

Country Comparison

Grade Levels: 9-12

Time Commitment: 90 Minutes

Subject(s): Economics, Human Geography, Civics, World History

Overview: Students will judge which country is the “best” place to live based on the metrics and indices. While doing so, students should see how democracy and capitalism affect the Human Development Index (HDI).

Materials: • Student Handouts (Digital or Printed) • Smartboard
• 1:1 Computers/Tablets • Whiteboard, Chalkboard, or Giant Sticky Note

Opener (15 Minutes):

1. Pose the question and have students brainstorm ideas: What makes a place “better” to live in?
 - a. Capture student ideas on a whiteboard or chalkboard, giant or small sticky notes, or on a digital platform such as [Mentimeter](#) or [Canva](#).
2. Guide the conversation towards the [Human Development Index](#) - a higher score is better because citizens:
 - a. Live a longer, healthier life
 - b. Receive a good education
 - c. Benefit from a decent standard of living.

Activity (60 Minutes)

1. Students will need to know about the indices before completing this activity. Use the slides (Pages 9-20) to go over specifics.
2. Provide the Data Organizer (Pages 5-7) to the students.
3. Emphasize that students are looking for rankings, **not** the actual score on the index, and the logic behind using the rankings for this assignment:
 - a. Rankings are easier to compare - they quickly show which countries perform better or worse than others without needing to interpret the meaning of the scores.
 - b. Rankings simplify complex data - they turn detailed numerical results into an easy-to-understand order.
 - c. Rankings highlight relative performance - they show where a country stands compared with others.
 - d. The downside: rankings do not show how big the differences are
 - i. For example, the countries ranked #1 and #2 might have almost identical scores, while the difference between #2 and #3 could be much larger. Actual scores provide that extra detail.
4. **I DO** - While sharing or projecting your screen, walk the students through filling in the data for the United States
 - a. Show the students how to use the [DEMCAAP Analytics](#) website as you gather data and fill in the Data Organizer (Pages 5-7).

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Activity (Continued)

- a. Show the students how to change the display of data from “Value” to “Ranking” using the drop-down menu at the top - “View Value as:”
 - b. To speed up the data gathering, show the students how to search for all their chosen countries at once. List all of their chosen countries in the “Countries” box on the lower right. Changing the Dataset A choice will show the rankings for the same chosen countries. {Note: Adding a Dataset B will remove all the countries except the last one entered.}
 - c. Generally, a ranking closer to 1 is desired for HDI and all the subcomponents of Democracy and Capitalism. The lone exception is “Transfers and Subsidies Rankings” - the farther from 1 indicates more capitalism.
3. **WE DO** - While you share or project your screen, have students research another country on their devices. Have them share what they found, and you fill in
 4. **YOU DO** - Have the students research other countries of their choosing and fill in their data organizer. The time for the activity assumes students will do 3 additional countries
 - a. The Student Data Organizer allows for up to 5 additional countries
 - b. Students should answer the reflection questions based on their researched data and their analysis of it.
 5. Grade students' work using the Rubric (Page 8).

Closer (15 Minutes)

1. In a whole-group setting, revisit the opening question: What makes a place “better” to live in?
 - a. Discuss whether their initial responses have changed based on the activity.
2. **ALTERNATIVE** - Have the students submit a 3-2-1 Exit Ticket
 - a. 3 - Provide three additional countries you want to explore further
 - b. 2 - Provide two components you found most important
 - c. 1 - Provide one unanswered question (or one way to improve this activity)

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Tips & Tricks for the Activity

- Before completing this assignment, students should look up the definitions of these indices in the Homework Assignment (Page 4)
- Students should be familiar with the indices and terms. Use the slideshow (Pages 9-20) to introduce these before doing this activity.
- Be prepared for the students to assume the United States is the most democratic and capitalistic country.
 - Countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, New Zealand, and Australia score higher on most indices that measure democracy
 - Countries of Switzerland, Singapore, Luxembourg, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland score higher on many indices that measure capitalism

Extension Activity Ideas

- Have students (or groups) create and deliver presentations that highlight their research and conclusions
- Students can research and pick an additional component for democracy, capitalism, or both. Ask the students: Why did you choose your additional component? What value did it add to your analysis?

Modified Activity Ideas

- Assign specific countries for students to research. To ensure varied responses, consider doing something like this:
 - I DO: United States of America
 - WE DO: Greece
 - YOU DO:
 - Three Countries: Norway, China, Kenya
 - Five Countries: Norway, China, Venezuela, Egypt, and Kenya
- Allow students to work in small groups of three to five people for the “You Do” independent work.
- Break students into groups and assign the groups a specific region to research. Have the groups look at 5 countries within their continent or region.
 - Possible regional assignments include: the Americas, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East & North Africa, Central & South Asia, and Asia-Pacific.

Country Comparison

Homework Assignment

Name: _____

Block: _____

Look up these indices and provide a definition or description that explains what they measure and how they are calculated.

Index	Definition / Description
Human Development Index (HDI)	
Free and Fair Elections Index	
World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index	
Civil Liberties Index	
Protection of Property Rights Index	
Freedom to Trade Index	
World Bank Getting Credit Index	
Transfers and Subsidies Index	

Country Comparison

Data Organizer

Name: _____

Block: _____

Look up the rankings (latest year available) for HDI and the component factor indexes of both democracy and capitalism, and organize them in the chart below with data from the DemCap Analytics tool.

	Your Goal – Want this closest to 1	Democracy Index Components Closer to 1, More Democracy			Capitalism Index Components Closer to 1, More Capitalism*			
INSET YOUR CHOICE OF COUNTRIES BELOW	HDI Ranks→What you want to be higher as an end goal.	Free and Fair elections Index Ranks	Rule of Law Index WJP Ranks	Civil Liberties Index Ranks	Protection of Property Rights Ranks	Freedom to Trade Ranks	Getting Credit Ranks	*Transfers and Subsidies Ranks (further from 1, more capitalism)
I do: USA								
We Do:								
You do:								

Country Comparison

Data Organizer Questions

Name: _____

Block: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer each question in multiple full, detailed sentences.

Democracy Questions:

1. Based on your data from the democracy component indexes, what is the most democratic country in your sample? How did you decide?
2. Based on your data from the democracy component indexes, what is the least democratic country in your sample? How did you decide?
3. Do you think one of the three democracy component indexes used in this chart is more important to the functioning of democracy as a whole? Why or why not?

Capitalism Questions:

4. Based on your data from the capitalism component indexes, what is the most capitalist country in your sample? How did you decide?
5. Based on your data from the capitalism component indexes, what is the least capitalist country in your sample? How did you decide?
6. Do you think one of these three capitalism component indexes used in this chart is more important to the functioning of democracy as a whole? Why or why not?

Country Comparison

Data Organizer Questions

Name: _____

Block: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer each question in multiple full, detailed sentences.

Overarching Questions:

7. Do you think that more democracy correlates to a higher or lower HDI? Using your data, justify your answer.

8. Do you think more capitalism correlates to a higher or lower HDI? Using your data, justify your answer.

Reflection:

9. Do you think that the level of democracy or capitalism is more important to the level of development, or are they equal? Why?

10. Choose one of the organizations that made one of the indexes (in the description of the index on DemCap).
 - a. What is the index you chose, and which organization created it?

 - b. What are your organization's political goals/perspective (what they lobby for)?

 - c. Does this organization's political goals/perspective make you question the reliability of the index? Why or why not?

Country Comparison

Rubric

Name: _____

Block: _____

	Student does not complete this category			Student Mostly Meets Expectations		Student Fully Meets Expectations
Category	0	1	2	3	4	5
The successful student provides accurate HDI ranks for their chosen countries.						
The successful student provides accurate ranks for the democracy component indexes.						
The successful student provides accurate ranks for the capitalism component indexes.						
The successful student effectively analyzes their data collected to thoughtfully and accurately answer the democracy questions.						
The successful student effectively analyzes their data collected to thoughtfully and accurately answer the capitalism questions.						
The successful student effectively analyzes their data collected to thoughtfully and accurately answer the overarching questions.						
The successful student effectively analyzes their data collected to thoughtfully and accurately answer the reflection questions.						
The successful student's answers are thorough, clear, and free from grammatical error.						

This Lesson Plan was:

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Country Comparison

Terms and Concepts



Looking at Democracy

What components do you think of when Democracy
is mentioned?

Human Development Index

A Higher Score Is Better Because Citizens Live A Longer Healthy Life, Receive A Good Education, And Benefit From A Decent Standard Of Living.

The Human Development Index (HDI) calculates a score between 0 and 1 based on four core indicators:

- Long and Healthy Life: Measured by life expectancy at birth.
- Knowledge: Expected years of schooling for children of school-entering age
- Knowledge: Mean years of schooling for adults aged 25 and older
- Decent Standard of Living: Measured by Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (adjusted for purchasing power parity, or PPP, to reflect local living costs)

Free and Fair Elections Index

The Index Ranges From 0 To 1 -

Higher Score Indicates Elections Are More Free And Fair

Experts Estimate The Extent To Which Elections Lack:

- Violence
- Government Intimidation
- Fraud
- Large Irregularities in Vote Counting
- Vote Buying

World Justice Project - Rule of Law Index

Rule of law is a principle under which all persons, institutions, and entities are accountable to laws that are: publicly promulgated, equally enforced, independently adjudicated, and consistent with international human rights principles.

The index evaluates each country's performance using 44 granular indicators grouped into eight primary categories:

- Constraints on Government Powers: The extent to which those who govern are bound by the law.
- Absence of Corruption: Measures bribery, improper influence, and the misappropriation of public funds.
- Open Government: Assesses sunshine laws, civic participation, and access to public information.
- Fundamental Rights: Evaluates basic human rights, including due process, labor rights, and freedom of expression.
- Order and Security: Measures crime rates, political violence, and public safety.
- Regulatory Enforcement: Assesses the fair and effective implementation of government regulations.
- Civil Justice: Evaluates accessibility, impartiality, and efficiency of civil courts.
- Criminal Justice: Measures the fairness, timeliness, and impartiality of the criminal justice system.

Civil Liberties Index

*Civil Liberties Index Grades Countries On A Scale -
1 (Strongest) To 7 (Weakest)*

It Measures How Well A Society Protects Fundamental Rights -

- Freedom Of Expression
- Associational Rights
- Rule Of Law
- Personal Autonomy

Looking at Capitalism

What components do you think of when Capitalism
is mentioned?

Protection of Property Rights Index

The Index Evaluates These Rights Across Three Major Areas On A Scale From 0 To 10 (Higher Being More Protected)

It Measures The Amount Of Property Rights Citizens Enjoy By Measuring Three Core Areas:

- Legal And Political Environment (Lp): Measures Judicial Independence, Rule Of Law, Political Stability, And Control Of Corruption.
- Physical Property Rights (Ppr): Assesses The Protection Of Physical Assets, Registering Property, And Ease Of Access To Loans.
- Intellectual Property Rights (Ipr): Measures Copyright, Patent, And Trademark Protections.

Freedom to Trade Index

The Index Evaluates A Scale From 0 To 100 - Higher Scores Indicate Greater Integration Into The Global Economy And Fewer Restrictions For Consumers And Businesses

It Measures Two Main Areas -

- Trade-Weighted Average Tariff Rate - Evaluates The Taxes And Duties Placed On Imported Goods
- Non-Tariff Barriers (Ntbs) - Measures Covert Obstacles Like Quantity Quotas, Price Controls, Regulatory Restrictions, And Customs Delays

World Bank Getting Credit Index

The Index Measures The Strength Of Credit Systems And Legal Rights Of Lenders And Borrowers. This Is Scored From Low Access To High Access (0-100).

It Measures Two Main Areas -

- Legal Rights Of Borrowers And Lenders
- Presence of Robust Financial Infrastructure

Transfers and Subsidies Index

The Index Evaluates These Rights Across Three Major Areas On A Scale From 0 To 10 (Higher Being More Protected)

Important Note - Further From 1 Indicates More Capitalism

This Index Measures Government Expenditures On Non Repayable Payments To Enterprises, Foreign Governments, And Individuals

It Calculates These Unrequited Payments—Which Include Social Security, Welfare, And Business Subsidies—As A Percentage Of Total Government Expenses

A Simple Summary

Index	What It Measures	Organization That Creates It
Human Development Index (HDI)	Health, education, and income	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
Free and Fair Election Index	How free and honest elections are	Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute
Rule of Law Index	Whether laws are fair and enforced equally	World Justice Project (WJP)
Civil Liberties Index	Protection of freedoms like speech, religion, and assembly	Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute
Protection of Property Rights Index	How well private property is protected	Fraser Institute
Freedom to Trade Index	How easy it is to trade with other countries	Fraser Institute
Getting Credit Index	How easy it is for people and businesses to borrow money	World Bank
Transfers and Subsidies Index	How much the government spends on transfers and subsidies	Fraser Institute