



So what country has the highest living standard in the world?

Probably Norway, which topped the charts in per capita income at \$37,783 in 2002 (at contemporary exchange rates). Luxembourg and Bermuda can boast of averages in the mid-40s, but those figures are almost certainly biased by the weight of some very, very rich individuals in the mix.

The lowest rungs on the ladder are occupied by the residents of some remarkably dysfunctional economies. How on earth, you ask, do folks in Ethiopia manage on \$90 a year? They don't: translating the value of Ethiopian output into dollars generates virtually meaningless numbers. Suffice it to say, all 10 countries on the list are exceedingly poor.

Perhaps a better one-size-fits-all measure of living standards is life expectancy at birth. But these numbers are also misleading due to the toll of AIDS, which is killing a high percentage of young adults in central and southern Africa.

Which countries are least likely to break out of the cycle of poverty? I'd bet against the countries that discriminate most heavily against women. One revealing measure is the percentage point difference between male and female literacy. And by that criterion, predominately Muslim countries are in for a rough ride.

—Peter Passell

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DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEMALE AND MALE LITERACY

(PERCENTAGE POINTS)

Yemen	42.2
Nepal	35.4
Liberia	33.3
Iraq	31.6
Mozambique	31.3
Guinea-Bissau	30.6
Togo	29.8
Pakistan	29.5
Benin	28.5
Syria	27.9

POOREST BY INCOME (PER CAPITA US\$)

Ethiopia	90
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	91
Afghanistan	98
Burundi	103
Somalia	110
Sierra Leone	164
Liberia	169
Niger	171
Tajikistan	172
Mozambique	189

SOURCE: United Nations Statistics Division

LOWEST LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (YEARS)

	Men	Women
Lesotho	32.3	37.7
Zambia	32.7	32.1
Sierra Leone	33.1	35.5
Swaziland	33.3	35.4
Zimbabwe	33.7	32.6
Mozambique	36.6	39.6
Malawi	37.3	37.7
Rwanda	38.8	39.7
Angola	38.8	41.5
Botswana	38.9	40.5

