**International Youth Sustainable Development Index (YSDI) Report 2021**

YSDI Joint Project Group

December 2021

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**I. Foreword**

Young people are energetic and creative. They are key drivers for sustainable development. According to the United Nations, there are currently 1.2 billion young people aged between 15 and 24 in the world, and 87% of them live in developing countries.

Since 1985 when the United Nations celebrated the first International Year of Youth, young people have been widely recognized as a major force in promoting social development and progress, and have attracted the attention of relevant international organizations, governments, and even the global community. In recent years, relevant international organizations and national governments have attached greater importance to youth development and formulated a series of policies and plans to support youth development. In September 2018, the United Nations launched its youth strategy “Youth 2030”, which has become a blueprint of the development of young people around the world; Singapore has launched a Youth Action Plan to encourage its young people to work together to shape a better future for their country; Germany has formulated and revised from time to time its law to protect the interests of young people and, in the name of the Federal Government, issued its national youth strategy; and Indonesia has enacted a youth-related law to guarantee youth development.

China, the largest developing country in the world, has always regarded young people as the most powerful agent of social and economic development. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Party and central government have given substantial support to youth development. As part of its sustainable development strategy, in 2017, China formulated the first national plan for youth development in its history to prioritize youth development and launched a series of practical measures in 10 key areas of youth development. Up to date, China's youth development policy and promotion mechanism with Chinese characteristics have become rather mature and complete, and youth development in China has entered a new stage.

Conducting objective assessments based on a well-designed index system is important for promoting youth development. Currently, there are two main indexes for measuring and comparing youth development among countries and regions across levels of economic development: One is the Global Youth Development Index (YDI) developed by the Secretariat of the Commonwealth, and the other is the Youth Progress Index jointly released by the European Youth Forum and the Social Progress Imperative. Both indexes indicate that youth development is not balanced across countries and regions due to significant differences in history, culture, and resource endowments, while they also report many new findings and new trends. Using scientific and objective metrics and methods, this International Youth Sustainable Development Index (YSDI) Report looks into youth development in various countries and regions, particularly developing countries, and aims to present an overall picture of the current levels, characteristics, trends and problems of youth development through a multi-dimensional and multi-level assessment. Hopefully, it will motivate countries across the world to share experience concerning youth development, and help drive the common, sustainable and high-quality development of young people in all countries and regions.

This co-op project group comprises China Youth and Children Research Center, China International Youth Exchange Center, the Center for Youth Moral Education, Tsinghua University, and the Research Center for Contemporary China at Peking university. Combining interdisciplinary theoretical research and consideration of current international evaluation metrics, the joint project group has developed an international index of sustainable youth development with the hope of informing policies to boost sustainable youth development in all countries.

**II. Framework of Indicators and Data Availability**

**1. Framework of Indicators**

Borrowing from the metrics of the United Nations and other international organizations to measure youth development and considering the availability and comparability of data, the project group has focused on five YDI domains: Health and Well-being, Education, Employment and Opportunity, Family and Society and Civic Participation, which concern the young people around the world. Each domain has 3-4 indicators, so there are 17 indicators in total.

Table 1 Domains and Indicators of the YSDI Index

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Domains | Health & Well-being | Education  | Employment & Opportunity | Family & Society | Civic Participation |
| Indicators | Healthy weight percentage  | Expected years of schooling  | Labor force participation rate  | Youth marriage rate  | Engagement in state-administered mass organizations |
| Life expectancy at the age of 20  | Gross enrollment ratio, tertiary  | Youth unemployment rate | Fertility rate | Members of parliament under age 40  |
| Anxiety disorder prevalence of 15-39-year-olds  | Percentage of individuals using the Internet | Youth entrepreneurship rate | Total dependency ratio | Voter turnout in parliamentary elections |
| Youth drug abuse rate  | Numbeo Safety Index |

**2. Breakdown of Indicators and Data Sources**

**i. Health and Well-being**

**1) Healthy weight percentage.** Healthy weight percentage reflects the body shapes and size, nutrition, physical fitness, and the overall health conditions of young people in a country. This indicator measures three dimensions of Health: “Adolescent Overweight Rate", "Adolescent Obesity Rate" and "Adolescent Underweight Rate". Apparently, they are negative dimensions, but they have been converted into a positive indicator according to conventional medical statistical rules: “healthy weight percentage”. Data on this indicator are derived from the 2016 Body Mass Index (BMI) statistics of teenagers aged 10-19 in countries and regions calculated by the World Health Organization. By definition, the adolescent overweight rate is the percentage of people whose BMI in relation to their ages is 1 standard deviation above the median; the adolescent obesity ratio refers to the percentage of people whose BMI relative to their ages is 2 standard deviations above the median, and the adolescent underweight ratio is the proportion of people with BMI below 2 standard deviations of the median. Some data are missing, but they are interpolated by using relevant statistics for the same year.

**2) Life expectancy at the age of 20.** Life expectancy indicates the health dimension of a country or region and is included in many authoritative indexes such as UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI).This estimation is based on the *2019 Revision of World Population Prospects* by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The co-op YDI project group uses linear interpolation to estimate the life expectancy of each country at the age of 20 by sex in 2020, based on the abridged life tables of countries and regions (calculated for every 5 years of age). With the exception of some countries and regions whose life tables can be derived directly from the Death Rates-HMD, most life tables are calculated by combining the mortality data of 2019 with the extended regional model life tables by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

**3) Anxiety disorder prevalence of 15-39-year-olds.** The impact of mental health is more and more prominent and has received closer attention from many international organizations such as the World Health Organization. Data on this indicator are obtained from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD). Considering the availability and comparability of data, the project group focuses on the prevalence of anxiety disorder among young people aged 15-39 in countries in 2019.

**4) Youth drug abuse rate.** As drug and substance abuse among young people can be a serious threat to both their physical and mental health and leads to delinquency, it is closely monitored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization, as well as national and regional health and security authorities. Data on this indicator are obtained from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) and the project group picks the drug abuse rate of young people aged 15-39 in countries in 2019.

**ii. Education**

**5) Expected years of schooling.** It refers to the years of education that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child's life. In alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for education, this indicator reflects the overall education level of a country's population. Data on this indicator are derived from the Human Development Index (HDI), which offers abundant and reliable data of 143 countries and regions from 1990 to 2019.

**6) Gross enrollment in tertiary education.** According to UNESCO, "gross enrollment in higher education" refers to "the total number of students enrolled in higher education institutions as a percentage of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of tertiary education after the successful completion of education at the secondary level, reflecting the level of higher education in a country or region. Data on this indicator come from the World Bank, covering 107 countries and regions. Considering their completeness, the estimation is based on the data of 2018.

**7) Percentage of individuals using the Internet.** Access to the Internet is an important way for young people to acquire knowledge and receive equitable education. Based on the "Percentage of Individuals Using the Internet" from the database of International Telecommunication Union (ITU), this indicator measures the percentage of population over 5 years’ experience using the Internet nationwide. The estimation is based on the data of 2018 while Chinese data are interpolated using the "Percentage of Individuals Using the Internet" from *the Statistical Report on the Development of Internet in China* published by China Internet Network Information Center.

**iii. Employment and Opportunity**

**8) Labor force participation rate.** It refers to the ratio of the economically active population (including the employed and the unemployed) to the working-age population, reflecting the preference of the labor force for work or leisure over a certain period of time. Affected by social factors such as economic development and industrial structure, as well as by the education level, age, gender, wage level and employment willingness of the labor force, this indicator showcases the level of labor force development in a country or region. This indicator is based on data published by the World Bank and the International Labour Organization in 2019.

**9) Youth unemployment rate.** As an important YDI, this indicator measures how sufficiently young people are employed, which is a common concern of all countries and regions. It is based on the ratio of unemployed youth aged 15-24 to the total population of a country or region measured by the International Labour Organization in 2019, which reflects the level of youth employment, as well as the career development of young people in various countries.

**10) Youth entrepreneurship rate**. Young people boast strong potential for innovation and entrepreneurship. Countries have gradually focused on providing policy incentives, resources guarantee, and knowledge and technology support for young people’s entrepreneurship projects. This indicator is based on the age-specific statistics ofthe Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report, focusing on young entrepreneurs aged 25-34 as a percentage of the population aged 18-64 in each country and region in the 2020 survey. The missing data are interpolated using statistics of the nearest year of the country between 2015 and 2019, or the median of the same income group in the same region as defined by the World Bank.

**iv. Family and Society**

**11) Youth marriage rate.** A happy marriage plays an important role in the development of young people. Data on this indicator come from *the World Marriage Data 2019* published by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, covering the marriage status of the population by age and sex in 232 countries or regions. Based on the population census data of each country and region, this co-op project focuses on the marriage rate of people aged 15-34.

**12) Fertility rate.** It measures the fertility rate of women during their lifetime, considered as an important indicator of youth development and a core factor of population growth. Data on this indicator come from the World Development Indicators calculated by the World Bank. This collection of development indicators is based on the census data including the number of births registered in 266 countries and regions from 1960 to 2019, which are highly reliable. This study focuses on the fertility rate of 2019.

**13) Total dependency ratio.** This ratio reflects the burden on young families and the society, and affects the level of youth development. It measures the number of dependents aged from 0 to 14 and over 65 per 100 working age people aged 15-64, which reflects the change in the number of non-working age people as a percentage of the working age population. Data on this indicator come from the World Development Indicators calculated by the World Bank covering 241 countries and regions from 1964 to 2020. Data of 2019 are used to calculate the ratio.

**14) Social security assessment.** Social security plays an important role in the healthy growth and high-quality development of young people. This indicator is based on the Safety Index published by Numbeo, which estimates the overall level of social security in 137 countries and regions from 2009 to 2021. The security index of each country and region is derived from the Crime Index in 2019, which is based primarily on the poll of website visitors.

**v. Civic Participation**

**15) Organizational participation.** Participation in public organizations reflects the level of civil participation of youth. It refers to the ratio of people who are regularly active in public organizations, such as women's associations, workers' unions, or youth associations. Data on this indicator come from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project. Consisting of more than 50 social scientists, this co-op project develops a dataset covering over 210 countries and regions from 1789 to 2019 according to official releases and makes assessments based on data of 2019.

**16) Percentage of 15-39-years-olds in elected representatives.** Getting elected as a public representative is an important indicator of political participation. This indicator measures the ratio of representatives or parliamentarians aged below 40 in the member countries of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Founded in 1889, the IPU is an international organization of parliaments of various countries and regions. Currently, it has 179 members and 13 associate members. Its public database contains data of the structure, composition, work, and activities of more than 600 national and regional parliaments. This study uses data of 2019.

**17) Voting rates of elected representatives**. Voting as a public representative is another important indicator of political participation. Data on this indicator come from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, whose database registers the voting rates of elected representatives in 187 countries and regions from 1945 to date. The 2019 voting rates of elected representatives are assessed, while the missing data are interpolated using the group median.

**III. Methodology and Overall Results**

**1. Methodology**

**1) Imputation.** Considering data representativeness, availability and comparability, this study picks 85 countries for YDI calculations. For some of these countries, however, data are not available on one or two raw data, so linear interpolation is used to fill gaps in the first instance by growth rates since 2015. If a country lacks continuous data on any indicator for 2015-2018, data of the nearest year are used; if a country misses past data on any indicator, grouping median interpolation is used. For this purpose, all countries are divided into 17 groups according to the World Bank's regional and income level grouping standards.

**2) Non-dimensionalization.** For index values, the original data are non-dimensionalized using the range method, so that the values can be compared. The selection of functions for non-dimensionalization is made according to the standards of monotonicity, definite interval, direct result, clear meaning, and being as far as possible free from the influence of the positive or negative index form. After data processing, all the index values fall into the range of 1-100.

**3) Weighting indicators and domains.** Considering the need to suppress subjective factors so as to improve the validity of data, the project group uses the objective weighting method to fit the data. After comprehensive analysis and comparing mainstream methods, the project group decides to use the CRITIC method for calculating the weighting.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**2. Overall Results**

According to the results of calculation by the CRITIC method, the project group ranks the 85 countries. Overall, the results are objective and balanced, and reflect the levels of youth development in various countries. In terms of geographical distribution, the top 10 countries include 4 Asian countries (Singapore, Israel, Bahrain, and Kuwait), 5 European countries (Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, and Austria) and one country from Oceania (Australia); in terms of development level, the top 10 countries include 8 developed countries (Singapore, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Australia, Israel, and Austria) and two developing countries (Bahrain and Kuwait).

Table 2 International Youth Sustainable Development Index Ranking

| Ranking | Country | Score (Total score: 100) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Singapore | 70.5 |
| 2 | Norway | 65.8 |
| 3 | Belgium | 65.6 |
| 4 | Denmark | 63.2 |
| 5 | Iceland | 61.7 |
| 6 | Australia | 61.3 |
| 7 | Israel | 61.2 |
| 8 | Bahrain | 60.7 |
| 9 | Kuwait | 60.6 |
| 10 | Austria | 60.3 |
| 11 | Sweden | 59.8 |
| 12 | South Korea | 59.7 |
| 13 | Luxembourg | 59.2 |
| 14 | Kazakhstan | 58.9 |
| 15 | Japan | 58.9 |
| 16 | Latvia | 58.8 |
| 17 | Estonia | 58.7 |
| 18 | Turkey | 58.6 |
| 19 | The Netherlands | 58.3 |
| 20 | Finland | 58.1 |
| 21 | New Zealand | 58.1 |
| 22 | Cyprus | 57.7 |
| 23 | China | 57.4 |
| 24 | Saudi Arabia | 57.0 |
| 25 | Malta | 56.9 |
| 26 | Germany | 56.6 |
| 27 | Greece | 56.5 |
| 28 | Slovak Republic | 55.9 |
| 29 | Malaysia | 55.8 |
| 30 | Slovenia | 55.5 |
| 31 | Argentina | 55.1 |
| 32 | Canada | 54.8 |
| 33 | Czech Republic | 54.5 |
| 34 | Trinidad and Tobago | 53.6 |
| 35 | USA | 53.4 |
| 36 | Croatia | 53.4 |
| 37 | Chile | 53.3 |
| 38 | Spain | 53.3 |
| 39 | Ireland | 52.9 |
| 40 | Thailand | 52.9 |
| 41 | Peru | 52.7 |
| 42 | Portugal | 52.6 |
| 43 | Hungary | 52.4 |
| 44 | Poland | 52.3 |
| 45 | UK | 52.3 |
| 46 | Philippines | 52.2 |
| 47 | Azerbaijan | 52.2 |
| 48 | Panama | 51.6 |
| 49 | Switzerland | 51.5 |
| 50 | Russian Federation | 51.2 |
| 51 | Indonesia | 51.0 |
| 52 | Uruguay | 50.8 |
| 53 | Lithuania | 50.5 |
| 54 | Uzbekistan | 50.3 |
| 55 | Mongolia | 50.2 |
| 56 | Bulgaria | 50.0 |
| 57 | Italy | 49.2 |
| 58 | Paraguay | 48.9 |
| 59 | Mexico | 47.8 |
| 60 | Dominican Republic | 47.5 |
| 61 | Brazil | 47.2 |
| 62 | Colombia | 47.0 |
| 63 | Tunisia | 46.9 |
| 64 | Nicaragua | 46.3 |
| 65 | France | 44.8 |
| 66 | Morocco | 44.7 |
| 67 | Romania | 44.6 |
| 68 | Ghana | 44.5 |
| 69 | Bosnia and Herzegovina | 44.3 |
| 70 | Nepal | 43.5 |
| 71 | Kenya | 43.3 |
| 72 | South Africa | 43.2 |
| 73 | Benin | 43.0 |
| 74 | Iraq | 42.6 |
| 75 | El Salvador | 41.1 |
| 76 | Zimbabwe | 40.5 |
| 77 | Jamaica | 40.0 |
| 78 | Mozambique | 38.6 |
| 79 | Namibia | 37.4 |
| 80 | Niger | 37.2 |
| 81 | Bangladesh | 36.9 |
| 82 | Chad | 36.6 |
| 83 | Honduras | 36.5 |
| 84 | India | 35.9 |
| 85 | Nigeria | 33.9 |

**1) Comparison with GDP per capita**

Youth development is closely related to the level of economic development, while GDP per capita is a key indicator of economic development. The project group has compared YDI with GDP per capita. Overall, the level of youth development is basically on a par with the level of economic development. More exactly, of all the 85 countries, youth development is ahead of economic development in 20 countries, the two levels are close in 46, and youth development lags behind economic development in 19; of the top 10 countries, youth development is ahead of economic development in 3, and the two levels are close in 7. It is interesting to find that among 34 developed countries as recognized by IMF, youth development goes ahead of economic development in only 4, the two levels are close in 19, but youth development lags behind economic development in 11; on the other hand, among 51 developing countries, youth development is more advanced than economic development in 16, both levels are close in 27, and youth development lags behind economic development in 8. Obviously, although youth development is closely linked to economic development, they are not strictly or fully synchronized. Youth development is comprehensive and systematic, while economic development is mono-dimensional, so it cannot directly determine the level of youth development. Multi-sided synergy is needed to promote youth development.

Table 3 Comparison between Youth Sustainable Development Index and GDP per Capita

| Country | YSDI Ranking | Ranking by GDP per Capita | YDI relative to Economic Development |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Singapore | 1 | 6 | On par |
| Norway | 2 | 4 | On par |
| Belgium | 3 | 15 | Ahead |
| Denmark | 4 | 8 | On par |
| Iceland | 5 | 5 | On par |
| Australia | 6 | 9 | On par |
| Israel | 7 | 17 | On par |
| Bahrain | 8 | 31 | Ahead |
| Kuwait | 9 | 23 | Ahead |
| Austria | 10 | 12 | On par |
| Sweden | 11 | 11 | On par |
| South Korea | 12 | 24 | Ahead |
| Luxembourg | 13 | 1 | Behind |
| Kazakhstan | 14 | 52 | Ahead |
| Japan | 15 | 21 | On par |
| Latvia | 16 | 37 | Ahead |
| Estonia | 17 | 29 | Ahead |
| Turkey | 18 | 53 | Ahead |
| The Netherlands | 19 | 10 | On par |
| Finland | 20 | 13 | On par |
| New Zealand | 21 | 19 | On par |
| Cyprus | 22 | 27 | On par |
| China | 23 | 48 | Ahead |
| Saudi Arabia | 24 | 33 | On par |
| Malta | 25 | 25 | On par |
| Germany | 26 | 14 | Behind |
| Greece | 27 | 36 | On par |
| Slovak Republic | 28 | 35 | On par |
| Malaysia | 29 | 47 | Ahead |
| Slovenia | 30 | 28 | On par |
| Argentina | 31 | 50 | Ahead |
| Canada | 32 | 16 | Behind |
| Czech Republic | 33 | 30 | On par |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 34 | 40 | On par |
| USA | 35 | 7 | Behind |
| Croatia | 36 | 43 | On par |
| Chile | 37 | 44 | On par |
| Spain | 38 | 26 | Behind |
| Ireland | 39 | 3 | Behind |
| Thailand | 40 | 56 | Ahead |
| Peru | 41 | 57 | Ahead |
| Portugal | 42 | 32 | On par |
| Hungary | 43 | 39 | On par |
| Poland | 44 | 42 | On par |
| UK | 45 | 18 | Behind |
| Philippines | 46 | 69 | Ahead |
| Azerbaijan | 47 | 65 | Ahead |
| Panama | 48 | 41 | On par |
| Switzerland | 49 | 2 | Behind |
| Russian Federation | 50 | 46 | On par |
| Indonesia | 51 | 68 | Ahead |
| Uruguay | 52 | 38 | Behind |
| Lithuania | 53 | 34 | Behind |
| Uzbekistan | 54 | 79 | Ahead |
| Mongolia | 55 | 66 | Ahead |
| Bulgaria | 56 | 51 | On par |
| Italy | 57 | 22 | Behind |
| Paraguay | 58 | 62 | On par |
| Mexico | 59 | 49 | On par |
| Dominican Republic | 60 | 55 | On par |
| Brazil | 61 | 54 | On par |
| Colombia | 62 | 58 | On par |
| Tunisia | 63 | 70 | On par |
| Nicaragua | 64 | 76 | Ahead |
| France | 65 | 20 | Behind |
| Morocco | 66 | 71 | On par |
| Romania | 67 | 45 | Behind |
| Ghana | 68 | 74 | On par |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 69 | 59 | On par |
| Nepal | 70 | 81 | Ahead |
| Kenya | 71 | 78 | On par |
| South Africa | 72 | 60 | Behind |
| Benin | 73 | 80 | On par |
| Iraq | 74 | 61 | Behind |
| El Salvador | 75 | 67 | On par |
| Zimbabwe | 76 | 82 | On par |
| Jamaica | 77 | 63 | Behind |
| Mozambique | 78 | 85 | On par |
| Namibia | 79 | 64 | Behind |
| Niger | 80 | 84 | On par |
| Bangladesh | 81 | 77 | On par |
| Chad | 82 | 83 | On par |
| Honduras | 83 | 72 | Behind |
| India | 84 | 75 | On par |
| Nigeria | 85 | 73 | Behind |

Notes:

1. In this table, being "Ahead" means the YSDI Ranking of a country is 10 or more places higher than its ranking by GDP per capita; "On par" means the difference is less than 10 places; and lagging "Behind" indicates that its YSDI Ranking is more than 10 or more places lower than its ranking by GDP per capita.

2. In this table, “Ranking by GDP per Capita” refers to the relative positions of the 85 countries measured.

**2) Comparison with Human Development Index (HDI)**

The Human Development Index (HDI), published regularly, is a tool developed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to measure countries' levels of social and economic development and thereby guide the development of national development strategies. The project team has compared YDI with HDI. Overall, youth development basically reflects human development. More exactly, among all the 85 countries, youth development is ahead of overall human development in 16 countries, both levels are close in 54, and youth development falls behind human development in 15; among the top 10 countries, youth development goes ahead of human development in 3 and both levels are close in 7. Among the 34 developed countries recognized by IMF, youth development is ahead of overall human development in only 2 countries, both levels are close in 21, and youth development falls behind overall human development in 11; on the other hand, among the 51 developing countries, youth development is ahead of human development in 14 countries, both levels are close in 33, and youth development lags behind human development in only 4 countries.

Table 4 Comparison between Youth Development Index and Human Development Index

| Country | YSDI Ranking | HDIRanking | YDI relative to HDI |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Singapore | 1 | 10 | On par |
| Norway | 2 | 1 | On par |
| Belgium | 3 | 13 | On par |
| Denmark | 4 | 9 | On par |
| Iceland | 5 | 4 | On par |
| Australia | 6 | 7 | On par |
| Israel | 7 | 18 | Ahead |
| Bahrain | 8 | 38 | Ahead |
| Kuwait | 9 | 50 | Ahead |
| Austria | 10 | 17 | On par |
| Sweden | 11 | 6 | On par |
| South Korea | 12 | 21 | On par |
| Luxembourg | 13 | 21 | On par |
| Kazakhstan | 14 | 43 | Ahead |
| Japan | 15 | 18 | On par |
| Latvia | 16 | 33 | Ahead |
| Estonia | 17 | 27 | On par |
| Turkey | 18 | 45 | Ahead |
| The Netherlands | 19 | 7 | Behind |
| Finland | 20 | 10 | On par |
| New Zealand | 21 | 13 | On par |
| Cyprus | 22 | 30 | On par |
| China | 23 | 58 | Ahead |
| Saudi Arabia | 24 | 36 | Ahead |
| Malta | 25 | 26 | On par |
| Germany | 26 | 5 | Behind |
| Greece | 27 | 29 | On par |
| Slovak Republic | 28 | 35 | On par |
| Malaysia | 29 | 49 | Ahead |
| Slovenia | 30 | 20 | On par |
| Argentina | 31 | 41 | On par |
| Canada | 32 | 15 | Behind |
| Czech Republic | 33 | 25 | On par |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 34 | 51 | Ahead |
| USA | 35 | 16 | Behind |
| Croatia | 36 | 39 | On par |
| Chile | 37 | 39 | On par |
| Spain | 38 | 23 | Behind |
| Ireland | 39 | 2 | Behind |
| Thailand | 40 | 54 | Ahead |
| Peru | 41 | 54 | Ahead |
| Portugal | 42 | 34 | On par |
| Hungary | 43 | 36 | On par |
| Poland | 44 | 32 | Behind |
| UK | 45 | 12 | Behind |
| Philippines | 46 | 66 | Ahead |
| Azerbaijan | 47 | 59 | Ahead |
| Panama | 48 | 48 | On par |
| Switzerland | 49 | 2 | Behind |
| Russian Federation | 50 | 44 | On par |
| Indonesia | 51 | 66 | Ahead |
| Uruguay | 52 | 46 | On par |
| Lithuania | 53 | 31 | Behind |
| Uzbekistan | 54 | 65 | Ahead |
| Mongolia | 55 | 62 | On par |
| Bulgaria | 56 | 47 | On par |
| Italy | 57 | 27 | Behind |
| Paraguay | 58 | 64 | On par |
| Mexico | 59 | 53 | On par |
| Dominican Republic | 60 | 59 | On par |
| Brazil | 61 | 57 | On par |
| Colombia | 62 | 56 | On par |
| Tunisia | 63 | 61 | On par |
| Nicaragua | 64 | 72 | On par |
| France | 65 | 24 | Behind |
| Morocco | 66 | 69 | On par |
| Romania | 67 | 42 | Behind |
| Ghana | 68 | 77 | On par |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 69 | 52 | Behind |
| Nepal | 70 | 78 | On par |
| Kenya | 71 | 79 | On par |
| South Africa | 72 | 68 | On par |
| Benin | 73 | 81 | On par |
| Iraq | 74 | 70 | On par |
| El Salvador | 75 | 71 | On par |
| Zimbabwe | 76 | 80 | On par |
| Jamaica | 77 | 63 | Behind |
| Mozambique | 78 | 83 | On par |
| Namibia | 79 | 73 | On par |
| Niger | 80 | 85 | On par |
| Bangladesh | 81 | 76 | On par |
| Chad | 82 | 84 | On par |
| Honduras | 83 | 75 | On par |
| India | 84 | 74 | On par |
| Nigeria | 85 | 82 | On par |

Notes:

1. In this table, being "Ahead" means the YSDI Ranking of a country is 10 or more places higher than its HDI ranking; "On par" means the difference is less than 10 places; and lagging "Behind" indicates that its YSDI Ranking is 10 or more places lower than its HDI ranking.

2. HDI encompasses the rankings and scores of 189 countries and regions. Among them, this co-op project group has selected and ranked 85 countries.

**IV. Rankings and Scores by Domain**

**1. Health and Well-being**

The well-being of youth is critical to a country or region, while physical and mental health are important prerequisites for young people to grow and live happily. In the Health and Well-being domain, the project team measures four indicators: healthy weight percentage, life expectancy at the age of 20, anxiety disorder prevalence of 15-39-year-olds, and youth drug abuse rate. Country rankings and scores in this domain are as follows:

Table 5 Country Rankings and Scores in the Health and Well-being Domain

| Country | Ranking | Score | Domain ranking relative to overall YSDI Ranking |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Japan | 1 | 96.1 | Ahead |
| Singapore | 2 | 88.5 | On par |
| South Korea | 3 | 83.3 | On par |
| Slovenia | 4 | 80.1 | Ahead |
| Sweden | 5 | 78.7 | On par |
| Israel | 6 | 77.3 | On par |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 7 | 77.2 | Ahead |
| Finland | 8 | 77.1 | Ahead |
| Poland | 9 | 76.6 | Ahead |
| Panama | 10 | 76.0 | Ahead |
| Azerbaijan | 11 | 75.9 | Ahead |
| China | 12 | 75.7 | Ahead |
| Uzbekistan | 13 | 75.6 | Ahead |
| Slovak Republic | 14 | 75.5 | Ahead |
| Belgium | 15 | 74.5 | Behind |
| Iceland | 16 | 74.5 | Behind |
| Czech Republic | 17 | 74.4 | Ahead |
| Romania | 18 | 74.3 | Ahead |
| Bangladesh | 19 | 74.3 | Ahead |
| Croatia | 20 | 73.6 | Ahead |
| Denmark | 21 | 73.5 | Behind |
| Kazakhstan | 22 | 73.2 | On par |
| Luxembourg | 23 | 73.1 | On Par |
| Estonia | 24 | 72.7 | On par |
| Switzerland | 25 | 72.3 | Ahead |
| Thailand | 26 | 72.1 | Ahead |
| Spain | 27 | 71.8 | Ahead |
| Italy | 28 | 71.4 | Ahead |
| Nepal | 29 | 71.4 | Ahead |
| Mongolia | 30 | 70.7 | Ahead |

Note: In this table, being "Ahead" means a country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places higher than its overall YSDI Ranking; "On par" means the difference is less than 10 places; "behind" indicates that the country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places lower than the country's overall YSDI Ranking.

As the table shows, among the top 10 countries in the Health and Well-being domain, there are four Asian countries (Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Israel), and three developing countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland, and Panama), which is similar to the overall YSDI Ranking. Meanwhile, the ranking of 20 out of the 30 highest ranking countries in this domain goes ahead of their YSDI Ranking, and despite the comparatively low development level of these countries, their young people are healthy and have the potential to drive future development. It should be noted that some developed countries including the United States score rather low in the Health and Well-being domain. This is mainly because their youth drug abuse rate and healthy weight percentage are significantly lower than other countries, which indicates that their youth drug abuse and obesity issues pose a big threat to the health of their young people and would hamper their future development.

**2. Education**

It is well understood that knowledge is power. The level of education is a key indicator of youth development. In the Education domain, the project team measures three indicators: expected years of schooling, ratio of gross enrollment in tertiary education, and percentage of individuals using the Internet. Country rankings and scores in this domain are as follows:

Table 6 Country Rankings and Scores in the Education Domain

| Country | Ranking | Score | Domain ranking relative to overall YSDI Ranking |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Australia | 1 | 86.4 | On par |
| Greece | 2 | 81.3 | Ahead |
| Denmark | 3 | 79.3 | On par |
| Finland | 4 | 78.5 | Ahead |
| Iceland | 5 | 78.4 | On par |
| South Korea | 6 | 78.4 | On par |
| Norway | 7 | 78.1 | On par |
| The Netherlands | 8 | 77.9 | Ahead |
| New Zealand | 9 | 77.3 | Ahead |
| Sweden | 10 | 76.4 | On par |
| Belgium | 11 | 76.3 | On par |
| Spain | 12 | 74.6 | Ahead |
| Chile | 13 | 73.8 | Ahead |
| Japan | 14 | 73.4 | On par |
| Singapore | 15 | 73.1 | Behind |
| USA | 16 | 72.9 | Ahead |
| Ireland | 17 | 72.3 | Ahead |
| Argentina | 18 | 71.9 | Ahead |
| Austria | 19 | 71.8 | On par |
| Latvia | 20 | 71.7 | On par |
| Turkey | 21 | 71.6 | On par |
| Canada | 22 | 71.0 | On par |
| Saudi Arabia | 23 | 69.9 | On par |
| UK | 24 | 69.4 | Ahead |
| Germany | 25 | 69.1 | On par |
| Estonia | 26 | 68.5 | On par |
| Bahrain | 27 | 68.4 | Behind |
| Slovenia | 28 | 68.4 | On par |
| Cyprus | 29 | 67.7 | On par |
| Switzerland | 30 | 67.3 | Ahead |

Note: In this table, being "Ahead" means a country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places higher than its overall YSDI Ranking; "On par" means the difference is less than 10 places; "behind" indicates that the country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places lower than the country's overall YSDI Ranking.

In 28 out of the 30 top ranking countries, education development is either ahead of or close to their overall YSDI Rankings. In terms of regional distribution, 9 out of the 10 highest ranking countries are European and Oceanian countries, while the remaining one is an Asian country (South Korea). Overall, Asian countries rank relatively low. This indicates that Asian countries must invest more resources in youth development in the Education domain, where more progress is needed. In addition, all the 10 top ranking countries are developed countries. This means developed countries still hold a huge advantage over developing countries in terms of educational resources and talent development. Such a gap demands close attention from developing countries, since the level of education of young people is directly related to the country's potential for future development.

**3. Employment and Opportunity**

Employment is of utmost importance to the well-being of all people across the world, so governments are unanimously committed to promoting youth employment. In the Employment and Opportunity domain, the project team measures three indicators: Labor force participation rate, youth unemployment rate, and youth entrepreneurship rate. Country rankings and scores in this domain are as follows:

Table 7 Country Rankings and Scores in the Employment and Opportunity Domain

| Country | Ranking | Score | Domain ranking relative to overall YSDI Ranking |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Thailand | 1 | 75.2 | Ahead |
| Kuwait | 2 | 73.7 | On par |
| Peru | 3 | 71.6 | Ahead |
| Nepal | 4 | 70.9 | Ahead |
| Chile | 5 | 70.6 | Ahead |
| Slovak Republic | 6 | 69.2 | Ahead |
| Niger | 7 | 68.8 | Ahead |
| Kazakhstan | 8 | 67.4 | On par |
| Estonia | 9 | 66.8 | On par |
| Canada | 10 | 66.5 | Ahead |
| Latvia | 11 | 65.2 | On par |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 12 | 63.4 | Ahead |
| Chad | 13 | 62.9 | Ahead |
| USA | 14 | 62.4 | Ahead |
| Benin | 15 | 62.3 | Ahead |
| Kenya | 16 | 61.4 | Ahead |
| Panama | 17 | 61.1 | Ahead |
| Israel | 18 | 61.0 | Behind |
| Mozambique | 19 | 60.9 | Ahead |
| Nicaragua | 20 | 60.7 | Ahead |
| South Korea | 21 | 60.6 | On par |
| Azerbaijan | 22 | 59.9 | Ahead |
| Philippines | 23 | 59.7 | Ahead |
| China | 24 | 59.4 | On par |
| Singapore | 25 | 59.4 | Behind |
| The Netherlands | 26 | 59.1 | On par |
| Zimbabwe | 27 | 59.1 | Ahead |
| Iceland | 28 | 59.0 | Behind |
| Switzerland | 29 | 58.3 | Ahead |
| Germany | 30 | 57.9 | On par |

Note: In this table, being "Ahead" means a country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places higher than its overall YSDI Ranking; "On par" means the difference is less than 10 places; "behind" indicates that the country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places lower than the country's overall YSDI Ranking.

In this domain, the ranking of 27 out of the 30 highest ranking countries is either ahead or close to their overall YSDI Ranking. Among the top 10 countries, 4 are from Asia, 2 from Europe, 2 from South America, 1 from North America, and 1 from Africa. Meanwhile, only 3 of the 10 highest ranking countries are developed countries. Their distribution is relatively balanced across regions and development levels, which shows that developing economies have made substantial efforts to promote employment and create opportunities for young people. As a result, they have gone ahead of some developed economies and have laid a solid foundation for overall youth development.

**4. Family and Society**

A happy marriage and a happy family in a safe society are the most important expectations of young people in all countries after they leave school. In the Family and Society domain, the project team measures four indicators: youth marriage rate, fertility rate, total dependency ratio, and social security assessment. Country rankings and scores in this domain are as follows:

Table 8 Country Rankings and Scores in the Family and Society Domain

| Country | Ranking | Score | Domain ranking relative to overall YSDI Ranking |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Nepal | 1 | 57.1 | Ahead |
| Bahrain | 2 | 57.1 | On par |
| Chad | 3 | 56.3 | Ahead |
| Niger | 4 | 55.6 | Ahead |
| Saudi Arabia | 5 | 55.0 | Ahead |
| Benin | 6 | 54.6 | Ahead |
| India | 7 | 53.5 | Ahead |
| Singapore | 8 | 52.1 | On par |
| Kuwait | 9 | 52.1 | On par |
| Romania | 10 | 51.8 | Ahead |
| Nicaragua | 11 | 51.4 | Ahead |
| Poland | 12 | 51.4 | Ahead |
| Croatia | 13 | 51.0 | Ahead |
| Iceland | 14 | 50.8 | On par |
| Bangladesh | 15 | 50.7 | Ahead |
| Austria | 16 | 50.6 | On par |
| Indonesia | 17 | 50.4 | Ahead |
| Cyprus | 18 | 49.8 | On par |
| Philippines | 19 | 49.8 | Ahead |
| Israel | 20 | 49.5 | Behind |
| Chile | 21 | 49.1 | Ahead |
| South Korea | 22 | 48.8 | On par |
| Ghana | 23 | 48.7 | Ahead |
| Czech Republic | 24 | 48.6 | On par |
| Portugal | 25 | 48.3 | Ahead |
| China | 26 | 47.9 | On par |
| Japan | 27 | 47.8 | Behind |
| Malaysia | 28 | 47.3 | On par |
| Belgium | 29 | 46.9 | Behind |
| Switzerland | 30 | 46.7 | Ahead |

Note: In this table, being "Ahead" means a country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places higher than its overall YSDI Ranking; "On par" means the difference is less than 10 places; "behind" indicates that the country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places lower than the country's overall YSDI Ranking.

In this domain, the positions of 27 of the 30 highest ranking countries are either ahead of or close to their overall YSDI Ranking. It should be noted that some countries such as Chad, India, Benin, and Niger come up high on the list, far ahead of their overall YSDI Ranking, and there's only one European country (Romania) and one developed economy, (Singapore) among the top 10 countries. This indicates that levels of family and marital happiness and societal safety are not necessarily related to geographical location or socio-economic development. If a country neglects its young people's marriage, family, and societal safety needs while its economy makes strides, overall youth development will be deterred.

**5. Civic Participation**

Public affairs are of common interest to young people across countries. Civic participation is an indispensable dimension of youth development. In the Civic Participation domain, the project team measures three indicators: rate of organizational participation, percentage of 15-39-year-olds in elected representatives, and voting rate of elected representatives. Country rankings and scores in this domain are as follows:

Table 9 Country Rankings and Scores in the Civic Participation Domain

| Country | Ranking | Score | Domain ranking relative to overall YSDI Ranking |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Singapore | 1 | 73.2 | On par |
| Norway | 2 | 69.0 | On par |
| South Africa | 3 | 67.9 | Ahead |
| Belgium | 4 | 66.5 | On par |
| Luxembourg | 5 | 65.7 | On par |
| Indonesia | 6 | 64.5 | Ahead |
| Uzbekistan | 7 | 64.1 | Ahead |
| Turkey | 8 | 59.0 | On par |
| China | 9 | 58.2 | Ahead |
| Kenya | 10 | 58.1 | Ahead |
| Malaysia | 11 | 56.5 | Ahead |
| Israel | 12 | 53.8 | On par |
| Bahrain | 13 | 52.8 | On par |
| Kazakhstan | 14 | 52.6 | On par |
| Denmark | 15 | 52.4 | Behind |
| Nicaragua | 16 | 51.2 | Ahead |
| Kuwait | 17 | 50.6 | On par |
| Namibia | 18 | 50.5 | Ahead |
| Tunisia | 19 | 50.2 | Ahead |
| Philippines | 20 | 50.1 | Ahead |
| Benin | 21 | 49.9 | Ahead |
| Malta | 22 | 49.5 | On par |
| Sweden | 23 | 49.3 | Behind |
| Chad | 24 | 48.8 | Ahead |
| Austria | 25 | 48.8 | Behind |
| Ghana | 26 | 48.2 | Ahead |
| Mongolia | 27 | 47.1 | Ahead |
| Saudi Arabia | 28 | 46.6 | On par |
| Zimbabwe | 29 | 46.5 | Ahead |
| Argentina | 30 | 46.3 | On par |

Note: In this table, being "Ahead" means a country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places higher than its overall YSDI Ranking; "On par" means the difference is less than 10 places; "behind" indicates that the country's ranking in this domain is 10 or more places lower than the country's overall YSDI Ranking.

In this domain, in 27 out of the 30 highest ranking countries, the civic participation of young people is either ahead of or close to their overall YSDI Ranking. Among the 10 highest ranking countries, 4 are from Asia, 4 are from Europe, and 2 are from Africa. Meanwhile, only 3 of the top 10 countries are developed economies. Their distribution is relatively balanced across regions and development levels, indicating that all countries around the world have actively advocated young people's civic participation and have achieved a considerable progress in this regard. It should be noted that China ranks No. 9 in this domain, higher than many other developed economies. This testifies to the notable progress China has made in fostering social inclusion and promoting the civic participation of its young people.

**V. Conclusion**

This YSDI report is the outcome of an assessment project co-organized by China Youth and Children Research Center, China International Youth Exchange Center, Center for Youth Moral Education, Tsinghua University, and the Research Center for Contemporary China at Peking university. Launched in February 2021, the joint project has completed theoretical studies, indicator design, data collection and analysis, and verification, coming to a fruitful end after about 10 months.

Mankind has entered a new era of development characterized by interconnectivity, which means the interests of all countries are closely linked and they share a common future. The road towards peace and common prosperity is far from smooth. The ambitious initiative to build a community with a shared future for mankind requires shared and unremitting efforts of all countries and people all over the world. Young people are the most sensitive "barometer" of the future of a country and the entire world. They are expected to play bigger roles and fulfil greater responsibilities.

The YSDI published in this report aims to offer a common ground for promoting global sustainable youth development while respecting differences, by measuring the achievements of young people in various countries in an open and inclusive way. This index is also a means to promote lasting peace, common prosperity, the harmonious coexistence and mutual learning of civilizations, and sustainable development.

Chinese young people are ready to work with their peers all around the world to build a community with a shared future for mankind and make the world a better place for all.

1. The CRITIC method is based on two concepts. One is contrast intensity, which indicates the difference of the values in the same indicator. It is expressed as "standard deviation". The other is contradictions between indicators, which are measured based on the correlation between the indicators. The objective weight of each indicator is determined by measuring the contrast intensity and contradictions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)