



Global Peace Index (GPI)

2022 the Deadliest Year - The Middle East Least Peaceful, Most Improved

Sunni Dhu Al-Huda

Indonesian researcher and professor of law at the Islamic University of Malaysia

In 2022, armed conflicts reached their highest death toll since the 1994 Rwanda genocide. Battles involving the Eritrean and Ethiopian military, along with the Tigray People's Liberation Front, resulted in 100,000 casualties. Additionally, the War in Ukraine claimed the lives of approximately 82,000 people.

Peacefulness deteriorated in six of the nine regions in the world in 2022. Asia-Pacific, North America, the Middle East, and North Africa were the only three regions that improved. Russia and Eurasia recorded the largest average deterioration of all regions. The MENA region remains the least peaceful region in the world, considering how it is home to four of the ten least peaceful countries in the world. However, it recorded the most improvement in peacefulness in 2022. Several post-conflict countries in the region recorded improvements in peacefulness, including Libya, Iraq, and Yemen. Libya recorded the largest improvement in peacefulness in the region and the largest improvement globally, with a 7.2% improvement in its overall score.

The 17th edition of the Global Peace Index, GPI 2023, ranks 163 independent states and territories comprising 99.7% of the world's population according to their level of peacefulness. Produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) in Sidney, the GPI presents the most comprehensive analysis to-date on trends in peace, using 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators. It measures the state of peace across three domains: the level of Societal Safety and Security; the extent of Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict; and the degree of Militarization.

Results

The average level of country peacefulness deteriorated by 0.42%. In 2022, 84 countries recorded an improvement, while 79 countries recorded a deterioration in peacefulness. The average level of global peacefulness has deteriorated for 13 of the last 15 years by

5%. The world has become less peaceful. Out of 163 countries, 95 countries deteriorated, 66 improved, and two recorded no change over the past year in the GPI. Sixteen of the 23 indicators in the GPI deteriorated, while only seven improved.

Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has maintained since 2008, followed by Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand, and Austria. Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the world for the eighth consecutive year, followed by Yemen, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo .

The largest improvement in peacefulness occurred in Libya for the second successive year, followed by Burundi, Oman, Côte d'Ivoire, and Afghanistan. Europe is the most peaceful region in the world and is home to seven of the ten most peaceful countries worldwide .

Domain Analysis

Two of the three GPI domains have deteriorated since 2008, with Ongoing Conflict deteriorating by 14% and Safety and Security deteriorating by 5.4%. Militarization was the only domain to improve with 118 countries improving, 43 recording a deterioration, and two recording no change. Five of the six indicators on the Militarization domain improved, with only the weapons imports indicator recording a deterioration. A total of 113 nations recorded improvements in the armed personnel rate. The average armed personnel rate declined from 476 to 403 soldiers per 100,000 population. 123 countries improved on the UN peacekeeping funding indicator, and 110 countries improved on the nuclear and heavy weapons indicator, while the average level of military expenditure as a percentage of GDP also fell, from 2.04% to 1.95%. However, the absolute level of military expenditure increased, with the largest increases occurring in China (\$180 billion), the US (\$70 billion), and India (\$40 billion), since 2008. Eastern European countries bordering Russia deteriorated on the Militarization domain by an average of 6.9% between 2008 and 2023 .

Safety and Security

The Safety and Security domain deteriorated by 5.4% between 2008 and 2023. Of the 11 indicators in this domain, nine deteriorated and two improved. The largest deterioration occurred in the violent demonstrations indicator, with 120 countries seeing the impact of violent demonstrations increase. Average scores on this indicator have deteriorated in every region around the world .

The terrorism impact indicator had the second largest deterioration since 2008. Until 2015, most deaths from terrorism occurred in the MENA region. However, in the following eight years the epicenter of terrorism has shifted out of South Asia and MENA and into Sub-Saharan Africa especially the Sahel region. The Sahel region accounted for more terrorism deaths in 2022 than both South Asia and MENA combined. In the last four years terrorism impact has improved in all nine regions except Sub-Saharan Africa.

The homicide rate indicator had the largest improvement in the Safety and Security domain, with 104 countries recording reductions in their homicide rates since 2008. The average homicide rate across all GPI nations fell from 7.6% to 6.3% per 100,000 people. There are now 34 countries globally that have a homicide rate of less than one per 100,000, and 61 with a rate of less than two per 100,000 .

Perpetual Conflicts

The Ongoing Conflict had the largest deterioration of the three GPI domains, with an average fall of 14% between 2008 and 2023. All six of the Ongoing Conflict indicators deteriorated. In total, 99 countries recorded a deterioration in this domain, with 52 recording an improvement, and ten registering no change since 2008.

Total conflict-related deaths rose sharply in the 2010s to reach a peak of just over 149,000 in 2014. The dramatic increase was concentrated in a handful of countries, such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria and the Central African Republic.

The number of conflict-related deaths began falling by 2015. However, there has been a rise in conflict-related deaths mirrored by deterioration in the external conflicts fought indicator, meaning that more states are becoming involved in conflicts outside their own borders. The number of countries engaged in external conflicts has increased today from 58 countries in 2008 to 91 countries. Among those 91 countries, there are 13 involved in external conflicts, 33 participating in small coalitions, and 45 engaged in large coalitions comprising ten or more countries.

This resulted in total deaths rising to 45% between 2020 and 2021, primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa, most notably in Ethiopia and the tri-border region of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. In the past year the number of deaths increased by 96%, owing to conflicts in Ukraine and Ethiopia.

External conflicts fought recorded the largest deterioration of all indicators since 2008, worsening by over 50% in 77 countries. Of the 163 countries in the GPI, 122 were involved in at least one external conflict since 2008.

Conflict-related deaths in Mali increased 154% in 2022, with violence against civilians rising by 570%, while in Myanmar, conflict-related deaths increased by 87%. In contrast, the level of violence in other conflict-affected areas fell sharply over the past year. Conflict-related deaths fell by 91% in Afghanistan, and by 63% in Yemen.

The average intensity of internal conflict indicator score increased from 2.29 to 2.56 between 2008 and 2023. In 2008, 104 countries had a score of two or less on this indicator, suggesting no conflict or only a latent potential for conflict. By 2023, this number had fallen to 85. The number of countries with a score of four or higher, which indicates the existence of openly violent internal conflict, rose from 29 in 2008 to 37 in 2023.

Political instability deteriorated over the past year in 59 countries, compared to just 22 where the indicator improved, recording the third largest deterioration of all conflict indicators over the last five years .

Contagious Violence and Peacefulness

The analysis of the data of the Ongoing Conflict domain shows that both violence and peacefulness can be contagious. Actions in one region or country can spill over into bordering regions and countries, leading respectively to virtuous or vicious cycles where peace and conflict move in tandem. Eastern Europe is an example, where Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 led to a surge in militarization in Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, with military expenditure and neighboring countries relations deteriorating in all these countries.

By contrast, Coastal West Africa is an example of a virtuous cycle of peacefulness, where countries improved their GPI scores over the past 15 years, despite widespread violence in the neighboring Sahel region .

The Economic Impact of Violence

The economic impact of violence on the global economy in 2022 was \$17.5 trillion, which is equivalent to 12.9% of the world's GDP or \$2,200 per person, increasing by 6.6% from the previous year. This was mainly driven by an increase in the total economic impact of global military expenditure, which rose by 16.8%, although more countries reduced

their military expenditure. Much of the increase resulted from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and associated military expenditure from countries involved in the conflict.

The single largest component was global military expenditure, which totaled \$7.6 trillion, or 43.6% of the total economic impact of violence. Internal security expenditure was the second largest component, comprising 29.9% of the global economic impact of violence, at \$5.2 trillion. Globally, the economic impact of military expenditure increased by 16.8% in 2022, equivalent to \$1.1 trillion .

Even though military expenditure still accounts for the greatest share of the total economic impact of violence, it improved for the second consecutive year, with 92 countries reducing their level of military spending as a percentage of GDP. There are now 43 countries where military expenditure accounts for less than 1% of GDP .

For the ten countries most affected by violence, the average economic impact was equivalent to 34% of GDP, compared to 2.9% in the ten countries least affected by violence. Ukraine, Afghanistan, and the Central African Republic incurred the largest proportional economic cost of violence in 2021, equivalent to 63%, 47%, and 40% of GDP, respectively .

Spending on private security witnessed an 8.9% decrease, totaling \$1.2 trillion. This category, constituting 6.8% of the overall economic impact of violence indicators, ranks as the third largest. Notably, China and India experienced the most significant reductions in private security expenditures, with a combined decrease of \$51 billion in 2022 compared to the previous year.

Homicide is the fourth largest component in the index, comprising 6.6% of the global economic impact of violence, at \$1.1 trillion. This category increased by 4%, or \$44.3 billion, from the previous year. 62 countries recorded a deterioration in the economic impact of homicide, while 101 countries recorded an improvement .

The economic impact of violence deteriorated for most regions of the world in 2022. The Russia and Eurasia region had the largest deterioration, driven by the costs associated with the conflict in Ukraine, where it increased by 479%.