

Yale Environmental Performance Index

Unleashing the Power of Data to Promote Progress

Tracking data for over 200 countries across 9 environmental issues and 20 key indicators, the Yale Environmental Performance Index is the standard-bearer for global environmental performance. Looking to take a quantum leap forward in the EPI's 15th year, Yale approached MSDS to help design a new strategy and user experience that would make their research a more widely accessible and understood environmental performance scorecard. More than a data-rich website and toolset for research experts, the new EPI needed to connect with key audiences in business, government, media and the public—informing and educating each on the issues and implications of global performance against critical environmental metrics.

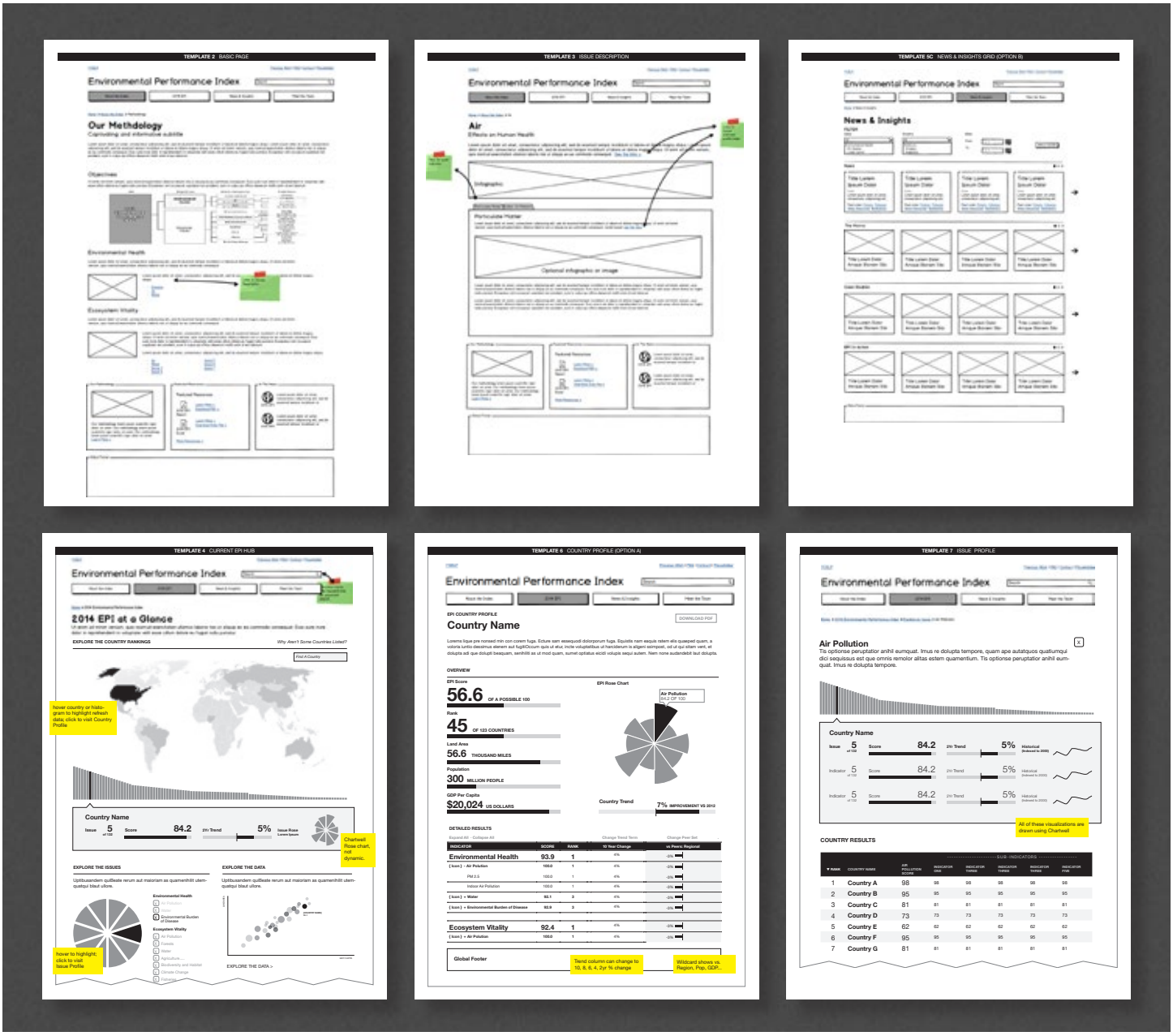
MSDS

Branding & Interactive for Nonprofits & Academia
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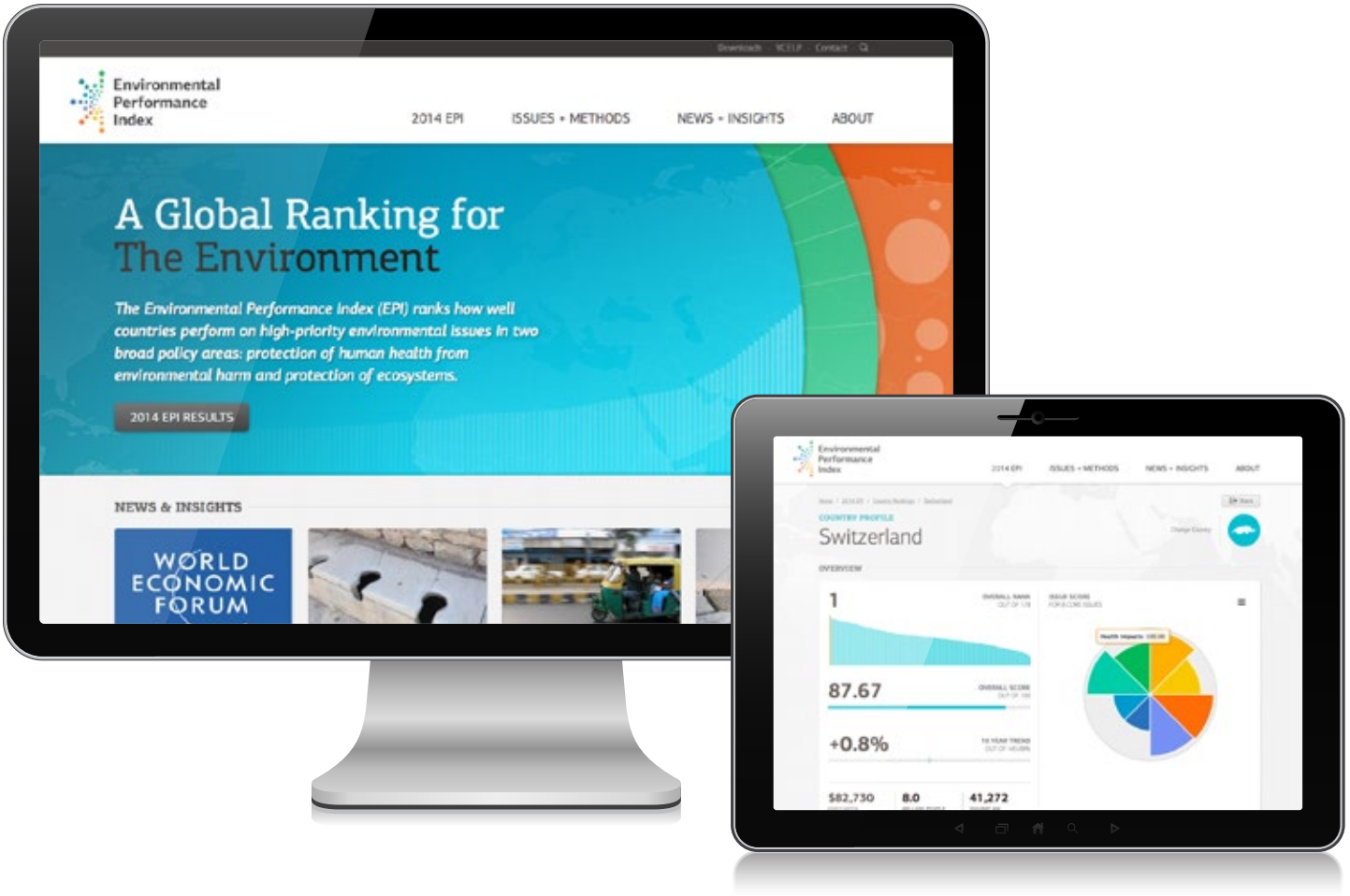
Yale EPI: Before Redesign

The existing EPI website suffered from a confusing and cluttered site experience, with essential content buried deep, difficult to find. Combined with a generic design that failed to give life to EPI research, and data visualizations that fell short of communicating nuanced details and the dynamics of the big picture, the result was a website that wasn't living up to the promise of the research. Our mission was to transform the EPI by helping to make Yale's research more compelling and accessible to ensure that it did.



Information Architecture & UX Design

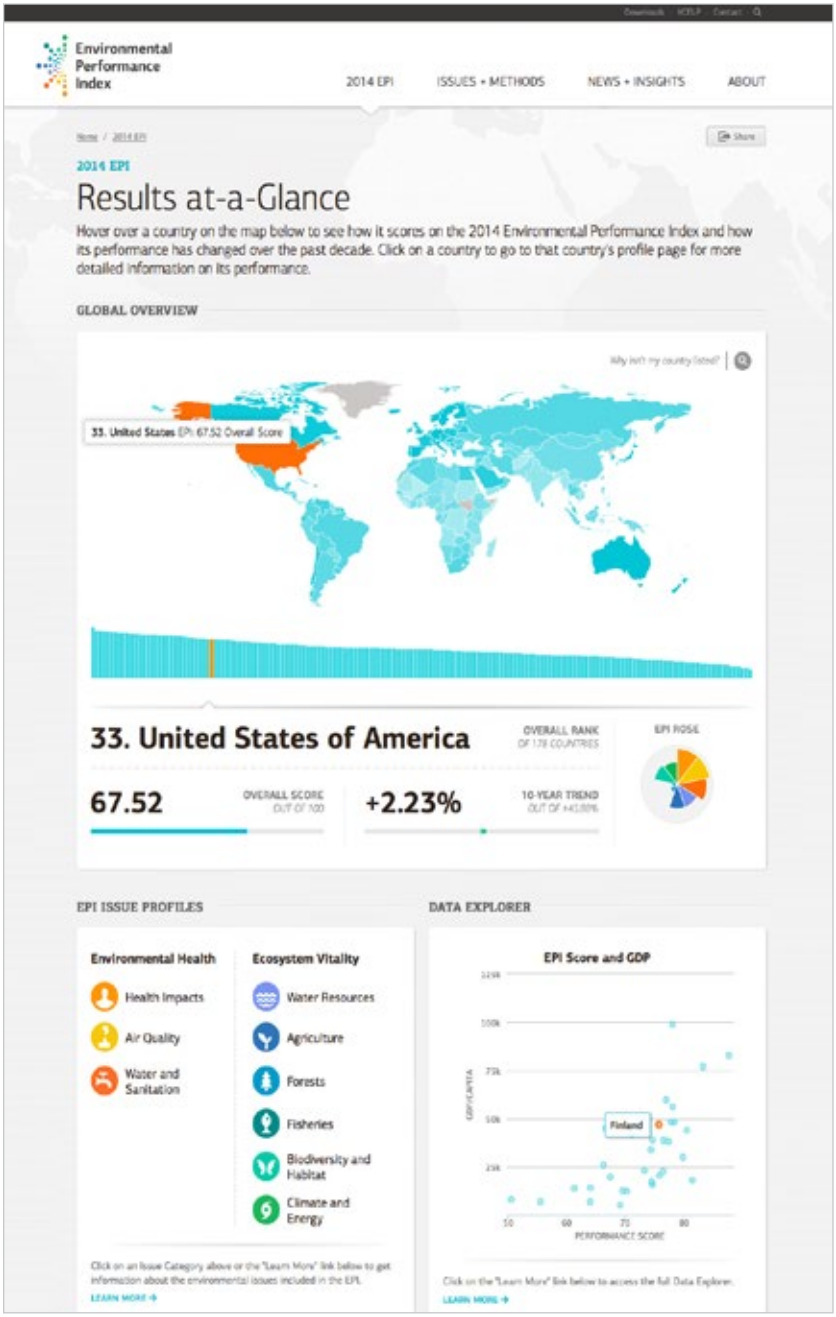
For data-heavy projects like the EPI, the challenge isn't sharing the information, it's creating an elegant, objective experience that intuitively guides audiences through the site as they explore issues and analyze the numbers. We collaborated with Yale to architect a user-centric structure that allows audiences to approach the EPI from multiple vantage points. At a page-level, dynamic data visualizations grab attention, while detailed data and tools encourage more granular exploration. The result is a more balanced experience that delivers the facts so audiences can apply their own assumptions and draw meaningful conclusions for themselves.

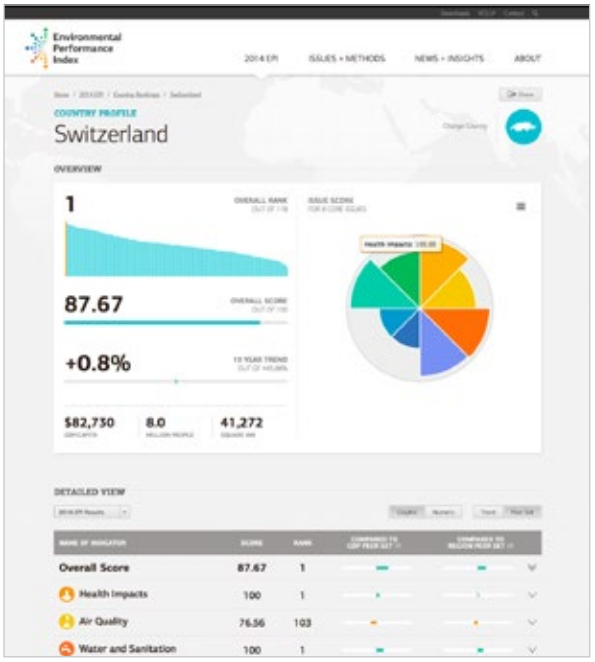


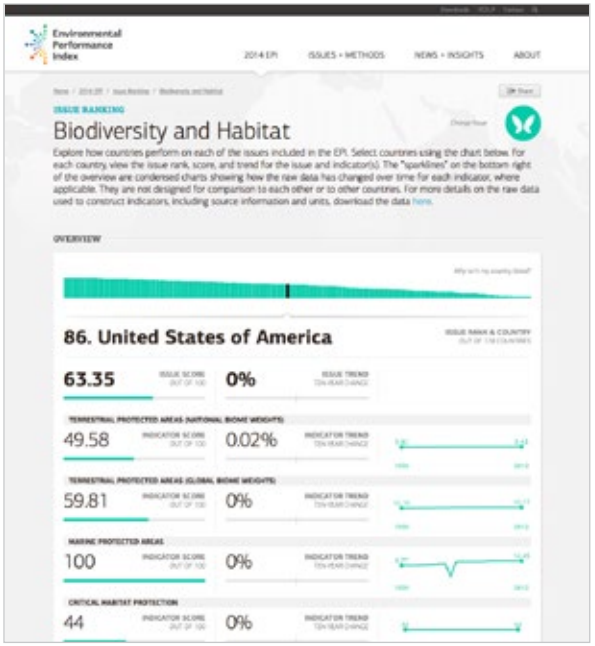
Branding & Interactive Design

With a blueprint in place, we set out to create a game-changing user experience that lived up to the integrity of Yale's brand and their research team's work. First and foremost, the new EPI website would reinforce the credibility and objectivity of Yale's research: clear and clean to allow audiences to bring their own assumptions to the data. It would deliver a visual experience that was both simple and sophisticated, avoiding the drab design so many data-heavy projects suffer from that relegate them to a narrow audience of policy wonks and research experts.

Design strategy started with a colorful brand identity and logo to establish a practical color system for presenting EPI data. To support the EPI's need to intuitively present extensive hierarchical information, we designed a comprehensive typographic system and custom-illustrated iconography that give life to EPI content. The result is a design that creates both a rational and emotional connection with users, making it easy and enjoyable for them to interact with the data.

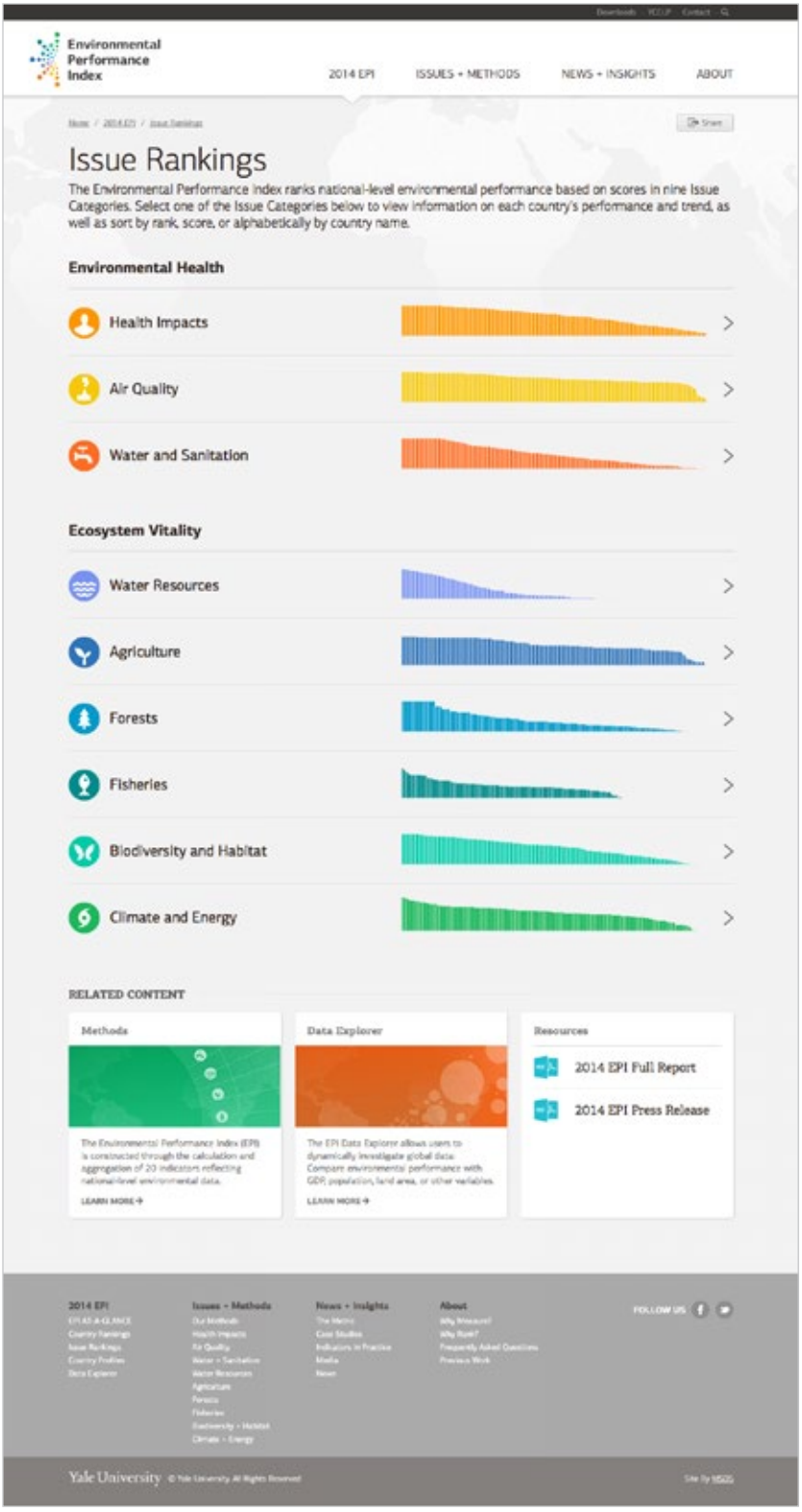


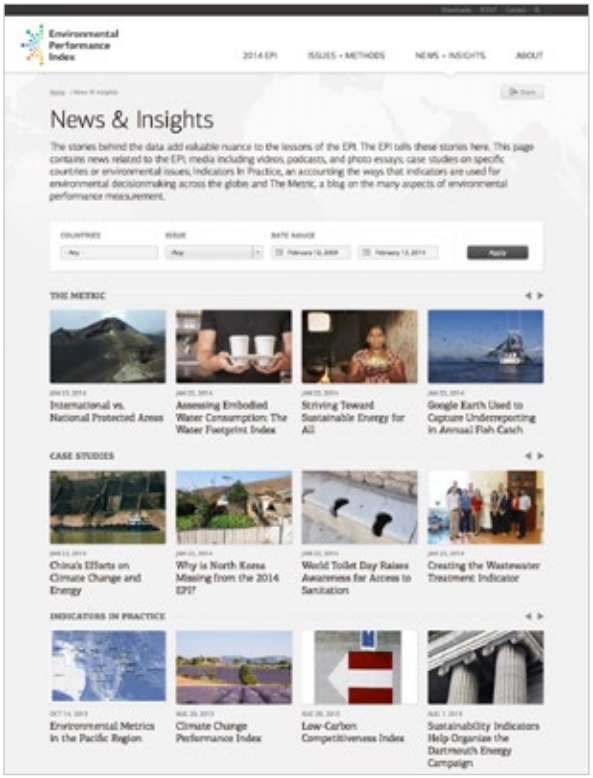


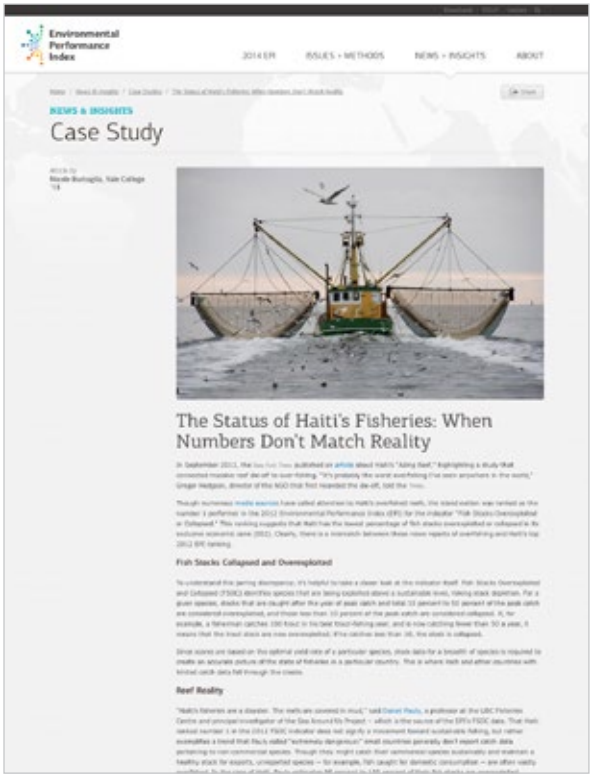


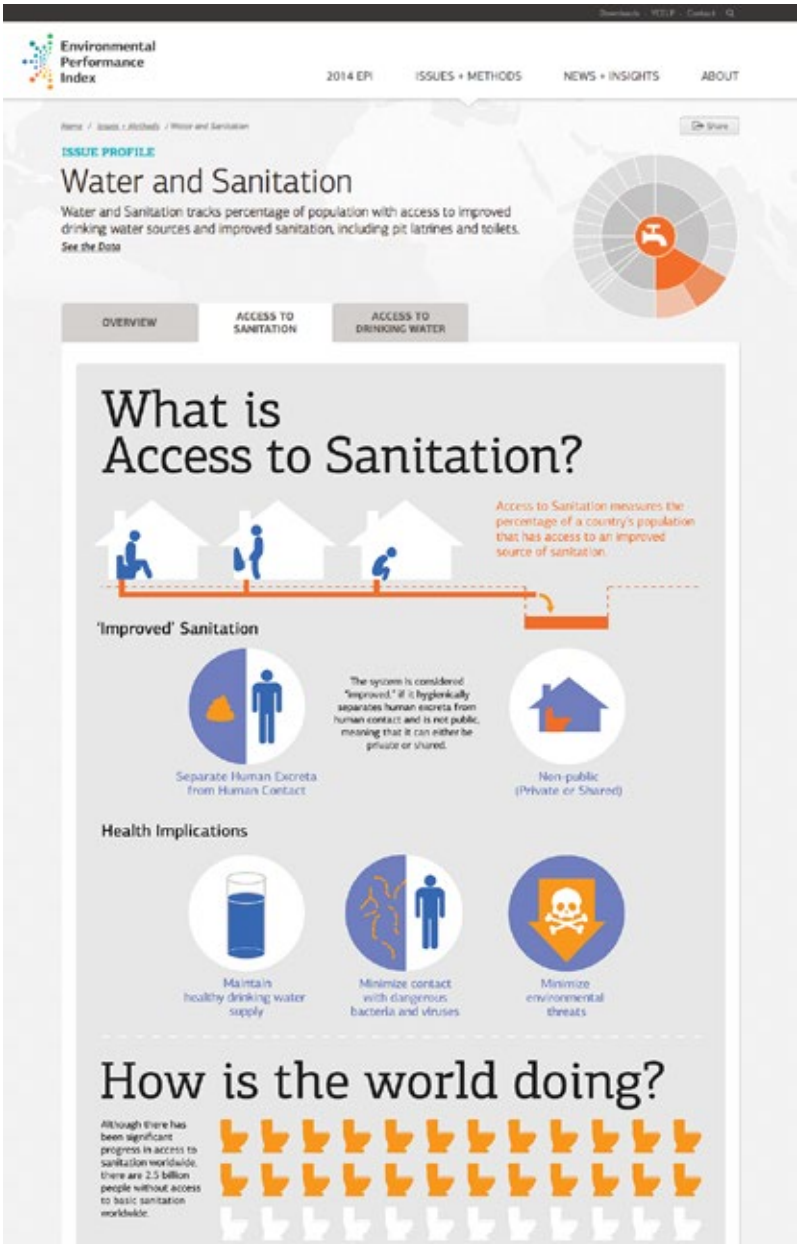
System Development

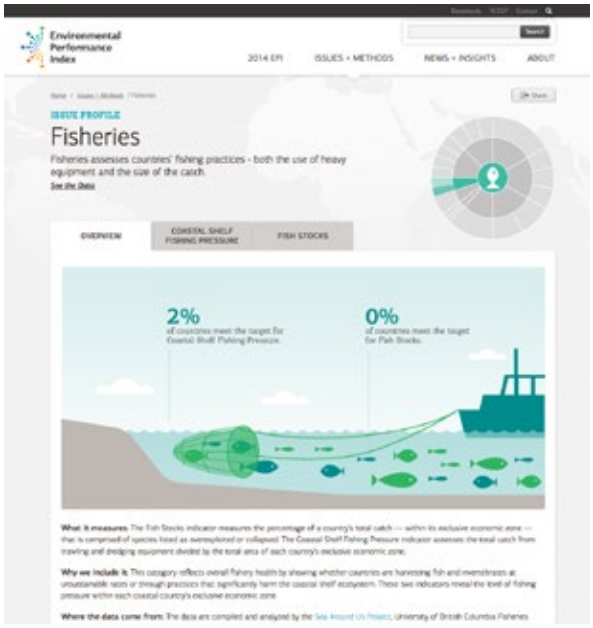
Visually, we set out to create a new standard in data-driven design, but behind the scenes is where the EPI really shines. We architected a database integrating Yale's data, developed by statisticians in "R", and customized a Drupal system that gives the EPI powerful tools and data visualization technology to give users the control to easily access, compare and analyze data sets. With an eye on the EPI's long-term goals, we built the system with a flexible and highly scalable architecture, prioritizing additions as budget is annually allocated.

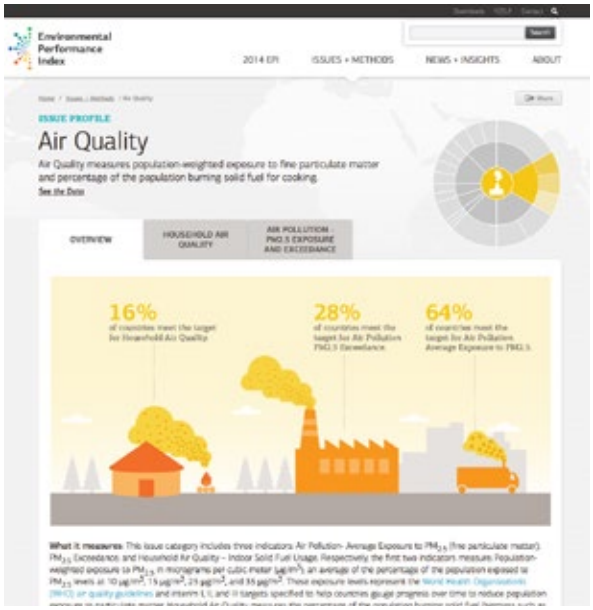

Environmental Performance Index
2014 EPI
ISSUES + METHODS
NEWS + INSIGHTS
ABOUT
Issue Rankings
The Environmental Performance Index ranks national-level environmental performance based on scores in nine Issue Categories. Select one of the Issue Categories below to view information on each country's performance and trend, as well as sort by rank, score, or alphabetically by country name.
Environmental Health
Health Impacts
Air Quality
Water and Sanitation
Ecosystem Vitality
Water Resources
Agriculture
Forests
Fisheries
Biodiversity and Habitat
Climate and Energy
RELATED CONTENT
Methods
Data Explorer
Resources
2014 EPI Full Report
2014 EPI Press Release
Yale University


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ISSUES + METHODS
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THE METRIC
International vs. National Protected Areas
Assessing Embodied Water Consumption: The Water Footprint Index
Striving Toward Sustainable Energy for All
Google Earth Used to Capture Underreporting in Annual Fish Catch
CASE STUDIES
China's Efforts on Climate Change and Energy
Why is North Korea Missing from the 2014 EPI?
World Toilet Day Raises Awareness for Access to Sanitation
Creating the Wastewater Treatment Indicator
INDICATORS IN PRACTICE
Environmental Metrics in the Pacific Region
Climate Change Performance Index
Low-Carbon Competitiveness Index
Sustainability Indicators Help Organize the Dartmouth Energy Campaign


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Case Study
The Status of Haiti's Fisheries: When Numbers Don't Match Reality
Fish Stocks Collapsed and Overexploited
Reef Reality

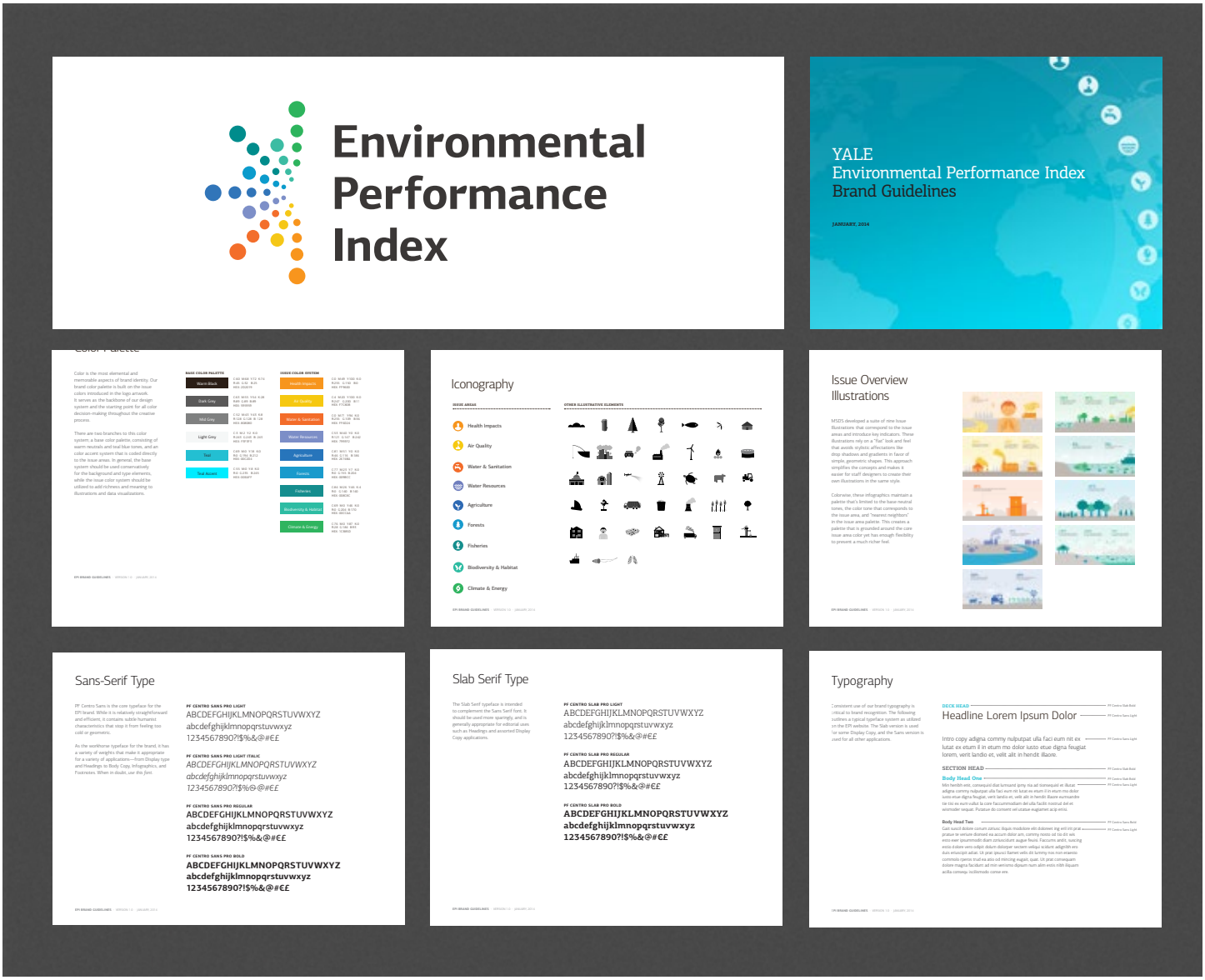






Data Visualization & Infographic Design

In addition to making environmental performance data intuitive and accessible, educating lay audiences on EPI methodology, environmental issues and indicators was critical to ensuring the EPI would resonate with interested lay audiences in business, the media and general public. We took Yale's previously analytical content and collaborated on creating objective, narrative information design to provide insight into what the EPI tracks, what it means, and most important, why it matters. As a result, instead of a dry, academic exercise catered to experts, the new EPI reaches a wider audience, educating them on complex but critical issues while providing memorable takeaways and a greater appreciation of what's at stake.



Our Client's Take

"We engaged MSDS with the enormous undertaking of developing a new website for the Environmental Performance Index. Their work has been successful for several reasons: The new EPI website is beautiful, which keeps our users focused and engaged; it's also highly usable, with tools that give users unprecedented access to EPI data. Most important, the infrastructure they built provides a scalable foundation, we hope, for the next 15 years. MSDS brought the EPI to life exactly as we had hoped; we couldn't be happier with the result."

Josh Galperin, Associate Director, Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy