COVERING 93% OF WORLD POPULATION AND MORE THAN 98% OF THE WORLD GDP

PROPERTY RIGHTS ALLIANCE

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INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY RIGHTS INDEX 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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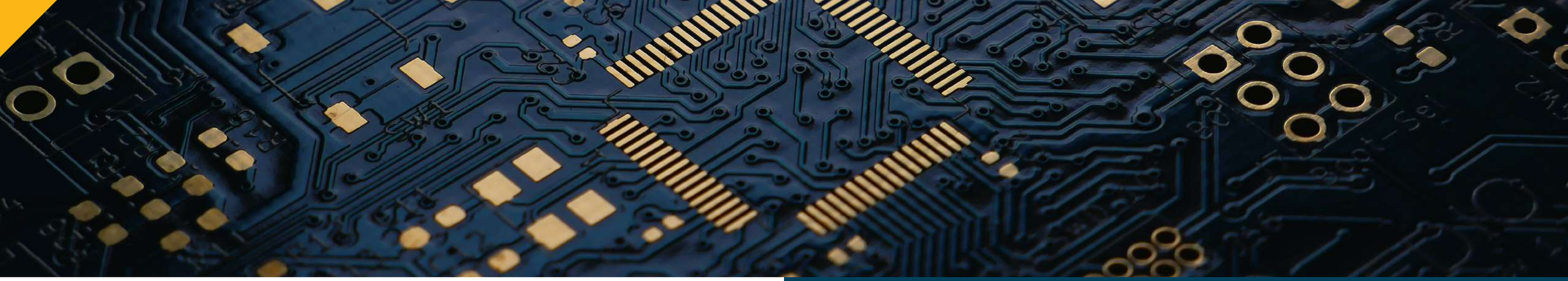
For more information, or to become a partner organization, please contact ***Lorenzo Montanari****, Executive Director of The Property Rights Alliance at* ***lmontanari@propertyrightsalliance.org***



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Property rights are the cornerstone of free and prosperous societies. As a key institution, the protection and clear definition of property rights create the legal and moral framework necessary for voluntary exchange, entrepreneurial activity, and peaceful social cooperation. Thinkers from various traditions converge on the view that secure property rights are essential, not only in fostering economic development but also in promoting innovation and technological advancement, allowing for human flourishing. Property rights are human rights and protect individual liberty.

Given the relevance previously highlighted, the Property Rights Alliance (PRA) launched the **International Property Rights Index** (IPRI) in 2007 to systematically monitor and benchmark the state of property rights across the globe. Adopting an institutional perspective, the IPRI underscores property rights as a foundational institution essential to the functioning of a free society. The index assesses the strength of institutions and the effectiveness of governments in safeguarding both physical and intellectual property rights. The IPRI is organized into three core components.

Figure 1. IPRI Structure. *The IPRI is built up of 11 factors, gathered under three components: Legal and Political Environment (LP), Physical Property Rights (PPR), and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), with a scale of [0 – 10]. The LP component provides information about the strength of a country's institutions, and the other two components of the index, PPR and IPR, reflect the two kinds of property rights unequivocal for countries' socio-economic development.*

During 2025, PRA worked to compile case studies with 133 think tanks and policy organizations in 72 countries involved in research, policy development, education, and promotion of property rights in their countries.

1

RESULTS

The 2025 International Property Rights Index (IPRI) covers 126 countries, representing 93.23% of the global population and 97.54% of global GDP. The IPRI recorded an average score of 5.13 (maximum: 8.2; minimum: 1.7). Among its components, the Legal and Political Environment (LP) emerged as the weakest, with an average score of 5.03 (maximum: 8.7; minimum: 1.1), followed closely by the Physical Property Rights (PPR) component at 5.05 (maximum: 8.3; minimum: 0.3). The Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) component was the strongest, averaging 5.32 (maximum: 8.0; minimum: 3.0), and notably maintained the highest minimum score across all components.

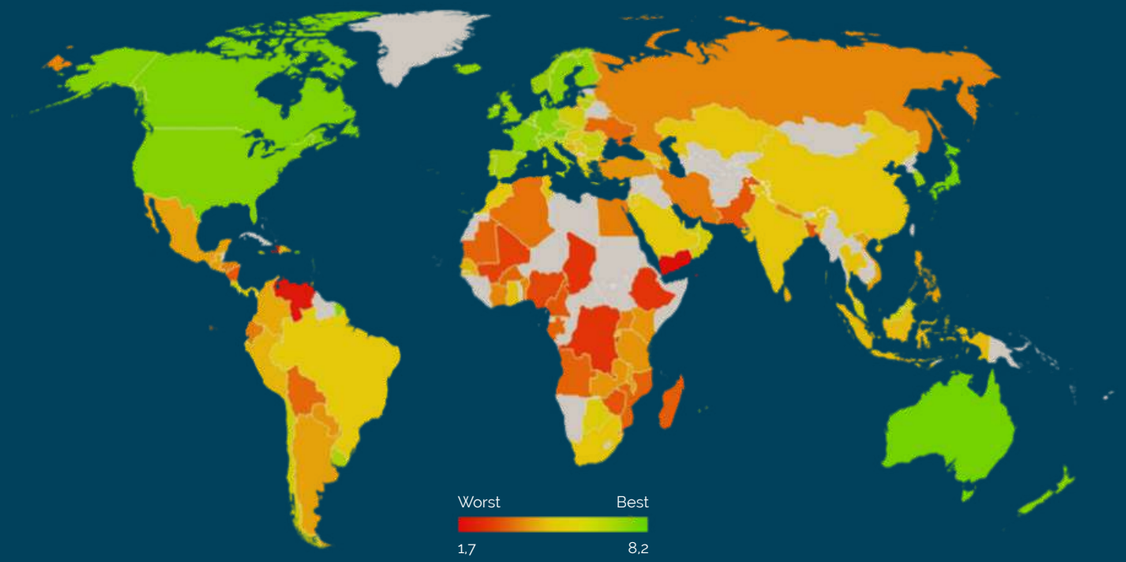


Figure 2. 2025-IPRI Scores Map. *On average, the sample of 126 countries exhibit an IPRI score of 5.13, with a maximum of 8.2 for Luxembourg and a minimum of 1.7 for Rep. of Yemen*

RESULTS

The average score this year reflects a continued deterioration in the global protection of property rights. That decline is largely driven by the PPR component, which registered a 3.28% decrease, mainly attributable to a new data series for the "Access to Financing" indicator. Additionally, the IPR component recorded a decrease of 0.65%. In contrast, the LP component demonstrated a modest improvement of 0.99%.

We must celebrate 55 countries that improved their IPRI scores this year compared to 2024, while alerting those 69 that deteriorated. Although the absolute changes - both positive and negative - were slight, they are significant in relative terms for some countries. Croatia (+1.07 or +20.51%), Bulgaria (+1.05 or +20.5%), Greece (+0.83 or +16.19%), and Italy (+0.96 or +16.06%) saw notable relative improvements. On the other hand, the Rep. of Yemen (-0.69 or -28.96%), Burundi (-0.94 or -25.24%), Bahrain (-1.12 or -19.54%), Mali (-0.68 or -19.11%), and Ethiopia (-0.59 or -18.71%) experienced substantial relative declines.

This year, Luxembourg leads the overall IPRI score with 8.24, as well as the PPR component with a score of 9.34. Denmark ranks first in the LP component with a score of 8.74, while the United States keeps leading the IPR component, with a score of 8.01. Austria, Sweden, Germany, and Singapore follow closely in the IPR component, with scores of 7.58, 7.57, 7.54, and 7.51, respectively.

Australia ranks second overall with an IPRI score of 8.04, followed by Switzerland in third place with a score of 8.01. In the LP component, Finland secures second place with 8.59, while New Zealand ranks third with a score of 8.51. The PPR component shows Luxembourg in the lead, followed by Switzerland (9.15), Japan (8.92), and Australia (8.60).

The IPRI scores of the top 15 countries range from 7.54 to 8.24, with a difference of less than 10% among them. A similar pattern is observed in the scores of the IPRI components: LP ranges from 6.6 to 8.74; PPR ranges from 6.97 to 9.34; and IPR ranges from 6.60 to 8.01. Among the top 15 countries, 9 out of 15 had the LP component as their strongest, while 7 out of 15 had the PPR component as the strongest.

Contrary to the pattern observed among top-ranking countries, for most of the lowest-ranked countries, the weakest component is the PPR, followed by the LP component. Only Venezuela and Lebanon deviate from this trend, showing LP as their weakest component, followed by PPR. In all cases, the IPR component stands out as the strongest.

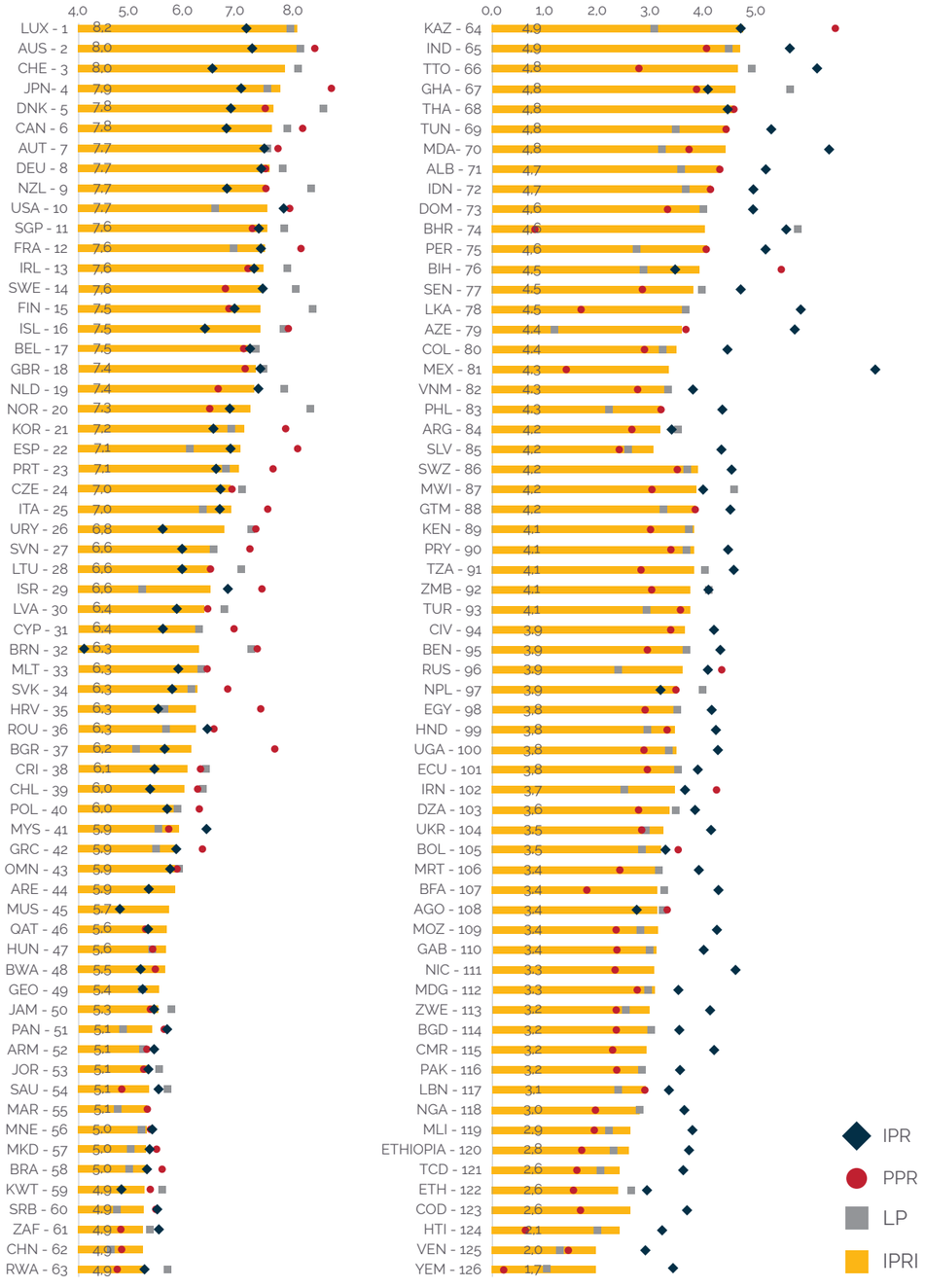


Figure 3. IPRI 2025 scores and rankings & components scores.

2

IPRI GROUPS.

The IPRI analysis also encompasses groups of countries categorized by different criteria such as geographical regions, income levels, degree of development, and participation in integration agreements.

Gathering countries according to relevant criteria raises valuable information to be used by individuals and policymakers to improve their countries' performance.

Figure 4. IPRI scores by Regional Groups 2015-2025. *We observe a consistent intergroup dynamic, except for certain improvements since 2022 of the EU compared to North America, and of the Rest of Europe compared to Asia.*

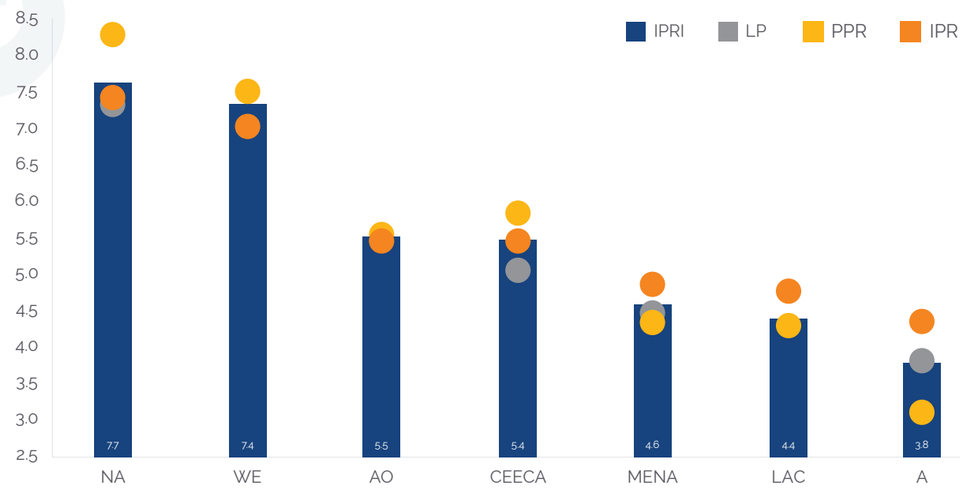


Figure 5. 2025 IPRI and Components. Regional Groups Score. *North America (7.71) leads the IPRI score, followed by Western Europe (7.39), East Asia, South Asia & Pacific (5.49), and Central and Eastern Europe (5.41). On the other extreme, we find Africa (3.78) and Latin America & the Caribbean (4.40) and Middle East & North Africa (4.63) countries. Beyond the score, top groups exhibited slight improvement, while the bottom ones showed a slight decrease. The behaviors of IPRI components reflect the same pattern as the IPRI.*

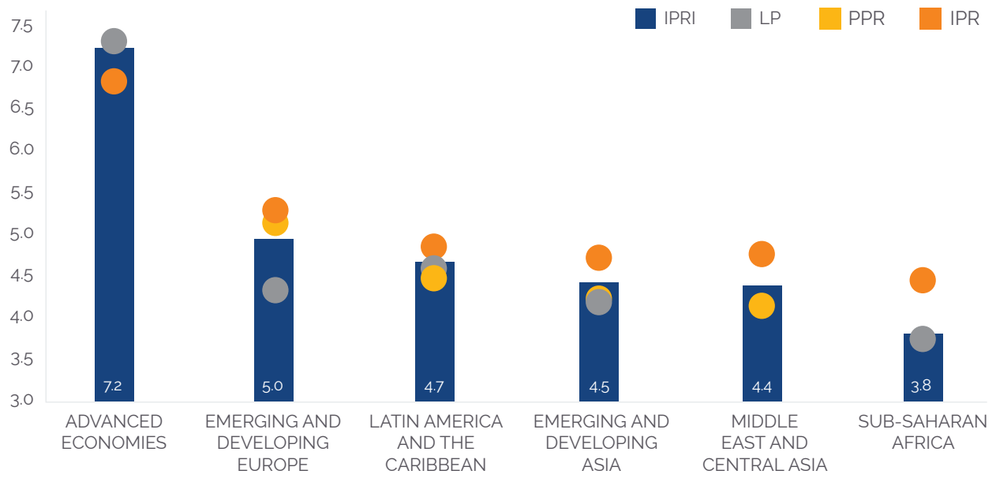


Figure 6. 2025 IPRI and Components. Region & Development Groups Score. *Advanced Economies (7.25) leads the IPRI scores, followed by Emerging and Developing Europe (4.95), Emerging and Developing Asia (4.70), Middle East and Central Asia (4.46); Latin America and the Caribbean (4.40), ending with Sub-Saharan Africa (3.79). The top groups improved their score while the bottom ones decreased compared to 2024. Their components' scores and rankings follow the pattern of the IPRI.*

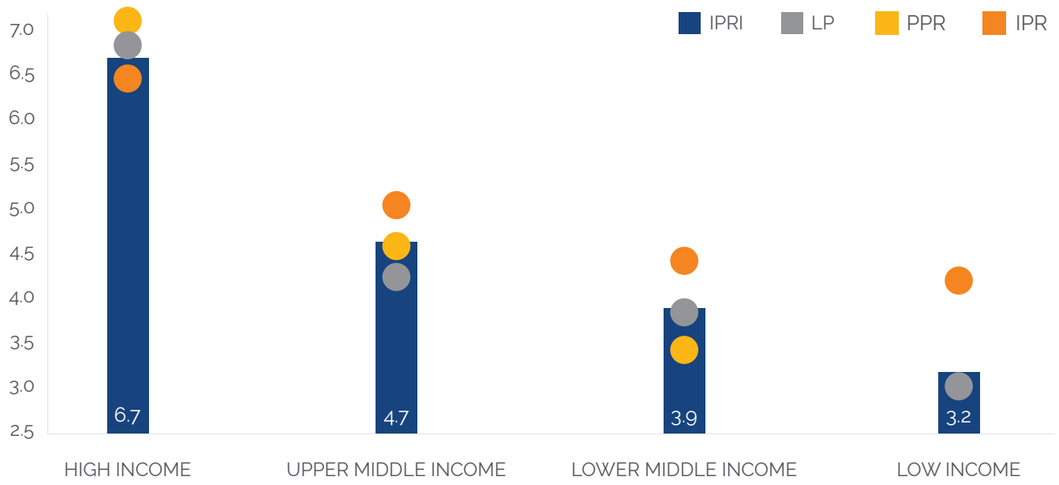


Figure 7. 2025 IPRI and Components. Income Groups Score. *As in previous editions, the income classification groups show the same display of the IPRI score. High Income (6.71) remains at the top, followed by Upper Middle (4.66), Lower Middle Income (3.89) and Low Income (3.17) countries. All groups, but High-Income countries, showed a decrease in their IPRI scores.*

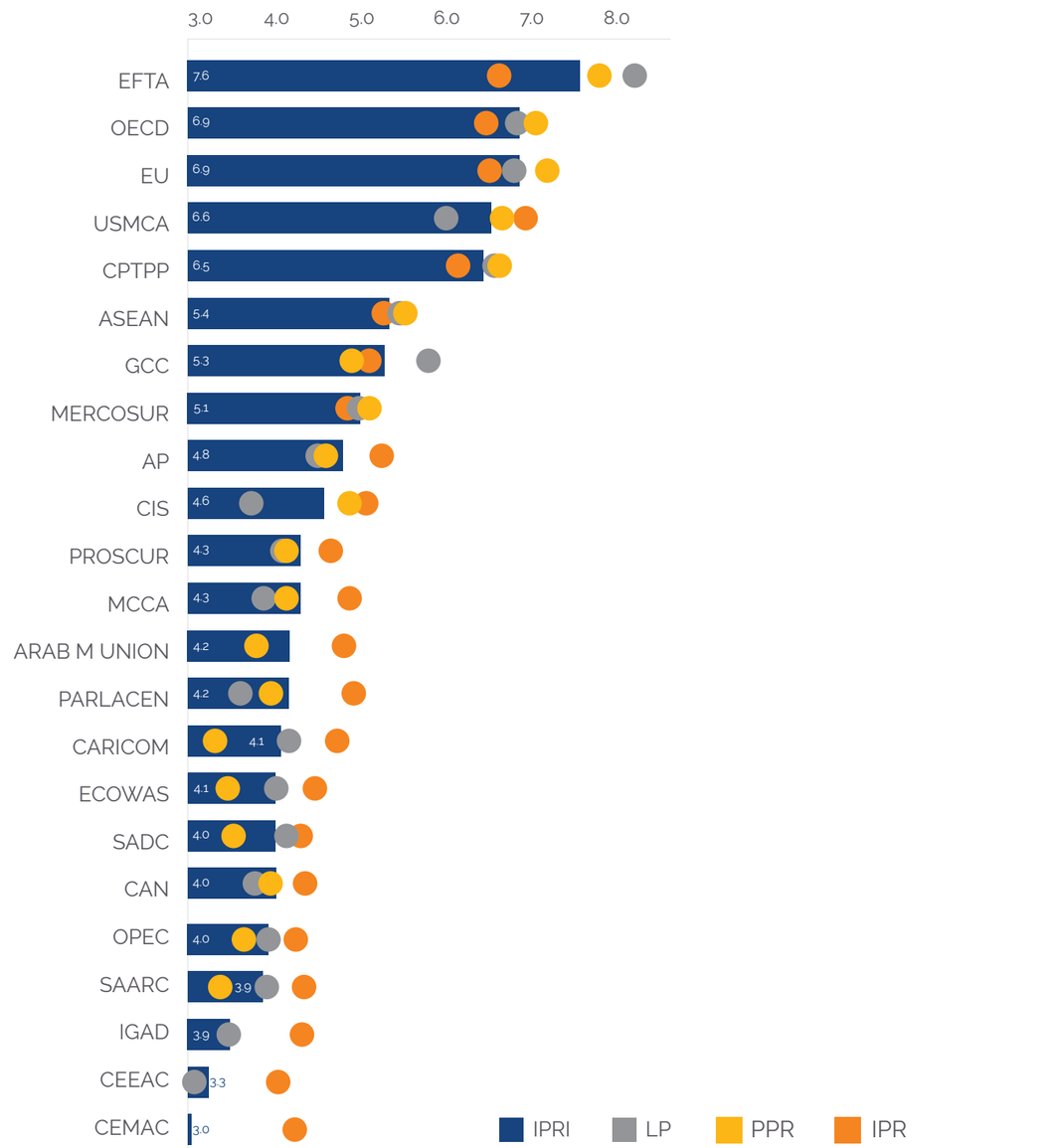


Figure 8. 2025 IPRI and Components. Integration Agreement Groups Score. *Besides their absolute scores, in terms of relative improvement in the IPRI score, the EU leads with a 5.96% increase, followed by MERCOSUR (3.97%), OECD (3.6%), CPTPP (3.1%), and EFTA (2.12%). Conversely, the greatest deteriorations were observed in IGAD (-13.14%), CEMAC (-12.32%), CEEAC (-11.42%), and the GCC (-9.55%).*

3

IPRI AND POPULATION

The primary objective of the IPRI is to accurately measure the level of property rights enjoyed by individuals. However, since the index uses countries and territories as its unit of analysis, important demographic differences may be overlooked. To address this limitation, a population incidence factor has been incorporated into the index since 2015. Although the 2025 IPRI average score is 5.13, when adjusted for population, it drops to 4.81 — a decrease of 4.15%.

Notably, 84% of this population lives in 78 countries with IPRI scores ranging from 1.5 to 5.4, reflecting weak to moderately robust property rights systems. In contrast, only 16% of the world's population resides in countries with mid-to-high levels of property rights protection (5.5 to 8.4).

2025 IPRI (RANGES)	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	POPULATION (000)	% POPULATION	IPRI INCIDENCE (%)	IPRI-POPULATION INCIDENCE (%)	% GDP
1.5 - 2.4	3	79,329	1.10	0.90	0.40	0.51
2.5 - 3.4	18	1,127,538	14.90	8.60	9.40	1.64
3.5 - 4.4	27	1,335,705	17.70	16.80	14.80	8.60
4.5 - 5.4	30	3,777,078	50.10	22.60	50.60	27.56
5.5 - 6.4	19	180,555	2.40	17.70	3.00	3.61
6.5 - 7.4	12	290,312	3.80	13.00	5.70	11.61
7.5 - 8.4	17	753,611	10.00	20.30	16.00	46.47
TOTAL	**126**	**7,544,128**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Combining the IPRI-Population analysis with GDP results, we find that 62% of the world's GDP comes from 48 countries with 16% of the total population, and they show robust property rights systems, with IPRI scores over 5.5; and particularly, 58.09% of the total GDP is from 29 countries with 13.8% of the total population with an IPRI score over 6.5. On the other hand, 16% of the population lives in 21 countries with lower levels of property rights [1.5 – 3.4] and accounts for only 2.15% of world GDP.

And 27.56% of the total GDP comes from 30 countries with 50.7% of the total population, and they show middle IPRI scores, in a range [4.5 – 5.4].

This information clearly highlights the positive relationship between strong property rights systems, economic strength, and global GDP share - an important consideration for densely populated countries and their policymakers.

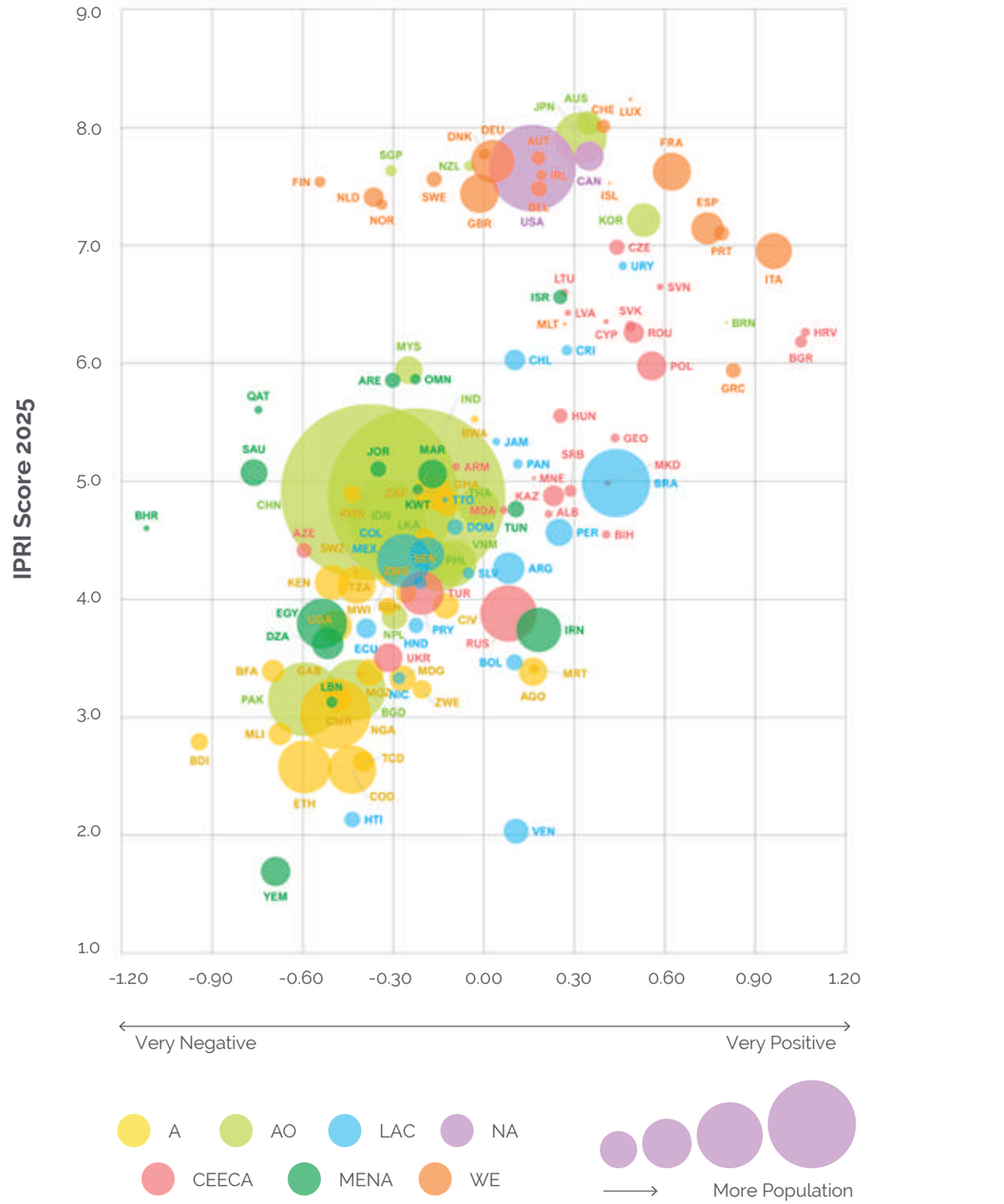


Figure 10. *This figure shows a combination of elements for analyzing changes in the 2025 IPRI scores compared to 2024, including population and their belonging to regional groups.*

4

IPRI AND GENDER

The Gender Equality (GE) component, when combined with the IPRI, is designed to identify potential biases or discriminatory practices within countries or territories. This approach acknowledges that property rights may not be equally protected or accessible for all members of a society. While discrimination can take many forms, the IPRI specifically focuses on gender-based discrimination.

The GE results show an average score of 7.91, with a relevant dispersion: from 0.429 (Cameroon) to 9.857 (held by Albania, Austria, Belgium, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK). After weighting the IPRI with the gender component, the overall IPRI-GE scores 4.68, which is a reduction of 8.71% from the IPRI score ($IPRI_{2025}$= 5.13). Moreover, if compared to $IPRI\text{-}GE_{2024}$ (4.71), it represents a slight deterioration of 0.55%, pushing it away from the results of 2021($IPRI\text{-}GE_{2021}$: 4.89).

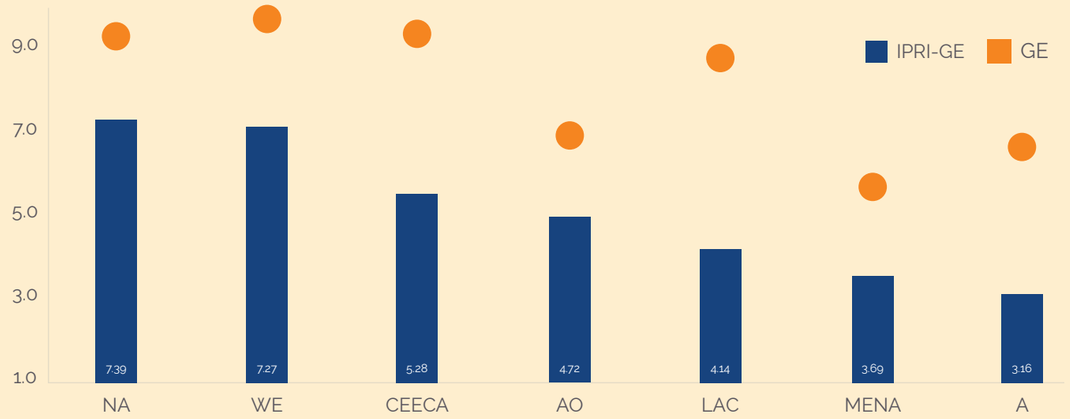


Figure 11. 2025 IPRI-GE and GE. Regional Groups Scores. *At the top of the IPRI-GE scores we find North America (7.39) and Western Europe (7.27); then come Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (5.28), East Asia, South Asia and Pacific (4.72) and Latin America and the Caribbean (4.14), and at the bottom Africa (3.16) and Middle East and North Africa (3.69).*

STRONG

TOP 20%	2ND QUINTILE	3RD QUINTILE	4TH QUINTILE	BOTTOM 20%
LUXEMBOURG	NETHERLANDS	ISRAEL	TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	TUNISIA
SWITZERLAND	NORWAY	SINGAPORE	NORTH MACEDONIA	INDONESIA
AUSTRIA	CANADA	BULGARIA	QATAR	MALAWI
DENMARK	NEW ZEALAND	COSTA RICA	RWANDA	CÔTE D'IVOIRE
GERMANY	PORTUGAL	POLAND	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	BAHRAIN
AUSTRALIA	SPAIN	GREECE	ARMENIA	NEPAL
UNITED STATES	ITALY	HUNGARY	PERU	BENIN
JAPAN	CZECH REPUBLIC	JAMAICA	OMAN	ECUADOR
SWEDEN	KOREA, REP.	MAURITIUS	SOUTH AFRICA	UKRAINE
BELGIUM	URUGUAY	BRUNEI DARUSSALAM	THAILAND	ZAMBIA
IRELAND	LITHUANIA	PANAMA	MALAYSIA	HONDURAS
FINLAND	SLOVENIA	CHILE	AZERBAIJAN	KENYA
ICELAND	LATVIA	MONTENEGRO	GHANA	NICARAGUA
UNITED KINGDOM	MALTA	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	VIETNAM	UGANDA
FRANCE	SLOVAKIA	BOTSWANA	MEXICO	TANZANIA
	CYPRUS	GEORGIA	KUWAIT	PHILIPPINES
	ROMANIA	CHINA	PARAGUAY	KINGDOM OF ESWATINI
	CROATIA	KAZAKHSTAN	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	BOLIVIA
		BRAZIL	SAUDI ARABIA	MOZAMBIQUE
		ALBANIA	COLOMBIA	GABON
		MOLDOVA	INDIA	BURKINA FASO
		SERBIA	MOROCCO	ANGOLA
			TURKEY	SRI LANKA
			SENEGAL	ZIMBABWE
			EL SALVADOR	EGYPT
			ARGENTINA	MADAGASCAR
			JORDAN	ALGERIA
			GUATEMALA	IRAN
				BANGLADESH
				LEBANON
				PAKISTAN
				MALI
				NIGERIA
				ETHIOPIA
				BURUNDI
				MAURITANIA
				VENEZUELA, BOLIVARIAN REP.
				CONGO, DEM. REP.
				HAITI
				CHAD
				CAMEROON
				YEMEN, REP.

WEAK

Figure 12. 2025 IPRI-GE organized by Quintiles. *The number of countries belonging to each quintile increases from the top to the bottom. Hence, the fourth and the fifth quintiles include 56% of the countries of the sample, 70 countries, while the first three include 55 countries (44%).*

5

IPRI & TAXES

It is undeniable that property taxes impose constraints on property rights. Therefore, an adjustment to the IPRI is necessary to account for their impact, and results show that, on average, the IPRI-PT score is 5.48% lower than their IPRI scores.

TAXES

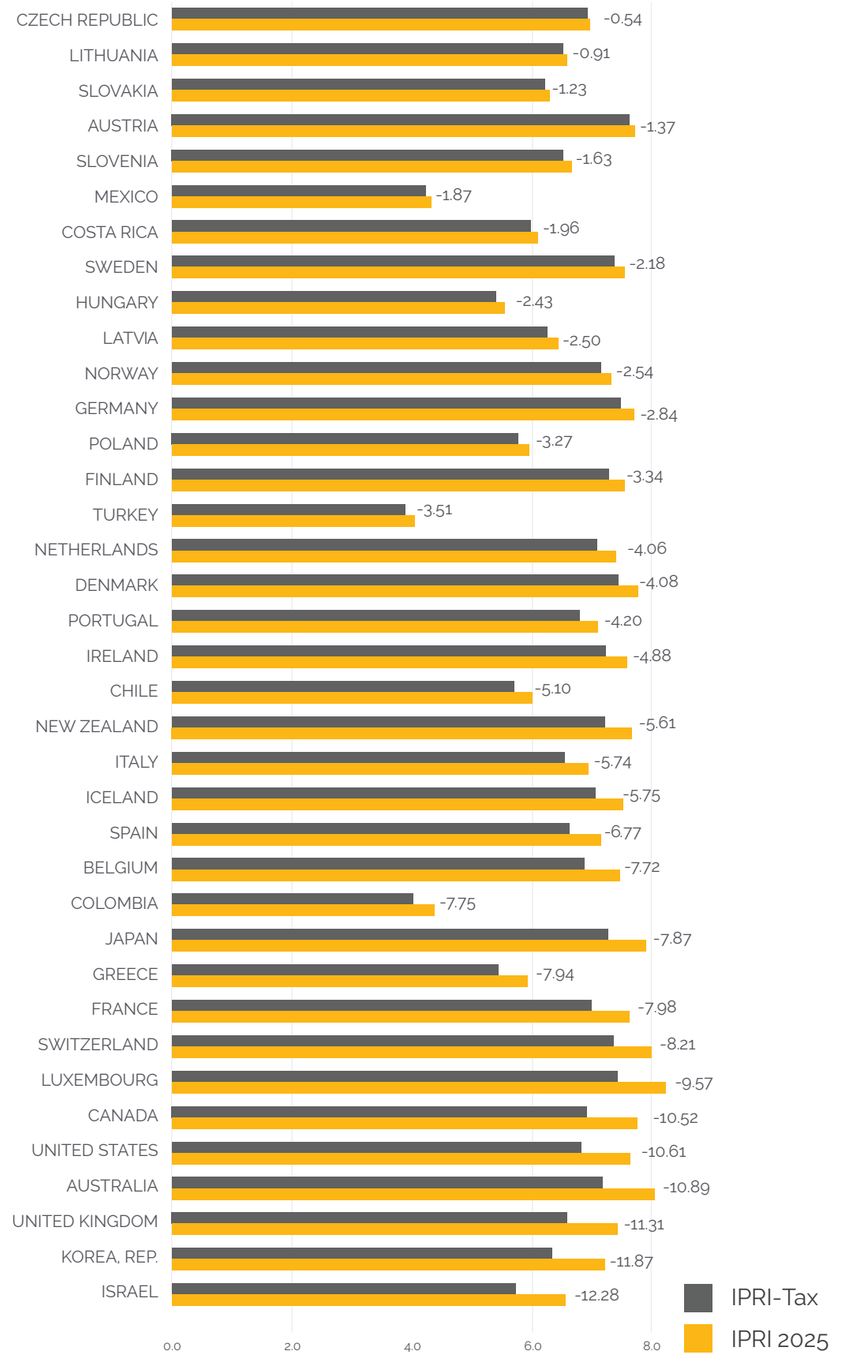


Figure 13. 2025 IPRI vs 2025 IPRI-PT (%). *The IPRI-PT score is 5.48% lower than the IPRI, with an important dispersion from -0.6% to -12.28%.*

6

IPRI AND DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

Property rights are not just one element among many, they are a foundational pillar within the intricate web of relationships that sustain a vibrant and virtuous ecosystem. Recognizing this, it becomes critical to uncover and highlight these connections, as they define the institutional environments that empower citizens to enjoy higher standards of living and inspire societies to move forward with freedom, responsibility, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

To make this visible, we conducted a thorough analysis, calculating correlations across 21 key indices and variables, organized into three strategic groups.

Moreover, on average, countries in the top quintile of IPRI scores show a per capita income of 21 times that of the countries in the bottom quintile, reinforcing the significant and positive relationship between prosperity and a property rights system.

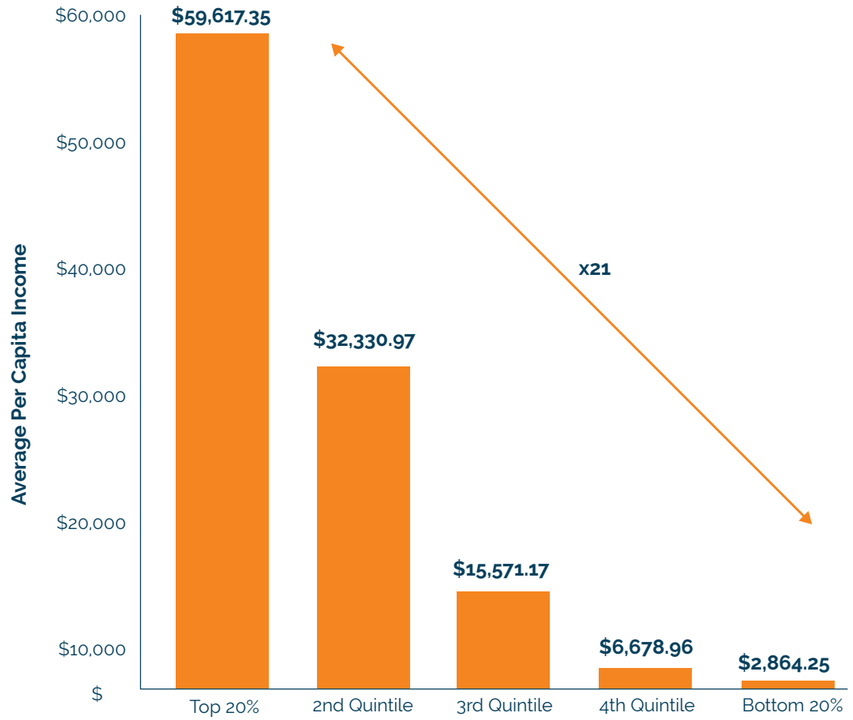


Fig 14. Average per capita Income by IPRI Quintiles. *Countries in the top quintile of IPRI scores show a per capita income of 21 times compared to the bottom quintile, reinforcing the significant and positive relationship between prosperity and a robust property rights system.*

	VARIABLE	IPRI	LP	PPR	IPR
PROSPERITY AND WELLBEING	GDP per capita (constant 2015 US$)	0.8101	0.8032	0.7424	0.7607
	GDP per capita (constant 2015 US$) * GINI	0.7947	0.7725	0.7446	0.7591
	Gross capital formation per capita (current US$)	0.7861	0.7880	0.7144	0.7295
	Economic Complexity Index Trade	0.8060	0.7191	0.8062	0.7862
	Global Entrepreneurship Index	0.8818	0.8431	0.8250	0.8452
	Global Social Progress Index	0.9012	0.8447	0.8987	0.8145
	Health Care Index (Overall)	0.7949	0.7481	0.7506	0.7758
LIBERTY AND RIGHTS	Global Social Mobility Index	0.8899	0.8621	0.8435	0.8174
	Henley Passport Index	0.8335	0.7610	0.8276	0.7793
	Political Rights - Freedom in the World	0.7349	0.7096	0.7167	0.6488
	Civil Liberties - Freedom in the World	0.7793	0.7623	0.7525	0.6854
	Human Freedom Index	0.8266	0.7951	0.8031	0.7397
	Global Organized Crime Index - Criminality Score	-0.5514	-0.6079	-0.5183	-0.4016
INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	Travel & Tourism Development Index	0.8210	0.7201	0.8036	0.8191
	Open Data Barometer	0.7760	0.7012	0.7487	0.7819
	Global Health Security Index	0.7991	0.7270	0.7781	0.7779
	Biotech	0.8637	0.7984	0.7763	0.8521
	Global Innovation Index	0.8803	0.8000	0.8345	0.8733
	Energy Transition Index	0.7834	0.7329	0.7437	0.7531
	Global Knowledge Index	0.9185	0.8505	0.9019	0.8437
	AI Preparedness Index	0.9335	0.8678	0.9001	0.8949

Correlation Code:
Weak
Soft
Moderate
Good
Strong
Perfect

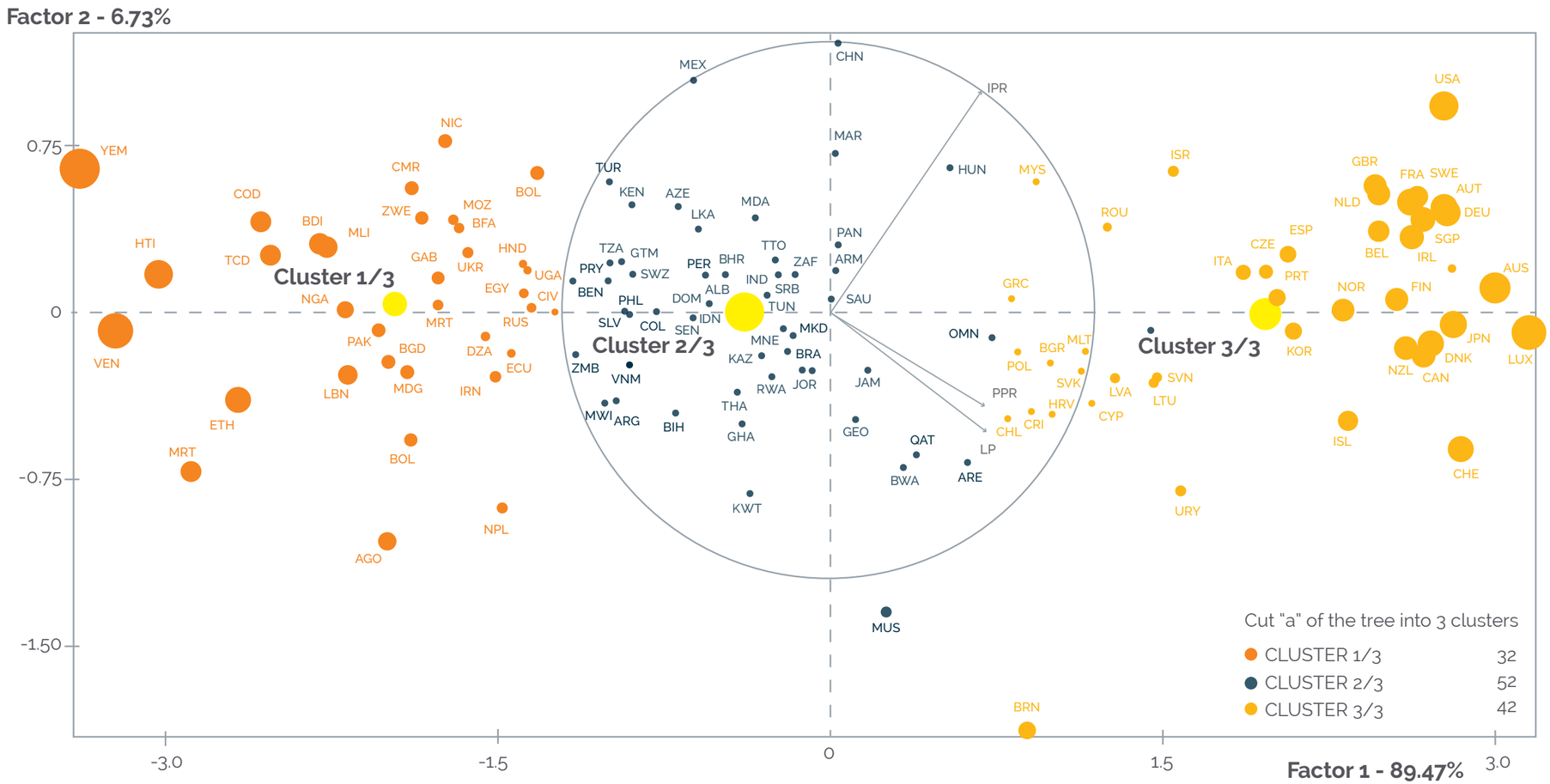
Fig 15. Pearson's Correlation Coefficients. *IPRI and components correlations with the indices used were mostly strong and good and their directions were as expected. The strongest was with the AI Preparedness Index (0.93), the Global Knowledge Index (0.92), and the Global Social Progress Index (0.90), showing property rights relevance for a virtuous ecosystem for human development.*

7

IPRI CLUSTERS

We performed a cluster analysis for all 126 countries according to the IPRI and its components. Each cluster represents more than a mere grouping by variables directly associated with property rights. They are groups with common characteristics within them and different features among clusters. This confirms the consistency of the IPRI and the relevance of property rights systems in influencing societies.

Figure 16. Cluster's Members & Centroids. *Three clusters were acceptable to explain the aggrupation of countries, emphasizing the significance of the IPRI as a robust tool in the examination of societies, and naturally of the key role of property rights promoting virtuous incentives, fostering full development, within liberty in societies.*



THE IP COMPASS: A STRATEGIC GUIDE FOR EU POLICYMAKERS NAVIGATING INNOVATION AND GLOBAL COMPETITION

By Dr. Matthias Bauer and Dyuti Pandya, European Centre for International Political Economy (Belgium)

This case study offers a strategic, policy-focused briefing on intellectual property (IP) tailored for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Its objective is to enhance legislators' understanding of IP as a cornerstone of Europe's innovation economy. While the European Union has historically held a leadership role in global IP and IP-intensive industries, that position is increasingly under pressure. China and the United States are accelerating their progress in technology development, patent filings, and market-driven commercialization, whereas Europe continues to grapple with fragmented regulatory frameworks and limited policymaker engagement on complex IP issues. In light of ongoing legislative discussions—ranging from reforms to standard essential patents (SEPs) and pharmaceutical exclusivity incentives, to emerging rules at the intersection of IP, data, and artificial intelligence—there is a critical need for a clear, sector-informed, and actionable guide to support effective, innovation-driven policymaking. Despite its formally strong legal architecture, the EU's IP system suffers from institutional fragmentation and regulatory inconsistencies that hinder investment, innovation, and global competitiveness.

New legislative initiatives risk compounding these challenges by creating uncertainty around IP protections across key sectors. This project seeks to fill that gap. The case study will present:

- A comparative analysis of innovation performance in the EU, the US, and China, using data from WIPO, the EUIPO, the OECD, and other international sources.
- An economic evaluation of the major categories of IP—patents, trademarks, copyright, industrial designs, trade secrets, and geographical indications—ranked by their value-added contributions across industries.
- A critical review of areas where EU regulation is deficient or misaligned with innovation priorities.
- A strategic set of policy recommendations aimed at reinforcing and future-proofing the EU's IP framework to safeguard its competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Ultimately, this study aims to support the European Parliament in reaffirming the EU's role as a global leader in intellectual property, ensuring that robust IP protection remains central to the Union's economic, digital, and industrial policy agenda.

EXPROPRIATION OF PROPERTY WITHOUT COMPENSATION: THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA AND INTERNATIONAL WORST PRACTICE

By Martin van Staden, Free Market Foundation (South Africa)

On 23 January 2025, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was revealed to have assented to the contentious Expropriation Act, a law permitting the state to seize private property without compensation. This ignited a firestorm of domestic controversy and international condemnation, particularly by the United States. This legislation, following the failed Constitution Eighteenth Amendment Bill, is perceived as undermining the protections of property under section 25 of the South African Constitution, which exacerbates discord in a country with a complex history of land dispossession. The Act's provision for "nil compensation" has prompted the U.S. to reassess its relationship with South Africa, including granting refugee status to racial minorities whose properties are thought to be the main target motivating the adoption of the new law. This move reflects broader concerns about South Africa's foreign policy and domestic governance, which have increasingly diverged from Western interests.

This case study explores the socio-political context surrounding the Act's adoption, analysing its implications for property rights and constitutional coherence. The Act's controversial compensation framework, particularly the concept of expropriation for "nil compensation," contrasts South Africa's approach with that of states like the United States, Switzerland, and Singapore, where compensation for expropriation is not only standard, but arguably sacrosanct. The Act's impact extends beyond domestic policy, jeopardising South Africa's eligibility for the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act, among other potential foreign consequences. It is argued in this study that secure property rights are foundational not only to economic prosperity, but also to democratic legitimacy and constitutionalism, and that the Expropriation Act's provisions threaten these principles. Finally, alternative mechanisms to address South Africa's historically unjust property relations without undermining property rights are proposed.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE TORRENS SYSTEM: POLICY INSIGHTS FROM AUSTRALIA'S TRANSITION TO AN ELECTRONIC CONVEYANCING SYSTEM.

By Dr. Anne C Pickering, Australian Catholic University (Australia)

This case study examines Australia's digital transformation of the Torrens land title registration system, and analyses how Australia has successfully balanced technological innovation with stringent security requirements. As one of the first major economies to implement a national electronic conveyancing system across a number of states within a federal system, the Australian experience offers valuable lessons in managing complex legal, technological and policy changes in land administration. This case study is useful to readers interested in property rights for several reasons. First, the secure registration of property rights provides the stability needed to support resource mobilization, attract investment, and enhance efficiency. Second, in Australia alone the title registration system underpins property markets worth over AUD$11 trillion, making stability and efficiency of property systems essential to national economic growth. Third, as other countries grapple with digital transformations of critical infrastructure, Australia's transition from paper-based title registration to electronic conveyancing offers important lessons on best practices and challenges of modernizing traditional property rights institutions while maintaining security and public trust.

Through the analysis of policy frameworks, implementation strategies, and quantitative outcomes across multiple Australian jurisdictions from 2010-2025, the paper highlights Australia's approach of combining public oversight with private sector innovation. This partnership model has delivered significant benefits in maintaining the integrity of property rights, and resulted in measurable improvements in transaction costs, prevention of fraud, and accessibility to the system. Key findings of the study include transaction cost reductions of up to 60%, enhanced fraud detection through digital identity verification, and improved accessibility particularly for remote users. These findings provide governance and policy insights relevant to both land title reform and digital transformation initiatives. Australia's experience shows that it is possible to modernize core systems without compromising on integrity while delivering efficiency and cost effectiveness. The paper provides valuable insights for other jurisdictions considering similar digital transformations of critical property infrastructure, and policymakers focused on secure property rights.

ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS AS DE FACTO EXPROPRIATION: HOW EVICTION PROTOCOLS UNDERMINE PROPERTY RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA

By María Andrea Cáceres and Jorge Gabriel Jimenez, Observatorio de Derechos de Propiedad (Guatemala)

Illegal invasions of private property represent a direct and persistent threat to property rights, individual liberty, and the rule of law in Guatemala. This study demonstrates that although such occupations are criminalized under national law, the excessive complexity, disproportionate requirements, and institutional delays in the eviction process have created a situation of legal defenselessness for owners. These procedural and bureaucratic obstacles are so significant that they constitute a form of de facto expropriation. Even with a valid title and a court order, many owners are unable to recover their property due to burdens imposed by the State and the failure of public authorities to fulfill their constitutional duties and obligations. In practice, authorities require landowners to meet conditions such as providing transportation, food, shelter, and even medical services to illegal occupants before executing a court-ordered eviction. These unjustified burdens shift public responsibilities to private citizens and turn the legal system into a barrier rather than a mechanism for justice. The result is a systemic erosion of legal certainty, which encourages illegal occupations, disincentivizes investment, fosters informal appropriation of land, and weakens the foundations of ownership in both urban and rural areas of the country. The study also addresses how certain international actors, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, have contributed to conceptual confusion. By equating judicial evictions with forced displacement, these narratives ignore the legal basis of eviction orders and mischaracterize the enforcement of property rights. This framing undermines institutional legitimacy, obscures the difference between lawful restitution and human rights violations, and emboldens unlawful actors by creating a perception of impunity and victimhood that distorts justice. According to data from the Public Prosecutor's Office, between 2020 and 2024 Guatemala recorded an average of 2,477 annual complaints for land usurpation and 5,740 for document forgery. Yet fewer than 2% of requested evictions were executed, revealing a serious gap between legal recognition and enforcement. Many cases involved well-organized groups that forged documents, intimidated rightful owners, engaged in coordinated invasions, and obstructed justice through procedural manipulation or institutional passivity. The study proposes urgent reforms: creation of specialized courts to handle land-related crimes, a unified inter-agency protocol for eviction, institutional strengthening of the Prosecutor's Office for Usurpation, and consistent application of flagrancy provisions. These actions are essential to restore the enforceability of property rights, uphold the rule of law, and guarantee effective legal remedies for legitimate owners across the country.

PRIVATE PROPERTY IS NECESSARY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

By Prof. Francisco Zalles and Luis E. Loria, Free Galapagos (Ecuador)

The lack of private property rights in the Galápagos Islands is severely impacting conservation. Even though Article 66 and Article 321 of the Ecuadorian Constitution guarantee private property in Ecuador, statutes passed by a non-elected governing body impose significant restrictions on private ownership, economic activity, and investment. Galápagos operates under the Organic Law of the Special Regime for the Province of Galápagos (LOREG, 2015), and although the intent of this special regime is to promote the conservation of the islands, it is currently subject to regulatory capture that create privileges and hurt conservation. The prohibitions have various negative consequences: they create incentives resulting in increased migration, the increased migration leads to deterioration of environmental resources, and most importantly they contribute to a serious deterioration of the maritime safety of ships on the islands and general deterioration of infrastructure. This paper explores the structure and implications of the property rights regime in the Galápagos Islands, a territory under a special legal and constitutional framework within Ecuador. Our objective is to examine how this legal and institutional framework, designed primarily to ensure environmental conservation, interacts with the rights to private property, and how this tension affects the islands' long-term economic sustainability and conservation. We analyze the tension between private property and environmental preservation, showing how rigid restrictions on land ownership, licensing, and market access conflict with constitutional protections for private initiative and property rights. We argue that clearer, transferable, and secure property rights can serve both economic and environmental goals through more efficient allocation of resources.

We present a series of case studies focused on key sectors of the Galápagos economy. In maritime transport, the prohibition on new vessel licenses has led to supply rigidities and high transportation costs. In tourism, the scarcity of hotel permits has resulted in inefficiencies and limited-service capacity. In the fishing sector, the lack of transferable quotas has generated overuse of common resources, echoing the "tragedy of the commons." We also examine the chronic deficiencies in port infrastructure and their impact on the supply chain. We suggest that reinforcing private property rights, while maintaining conservation as a guiding principle, can enable infrastructure development and attract long-term investment without compromising environmental integrity. Through this analysis, we highlight the importance of property rights as institutional tools for aligning incentives, reducing conflict, and promoting a more resilient and prosperous Galápagos for years to come.This case study explores the socio-political context surrounding the Act's adoption, analysing its implications for property rights and constitutional coherence. The Act's controversial compensation framework, particularly the concept of expropriation for "nil compensation," contrasts South Africa's approach with that of states like the United States, Switzerland, and Singapore, where compensation for expropriation is not only standard, but arguably sacrosanct. The Act's impact extends beyond domestic policy, jeopardising South Africa's eligibility for the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act, among other potential foreign consequences. It is argued in this study that secure property rights are foundational not only to economic prosperity, but also to democratic legitimacy and constitutionalism, and that the Expropriation Act's provisions threaten these principles. Finally, alternative mechanisms to address South Africa's historically unjust property relations without undermining property rights are proposed.

FROM RULE OF LAW TO RULE BY LOBBY: THE BATTLE FOR PROPERTY RIGHTS IN COSTA RICA

By Luis E. Loria and Ester Mendez, IDEAS Labs (Costa Rica)

In 2025, Costa Rica—long regarded as a regional model of democratic stability and rule of law—faced an acute challenge to private property rights through Bill No. 24.640, the Ley para la Buena Gobernanza y la Modernización para la Propiedad en Condominios. Promoted by a coalition of politically connected real estate developers and select lawmakers, this bill proposes sweeping changes to condominium governance that would significantly undermine the rights of small property owners. This case study details how the bill was developed through a non-inclusive process, using "closed-door" legislative lobbying and the exclusion of key stakeholders—such as IDEAS Labs and the National Condominium Owners Association—from public deliberations. Despite claims of transparency, even formal requests to participate in the review process were ignored, revealing a deeper crisis of democratic accountability.

The bill threatens property rights in at least three concrete ways:

1. Registration of substantial legal modifications without the consent or appearance of property owners before the National Registry, effectively bypassing their legal participation rights.

2. Authorization of decision-making processes with direct consequences for property owners without requiring consensus, stripping owners of meaningful control over their assets.

3. Retroactive application of the law, altering legal conditions and governance structures that property owners agreed to under entirely different rules—thus undermining legal certainty and trust.

In response, IDEAS Labs publicly denounced the coordinated efforts of crony capitalists and their allies in Congress to push through legislation that would erode property rights. The organization then spearheaded the formation of a broad-based coalition to oppose Bill 24.640. This effort gave rise to a civic movement that united small property owners, constitutional scholars, and civil society organizations in defense of legal certainty and individual freedoms. As part of this mobilization, IDEAS Labs launched the campaign #NoTeMetásConMiPropiedad, which rapidly gained momentum and gathered hundreds of signatures on Change.org—amplifying public awareness and resistance to what is widely seen as an unconstitutional and confiscatory initiative. Grounded in the institutional theories of Locke, Hayek, and Acemoglu, this study argues that the bill exemplifies a dangerous drift toward extractive policymaking. It calls for renewed civic vigilance and legislative transparency to preserve inclusive institutions, defend private property as a pillar of liberty, and ensure that public policy is shaped in the public interest—not captured by elite agendas.

PROPERTY RIGHTS
ALLIANCE