPH A

English and Productivity

Productive Capacities Index



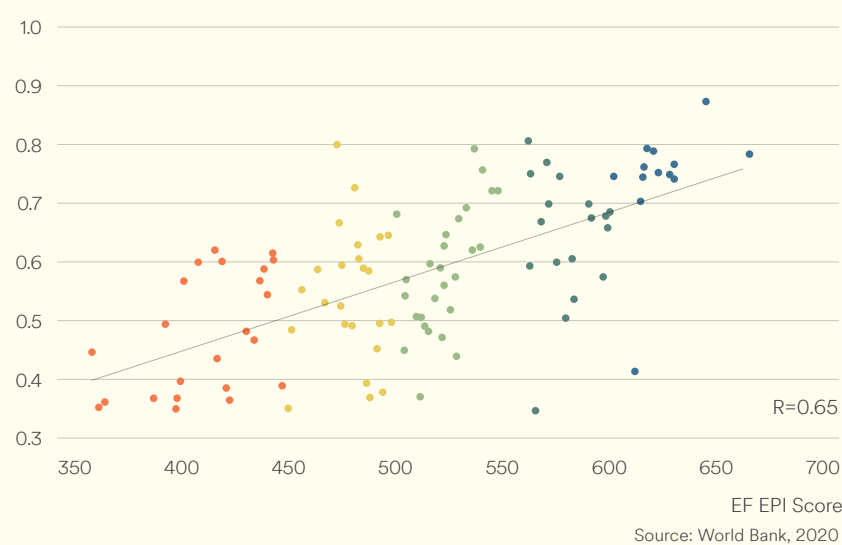
Proficiency Bands

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

GRAPH B

English and Human Capital

Human Capital Index



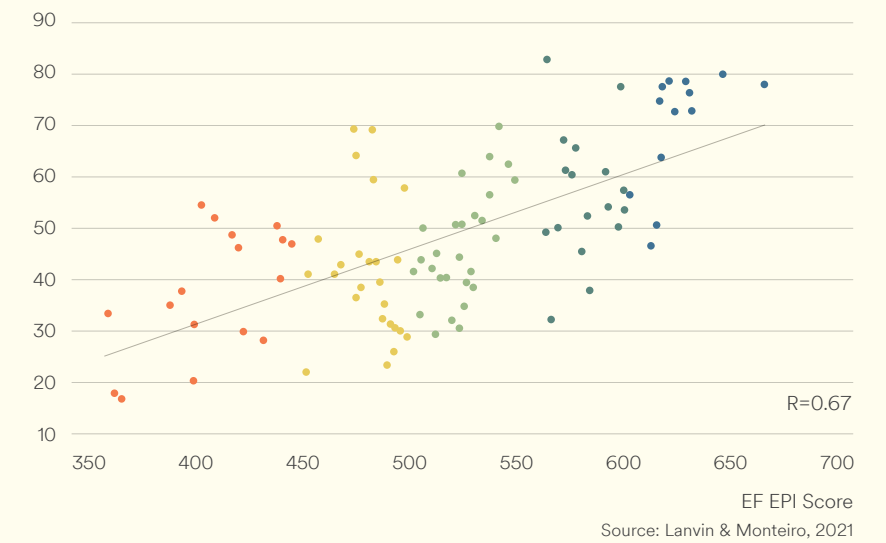
English and Innovation

Innovation flourishes when ideas and information can flow freely, when findings can raise new questions and solutions can find new applications. While it is primarily technology that underpins our ability to communicate instantly, a worldwide lingua franca doesn't hurt. Today, over two billion people speak English and so much research is published in the language, English has become the default medium of communication, both written and oral, in multinational labs, offices and universities around the world.

GRAPH C

English and Talent Competitiveness

Global Talent Competitiveness Index



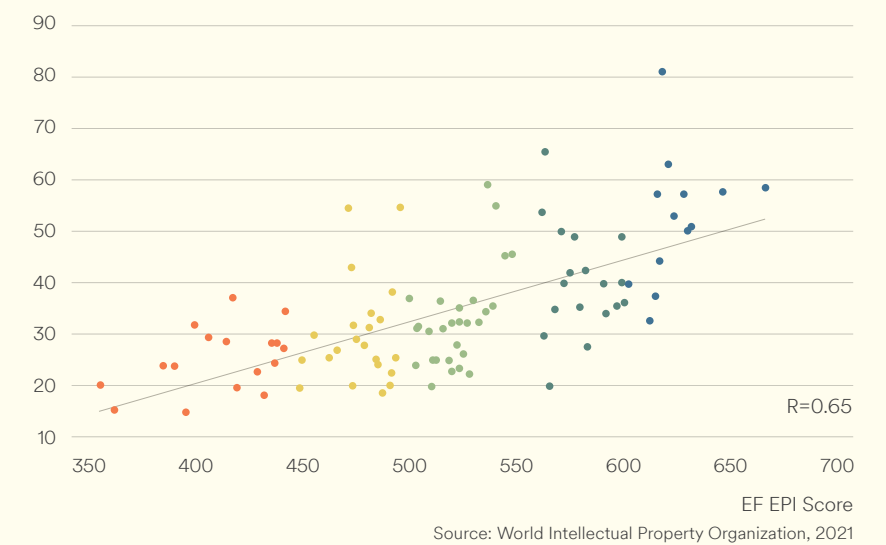
Proficiency Bands

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

GRAPH D

English and Global Innovation

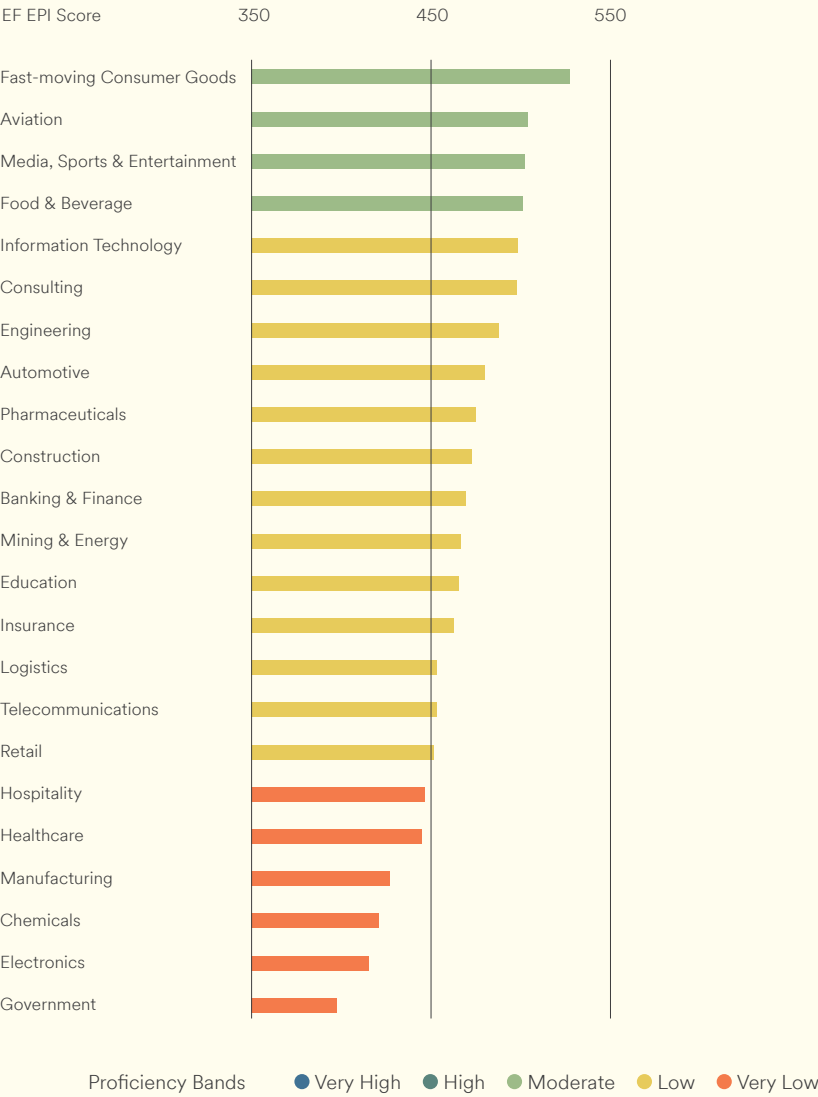
Global Innovation Index



English and Work

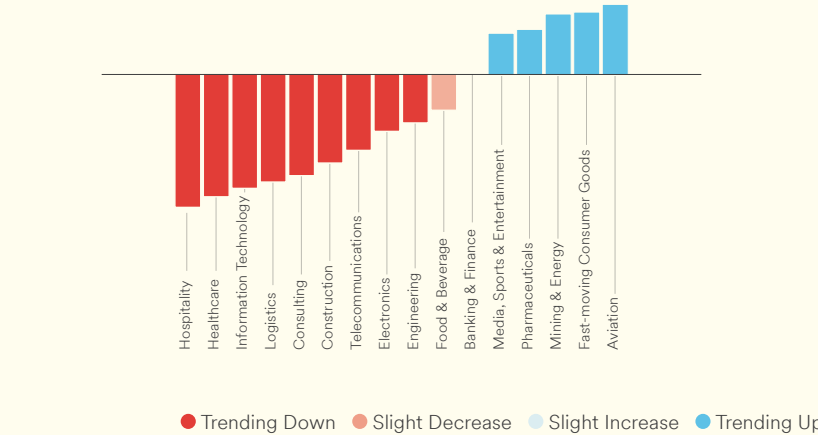
Over the past decade, our data increasingly shows that adults are developing their English proficiency in the workplace. Jobs that require English motivate ambitious professionals to study, and competition pushes forward-thinking companies to train. And for those who have some English, contact with the language at work provides daily practice – the essential component so often missing from English classes in school. Although this virtuous cycle is raising average proficiency levels in adults over 30 and homogenizing the level of English across seniorities, it may also be deepening inequality in places where many are left out of the labor market or have work that doesn't allow for international collaboration.

EF EPI by Industry



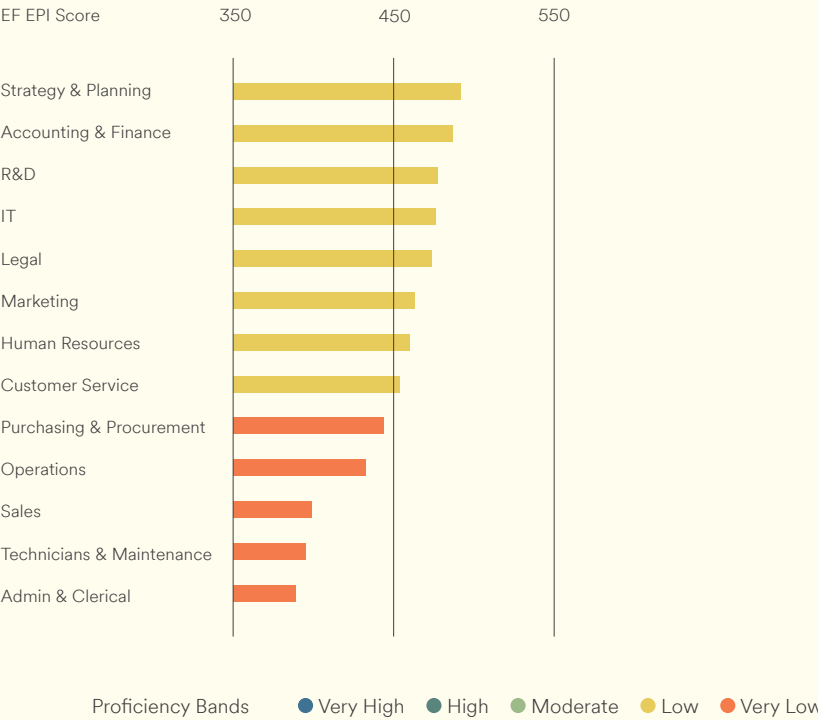
About a quarter of our test takers share information about their jobs, and based on that data set, English proficiency in many workplaces is too low for the average employee to collaborate efficiently across borders. That would require Moderate proficiency or higher. Although many industry scores have declined over the past ten years, this is primarily a consequence of our broadening geographic sample which today more accurately reflects industries at the global level.

EF EPI 2012 to 2022 Industry Trends



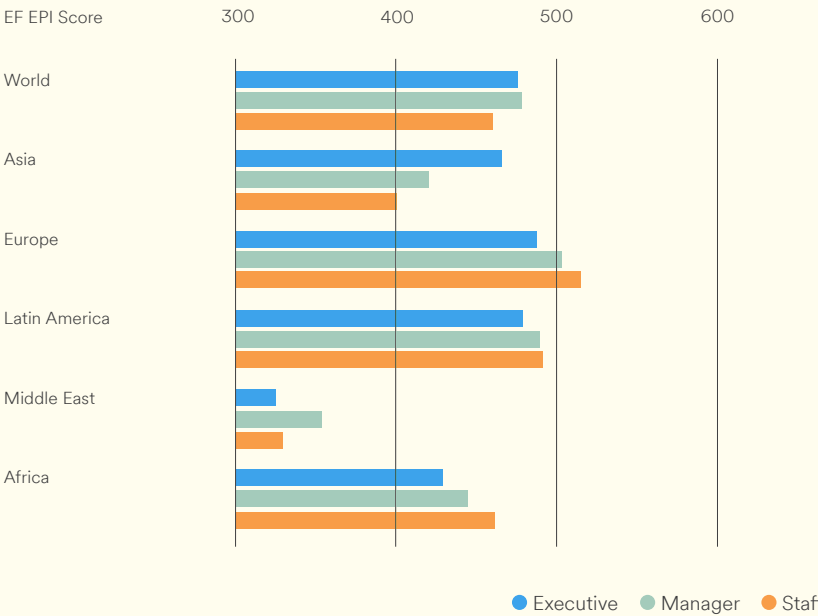
Modern businesses are increasingly non-hierarchical with borderless teams and an emphasis on agility and innovation. When professionals lack the English skills they need to evolve into new roles, their career development is curtailed. For their employers, the result is structural inefficiency. With ever more rapidly evolving business needs, a company's ability to reskill and upskill becomes key to its competitiveness. English should be a driver of inclusion rather than a barrier for career progression.

EF EPI by Job Function



On average, English proficiency in the workplace has not improved in the past decade, however, the gap between seniority levels has narrowed significantly. English is no longer an elite skill nor is it reserved for the youngest employees. Although English proficiency is now often taken into account in hiring and promotion decisions, it is usually as a requirement, not a bonus. Asia and the Middle East are the notable exceptions with their durable seniority-related proficiency gaps.

EF EPI by Seniority



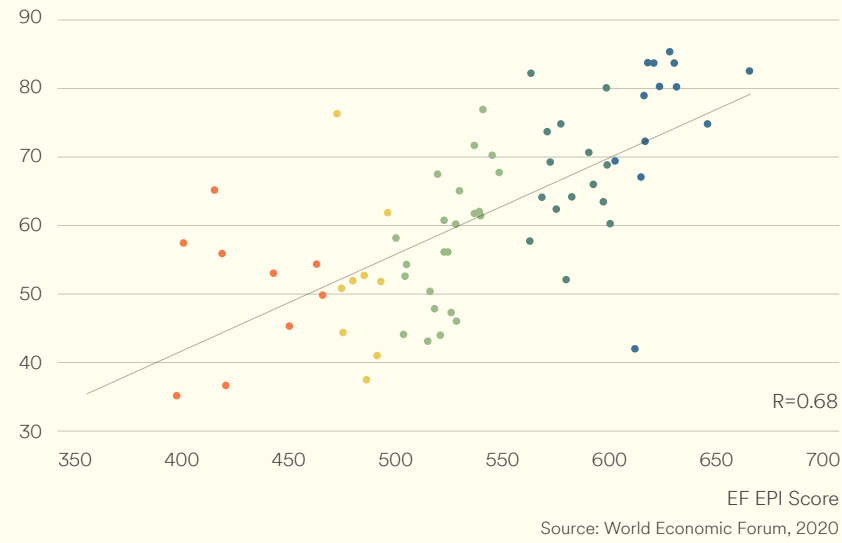
English and Society

Like many skills which can be acquired in school, English proficiency enables social mobility; however, education can only perform that function when everyone has access to it. Our data is not alone in pointing to the inequality-reducing properties of a good education, fairly distributed. Countries with entrenched or emerging inequalities, whether between genders, races or social classes, will find raising their average English proficiency level difficult without addressing the underlying imbalances.

GRAPH E

English and Social Mobility

Global Social Mobility Index



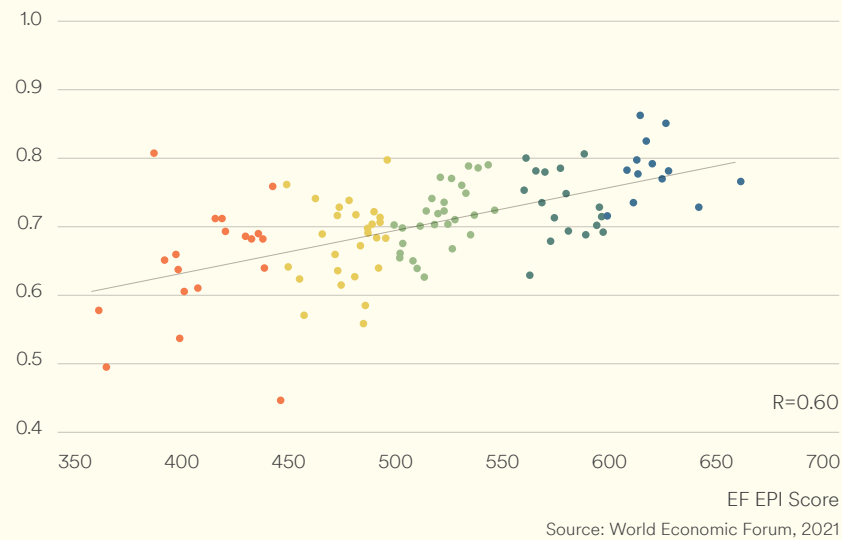
Proficiency Bands

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

GRAPH F

English and Gender Equality

Global Gender Gap Index (inverse)



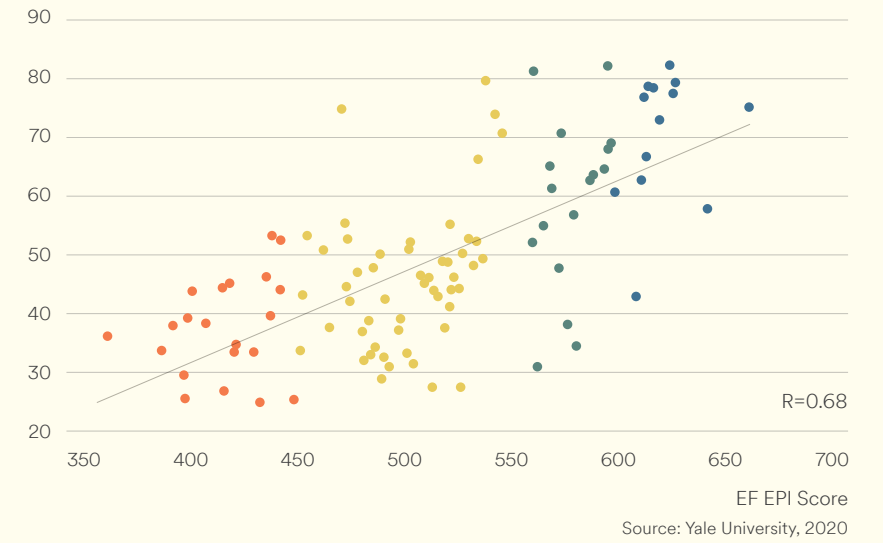
English and the Future

Learning another language opens up new areas of knowledge and cultural understanding. English is unique only in the oceans of information which humanity encodes in it. Plunging into our understanding of science, joining the international fight for environmental justice, reading uncensored accounts of history and current events: these experiences and others like them are essential to ensuring a peaceful and liveable future on this planet.

GRAPH G

English and the Environment

Environmental Performance Index



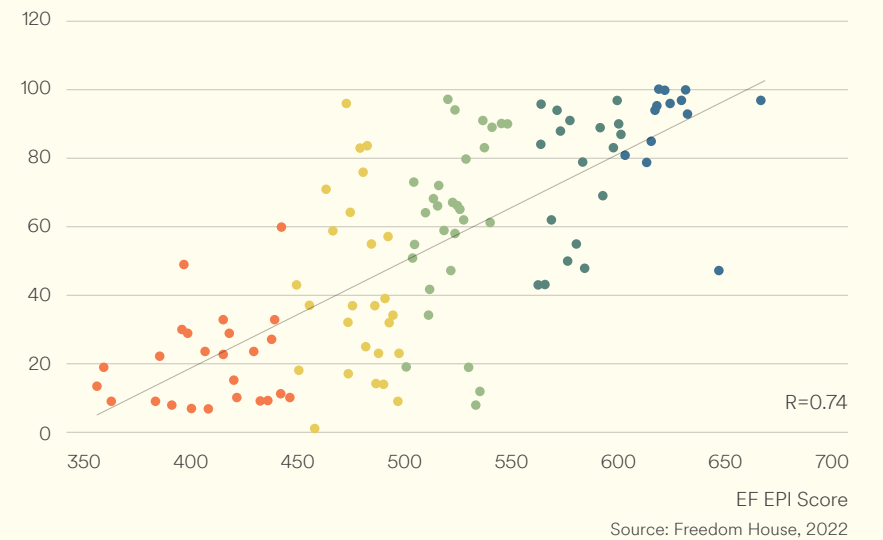
Proficiency Bands

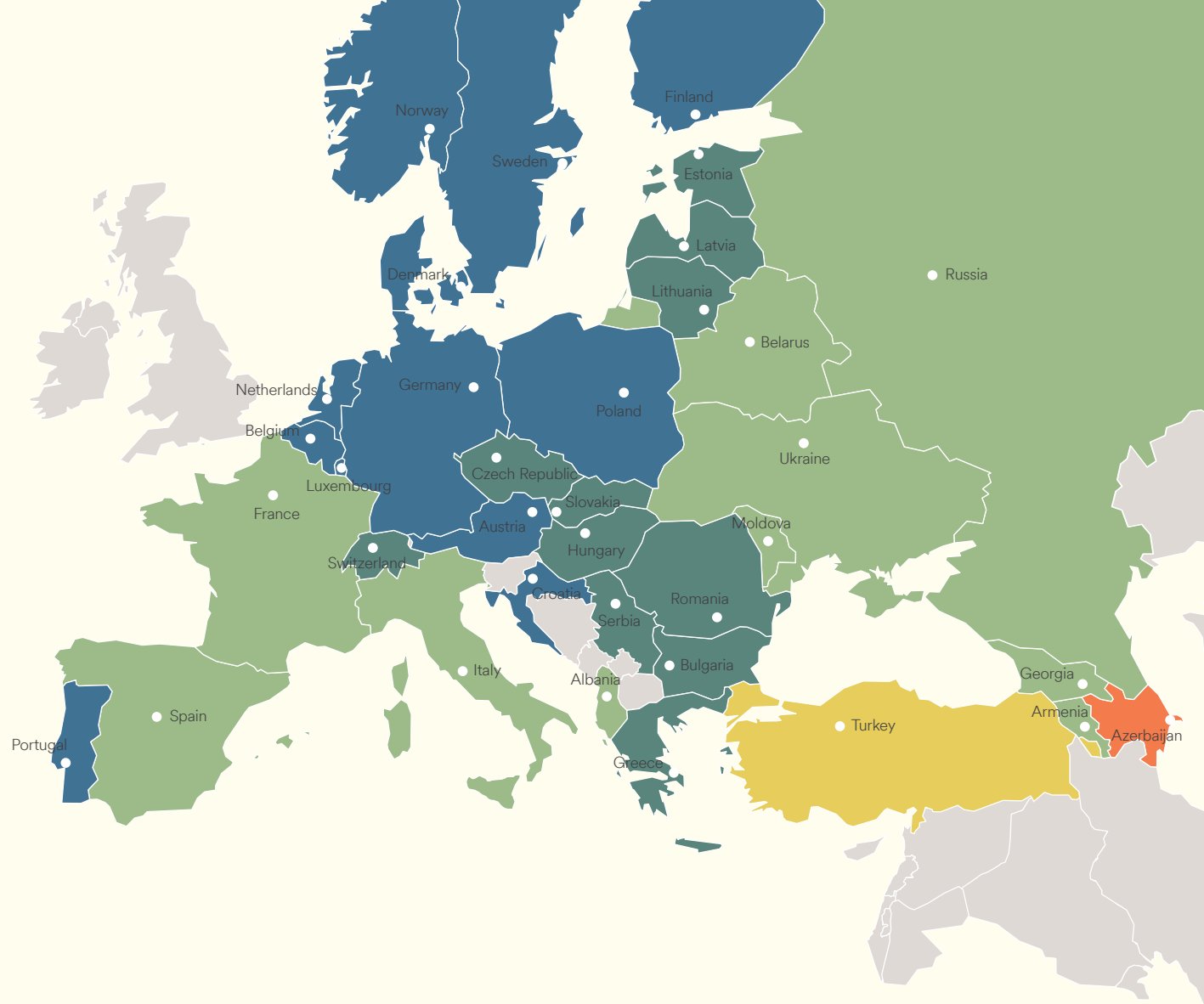
- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low

GRAPH H

English and Freedom

Global Freedom Scores





EUROPE

EF EPI Rankings

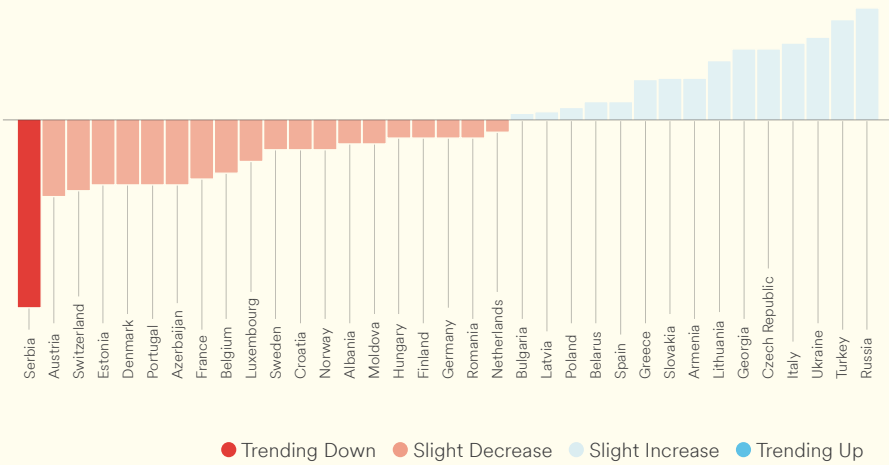
01	Netherlands	661	15	Slovakia	597	33	Spain	545
03	Austria	628	16	Luxembourg	596	34	France	541
04	Norway	627	17	Romania	595	35	Ukraine	539
05	Denmark	625	18	Hungary	590	39	Belarus	533
06	Belgium	620	19	Lithuania	589	40	Russia	530
07	Sweden	618	21	Bulgaria	581	42	Moldova	528
08	Finland	615	23	Czech Republic	575	45	Georgia	524
09	Portugal	614	25	Latvia	571	47	Albania	523
10	Germany	613	26	Estonia	570	57	Armenia	506
11	Croatia	612	27	Serbia	567	64	Turkey	495
13	Poland	600	29	Switzerland	563	92	Azerbaijan	440
14	Greece	598	32	Italy	548			

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

EF EPI Trends

English proficiency in Europe continues to rise at an average rate of 6 points per year, making it the most improved region since 2011 despite starting from a relatively high base. This year's increase was driven by large Low and Moderate proficiency countries such as Italy, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. The rate of improvement within the EU was slower. Note: regional averages are population weighted.

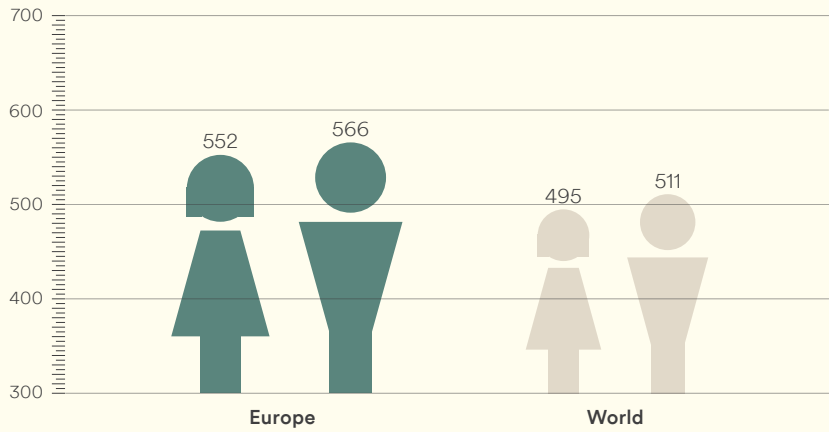
EF EPI Score Change from Last Year



Gender Gap

The skill gap between men and women widened slightly this year in Europe, although both groups' English proficiency improved. In 12 countries, the gap is significant (over 20 points), and men outscored women in all but 6 countries. However, a few large countries (France, Italy, Russia and Ukraine) have almost no gender gap.

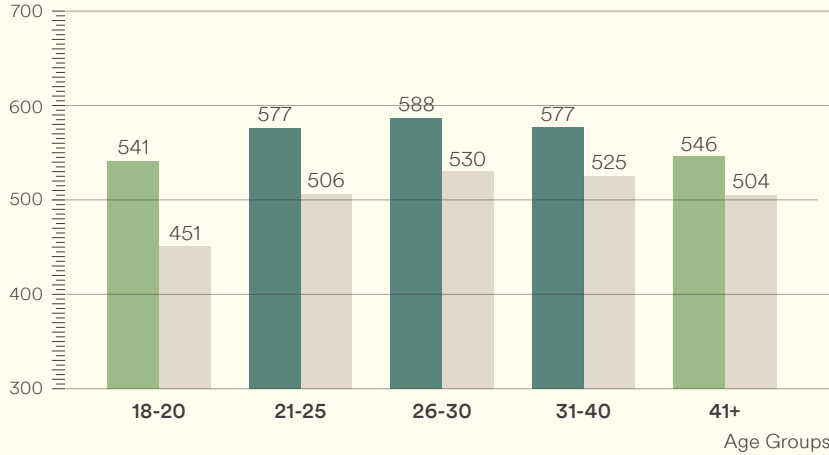
EF EPI Score



Generation Gap

Adults are the drivers of rising English proficiency in Europe, undermining the commonly held belief that people learn most of their English in school. Since 2015, young graduates in Europe have had stable scores, while every other age group has improved significantly. Adults over 40 have gained nearly 100 points.

EF EPI Score





ASIA

EF EPI Rankings

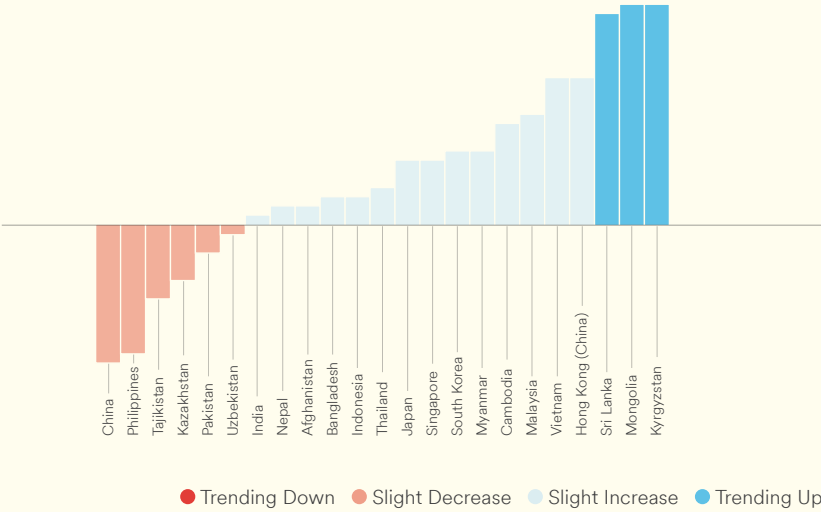
2	Singapore	642	66	Bangladesh	493	93	Myanmar	437
22	Philippines	578	70	Pakistan	488	94	Cambodia	434
24	Malaysia	574	71	Sri Lanka	487	97	Thailand	423
31	Hong Kong (China)	561	72	Mongolia	485	99	Kazakhstan	420
36	South Korea	537	80	Japan	475	106	Tajikistan	397
52	India	516	81	Indonesia	469	111	Laos	364
60	Vietnam	502	87	Afghanistan	450			
62	China	498	89	Uzbekistan	446			
65	Nepal	494	91	Kyrgyzstan	442			

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

EF EPI Trends

Asia's regional average dropped slightly this year, although three countries improved significantly and two more moved into a higher proficiency band. China and the Philippines were the main drivers of the declining regional score. Central Asia's proficiency seems to be leveling off after three consecutive years of rapid improvement.

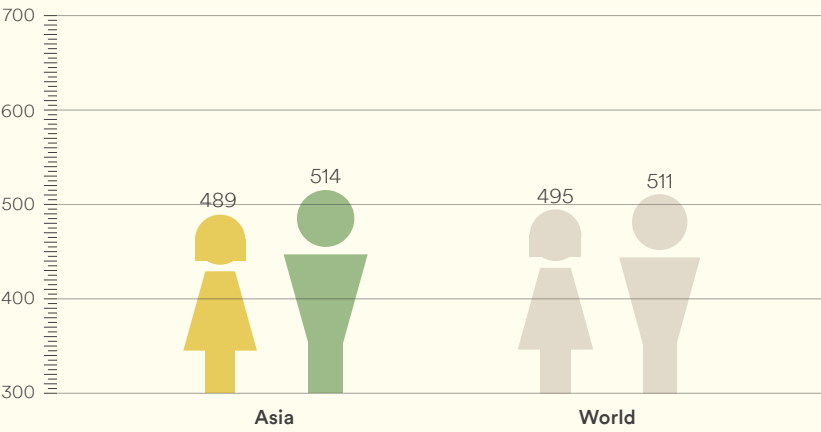
EF EPI Score Change from Last Year



Gender Gap

Asia has the widest gender gap in the world this year, driven primarily by China and India moving to opposite ends of the spectrum. Chinese women, already ahead last year, increased their lead to 48 points—the largest gender gap in the world. India's gender gap is also wider than last year: 29 points in favor of men.

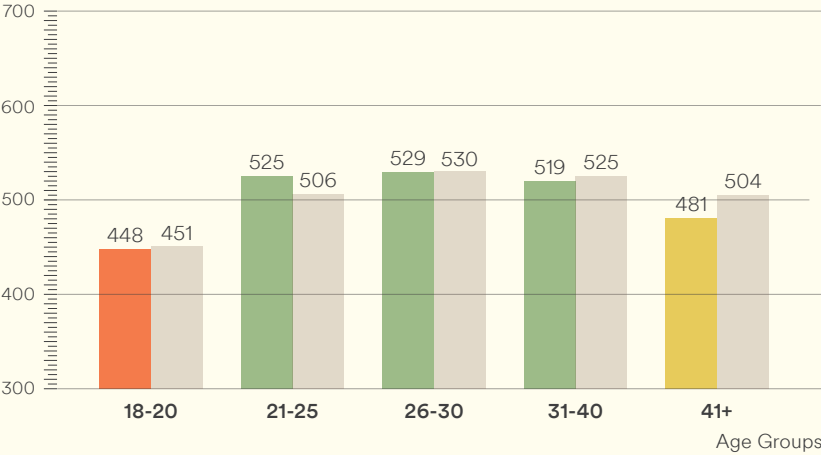
EF EPI Score



Generation Gap

In Asia, English skill differences between age groups are significant, although in many individual countries these gaps are narrower. Young adults in China, Indonesia and Japan have particularly low levels of English when compared to people over 30. China's decline in score this year was driven exclusively by the country's youngest cohort.

EF EPI Score



LATIN AMERICA



EF EPI Rankings

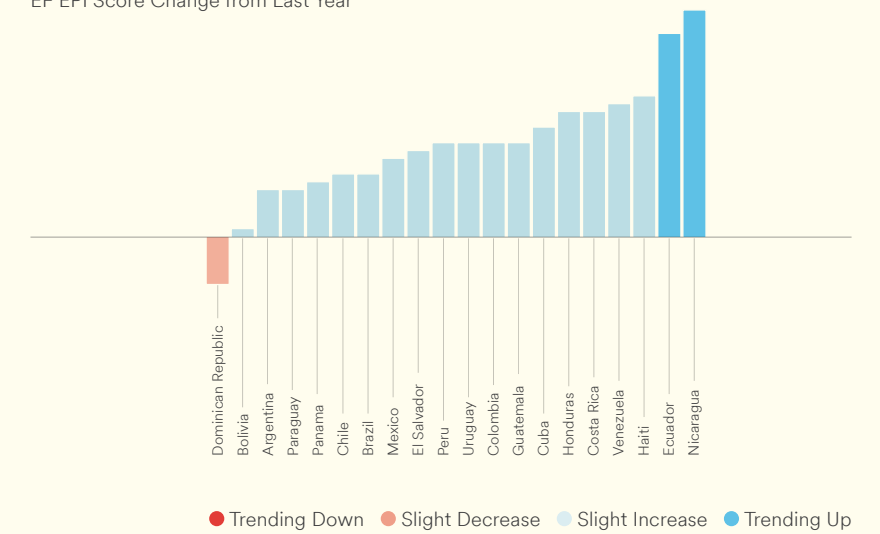
30	Argentina	562	53	Dominican Republic	514
37	Costa Rica	536	58	Brazil	505
38	Cuba	535	58	Guatemala	505
43	Paraguay	526	61	Nicaragua	499
44	Bolivia	525	67	Venezuela	492
45	Chile	524	75	Panama	482
48	Honduras	522	77	Colombia	477
49	Uruguay	521	82	Ecuador	466
50	El Salvador	519	88	Mexico	447
51	Peru	517	98	Haiti	421

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

EF EPI Trends

Latin America continued to improve its English proficiency this year with scores rising in almost every country. The region's remarkable progress over the past decade has transformed it from a Very Low proficiency region to a largely Moderate proficiency one. Even Mexico saw a small rebound after five years of decline.

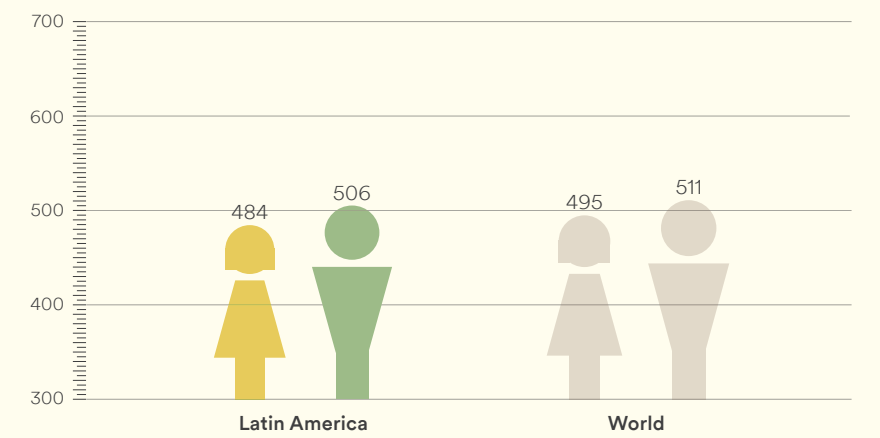
EF EPI Score Change from Last Year



Gender Gap

Men outscored women in Latin America again this year, although the gap has narrowed slightly and both groups improved. The regional gender gap is unusually homogenous, with men's scores between 10 and 25 points higher than women's in a majority of countries. Only Haiti and Uruguay have small proficiency gaps in favor of women.

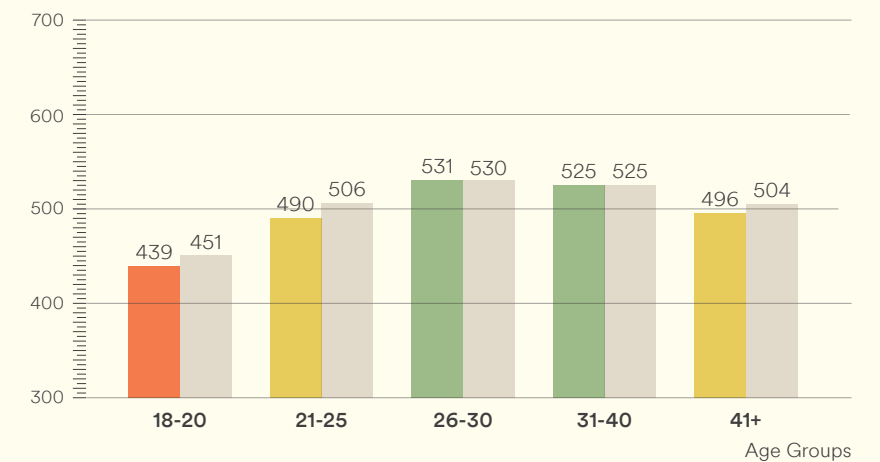
EF EPI Score



Generation Gap

As in Europe, rising levels of English proficiency in Latin America are driven by workplaces, not schools. Since 2015, Latin American adults over 25 have made significant gains with those in their 30's improving the most. During the same period, the 20-25 cohort has had stable scores and the 18-20 cohort has declined by 60 points. This leaves the region with the largest age-related proficiency gap in the world.

EF EPI Score



AFRICA

EF EPI Rankings

12	South Africa	609	85	Egypt	454
20	Kenya	582	86	Mozambique	453
28	Nigeria	564	95	Sudan	426
41	Ghana	529	96	Cameroon	425
55	Uganda	512	100	Somalia	414
56	Tunisia	511	104	Côte d'Ivoire	403
63	Tanzania	496	105	Angola	402
68	Ethiopia	490	107	Rwanda	392
76	Morocco	478	108	Libya	390
78	Algeria	476	110	Democratic Republic of the Congo	367

Proficiency Bands

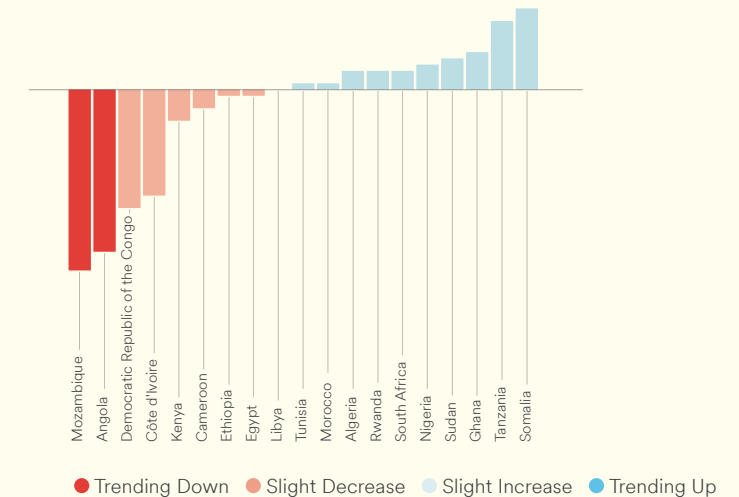
Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
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EF EPI Trends

Africa's English proficiency remained steady this year with no countries changing proficiency band. Of the countries which have been in the index at least five years, only Algeria, Nigeria and Tunisia have made significant gains. After years of steady improvement, English proficiency in North Africa seems to have reached a plateau.

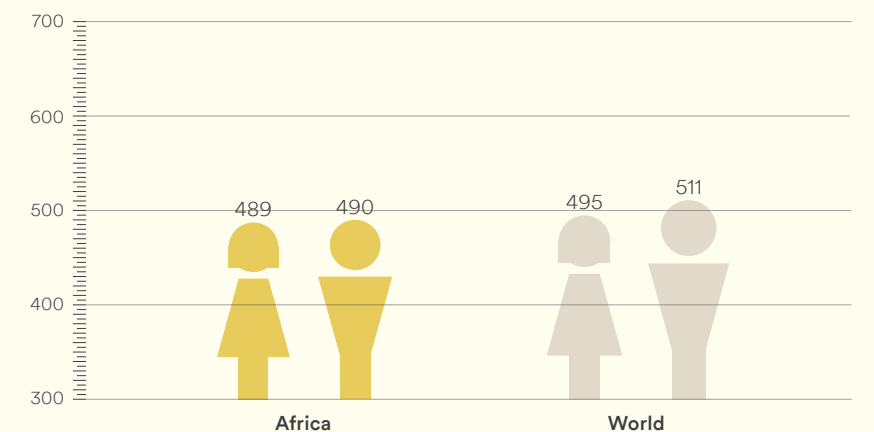
EF EPI Score Change from Last Year



Gender Gap

Men's English caught up to women's in Africa for the first time this year, but the regional average masks the fact that a majority of countries still have a significant gender gap (over 20 points). Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda and Ghana have among the widest gender gaps in the world in favor of women, while Uganda and Tunisia have among the widest in favor of men.

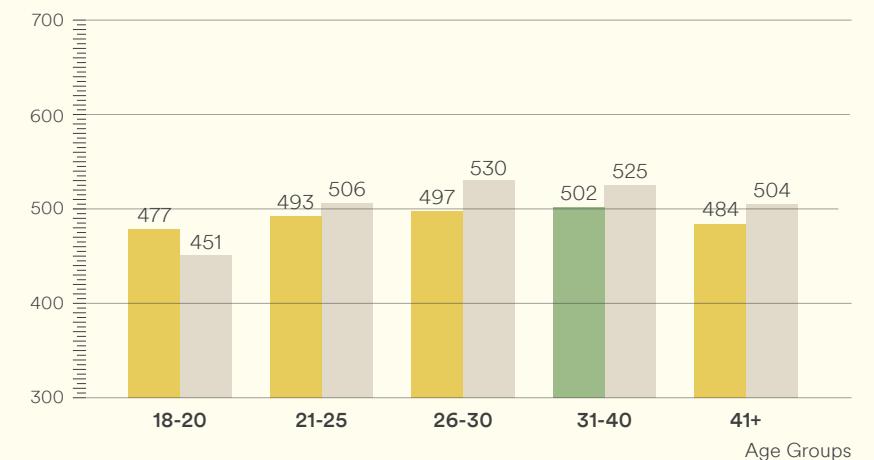
EF EPI Score

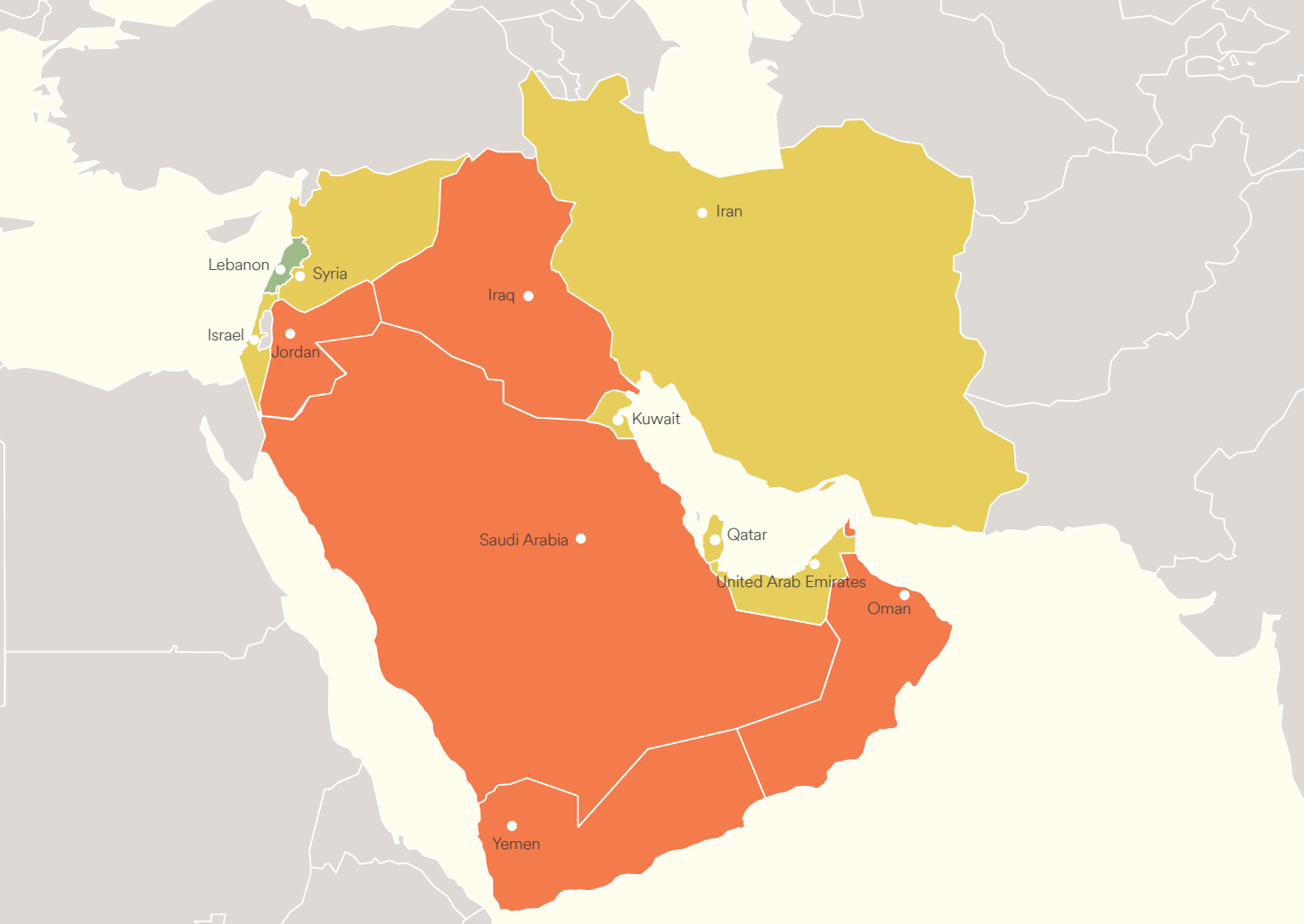


Generation Gap

Age is not an indicator of English proficiency in Africa as a whole, however, as with gender, the regional average doesn't reflect national variation. Ethiopia, Ghana, Libya and Sudan have a score spread of over 70 points between age groups; the spread in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia is only slightly narrower.

EF EPI Score





MIDDLE EAST

EF EPI Rankings

54 Lebanon	513	84 Kuwait	459
69 Iran	489	90 Jordan	443
73 Qatar	484	101 Oman	412
74 Israel	483	102 Saudi Arabia	406
78 United Arab Emirates	476	103 Iraq	404
83 Syria	461	109 Yemen	370

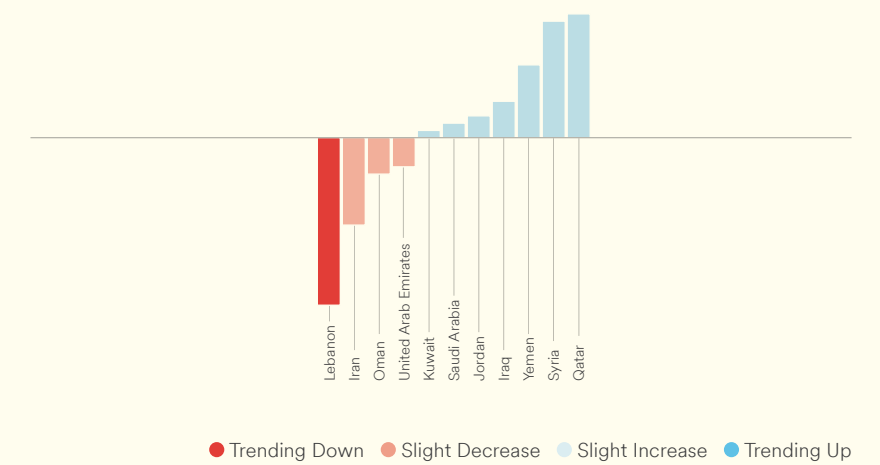
Proficiency Bands

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

EF EPI Trends

The regional average for the Middle East did not change this year and no country made significant gains. Over the past decade, the region has improved its English at less than half the rate of Europe and Latin America. Only Qatar and the UAE have seen their scores rise more than 20 points during that period.

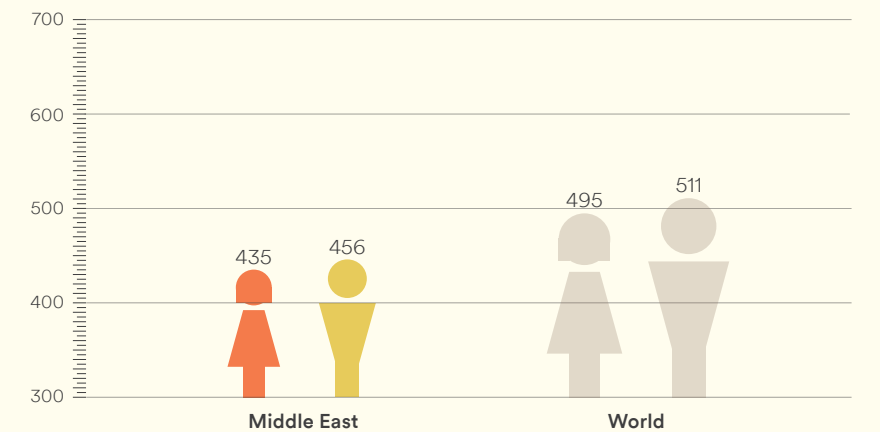
EF EPI Score Change from Last Year



Gender Gap

The gender-related skill gap in the Middle East narrowed this year. Although men still outperform women in a majority of countries, Saudi Arabian women scored better than men for the first time. Jordan and Iraq, however, tied for the second largest gender gap in the world in favor of men (37 points).

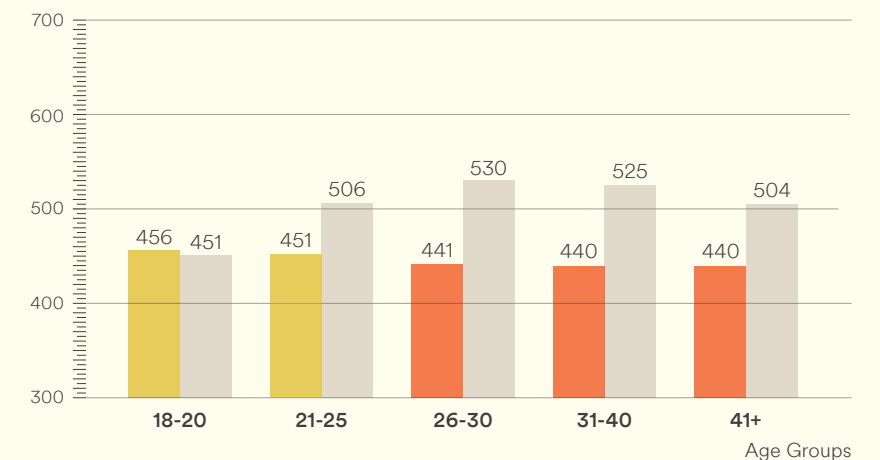
EF EPI Score



Generation Gap

English proficiency is remarkably homogenous between generations in the Middle East at both the regional and national level: not a herald of change. Of the 12 countries with sufficient data, only Iran and Iraq have gaps of over 60 points between the most and least proficient age cohorts. In both cases, the youngest adults have the best English.

EF EPI Score



Conclusions

English is the most widespread medium of information exchange the world has ever known. At no previous time in history has a third of humanity shared a language nor have we had the technology to pool knowledge in a manner independent of geographic constraints.

These two ingredients—a medium and a method—could usher in an era of global community in which we come together to tackle climate change, share resources equitably and guarantee peace. Or not. Humans may not be biologically capable of feeling a sense of community with such a large group and tackling long-term problems has never been our strong suit. But regardless of the cohesiveness of the so-called “global community,” learning English (when combined with access to the Internet) undoubtedly opens opportunities for individuals to work, acquire information and share their experiences more widely. Broadening access to those opportunities is an inherently worthy goal. The question then is how to do it.

English teaching grows up

Teaching English better at school is inevitably part of the solution. In particular, many countries need more teachers who speak English well and strategies to entice those teachers to work in rural and low-income schools. Too often, teacher training is tacked on to education reform as an afterthought. That’s backward thinking. Teachers need robust training before they can effectively use new methodologies and tools in the classroom.

In addition to teacher training, some education systems still need to shift from memorization to communication-based approaches for language acquisition. Schools relying on English as the sole medium of instruction when pupils speak other languages at home would do well moving to a multilingual model, as children need to learn how to read and write their native languages.

Children who are not taught to read and do math will find those skills difficult to acquire as adults, but schools often get too much credit (and blame) for adult English proficiency. In every language they use frequently, adults acquire vocabulary throughout their lives, and in English, they’re making real progress.

Today in most countries, working adults speak English better than young people finishing secondary school. Learning a language takes time and practice, hundreds of hours of practice, and workplaces are the perfect place for it. Professionals who acquired some English during their education consolidate and build upon those skills thanks to daily contextualized contact with the language. Those who didn’t get much English in school are motivated by international workplaces to acquire a skill they perceive as valuable for their careers (motivation is a key factor in successful language acquisition).

Workplace training schemes are contributing by building on the structural advantages of multilingual working environments. They help develop specific skills in particular professions, address individual shortfalls and remove hurdles for those who would otherwise be intimidated by the task of mastering a language unaccompanied. The fact that so much of this training has moved online has only made it more appealing to busy professionals and their employers.

Remote possibilities

Online learning has been put through its paces since 2020. We all now understand its limitations, especially for children. We also understand its potential, not only to educate during a crisis, but more broadly to reduce inequality by delivering (potentially) excellent training to any location at scale. Adults who did not learn English in school, or not enough, have more ways than ever before to study online autonomously, with a teacher, or a mix of the two, for an affordable price and at times that suit their schedule.

The cutting edge digital learning spaces of today are unrecognizable compared to the offerings even five years ago. New immersive technology allows learners to role play in situ and complete collaborative tasks using authentic documents. Personalization engines prompt them to review a skill at the ideal time for retention. Huge data sets allow for AI training to predict engagement and adjust a course to maximize it, summoning a teacher or coach well before a learner can drop out.

Thanks to the ever-growing number of online degree programs and remote job offers, geography is not the barrier it once was to developing skills and using them to earn a living, especially for those who speak English. While some companies have summoned employees back to the office full time and many essential workers never left, a less rigid perspective on when and where we work is one of the pandemic’s lasting legacies.

Testing times

The spread of globalization and, in tandem, the adoption of English parallel the resurgent populism, isolationism and xenophobia sadly evident in so many countries over the past decade. In the past two years, we have not only experienced a pandemic; war has returned to Europe and China has begun to close in on itself. The resulting supply chain disruptions have had companies scrambling to find local suppliers, integrate vertically and stockpile inventory.

If the trend continues beyond the current turbulence, looking closer to home for both suppliers and customers will signal a significant change in how globalization works, assuming it does not veer into insularity. The subsequent impact on the demand for English remains to be seen, but over time, regional languages (or the language of the largest economy in a region) stand to rise in popularity.

For autocracies intent on controlling a population, English may look like a threat. People who speak English have access to more information from a broader range of sources than those who don’t, and they can document their experiences and share them with a far wider audience. They may also work outside their national economies and have more social contacts abroad.

When seen from that perspective, limiting access to the internet and limiting access to English instruction are similar strategies. In practice, this might include reducing the hours of English instruction in schools, removing it from national exams, making it harder to operate an English tutoring business, spreading negative propaganda about English and a host of other measures to reduce supply and dampen demand.

But aside from the impact on individual freedom, proactively lowering English proficiency in the working population is likely to have an economic impact. The correlations between English proficiency and international trade, income and productivity are well-established.

English for everyone

The adoption of English by an estimated 2.5 billion people and counting isn’t due to any inherent value in the language itself. It’s a meeting of history and circumstance, economics and technology. The current momentum is a classic example of a network effect: the more people speak English the more useful it becomes, resulting in a positive feedback loop.

But learning a language isn’t like buying a telephone. If it were easier to learn English, everyone would already speak it. It is only by improving the quality and distribution of English instruction in schools, opening access to a diversity of training methods for adults and recognizing the essential role of the workplace in driving English acquisition that leaders can leverage the true potential of a global lingua franca to build connections, speed information exchange and tap into the wider world.

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.

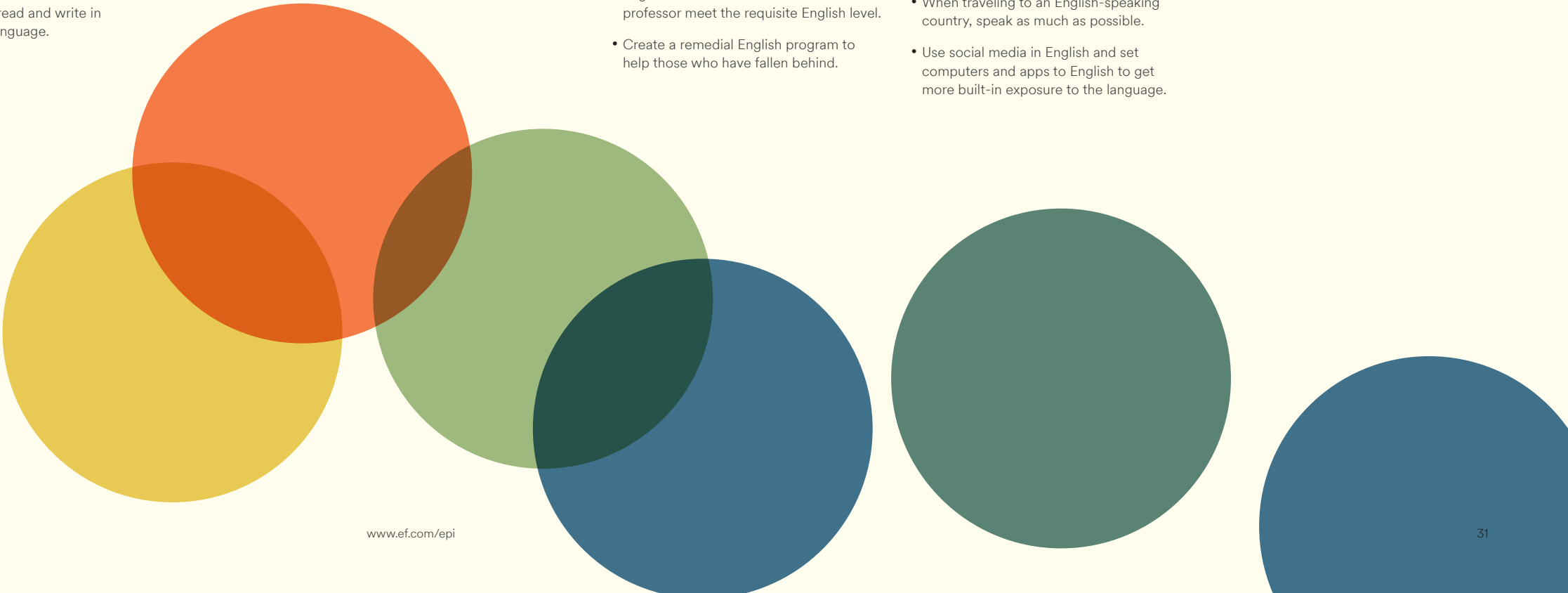
- Assess the English skills of all public servants and provide training as necessary, not only for their current jobs, but also for their careers.
- Provide English language instruction in job centers and unemployment reduction programs.
- Give adults access to lifelong learning programs and include 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 20-30 minutes rather than for hours at a time.
- 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.



About the Index

Methodology

This edition of the EF EPI is based on test data from more than 2,100,000 test takers around the world who took the EF Standard English Test (EF SET) or one of our English placement tests in 2021.

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 2022 scores have been found to correlate strongly with TOEFL iBT 2020 scores (r=0.81) and IELTS Academic Test 2019 scores (r=0.75). 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 41% of the overall sample, male respondents 33% and respondents who did not provide gender information 25%.
- The median age of respondents who provided age information was 25. 87% of those respondents were under the age of 35, and 97% were under the age of 60. 25% of respondents did not provide their birth date.
- 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. However, there is no incentive for test takers to inflate their scores artificially on these low-stakes tests by cheating, as the results are purely for personal use.

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 35% 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. 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

To calculate an EF EPI score, we used weighted components which include the EF SET and the EF EPI of the previous two years. Inclusion of the previous indices helps to stabilize scores year over year, but test takers from the previous years are not counted in the total test taker count for the current year. Regional averages are weighted by population.

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
C2	700-800
C1	600-699
B2	500-599
B1	400-499
A2	300-399
A1	200-299
Pre-A1	1-199

- The Very High Proficiency band corresponds to CEFR level C1.
- The High and Moderate Proficiency bands correspond to CEFR level B2, with each EF EPI band corresponding to half of the CEFR level.
- The Low Proficiency band corresponds to the upper half of CEFR level B1.
- The Very Low Proficiency band corresponds to the lower half of CEFR level B1 and A2.

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. Unfortunately, no such survey of English skills has ever been performed at an international level.

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 level of the “average” person. The EF EPI seeks to compare countries and territories, which necessitates overlooking individual strengths and weaknesses.

Proficiency	Sample Tasks
Very High Germany Netherlands Singapore	✓ Use nuanced and appropriate language in social situations ✓ Read advanced texts with ease ✓ Negotiate a contract with a native English speaker
High Argentina Nigeria Philippines	✓ Make a presentation at work ✓ Understand TV shows ✓ Read a newspaper
Moderate Brazil India Russia	✓ Participate in meetings in one’s area of expertise ✓ Understand song lyrics ✓ Write professional emails on familiar subjects
Low China Pakistan Turkey	✓ Navigate an English-speaking country as a tourist ✓ Engage in small talk with colleagues ✓ Understand simple emails from colleagues
Very Low Mexico Saudi Arabia Thailand	✓ 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 • 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 him/herself spontaneously, very fluently, and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1 • Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. • Can express him/herself 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 • Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her 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 • 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 • 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 his/her background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1 • Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. • Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows, and things he/she has. • 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.

APPENDIX D

EF EPI

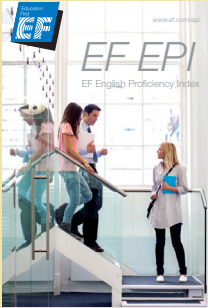
Country and Region Rankings

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

	EF EPI 2021 Edition	EF EPI 2022 Edition	Score Change
Netherlands	663	661	-2
Singapore	635	642	7
Austria	641	628	-13
Norway	632	627	-5
Denmark	636	625	-11
Belgium	629	620	-9
Sweden	623	618	-5
Finland	618	615	-3
Portugal	625	614	-11
Germany	616	613	-3
Croatia	617	612	-5
South Africa	606	609	3
Poland	597	600	3
Greece	591	598	7
Slovakia	590	597	7
Luxembourg	604	596	-7
Romania	598	595	-3
Hungary	593	590	-3
Lithuania	579	589	10
Kenya	587	582	-5
Bulgaria	580	581	1
Philippines	592	578	-14
Czech Republic	563	575	12
Malaysia	562	574	12
Latvia	569	571	2
Estonia	581	570	-11
Serbia	599	567	-32
Nigeria	560	564	4
Switzerland	575	563	-12
Argentina	556	562	6
Hong Kong (China)	545	561	16
Italy	535	548	13
Spain	540	545	5
France	551	541	-10
Ukraine	525	539	14
South Korea	529	537	8
Costa Rica	520	536	16
Cuba	521	535	14
Belarus	528	533	5
Russia	511	530	19
Ghana	523	529	6
Moldova	532	528	-4
Paraguay	520	526	6
Bolivia	524	525	1
Chile	516	524	8
Georgia	512	524	12
Albania	527	523	-4
Honduras	506	522	16
Uruguay	509	521	12
El Salvador	508	519	11
Peru	505	517	12
India	515	516	1
Dominican Republic	520	514	-6
Lebanon	536	513	-23
Uganda	—	512	New
Tunisia	510	511	1

	EF EPI 2021 Edition	EF EPI 2022 Edition	Score Change
Armenia	499	506	7
Brazil	497	505	8
Guatemala	493	505	12
Vietnam	486	502	16
Nicaragua	470	499	29
China	513	498	-15
Tanzania	485	496	11
Turkey	478	495	17
Nepal	492	494	2
Bangladesh	490	493	3
Venezuela	475	492	17
Ethiopia	491	490	-1
Iran	501	489	-12
Pakistan	491	488	-3
Sri Lanka	464	487	23
Mongolia	461	485	24
Qatar	467	484	17
Israel	—	483	New
Panama	475	482	7
Morocco	477	478	1
Colombia	465	477	12
Algeria	474	476	3
United Arab Emirates	480	476	-4
Japan	468	475	7
Indonesia	466	469	3
Ecuador	440	466	26
Syria	445	461	16
Kuwait	458	459	1
Egypt	455	454	-1
Mozambique	482	453	-29
Afghanistan	448	450	2
Mexico	436	447	10
Uzbekistan	447	446	-1
Jordan	440	443	3
Kyrgyzstan	418	442	24
Azerbaijan	451	440	-11
Myanmar	429	437	8
Cambodia	423	434	11
Sudan	421	426	5
Cameroon	428	425	-3
Thailand	419	423	4
Haiti	403	421	18
Kazakhstan	426	420	-6
Somalia	401	414	13
Oman	417	412	-5
Saudi Arabia	404	406	2
Iraq	399	404	5
Côte d'Ivoire	420	403	-17
Angola	428	402	-26
Tajikistan	405	397	-8
Rwanda	389	392	3
Libya	390	390	0
Yemen	360	370	10
Democratic Republic of the Congo	386	367	-19
Laos	—	364	New

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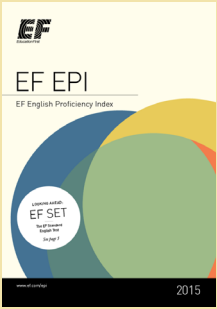
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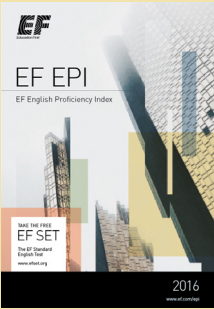
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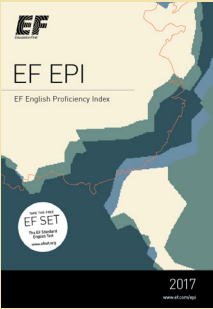
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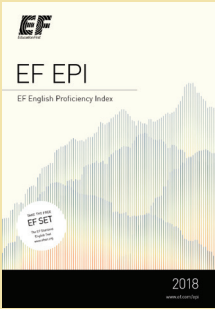
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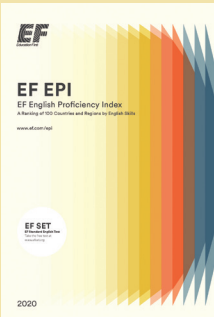
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