



## FAQ Document

---

### The Sustainable Development Report

- **What are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and why should countries care about them?**

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all 193 UN Member States as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity. The SDGs are a universal urgent call for all nations to commit to economic prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The SDGs are closely linked with the Paris Climate Agreement (which is incorporated in SDG 13). The SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement should be viewed as a package, with the SDGs oriented toward 2030 and the Paris Agreement oriented toward obtaining climate neutrality by 2050.

- **What is the Sustainable Development Report (SDR)?**

The Sustainable Development Report (SDR), which includes the SDG Index and Dashboards, annually tracks the performance and progress made by all UN Member States on the SDGs. The SDR is prepared by a group of independent scientists at the SDSN and does not represent the views of any organization, agency, or programme of the United Nations. In addition to the global SDR edition published in June each year, the SDSN and its global network prepare regional and subnational editions which discuss at length SDG performance and implementation challenges in specific continents, countries, and cities.

- **How should the SDR and SDG Index be used?**

The SDR can be used in three ways: First, as a report card to identify progress and persisting SDG challenges. Second, to identify persisting data gaps at the country level. And third, as a tool that helps promote global SDG awareness. Since 2016, the SDG Index has been used extensively by UN partners, national and subnational governments, businesses, private and public financial institutions, and civil society to inform policy, indicators, and financing frameworks for the SDGs.

- **What's new about this year's report? Why focus on SDG financing?**

This year, the SDR includes four important new features. First, the opening section, prepared by [SDSN's Leadership Council](#) provides novel insights at the mid-point of SDGs on progress made



and priorities to restore and accelerate SDG progress. Scaling-up and aligning global financial flows to the SDGs is a crucial lever. Second, the SDG Index incorporates new metrics to track negative international spillovers, as well as access to key services and roads building on geospatial tools and an innovative partnership between the SDSN and the Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri). Third, this year's SDR includes a new Index to track government efforts and commitments for the SDGs, building on the SDSN's global survey of government efforts and commitments for the SDGs. In particular, this new Index evaluates countries' efforts to promote effective coordination mechanisms at the central/federal level, adopt and implement long-term policy and investment pathways for the SDGs, and support multilateralism under the UN Charter. Fourth, this year's edition includes a special chapter that takes stock of a decade of work at the SDSN on data and statistics to identify lessons and priorities for the coming years. The chapter includes first-hand contributions from partners that have used the SDG Index to advance policy, financing, and data discussions in various parts of the world.

- **What does the SDR not assess?**

The SDR focuses on the performance of UN Member States. As such, the global edition does not evaluate the performance and progress of regions/provinces and cities on the SDGs. Due to time lags in international statistics, the 2023 SDR edition does not yet fully capture the impacts of recent geopolitical tensions.

- **How many countries does the SDR rank?**

All 193 UN member states are represented in the SDR and have a country profile. Yet, to address missing data bias, we only provide an overall SDG Index rank and score for countries that have 80% or more of the data available. This year, the SDG Index covers 166 UN Member States.

- **What data is used to rank the countries, and how are the rankings calculated?**

The SDG Index methodology is described at length in various documents accessible in open source online. The methodology was peer-reviewed, and the 2019 global edition was statistically audited by the European Commission Joint Research Centre. This year's SDG Index includes 97 global indicators and 27 additional indicators included specifically for OECD countries (due to greater data availability and comparability for these countries). Around two-thirds of the indicators come from official statistics (mainly UN custodian agencies, such as WHO, FAO, UNESCO, and others) and one-third comes from non-traditional data sources, including from the scientific literature and NGOs, such as Transparency International and Reporters sans frontières.



- **How is the SDR different from UN DESA’s Sustainable Development Goals Report?**

The SDR is prepared by a group of scientists and practitioners at the SDSN and is meant to complement the official SDG indicators and voluntary country-led review processes. As such, it is not an official report of the United Nations. The SDR and UN DESA reports present and discuss similar indicators. The SDR aggregates results at the goal and overall SDG Index level, whereas UN DESA presents indicators individually without an overall aggregation.

- **How has the SDR helped spur countries’ progress on the SDGs?**

The SDR is frequently used by countries in the preparation of their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR); the official process through which around 40 countries present their SDG action plans and priorities each year at the United Nations. The SDG Index was listed by the European Parliament Research Service in the list of the top Indices useful for policymaking. Additionally, the SDG Index is increasingly being used alongside other data sources and tools to inform sustainable investment decisions worldwide.

- **How have COVID-19 and geopolitical and military conflicts impacted the results?**

This year’s SDG Index finds that SDG progress has stalled since 2020. Multiple and simultaneous crises have led to stagnation and even reversal on several SDG indicators, goals, and countries, with poor and vulnerable countries suffering the most. The 2023 edition only partially captures the impacts of recent security and geopolitical crises.

- **Do countries participate in the SDR research process?**

The SDR process is very transparent, inclusive, and participative. The full methodology and database are accessible in open source, and anyone can replicate our results. Each year, an online public consultation is conducted where anyone can provide feedback on draft results. The findings are compiled by an independent team of researchers at the SDSN, yet we do exchange regularly with national governments, notably via their National Statistical Institutes and international UN organizations to obtain and provide clarifications on SDG data and statistics. The Index of government effort and commitment to the SDGs builds on a global survey conducted in cooperation with SDSN’s global network of research institutions.



- **Why are rich countries ranked higher than poor countries on the SDG Index?**

On average, rich countries, especially European countries, tend to perform better than other countries. This is driven by relatively better performance on socio-economic SDGs. Yet no rich country is on track to achieving the 17 SDGs, and all face challenges in achieving the SDGs, particularly related to climate and biodiversity. Many also generate negative international spillovers, notably through unsustainable consumption as well as unfair tax competition and profit shifting.

- **Can I download the data used in the report?**

The full database is accessible in open source on our website (<https://www.sdgindex.org/>). There is also an interactive data visualization platform (<https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/>). Additionally, users can access all of SDSN's work on SDG analytics, data, and pathways via the newly launched SDG Transformation Center (<https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/>).