



Looking Beyond GDP

Measuring what matters
through the High-Level Expert
Group's proposed dashboard



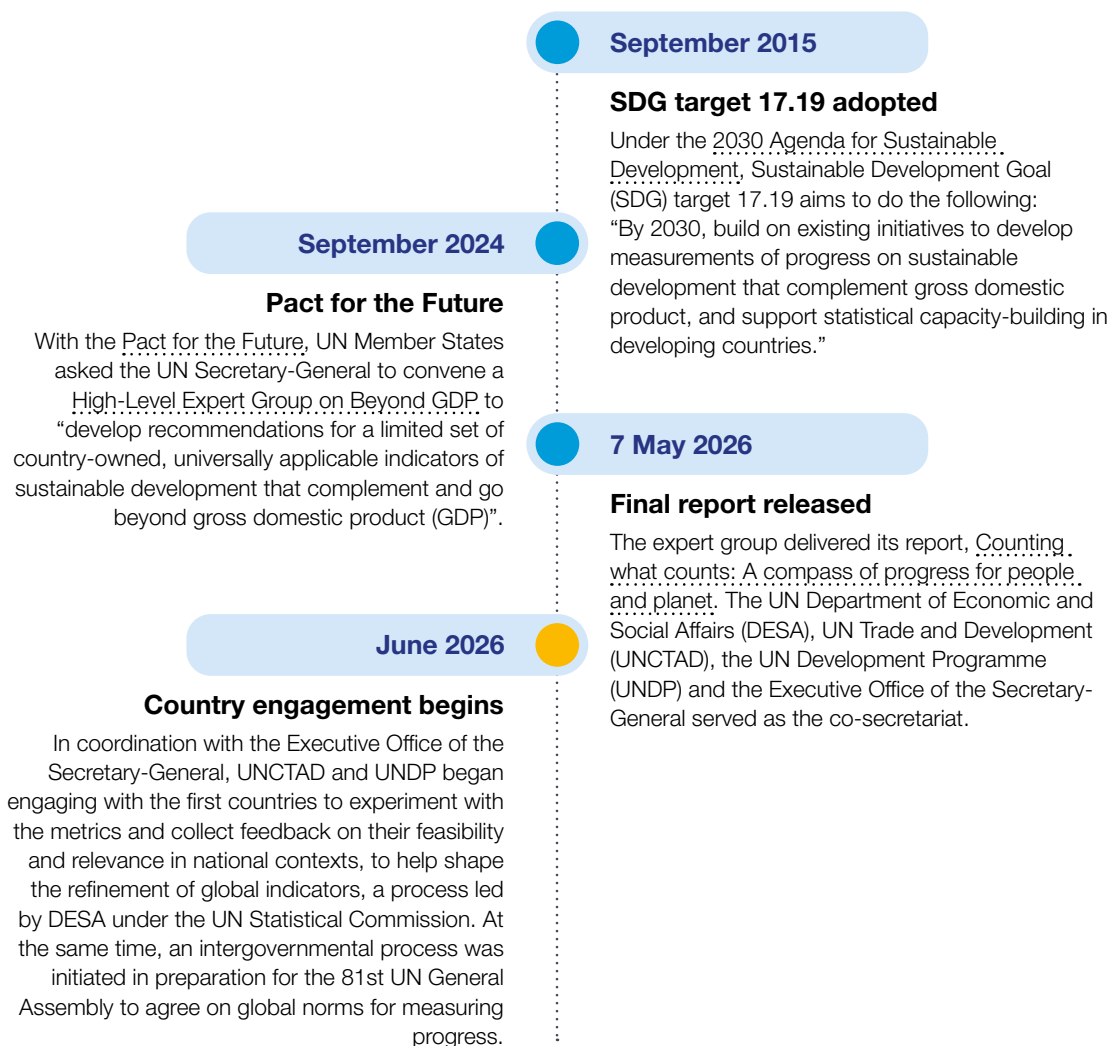
Why go beyond GDP?

Gross domestic product (GDP) has long been the leading indicator used to measure progress and assess countries' performance.

GDP measures economic output. But it doesn't show whether people are living well, whether production and consumption are harming the planet, whether opportunities are shared or whether progress can continue over time.

These limitations are reflected in real-world outcomes. GDP growth has frequently been accompanied by persistent inequality, ecological degradation and declining public trust in institutions.

Episodic shocks, such as financial crises and the COVID-19 pandemic, have revealed systemic weaknesses. Long-term structural pressures, including environmental degradation, inequality, geopolitical tensions and democratic challenges, have further underscored the limitations of relying on GDP alone.





What does going beyond GDP mean?

It requires a new understanding of what we mean by progress.

Progress builds on the foundational principles of peace, human rights and respect for the planet, recognizing that:

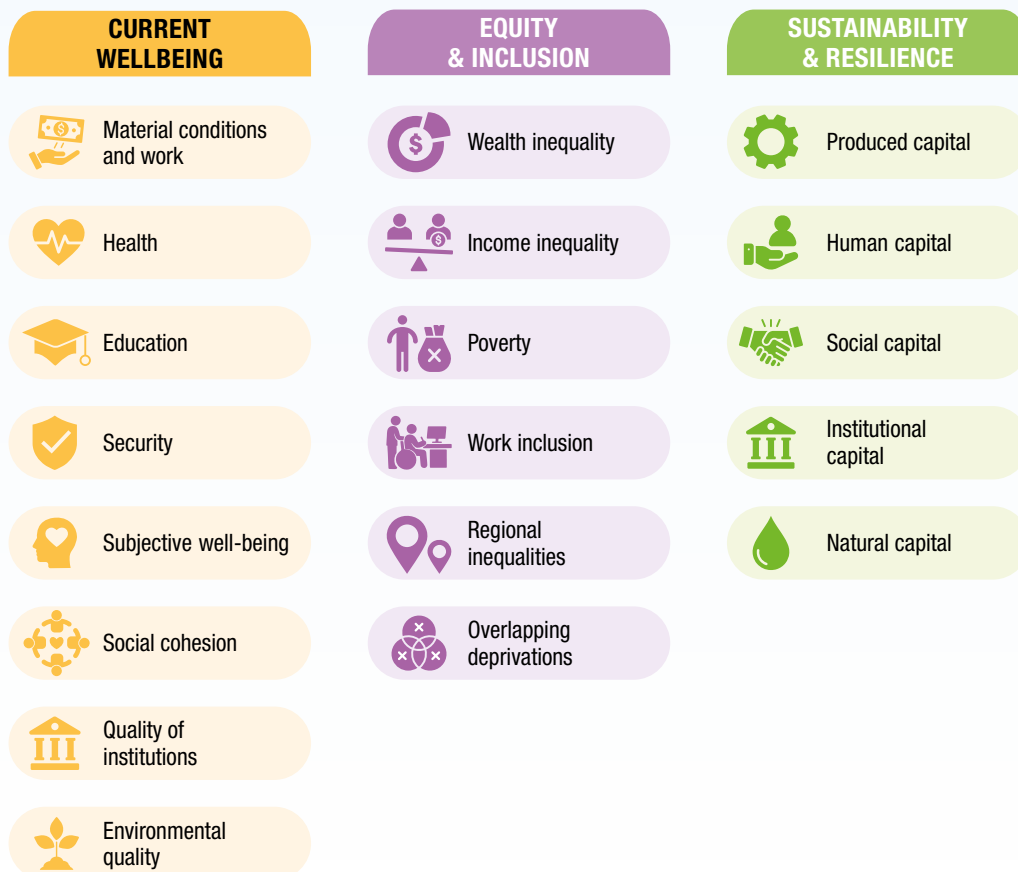
- Well-being is collective as well as individual
- People and planet are deeply interconnected
- Cross-border spillovers matter in an interdependent world

The proposed dashboard contains 31 indicators designed to help countries track progress beyond GDP:

- Around half of the indicators are drawn directly from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), so countries can start immediately
- It is country-owned and adaptable
- It measures well-being outcomes, equity and inclusion directly
- It tracks sustainability and resilience through natural, human, social and institutional capital



 The Beyond GDP dashboard tracks three dimensions of progress
supported by foundational principles



What the selected data show

The dashboard changes the questions we ask about progress. These examples below compare economic output with outcomes for people, society and the planet, highlighting insights and data gaps from indicators in the new dashboard for tracking progress beyond GDP.





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HEALTH

Current well-being

This dimension covers material conditions and work, health, education, security, subjective well-being, social cohesion, the quality of institutions and environmental quality. Let's look at some selected data.



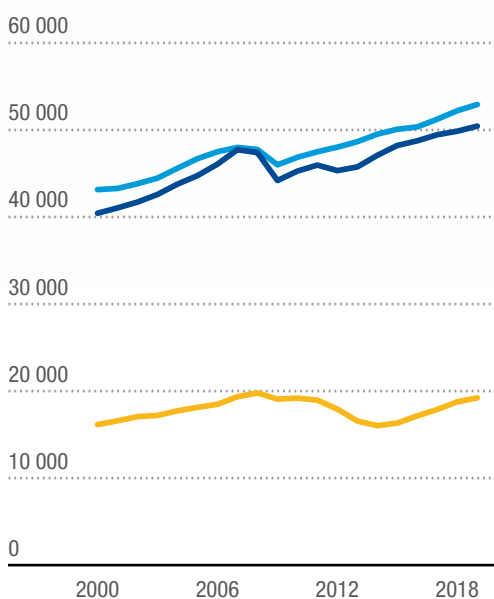
Higher incomes don't always mean longer, healthier lives

Median gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and healthy life expectancy in years, Northern America, Northern Europe and Southern Europe, dollars and years, 2000–2019.

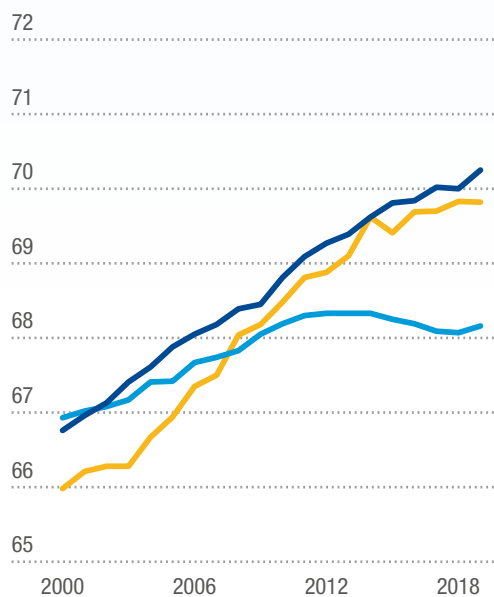
Higher GDP doesn't always translate into more well-being. Southern Europe's GDP per capita is less than one half of Northern America's and Northern Europe's. Yet its healthy life expectancy is higher than the former's and has caught up to the latter's. In Southern Europe, healthy life expectancy continued to improve despite economic slowdown.

— Northern America — Northern Europe — Southern Europe

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in dollars



Healthy life expectancy in years



Source: World Bank and WHO.





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SECURITY



Safety and security can worsen even as GDP improves

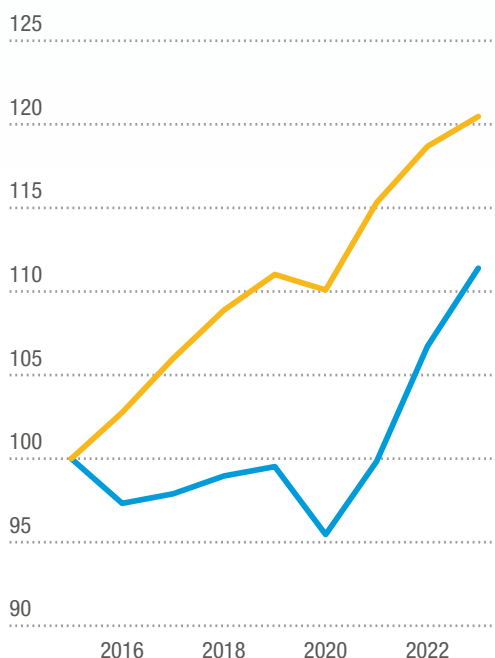
Median gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and intentional homicides, Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, index: 2015=100 and number of victims of homicide per 100,000 people, 2015–2023.

Sustained GDP growth doesn't always deliver more safety. In Latin America, homicides increased nearly 50% from 2015 to 2023, even as GDP rose 17%. In fact, median homicide rates reached their highest level on record in 2023. This contrasts sharply with Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, where homicide rates were 29 times lower.

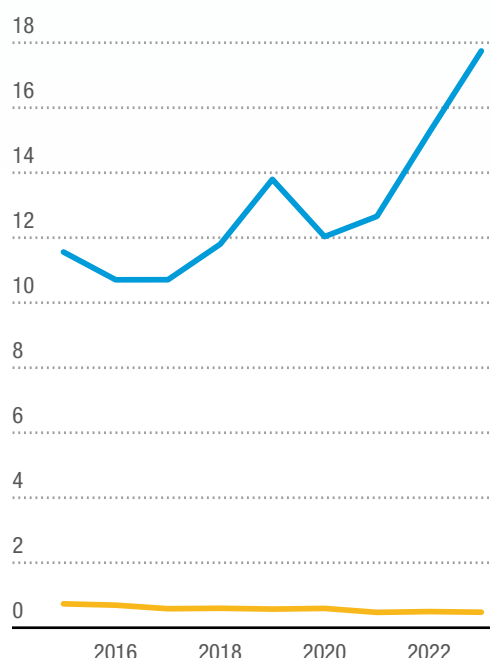
— Eastern and South-Eastern Asia

— Latin American and the Caribbean

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, index 2015=100



Number of victims of homicide per 100 000 people



Source: World Bank.

Countries in calculation: Eastern and Southern Asia: Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Republic of Korea, Singapore. Latin America: Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Uruguay.





SOCIAL COHESION



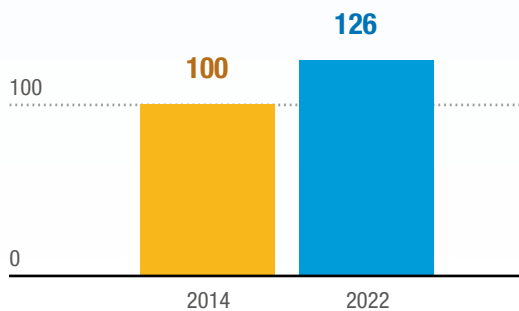
Economic growth doesn't automatically improve social cohesion

Median gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and share of people who say most people can be trusted, Northern Africa and Western Asia, index: 2014=100 and percentage, 2014 and 2022.

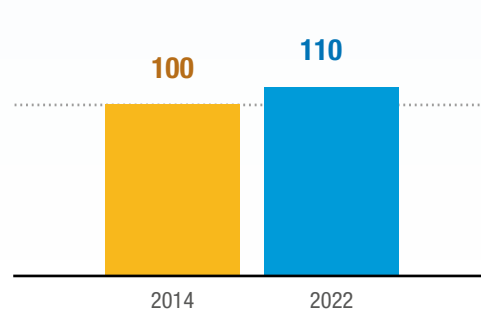
You can't buy trust. Similar economic growth can coincide with different changes in social cohesion. Median GDP rose 10.5% in Northern Africa between 2014 and 2022, but trust in people fell more than 17%. Meanwhile, both GDP per capita and trust rose by more than 20% during the same period in Western Asia.

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, index 2014=100

Western Asia

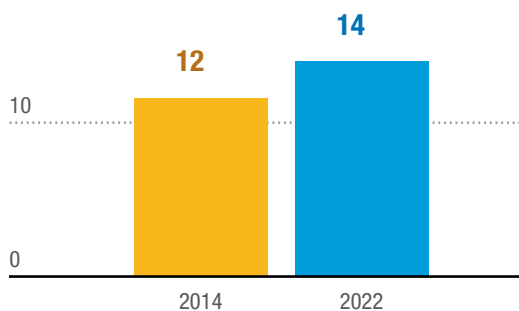


Northern Africa

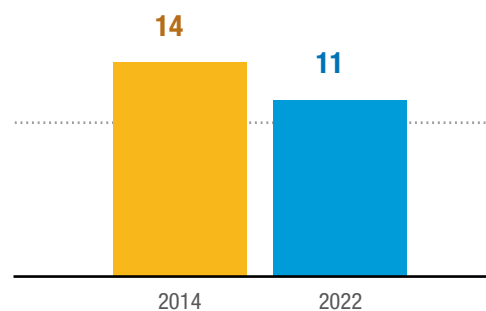


Share of people who say most people can be trusted, per cent

Western Asia



Northern Africa



Source: World Bank and World Values Survey.

Countries in calculation: Northern Africa: Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia. Western Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Türkiye.





SOCIAL COHESION



More prosperity doesn't guarantee more satisfaction with public services

Share of people satisfied with their last experience of public services and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, selected countries, percentage and dollars, 2015–2024 average

Confidence in institutions matters. And this doesn't always come with higher levels of economic prosperity. Bulgaria and Mexico report greater satisfaction with public services than some wealthier countries, such as Norway and Italy.

Country	Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita	Satisfaction with public services
Cyprus	19 739	95
Belarus	6 238	95
Lithuania	17 150	89
Mexico	10 032	84
South Africa	5 906	81
Finland	44 930	78
Tunisia	3 999	77
Netherlands (the)	48 862	76
Switzerland	87 131	72
Estonia	19 850	71
Luxembourg	106 852	71
Ireland	80 824	70
Sweden	52 801	70
Belgium	42 721	69
New Zealand	40 795	68
Australia	59 294	68
Denmark	57 062	68
Canada	44 364	67
Iceland	56 475	67
Korea (the Republic of)	33 672	65
Israel	39 452	64
Latvia	15 194	64
Germany	43 573	58
Slovenia	23 630	57
France	37 958	53
Slovakia	18 119	53
Chile	13 768	51
Greece	19 219	51
Spain	27 418	50
Norway	77 032	49
Italy	32 172	48
Portugal	20 944	45
Gambia (the)	677	39

Source: World Bank and United Nations Development Programme via the United Nations Global SDG Indicators Database.

Note: Reported satisfaction may reflect expectancy-disconfirmation. People with higher expectations may report lower satisfaction, even when the objective quality of the service is higher.



WEALTH
INEQUALITY

Equity and inclusion

This dimension measures whether opportunities and outcomes are shared. It covers wealth and income inequality, poverty, work inclusion, regional inequalities and overlapping deprivations. Let's look at some selected data.



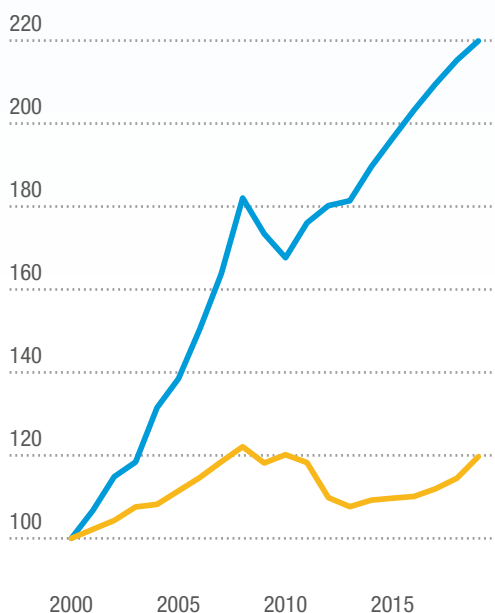
Faster growth can come with wider wealth inequality

Median gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and share of wealth held by the bottom 99%, Eastern and Southern Europe, index: 2000=100 and percentage, 2000–2019.

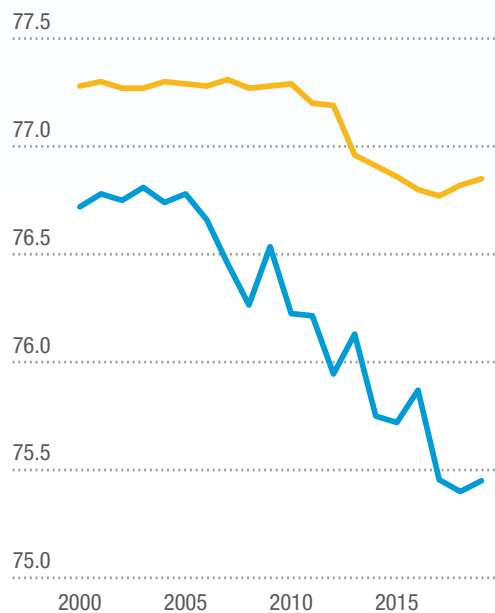
A rising tide doesn't always lift all boats – economic growth can coincide with growing inequality. For example, GDP per capita grew faster in Eastern Europe than in Southern Europe. Yet the share of wealth held by the bottom 99% declined more sharply in Eastern Europe.

— Eastern Europe — Southern Europe

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, index 2000=100



Wealth share of bottom 99%, per cent



Source: UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) based on World Bank and World Inequality Database.

Countries in calculation: Eastern Europe: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Ukraine. Southern Europe: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain



**INCOME
INEQUALITY**

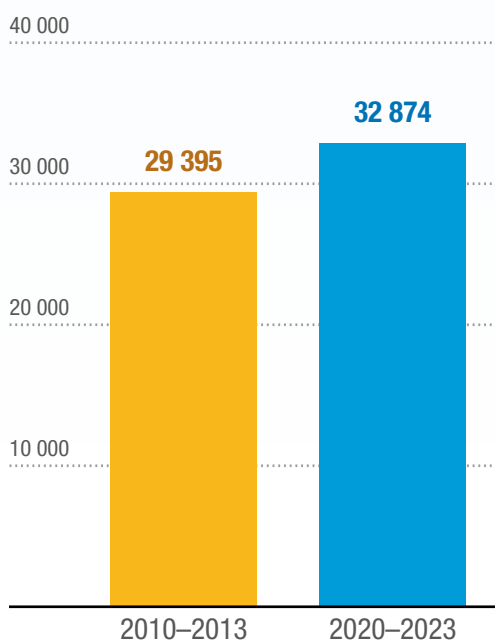


Economic growth outpaces gains in women's pay

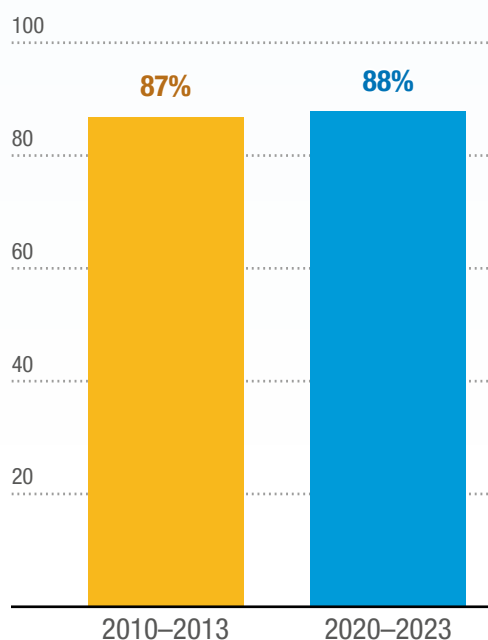
Average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and women's average hourly earnings as a share of men's, developed economies, dollars and percentage, 2010–2013 and 2020–2023 averages.

GDP growth can be slower for one segment of the population. Average GDP per capita in developed economies rose 12% over a 10-year period, but women's pay relative to men's improved only 1% – less than one tenth as much.

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, dollars



Women's hourly earnings, share of men's



Source: World Bank and International Labour Organization via the United Nations Global SDG Indicators Database.

Countries in calculation: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

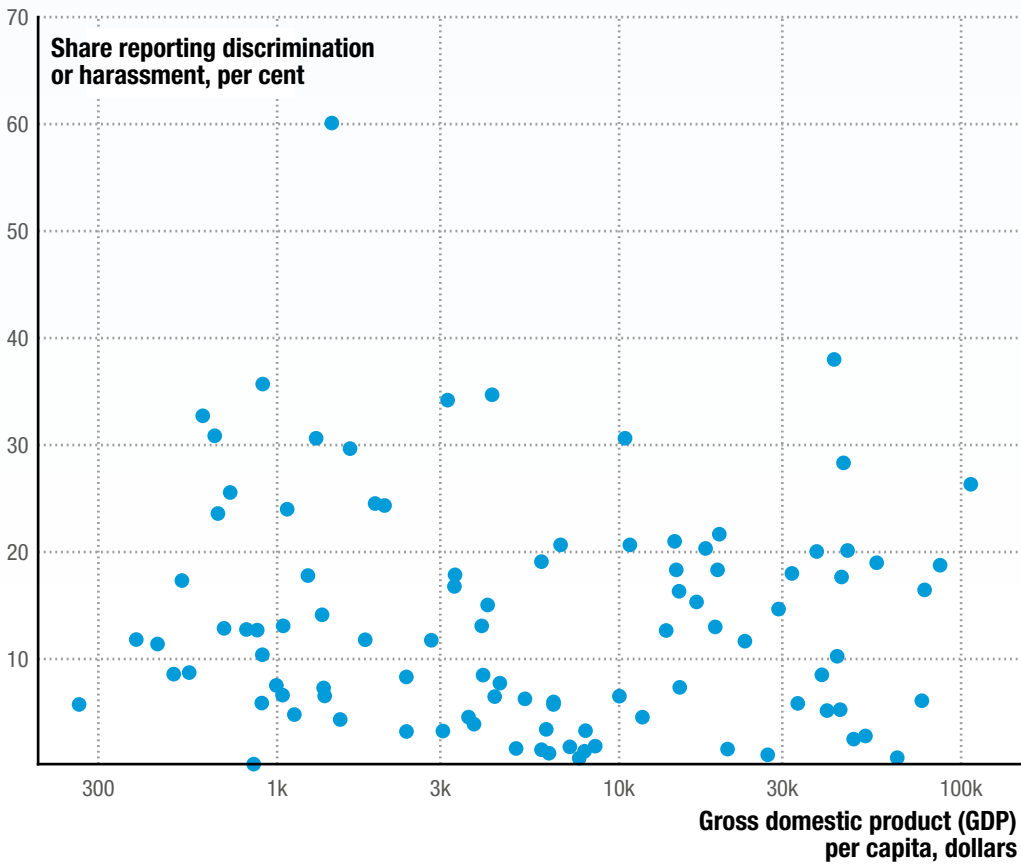




Economic prosperity doesn't protect people against prejudice

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and share of people reporting discrimination or harassment in the previous 12 months, selected countries, dollars on a logarithmic scale and percentage, 2014–2024 average.

Higher GDP isn't systematically linked to less discrimination or harassment. Focusing only on economic growth creates a major blind spot in people's lived experience.



Source: World Bank and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).





NATURAL
CAPITAL

Sustainability and resilience

This dimension tracks whether progress can continue over time. It considers produced, human, social, institutional and natural capital.



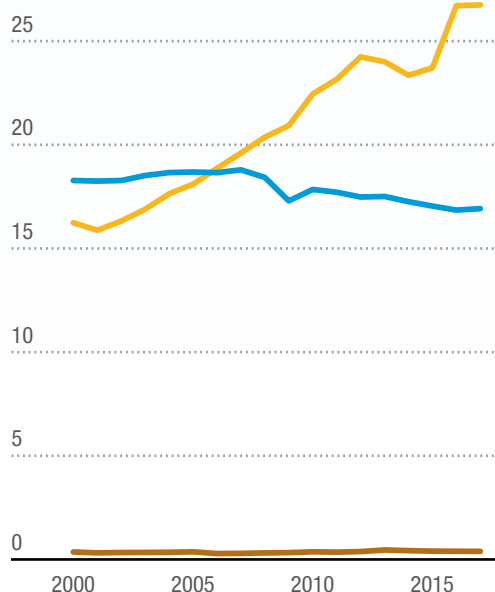
Global emissions rise even as emissions per person level off

Greenhouse gas emissions, by development status, billions of tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent and median tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per person, 2000–2017.

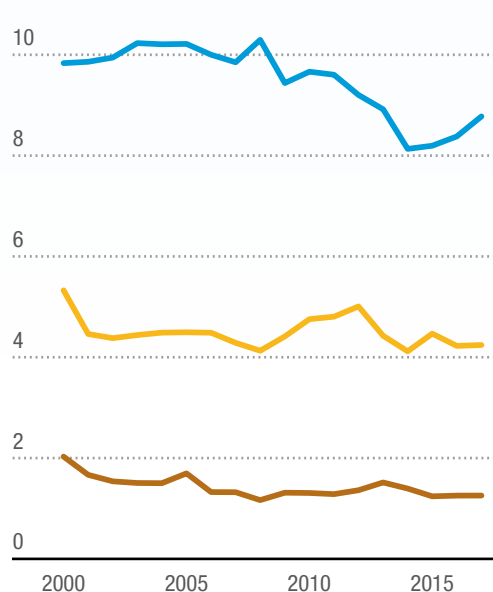
The picture changes if we look at emissions per person or total emissions. Per-person emissions have stabilized in many countries, but economic and population growth continue to push total emissions higher. Staying within planetary boundaries requires greater ambition and action.

— Developed — Least developed countries (LDCs) — Other developing

Total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, billions of tonnes CO₂e



Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per capita, tonnes CO₂e per person



Source: UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) based on UNFCCC Secretariat via UN Global SDG Indicators Database.

Note: Units assumed from the draft mockup (tonnes CO₂e per person; billions of tonnes CO₂e total) – not explicitly confirmed in the source graphic.





How can we fix what we can't see?

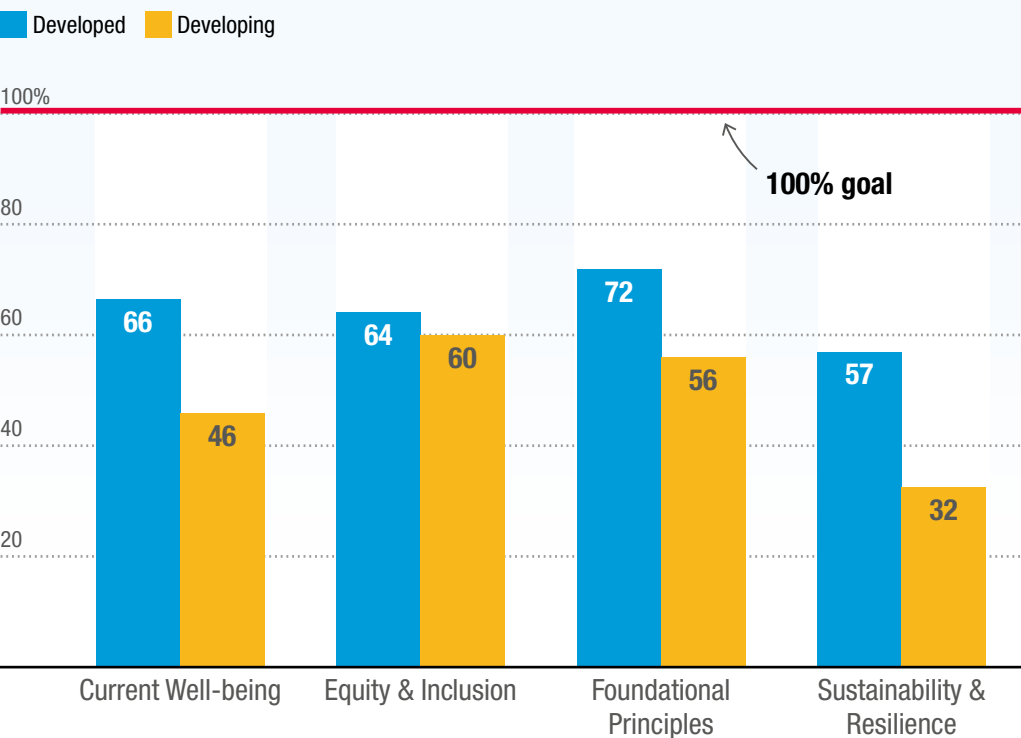
The availability of Beyond GDP indicators varies widely across levels of development and dashboard dimensions.



Developing countries have less Beyond GDP data

Beyond GDP dashboard indicators with at least one publicly available data point, by dimension and development status, percentage

Although the analysis largely relies on the SDG indicator framework, data availability remains limited. Based on data collected in April 2026 for the available international indicators, coverage gaps between developed and developing countries are particularly pronounced for current well-being and sustainability and resilience. At present, fewer than half of developing countries are covered for these two key dimensions.



Source: UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) calculations on internationally available data

Note: This calculation draws on data from publicly available international databases and may therefore not capture additional data available at the national or private level.



A shared effort to move beyond GDP

Moving beyond GDP builds on decades of international efforts to incorporate sustainability and well-being in the way we measure and understand progress. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development released *Our Common Future* (the Brundtland Report), which popularized the concept of sustainable development by linking economic development with environment concerns. In 2009, the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report, *Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up*, introduced an array of concepts, ranging from sustainable measures of economic welfare to measures of savings and wealth and a “green GDP.” Together, they changed the way people think about progress, laying the foundation for the modern Beyond GDP agenda.

Turning the Beyond GDP agenda into practice requires coordinated action across countries, the UN system, the statistical community, civil society, and other stakeholders. Country engagement is central to adapting the framework to national priorities, strengthening data and statistical systems, and using it to inform decision-making. The high-level expert group's recommendations call on:

- 1 Governments to invest in statistics, data and innovation
- 2 Countries to set up national progress-measurement initiatives
- 3 The UN to support implementation, including a global capacity development and reporting process
- 4 The statistical community to improve methods and fill data gaps
- 5 Civil society and others to support measurement and accountability

UNCTAD's role in Beyond GDP

UNCTAD's work on Beyond GDP focuses on supporting countries' statistical and analytical capacities, as requested at the UNCTAD16 conference.

We work closely with DESA, UNDP and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on capacity support. We also contribute to methodology development under the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Chief Statisticians' network, and advance youth engagement with the Geneva Beyond Lab.

We support the Global Alliance on Beyond GDP, launched in Sevilla and spearheaded by Spain. Together with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), the Alliance facilitates country exchanges and learning.

We also work with countries and civil society organizations to ensure efficient support and promote shared global approaches.

Moving beyond GDP requires a collective, long-term effort. Governments, institutions and society need stronger data and evidence-based action.



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This work is part of the project “*Beyond GDP: Advancing global and national initiatives to develop, compile and integrate beyond-GDP metrics to foster inclusive, sustainable, and forward-thinking policy making*” with financial support from the 2030 Agenda Sub-Fund of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund.

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