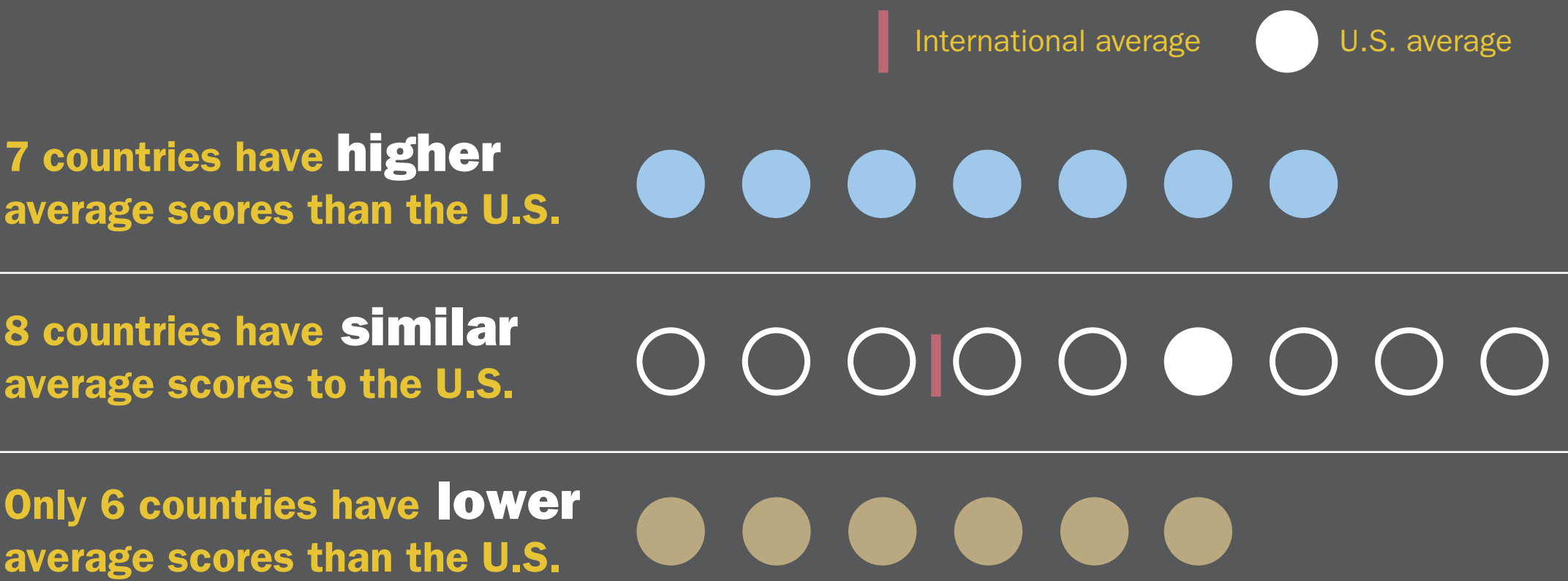


# Getting Back Up to Speed

WHY WE NEED TO IMPROVE THE SKILLS OF YOUNG ADULTS

Literacy skills are essential to participate fully in society, develop one's knowledge, and reach one's full potential.

According to a recent international survey of adult skills (PIAAC), the literacy skill level of **U.S. adults is just at the international average** of adults in 22 participating countries.



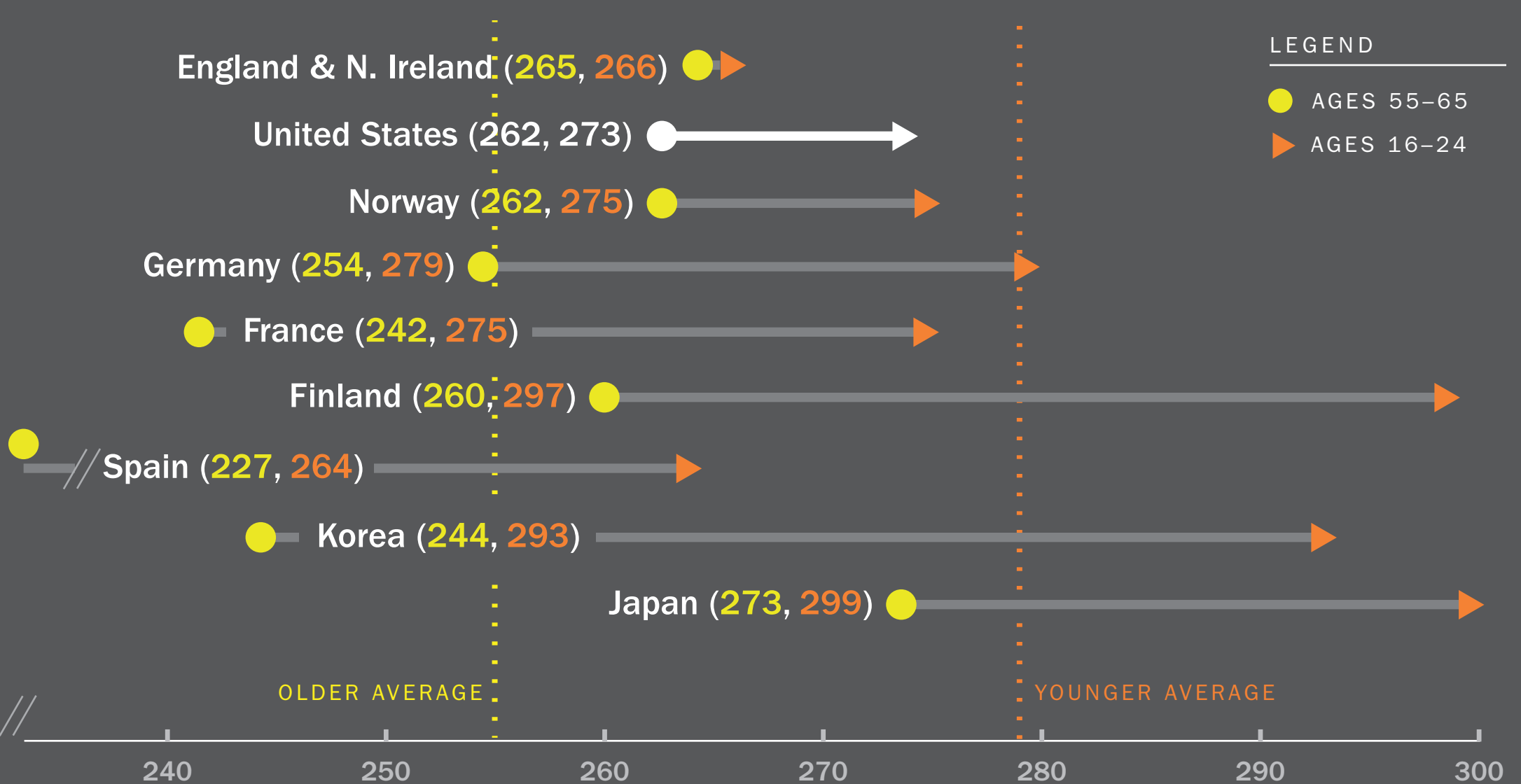
## Equip Young Adults with Skills

Of particular importance to the U.S. are the PIAAC findings regarding the skill level of our 16- to 24-year-old young adults.

The accompanying figure shows not only that these young U.S. adults score below their international peers, lagging behind Germany, South Korea, Finland, and Japan, but that the gap in the U.S. between young adults (ages 16–24) and older adults (ages 55–65) is one of the smallest among the participating countries.

This means that young U.S. adults are entering the global and highly competitive labor market with **almost the same literacy skills** as older adults who are leaving the workforce.

### Average literacy scores of older adults (ages 55–65) and younger adults (ages 16–24), by selected country: 2012, 2012/2014



**During the next 30 to 40 years, as our older workers retire, today's young adults will become the majority of the U.S. workforce, the main participants in civil society, and the parents of the next generation.** Investing in targeted education and training opportunities for these young adults and improving the quality of initial education for future generations will better prepare our workforce to meet the demands of the global 21<sup>st</sup>-century economy.

NOTE: Reported results and international averages exclude Australia due to national restrictions on the use of their data.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012/2014; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), 2012.