1 Overview

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015 by all the members of the United Nations, has an unprecedented ambition, but also confronts countries with complex challenges. This report aims to help OECD Member countries meet their obligations to monitor and report on the SDGs by looking at how far OECD countries have come in achieving each of the SDG targets for which data exist. The chapter finds that while a few targets have already been met (mainly those relating to securing decent living standards and to the implementation of policy tools and frameworks), in many areas OECD countries still have a long road to travel. In particular, OECD countries have scope to strengthen their efforts to ensure that no one is left behind, to restore trust in institutions and to limit pressures on the natural environment.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all the UN Member States at the UN General Assembly in September 2015, includes an ambitious set of 17 goals and 169 targets that all the countries committed to achieve by 2030. It is a call to action for a better and more sustainable future for all. While the UN prepares annual reports on progress towards the SDGs at global and regional levels (UN, 2021[1]), national governments are responsible for monitoring and reporting achievements at the national and sub-national levels.

To support the international community and OECD member and partner countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the OECD Council adopted an Action Plan on the Sustainable Development Goals in December 2016 (OECD, 2016[2]). The present report is a major element of this Plan. While a central part of the OECD's data effort is to contribute to the global indicator framework put in place to monitor the 2030 Agenda, *The Short and Winding Road to 2030: Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets* report offers a high-level picture of Member countries' performance across the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

The global framework for SDG follow-up and review

The 2030 Agenda includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Figure 1.1). For communication purposes, these goals are sometimes grouped under five broad themes (the "5Ps"): People (broadly corresponding to Goals 1 to 5), Planet (Goals 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15), Prosperity (Goals 7 to 11), Peace (Goal 16) and Partnerships (Goal 17).[1] Most of these goals and their underlying targets build on previous international agreements, especially those concerning development, the environment and human rights.

Figure 1.1. The Sustainable Development Goals

Source: Sustainable Development Goals Communications Materials, accessed on 3 December 2022. More details available at: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/.

The 17 SDGs are underpinned by 169 targets, which in several cases specify the achievements to be accomplished or the policies to be deployed by 2030. To monitor progress towards these targets, in 2015 the United Nations Statistical Commission (StatCom) created the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs), composed of experts from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and observers from international organisations (including the OECD), to develop and implement a global indicator framework

for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. These indicators are at different stages of development, with some already well developed, with established methodologies and regularly collected data, while others are still in the early stages of conceptual development and data collection. These global indicators are classified by the IAEG-SDGs into three tiers based on their methodological development and data availability, as follows:

- Tier I indicators are conceptually clear, based on established methodology and standards, and regularly produced by at least 50% of countries accounting for at least 50% of the population of each world region;
- Tier II indicators are conceptually clear, based on established methodology and standards, but not regularly produced by countries; and
- Tier III indicators are those that still lack an established methodology or standards.

The IAEG-SDGs is regularly revising the tier classifications of the indicators included in the global indicator framework, as their methodology and data availability evolve continuously over time. At the time of drafting this report, 130 indicators were classified as Tier I, 97 as Tier II and none as Tier III out of the 231 unique indicators[2] included in the global indicator framework, while the remaining four indicators had multiple tiers (i.e. different components of the indicator are classified into different tiers).[3] The tier level of indicators varies across the goals. For instance, more than 80 per cent of the indicators for goals relating to Good Health and Well Being (Goal 3), Affordable and Clean Energy (Goal 7) and Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (Goal 9) are classified as tier I, while less than one-third of the indicators on Gender Equality (Goal 5), Climate Action (Goal 13), Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11) and Peace, Justice and strong Institutions (Goal 16) are tier I.

Each year, the UN Secretary General prepares a global overview of progress towards the SDGs at the regional and global levels, which starts from the global indicator framework (UN, 2021[1]), while national governments are responsible for monitoring and reporting achievements in each country. While the SDGs are to be achieved globally, the 2030 Agenda states that implementation at the national level will be in accordance with national circumstances:

> "The Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities." *(UN, 2015[3])*

The OECD contribution to monitoring the SDGs

To support the international community and OECD member and partner countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the OECD Council adopted the Action Plan on the SDGs in December 2016 (OECD, 2016[2]). The Action Plan aims to: i) support countries to identify where they currently stand in relation to the SDGs and where they need to be, and to propose sustainable pathways based on evidence; ii) reaffirms the OECD role as a leading source of expertise, data, good practices and standards in the economic, social and environmental areas of public policy that are relevant to SDGs; and iii) encourages a "race to the top" for better and more coherent policies that can help deliver the SDGs through the use of hallmark OECD approaches (e.g. peer reviews and learning; monitoring and statistical reporting; policy dialogue; soft laws). With these objectives in mind, the OECD has identified four key areas of action:

- Apply an "SDG lens" to the OECD's strategies and policy tools.
- Leverage OECD data to help analyse progress in the implementation of the SDGs.
- Upgrade the OECD's support for integrated planning and policy making at the country level and provide a space for governments to share experiences on governing for the SDGs.
- Reflect on the implications of the SDGs for the OECD's external relations.

The OECD reports to its members on the implementation of the OECD Action Plan on an annual basis, supporting their implementation efforts with OECD analysis and recommendations. Much of the OECD's work is relevant to the SDGs. This includes the importance of international co-operation and global governance as well as the Universal Values of the 2030 Agenda, such as the overarching principle of "leaving no one behind" (LNOB) and policy work on the "5Ps" (i.e. People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership) that are embedded in the OECD's programme of work. Since 2015, the OECD has taken steps to integrate an SDG lens into a number of OECD review processes (including Environmental Performance Reviews, Investment Policy Reviews, Public Governance Reviews, Digital Government Studies Review, and Development Assistance Committee Peer Reviews) as well as analytical working papers and other publications.

Concerning SDG monitoring, the OECD contributed to the development of the global indicator framework for the SDGs as an observer to the UN Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The OECD is also the custodian or partner agency on a number of indicators featuring in the global indicator framework. It directly supplies data to the *SDG Global Database* on official development assistance (ODA) and other international flows, on gender-based legal discrimination (leveraging the OECD Development Centre's work on the Social Institutions and Gender Index (OECD, 2019[4])), as well as on access to civil justice (OECD, 2021[5]) and on policy instruments for biodiversity (Karousakis, 2018[6]).

The purpose and nature of this report

The OECD *Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets* report, first released in 2016 and now in its fourth edition, leverages UN and OECD data to provide a high-level assessment of OECD Member countries' performance across the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda at national level.[4] These reports contribute to the OECD Action Plan on SDGs, and in particular to Action Area 2 ("*Leverage OECD data to help analyse progress in the implementation of the SDGs*"). They are not meant to replace thematic reviews conducted by different OECD Directorates but rather to help Member countries with meeting the policy commitments they undertook when signing the 2030 Agenda by:

- Identifying available comparative indicators that countries could use to set their strategic priorities within the SDG agenda and to track progress towards them.
- Assessing OECD Member countries' most recent position on each of the targets and putting this into context through a comparison with the OECD average.
- Highlighting key data gaps where statistical development will be particularly important, either to track progress or to advance understanding of the policy drivers of SDG targets.[5]

This edition of the *Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets* builds on previous work. It deepens the analysis by looking at both current achievements and recent trends – i.e. whether countries have been moving towards or away from the targets, and how likely they are to meet their commitments by 2030 based on recent trends – as well as considering how these trends may be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the report draws on data from UN and OECD databases aligned with the global indicator framework, while complementing *SDG Global Database* with OECD sources to deepen the analysis of specific issues.

Member countries have used previous *Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets* reports to guide their monitoring processes, test the robustness of national indicators and develop national baselines.[6] As part of their national SDGs implementation processes, several OECD countries have used evidence from these reports to:

- Communicate on SDGs or add a comparative lens to national monitoring exercises (Statistics Denmark, 2017[7]; Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2018[8]; Statistics Netherlands, 2018[9]).
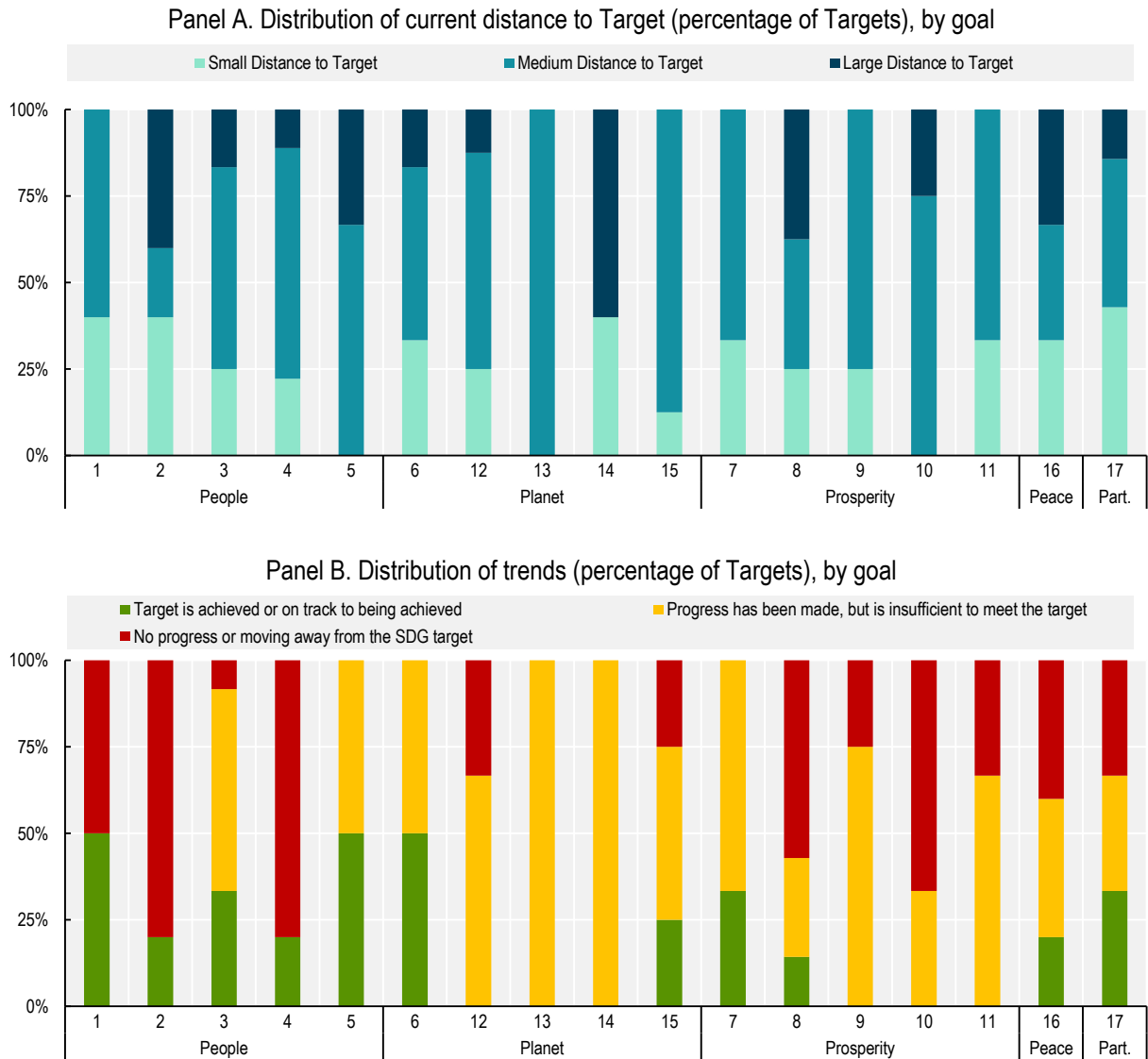
- Develop national monitoring and reporting systems (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017[10]; Bureau fédéral du Plan, 2019[11]).
- Discuss policy-relevant areas of action (Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2017[12]).

Where do OECD countries stand with respect to the SDGs?

While some SDG targets are, on average, close to being met, performance is very uneven across the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Figure 1.2 presents a snapshot of OECD progress towards targets based on available data for each of the 17 goals, showing that distances to targets and trends over time differ significantly even when considering a specific goal:

- On average, OECD countries have already achieved, or are close to achieving, at least 25% of the targets for 12 of the 17 goals (in lighter blue in Panel A, Figure 1.2). Conversely, no target can be classified as close to being reached for the goals relating to Gender Equality (5), Climate actions (Goal 13) and Reduced inequalities (Goal 10) – in medium or darker blue in Panel A, Figure 1.2.
- OECD countries are, on average, making progress towards the goals pertaining to Gender Equality (5), three of the Planet goals (Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation; Goal 13 on climate action; and Goal 14 on life below water) as well as on affordable and clean energy (Goal 7) – shown in green and yellow (Panel B of Figure 1.2).
- In most cases, the progress made is insufficient to reach targets by 2030 (in yellow). Conversely, while some targets are on track to be met by 2030 for all the People-related goals, progress has been slow or even reversed in most cases (in red).

Figure 1.2. Distribution of distance to targets and trends over time, OECD average, by goal

Panel A. Distribution of current distance to Target (percentage of Targets), by goal

Panel B. Distribution of trends (percentage of Targets), by goal

Note: Numbers from 1 to 17 stand for the goals: 1 for No poverty, 2 for Zero hunger, 3 for Good health and well-being, 4 for Quality education, 5 for Gender equality, 6 for Clean water and sanitation, 7 for Affordable and clean energy, 8 for Decent work and economic growth, 9 for Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10 for Reduced inequality, 11 for Sustainable cities and communities, 12 for Responsible consumption and production, 13 for Climate action, 14 for Life below water, 15 for Life on land, 16 for Peace, justice and strong institutions and 17 for partnerships for the goals. These goals are grouped under five broad themes (the "5Ps"): People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. Panel A shows how OECD countries perform, on average, at a given point in time, in terms of their distance from the target level they are supposed to meet by 2030. Panel B shows how OECD countries perform, on average, based on recent developments for the different indicators; it shows the likelihood of meeting the different targets by 2030 based on recent trends. The OECD average is measured as the simple average across OECD countries with available data. Averages for each goal are based on the simple average of the distances across each of the targets pertaining to a given goal. Percentages are computed for the targets with available data – see Future statistical and research agenda on SDGs.
Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021[13]), *SDG Global Database*, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg and (OECD, 2021[14]), *OECD.Stat,* https://stats.oecd.org/ (accessed on 29 October 2021).

StatLink ᠌᠍᠌᠍ https://stat.link/lrv5nq

These results suggest that the **"Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals"** (UN, 2020[15]) is mired in uncertainty. With less than 10 years left to achieve the SDGs, much stronger policy actions will be needed to make the 2030 Agenda a success. In addition, there is significant heterogeneity

in the performances of OECD countries across goals and targets. The four thematic chapters included in this report provide a more exhaustive picture of where OECD countries stand in meeting the different targets, while country profiles dive into the details of countries' performances and data availability. The present chapter provides an overview of the main strengths and weaknesses of OECD countries.

Box 1.1. Key challenges in SDG measurement

This report is closely aligned with the global indicator framework as curated by the IAEG-SDGs;[1] as such, it reflects the level of ambition agreed by UN Member States when setting the 2030 Agenda. Doing so allows to provide a picture of countries' achievement vis à vis the SDG targets. Yet, these estimates should be interpreted with the following considerations in mind:

- First, when seeking to identify strategic priorities for implementing the SDGs, countries should look at their performance against targets rather than focusing on average results by goal or even broader categories (the 5Ps). Achievements at target level differ significantly even when considering a specific goal; the average distance at goal level may mask those differences and prevent identifying the specific targets for which stronger policy action is needed.

- Second, when evaluating countries' performances at the goal level, attention should be paid to the many blind spots arising from missing data. For instance, although data are currently available for almost 70% of the targets pertaining to the Planet category, only one in three of these targets can be monitored over time due to limited availability of robust time-series data.

- Third, while the target levels have been set with reference to the wording of the 2030 Agenda wherever possible, these targets reflect large disparities in their level of ambition. For instance, for climate-related targets (mainly in Goal 13), the level of ambition appears to be particularly low as the Paris Agreement on climate change entered into force over one year after the SDGs were agreed; the 2030 Agenda, therefore, falls short of the ambition of the Paris Agreement. Also, the wording of SDG targets varies between targets. For instance, while some targets are expressed using strong prescriptive verbs such as "eradicating" (e.g. Target 1.1. aims at "eradicating extreme poverty") or "ending" (e.g. Target 5.1 aims at "ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls"), others are more loosely defined (e.g. Target 12.5 aims at "substantially reducing waste generation").

In addition, the projections included in this report only illustrate the potential scale of progress; they should be interpreted as indicating where OECD countries could end up in 2030 if they were to keep travelling at the same pace they achieved over the past decade(s). As a result, given the lags in available data, the pace of progress displayed will not reflect measures already announced or enacted but which have not yet manifested their full effect. Also, the pace of progress does not reflect the effects of the pandemic on countries' trajectories (see the Methodological Annex for more details).

Note:
1. While all indicators and time series used in the report are closely aligned with the global indicator framework, in some cases, and while recognising the need for comparability among OECD Member countries, the present report goes beyond the global indicator framework, in particular, for monitoring indicators and targets for which no comparable data are currently available or tailoring the analysis to the policy challenges confronting OECD countries (more details in Methodological Annex). Such indicators that are not included in the global indicator framework are highlighted in the thematic chapters.

Progress on targets: Main results

Progress on SDGs requires a granular understanding of countries' strengths and weaknesses based on the consideration of the 169 targets (Figure 1.3). The assessment shows both **current achievements** (in the inner circle; the longer the bar, the smaller the distance remaining to be travelled) **as well as whether OECD countries are on track** (or at least making progress) to meet their commitments by 2030 (in the outer circle).

Overall, while a few targets have already been met (mainly those relating to securing basic needs and to the implementation of policy tools and frameworks – see Table 1.1), in many areas OECD countries still have a long road to travel (Figure 1.3). In particular, OECD countries have scope to strengthen their efforts to ensure that no one is left behind, to restore trust in institutions and to limit pressures on the natural environment (see Table 1.2).

Figure 1.3. OECD average distance from achieving SDG targets

Current level: bars shows current level of achievement on each available target. The longer the bar, the shorter the distance still to be travelled to reach the 2030 target. Colors refers to the Goals.

Trend asssessment: the outer ring describes the trend using stoplight colours to measure progress towards the target

- Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
- No progress or moving away from the SDG target
- Progress has been made, but is insufficient
- No (or insufficient) data

Goals

- 1: No Poverty
- 2: Zero Hunger
- 3: Good Health and Well-Being
- 4: Quality Education
- 5: Gender Equality
- 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- 10: Reduced Inequality
- 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- 13: Climate Action
- 14: Life Below Water
- 15: Life On Land
- 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Note: The OECD average is measured as the simple average across OECD countries with available data.
Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021[13]), *SDG Global Database*, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg and (OECD, 2021[14]), *OECD.Stat,* https://stats.oecd.org/ (accessed on 29 October 2021).

The OECD area as a whole has secured decent living standards for its population. Table 1.1 lists the targets for which OECD distances (on average) are smallest. It shows that the OECD average already exceeds target levels (i.e. the average distance is nil) for 10 targets, while 18 additional targets are considered to be close to be met (the average distance is below 0.5 standardised measurement units, see

Annex 1.A). For instance, the OECD average distance is nil or very small (and likely to be nil by 2030) when it comes to eradicating extreme poverty (Target 1.1) and hunger (Target 2.1), as well as providing access to some basic amenities including sanitation (Targets 1.4 and 6.2), freshwater (Target 6.1) and energy (Target 7.1). OECD countries have also been able to reduce maternal and infant mortality (Targets 3.1 and 3.2), to afford access to early childhood education (Target 4.2), to provide modern education facilities (Target 4.a) and a legal identity to all citizens (Target 16.9), and to develop key statistical capacities (Targets 17.18 and 17.19).

Most OECD countries have already adopted or implemented a handful of policy instruments mentioned in the 2030 Agenda. Some of the data series included in this report are so-called "binary measures" (i.e. "yes" or "no" indicators) that aim at tracking the adoption and/or implementation of various policy instruments and frameworks. For most of these, most OECD countries have already met the relevant targets (i.e. they have already adopted or implemented the various measures). As a result, the average distance to target is very small (or nil) for the targets that rely on such binary measures. For example, all OECD countries with available data have already met Target 12.7 (on promoting public procurement practices) and Target 16.10 (on guarantying public access to information). Most of them have also met Target 11.a (on having national urban policies or regional development plans to support urban planning) and Target 15.8 (on implementing measures to prevent the introduction of Invasive Alien Species).

In a few cases, however, a small distance to targets may also reflect the lack of good quality data. Some SDG targets are multifaceted, phrased in general terms or open to different interpretations, implying that more than one indicator is needed to monitor progress. In these cases, relying on a single indicator can lead to wrong conclusions. For instance, while Target 4.2 refers to the quality of childhood education, available data only capture the quantity of education (i.e. participation rate in organised learning). In a few other cases, while data in the global indicator framework are available, they may not be fully appropriate in the OECD context. For instance, the global indicator framework proposed monitoring Target 14.6 on harmful fisheries subsidies through a policy indicator capturing the *"degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing"*. While this measure may provide an overview of the situation, an extensive assessment would require considering aspects that are not covered by such an indicator (see Planet chapter). Similarly, the global indicator framework proposes that the monitoring of Target 9.c on access to ICT should be done using data on the number of connections to the mobile network. But, as detailed in the Prosperity chapter, relying on this measure may mask significant connectivity gaps. In such cases (and wherever possible), the present report includes additional data series sourced from the OECD database to reflect the specific conditions prevailing in OECD countries (details are available in thematic chapters).

Table 1.1. Lowest OECD average distances to targets and recent trends

Targets where OECD countries, on average, already meet or are close to meeting SDG targets

		Target	Average distance	Trend assessment
	1.1	By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than USD 1.25 a day	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	1.4	By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	2.1	By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round	0.28	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
	2.c	Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and	0.00	Target is achieved or

		Target	Average distance	Trend assessment
		their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility		on track to being achieved
	3.1	By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	3.2	By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1 000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1 000 live births	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	3.b	Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and noncommunicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all	0.37	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	4.2	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education	0.24	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all	0.05	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	6.1	By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all	0.15	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	6.2	By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations	0.35	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	7.1	By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	8.10	Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all	0.45	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	8.b	By 2020, develop and operationalise a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization	0.45	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	9.c	Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020	0.36	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	11.6	By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management	0.49	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	11.a	Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning	0.23	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	12.1	Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with all countries taking action, and with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries	0.00	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	12.7	Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities	0.00	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	14.5	By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information	0.38	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	14.6	By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognising that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment of developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organisation negotiations on fisheries subsidies	0.36	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	15.8	By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or	0.30	Available data do not allow assessing trends

		Target	Average distance	Trend assessment
		eradicate the priority species		
	16.5	Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	0.00	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	16.9	By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	0.17	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	16.10	Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements	0.00	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	17.10	Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda	0.45	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
	17.18	By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing states, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts	0.09	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	17.19	By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries	0.11	Available data do not allow assessing trends

Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021[13]), *SDG Global Database*, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg and (OECD, 2021[14]), *OECD.Stat*, https://stats.oecd.org/ (accessed on 29 October 2021).

OECD countries still have a long road to travel to meet 21 targets by 2030 (Table 1.2), and none of the targets due by 2020 are likely to be met by all Member countries (see Box 1.2). Lack of progress is visible in the area of inequalities and exclusion, showing no change with respect to previous evidence (OECD, 2019[16]). On average, around one in eight OECD residents are considered as income poor, based on a relative threshold set at half of the median income of each country (Targets 1.2 and 10.2); over the past decades, most OECD countries did not make any progress toward poverty reduction based on this measure (see details on Goal 1 in the People chapter and on Goal 10 in the Prosperity chapter).

In addition, many population groups including women and young adults are facing additional challenges, implying large distances for the targets focusing on them. Despite progress, women's rights and opportunities are still limited in both the private and public spheres. For example, no OECD country reached equal representation of men and women at higher levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life or has been able to close the gender gap in wages, nor the gap in time spent on paid and unpaid work (Targets 5.4 and 5.5) – see details on Goal 5 in the People chapter.

Inequities in education start early in life and tend to get worse over time, owing to a number of different factors, including socio-economic background, gender and place of residence (Target 4.5).[7] All in all, too many children, youth and adults lack the basic skills needed to become active, responsible and engaged citizens (Target 4.6) – see details on Goal 4 in the People chapter.

Unhealthy behaviours (including malnutrition and tobacco consumption) may further exacerbate inequalities. Smoking (Target 3.a), harmful alcohol use (Target 3.4) and obesity (Target 2.2) are the root cause of many chronic health conditions and increase the risk of people dying from COVID-19 (OECD, 2021[17]). Such unhealthy behaviours tend to be more common among low socio-economic groups (Murtin et al., 2017[18]; Placzek, 2021[19]). Although smoking has been declining in many OECD countries, 17% of adults still smoke daily in the average OECD country. Unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles have led to rising obesity rates in all OECD countries, with an average of 60% of adults being overweight or obese. Yet, spending on disease prevention remains relatively low, accounting for only 2.7% of total health spending on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2021[17]). Also, despite universal health coverage in most OECD countries, barriers to access persist, with many households not having enough money to pay for health care (Target 3.8) – see details on Goals 2 and 3 in the People chapter.

Table 1.2. Largest OECD average distances from targets and recent trends

Targets where OECD countries are, on average, furthest from meeting SDG targets

		Target	Average distance	Trend assessment
	2.2	By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons	2.46	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
	2.5	By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed	3.59	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
	3.8	Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all	1.79	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	3.a	Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate	2.65	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy	1.57	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	5.4	Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	1.79	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	1.89	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	6.6	By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes	2.12	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	8.1	Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries	1.89	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
	8.2	Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high value-added and labour-intensive sectors	1.77	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
	8.6	By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training	1.69	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
	10.2	10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status	1.54	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	10.c	By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent	2.21	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	12.b	Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products	1.87	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
	14.1	By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution	1.83	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	14.4	By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics	1.78	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	14.b	Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets	1.64	Available data do not allow assessing trends
	16.3	Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	2.33	No progress or moving away from the SDG

		Target	Average distance	Trend assessment
				target
	16.6	Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels	2.26	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
	16.7	Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	1.85	Available data do not allow assessing trends
❀	17.15	Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development	2.32	Available data do not allow assessing trends

Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021[13]), *SDG Global Database*, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg and (OECD, 2021[14]), *OECD.Stat,* https://stats.oecd.org/ (accessed on 29 October 2021).

The macro-economic situation that prevailed in the years immediately prior to the pandemic was already challenging. As detailed in the section below (Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on OECD countries' progress in meeting the targets of the 2030 Agenda), the economy, along with trade, employment and incomes, is recovering from the shock caused by the pandemic, but the revival is unbalanced. As macro-economic indicators are among the timeliest, some of the distances to targets reported in Table 1.2 are already capturing the effect of the pandemic. Yet, even before the pandemic hit, many OECD economies were struggling with slow GDP growth (Target 8.1) and sluggish productivity (8.2) as well as intensifying trade frictions and low investment (OECD, 2021[20]). Structural problems in many labour markets include stubbornly high long-term unemployment, informality, poor job quality and security and worsening labour market outcomes for young people (Target 8.6) – see details on Goal 8 in the Prosperity chapter.

While the pandemic has underscored how critical trust and transparency are for democracies, OECD countries remain far from the related targets. Trust and transparency are critical to a society's capacity to absorb and bounce back from shocks (OECD, 2021[21]). Yet, available data show a marked decrease in people's trust in institutions in developed countries since the 1970s (UNDESA, 2021[22]). Trust in government is multifaceted and reflects a mix of economic, social and political interactions between citizens and government. Still, available data pertaining to Goal 16 in Table 1.2 show that OECD countries still have a long distance to travel to reach the targets relating to areas that are critical for trust, including accessibility, accountability, transparency and diversity in public institutions (Targets 16.3, 16.6 and 16.7) – see details on Goal 16 in the Peace and Partnership chapter.

The 2030 Agenda calls upon governments, international and non-governmental organisations, the private sector and civil society to join efforts to support the implementation of the SDGs beyond national borders. Yet, available data show that the total official development assistance (ODA) provided by members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is less than half the target (0.7% of GNI) agreed by the donor community (Target 17.2), and that very few OECD countries are using results frameworks and planning tools owned by recipient countries when deciding how to allocate ODA (Target 17.15). In addition, while remittances to developing countries are one of the largest development finance flows and have the potential to contribute towards the achievement of Agenda 2030, the high cost of sending remittances from destination to origin countries limits their full potential (Target 10.c) – see details on Goal 17 in the Peace and Partnership chapter.

At the same time, environmental pressures are rising. With few exceptions (mainly relating to Goal 14 on oceans and maritime biodiversity), current distances to the targets underpinning the Planet goals appear to be smaller, on average, than in other areas (Figure 1.3). However, this mainly reflects the fact that the social and economic damages from environmental emergencies are now only starting to materialise. In some cases, this also reflects the lower level of ambition of these targets[8] (see Box 1.1) and the higher uncertainty relating to missing data (see Figure 1.5). Looking at changes over time (rather than current performance) provides a more sober assessment of OECD countries' performance on these goals

and targets. Although available data do not allow such a dynamic assessment for the vast majority of indicators, for those that can be assessed analysis shows that none of the Planet-related targets are on track to be achieved by 2030, with the only exceptions being those related to access to drinking water (Target 6.1), water quality (Target 6.3) and the use of forest resources (Target 15.2).
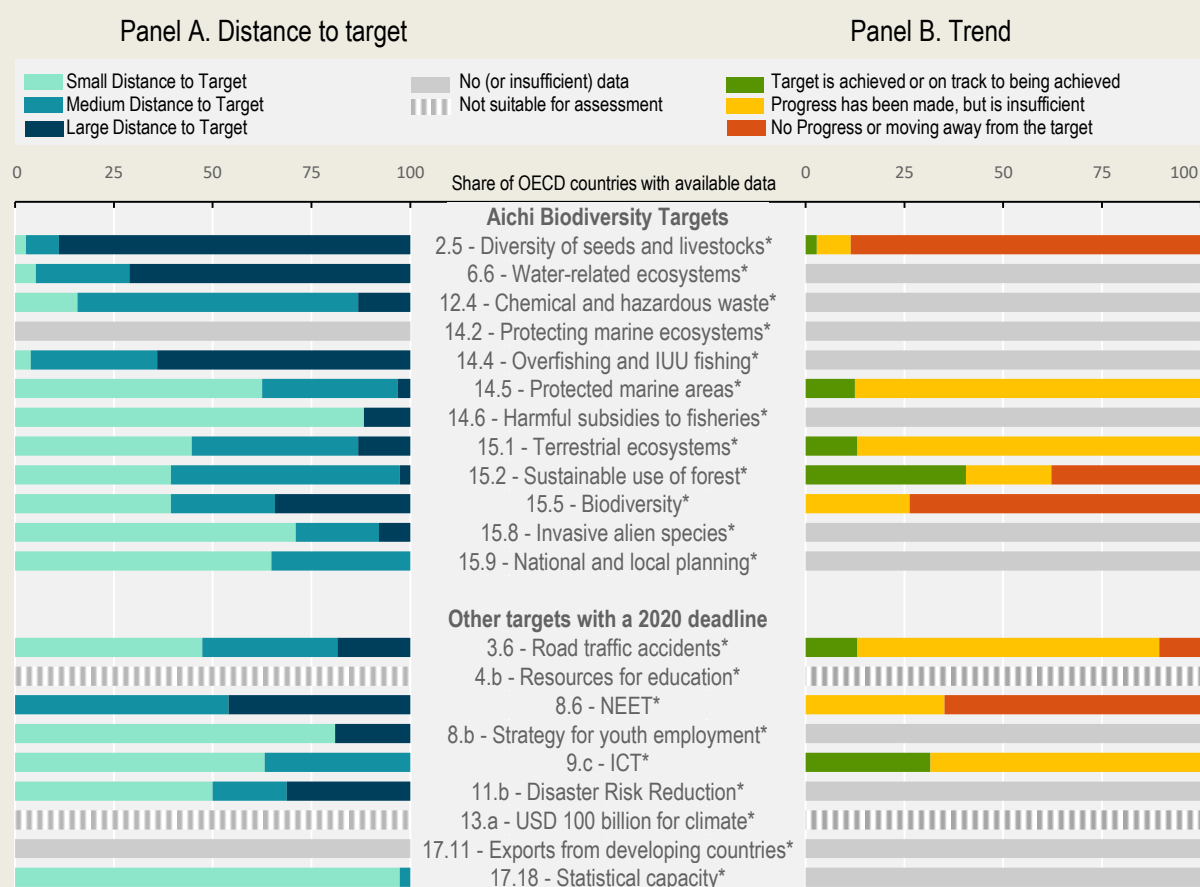
Overall, as further detailed by thematic OECD work, "the picture that emerges from OECD environmental indicators is mixed at best" (OECD, 2020[23]). The displacement abroad of production that is resource- or pollution-intensive (and, to a lower extent, technological progress and policy action) has allowed some progress in a few areas, such as energy intensity, water use and municipal waste management. Yet, the use of material resources to support economic growth remains high, and many valuable materials continue to be disposed of as waste (see details on Goals 6 and 12 in the Planet chapter and on Goal 7 in the Prosperity chapter). On the climate front, despite some progress achieved in decoupling greenhouse gas emissions from population and GDP growth, emissions are hardly decreasing, and all OECD countries are continuing to support the production and consumption of fossil fuels (see details on Goal 13 in the Planet chapter). As for biodiversity, despite some encouraging developments in protecting ecosystems, threats to terrestrial and marine biodiversity have been rising; as a result, in the absence of more determined action OECD countries are set to miss their targets in this field (see details on Goals 14 and 15 in the Planet chapter).

Box 1.2. SDG targets with a 2020 deadline

While urgent action is required to make progress on all the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda set an earlier deadline, in 2020, for a group of 21 targets (see Figure 1.4 for a full list of targets). Overall, available data reveal a lack of progress on many of these targets. Yet, given the lag in available data, "current" distances to the target may not reflect actual achievements by 2020; because of this, even when available data allows assessing 2020 outcomes, Panel B complements the measurement by describing past trajectories.

Of these 21 targets, 12 are linked to the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (*Aichi biodiversity targets, ABT), covering the period 2011-2020. The ABT encompass a set of five strategic goals and 20 targets that Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) agreed to use as a framework for their national commitments on biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. **According to available data, none of the ABT are likely to be met by OECD countries, on average, by the end of 2020,** although this varies significantly among countries and targets (Figure 1.4 – Annex 1.A provide methodological insights on the figure).

Figure 1.4. Distance to targets and trends over time across OECD countries, targets with a 2020 deadline

Panel A. Distance to target

Small Distance to Target
Medium Distance to Target
Large Distance to Target

No (or insufficient) data
Not suitable for assessment

Panel B. Trend

Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
Progress has been made, but is insufficient
No Progress or moving away from the target

Share of OECD countries with available data

Aichi Biodiversity Targets
2.5 - Diversity of seeds and livestocks*
6.6 - Water-related ecosystems*
12.4 - Chemical and hazardous waste*
14.2 - Protecting marine ecosystems*
14.4 - Overfishing and IUU fishing*
14.5 - Protected marine areas*
14.6 - Harmful subsidies to fisheries*
15.1 - Terrestrial ecosystems*
15.2 - Sustainable use of forest*
15.5 - Biodiversity*
15.8 - Invasive alien species*
15.9 - National and local planning*

Other targets with a 2020 deadline
3.6 - Road traffic accidents*
4.b - Resources for education*
8.6 - NEET*
8.b - Strategy for youth employment*
9.c - ICT*
11.b - Disaster Risk Reduction*
13.a - USD 100 billion for climate*
17.11 - Exports from developing countries*
17.18 - Statistical capacity*

Note: Given the lag in available data, "current" distances to target may not reflect actual achievements by 2020. Panel A shows the distribution of OECD countries in terms of the distance that they need to travel to reach each SDG target. Distances are measured in standardised units (s.u.), i.e. reflecting the dispersion in countries' achievements in the most recent available year. Countries' distances are grouped into three clusters: small distances (i.e. less than 0.5 s.u.), shown in light green; medium distances (from 0.5 s.u. to 1.5 s.u.), shown in medium green; and large distances (i.e. more than 1.5 s.u.), shown in dark green. Panel B shows the distribution of OECD countries in terms of their recent changes in the indicators for each target. Countries' progress, based on changes in the indicators over recent years, are grouped into three clusters: those whose recent pace of progress should be sufficient to meet the target by 2020, shown in yellow; those whose recent progress would be insufficient to meet the target by 2020, shown in orange; and countries whose recent performance has been stagnating or moving further away from the 2020 target, shown in brown. The figure also shows countries with no data to assess either their current distance or their pace of progress (shown in white). Time series are considered as missing where there are only two data points (or less) for each country; indicators are considered as missing when they are available for less than 20 OECD countries. For further details see the Methodological Annex.
Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021[13]), *SDG Global Database*, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg and (OECD, 2021[14]), *OECD.Stat,* https://stats.oecd.org/ (accessed on 29 October 2021).

StatLink ⟨⟩ https://stat.link/m4t83n

As the indicators underpinning these targets are of different natures, a "policy results chain" provides a useful lens on their assessment as it allows distinguishing between inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes (Cohen and Shinwell, 2020[24]).[1] As noted above, **OECD countries show positive results on many "process indicators" tracking the implementation of frameworks and policies**. In the field of biodiversity, data from the *SDG Global Database* show that virtually all OECD countries have already implemented international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (Target 14.6) and adopted national legislation to prevent and control invasive alien species (Target 15.8).

On the measurement side, all OECD countries have taken steps to integrate biodiversity values into national accounting and reporting systems, following the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA). Yet, the uptake of such policy tools and frameworks is not comprehensive. For instance, large disparities between OECD countries remain in the implementation of international agreements on the management of hazardous waste and other chemicals (Target 12.4). In addition, while the policy measures underpinning Target 14.6 suggest that OECD countries have made significant progress over the past 15 years in adopting and implementing policies against illegal, under-reported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, regulatory loopholes and policy gaps remain in all OECD countries, and IUU fishing continues to hamper the development of a sustainable ocean economy (OECD, 2020[25]).

Targets relating to the protection of ecosystems (supported by output measures) show good results. Figure 1.4 shows that all OECD countries expanded their protected areas over the past two decades. By 2020, 27 of them met Target 15.1 (and ABT 11) to protect at least 17% of their land area by 2020, while 20 met SDG Target 14.5 (and ABT 11) to protect at least 10% of coastal and marine areas (see Box 1.1 for insights into the summary figures included in this report). Still, as detailed in the Planet chapter, results are mixed when it comes to the protection of so-called "key biodiversity areas".[2] In addition, while worldwide forests are threatened by overexploitation, fragmentation, degradation and conversion to other types of land use (Target 15.2), the area of forests and wooded land has been stable or increasing in most OECD countries (OECD, 2020[23]), with most of them having achieved a sustainable use of their forest resources.[3]

Yet, outcome measure confirms that trends in biodiversity continue to decline. Since 1970, one tenth of the world's terrestrial biodiversity and one third of freshwater biodiversity have been lost and, according to (OECD, 2018[26]), we are on course to lose another 10% of terrestrial species by 2050. Data underpinning Target 15.5 show that biodiversity is losing ground in more than 2 in 3 OECD countries. On Target 2.5, focusing on local breeds and livestock, available data suggests that a very high share of local livestock breeds is at risk of extinction, with very few OECD countries making progress.

Beyond ABT, a broad range of targets ranging from road traffic accident (Target 3.6) to youth employment (Targets 8.6 and 8.b), access to ICT (Target 9.c) and north-south cooperation (Targets 4.b, 13.a, 17.11 and 17.18) had their target date in 2020. Figure 1.4 shows that, for those targets whose performance can be monitored over time, progress has been achieved. In particular, virtually all OECD countries have reduced deaths from road traffic accidents and expanded access to ICT. In addition, in around 40% of them, the share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) has been declining over the past 2 decades. Yet, OECD countries are, on average, far from having achieved their 2020 commitments. Most notably, the proportion of NEET (Target 8.6) is among the furthest away from its target level (see Table 1.2). As detailed in the Prosperity chapter, in a majority of OECD countries, more than one in ten young adult is not in employment, education or training, a share that exceeds one in five in Mexico, Italy, Turkey and Colombia.

Notes:
1. While none of the indicators underpinning ATB can be classified as an input indicator, the broader 2030 Agenda includes several relevant indicators, such as forest area as a proportion of total land area (Target 15.1) or revenue generated and finance mobilized from biodiversity-relevant economic instruments (Target 15.a) – see Box 1.1 for details.
2. Key Biodiversity Areas encompass: i) sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity; ii) sites holding effectively the entire population of at least one species assessed as Critically Endangered or Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species; and iii) Key Biodiversity Areas identified under an earlier version of the Key Biodiversity Area criteria. These three subsets are reassessed using the Global Standard, which unifies these approaches along with other mechanisms for identifying important sites for other species and ecosystems. See the SDG indicators metadata repository for further details at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/.
3. Despite the 2020 deadline for Target 14.2 on the management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, the indicator attached to this target (proportion of national exclusive economic zones managed using ecosystem-based approaches) is still missing from the *SDG Global database* (UNDESA, 2021[13]).

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on OECD countries' progress in meeting the targets of the 2030 Agenda

OECD countries' progress towards achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda has been significantly affected by the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic since late 2019. By November 2021, over 2.3 million deaths due to COVID-19 were reported in OECD countries (OECD, 2021[27])**. But even beyond the large number of deaths, the crisis induced by the pandemic is unprecedented,** differing from both previous economic crises and previous pandemics (Cohen, 2021[28]). It has affected all countries and world regions, touched upon all aspects of people's lives and tested the ability of governments to respond at the required speed and scale.

The recession induced by the COVID-19 pandemic was the most severe as well as the shortest since World War II (Cohen, 2021[28]). Most OECD countries implemented measures that deliberately restricted economic and social activities in order to limit contacts between people and the spread of the contagion. The impact on output growth has been substantial in all countries, resulting in a reduction of OECD GDP by almost 5% in 2020 (OECD, 2021[29]). The initial impact on OECD labour markets was ten times greater than that observed in the first months of the 2008 global financial crisis (OECD, 2020[30]). However, the rebound has also been steeper, supported by unprecedented support by governments and central banks as well as by progress in vaccination (see Prosperity chapter). In parallel, social safety nets, job retention schemes and food assistance programmes have buffered the short-term effects of the crisis on poverty and hunger (see People chapter).

Still, the pandemic has exacerbated some long-standing structural weaknesses of OECD countries and risks causing long-term damage to job prospects and living standards. In addition, the highly sectoral nature of the impacts of the crisis has meant that some workers have shouldered the bulk of the burden, while others not only suffered less, but also benefited more quickly from the recovery (OECD, 2021[31]). Young people have been hit particularly hard by the crisis, as they generally hold less secure jobs and are over-represented among workers in hard-hit industries, such as accommodation and food services (OECD, 2020[30]). Young people have also experienced some of the largest declines in mental health, social connectedness and subjective well-being (OECD, 2021[32]).

The crisis has severely challenged institutions. In many countries, attempts to prevent the circulation of the virus have limited people's ability to go to health-care facilities or to attend school. The pandemic has revealed and amplified existing vulnerabilities of preventive and curative health-care systems, pandemic preparedness and the distribution of medical equipment. School closures have harmed the education of young people and made their integration into the labour market more difficult (OECD, 2021[20]). Such disruptions may challenge OECD countries for a long time to come (see People chapter). Beyond the impact on education and health systems, the COVID-19 crisis has also exposed governments to severe stress tests, with many governments experiencing gaps and/or overlaps between the roles of different institutions (OECD, 2020[33]).

The pandemic has also put sources of public financing under pressure. The large stimulus packages implemented by OECD countries were both essential and successful in supporting households and firms. Yet, these programs significantly increased public debt. The "scissors effect" on SDG financing (i.e. increasing needs and declining resources) has been magnified by the need to respond to the pandemic. Moreover, the internal processes of government have often been subject to lower standards of consultation, transparency, oversight or control (see Peace and Partnerships chapter).

The reduction in economic activity associated with the COVID-19 crisis led to a temporary improvement of environmental conditions, with a short-term reduction in global emissions of greenhouse gases, temporary improvements in water quality in waterways and coastal zones, and less pressure on biodiversity. While this highlighted even further the significance of human interference with

the climate, ecosystems and biodiversity, these benefits are not lasting. The recovery is already being associated with poorer environmental conditions (see Planet chapter).

While countries have generally responded to the crisis at the scale and speed required by the exceptional situation, most governments were unprepared to confront the crisis (OECD, 2021[21]). As most OECD countries have now given two vaccinations to most of the eligible population, the threat of major new waves of hospitalisations and deaths is waning, but many uncertainties remain.

Contagion rates remain elevated, and countries with lower vaccination rates are exposed to risks of further outbreaks. In addition, in many low- and middle-income countries vaccination rates are still low, providing fertile ground for more dangerous variants of the virus to emerge. Delivery of vaccines to emerging and developing economies is expected to improve in 2022 and 2023 but is still falling short of needs. Unless vaccines win the race against variants, the pandemic will remain a factor in global economic outcomes over the coming years (OECD, 2021[20]).

The COVID-19 pandemic has not been the only disruption affecting our lives and jobs in recent times. Huge wildfires (notably in Siberia and Australia – possibly the largest in recorded history – and California and Turkey), unprecedented heatwaves and droughts (e.g. in western North America), extreme cold weather events and destructive floods (e.g. in Germany, Belgium and western Canada) have caused thousands of fatalities and major destruction of property and disruption of economic activity. Hurricane Ida in late August and early September 2021 was one the costliest storms in US history. In December 2021, Storm Barra caused the worst floods in decades in Spain and France. Such storms, along with other weather-related disasters, have become more frequent and severe due to rising sea and air temperatures (OECD, 2021[20]; IPCC, 2021[34]; World Meteorological Organisation, 2021[35]).

The COVID-19 crisis has prompted OECD governments to revisit long-held assumptions about the role of macro-economic policies, leading to fiscal responses on a scale not seen since World War II. The recovery packages deployed by most OECD governments provide an opportunity to "build back better" and strengthen systemic resilience to cope with future shock. Unchecked, major future challenges, such as climate change and biodiversity loss but also population ageing, the digital transformation and challenges to the social contract, could have social and economic impacts far greater than those caused by COVID-19. The massive public investment plans that have been rolled out since the onset of the crisis are therefore key to upgrade critical infrastructure, make progress towards the green transition, bridge the digital divides and avoid and mitigate future shocks. The challenge ahead will be to tailor short-term objectives on the strength of the recovery to the medium- and long-term objectives of the SDGs, so as to make the recovery green, inclusive and resilient.

Future statistical and research agenda on SDGs

While the findings of this report point to the need for stronger action in the eight years that separate us from 2030, blind spots remain in our understanding of where countries stand on SDGs. Data gaps remains significant. Overall, available data on the levels of the various indicators make it possible to cover 136 of the 169 global targets underpinning the 17 SDGs. As shown in Figure 1.5, indicator coverage is uneven across the 17 goals. For instance, data for OECD countries allow covering more than 80% of the targets for 11 of the 17 goals, while coverage is below this threshold for the goals relating to Food and hunger (Goal 2), Gender equality (Goal 5), Life below water (Goal 14), Sustainable cities (Goal 11), Peace, justice and institutions (Goal 16) and Partnerships for the goals (Goal 17).

Data gaps become starker when looking at indicators that allow measuring distances to the goals. While available data make it possible to cover 136 of the 169 targets, some of those do not allow to properly gauge current performance (see the Methodological Annex for details). Therefore, coverage actually

exceeds 80% for Good health and well-being and Quality education only (i.e. Goals 3 and 4) while it is less than half this level for Goal 17 on Partnerships for the goals.

A dynamic assessment of countries' performance on SDGs raises additional data challenges, related to the availability of robust time-series information.[9] Figure 1.5 shows that for seven goals, mostly those related to the Planet category – on Responsible consumption and production (Goal 12), Climate action (Goal 13), Life below water (Goal 14) and Life on land (Goal 15) – but also to Gender Inequality (Goal 5), Sustainable cities (Goal 11) and Partnerships for the goals (Goal 17) data are lacking to gauge progress over time for more than 60% of targets.

Figure 1.5. Share of the 2030 Agenda's targets covered by at least one indicator, by goal
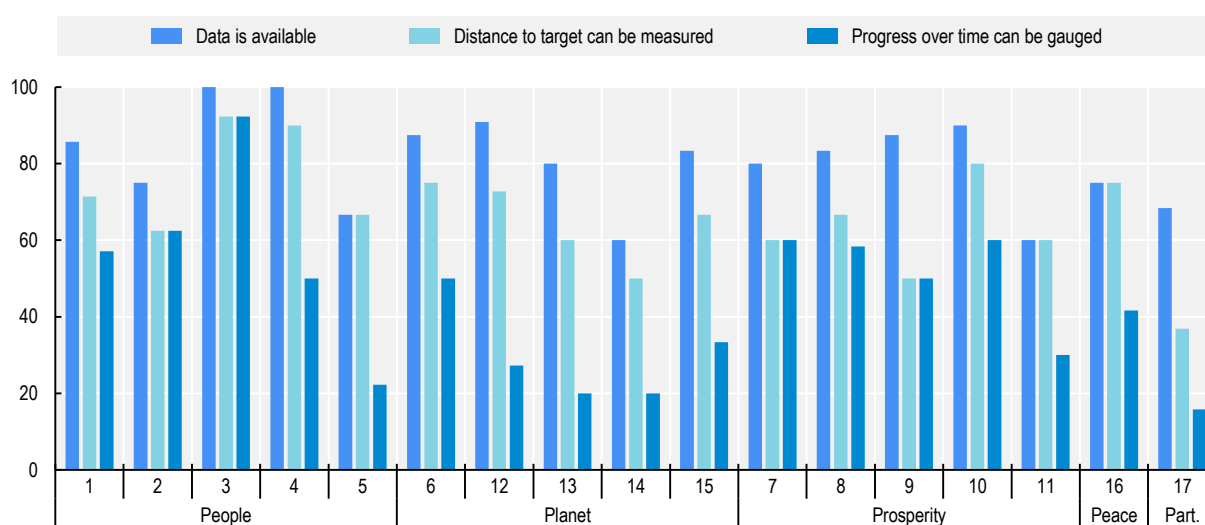
Note: Numbers from 1 to 17 stand for the goals: 1 No poverty, 2 Zero hunger, 3 Good health and well-being, 4 Quality education, 5 Gender equality, 6 Clean water and sanitation, 7 Affordable and clean energy, 8 Decent work and economic growth, 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10 Reduced inequality, 11 Sustainable cities and communities, 12 Responsible consumption and production, 13 Climate action, 14 Life below water, 15 Life on land, 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions and 17 Partnerships for the goals. These goals are grouped under five broad themes (the "5Ps"): People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership.
Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021[13]), *SDG Global Database*, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg and (OECD, 2021[14]), *OECD.Stat,* https://stats.oecd.org/ (accessed on 29 October 2021).

StatLink 🖵🖘 https://stat.link/b1eiox

Beyond data availability, many other gaps influence the understanding of progress toward the 2030 Agenda – not carefully recognised, they may lead to biased conclusions. Data availability is one of the most salient challenges standing in the way of a more robust assessment of the progress made by countries in meeting their commitments under the 2030 Agenda. Yet, other statistical gaps such as timeliness or granularity also weigh heavily on our assessment. For instance, given the lag in available data, the effects of the pandemic on current distances and trajectories are hardly reflected in our estimates (Figure 1.6). More generally, if the SDG reporting framework is incomplete, not up to date, or misses important segments of the population, it becomes risky to make inferences about what the good policies are.

Figure 1.6. Timeliness of available data

Distribution of latest available data, by year
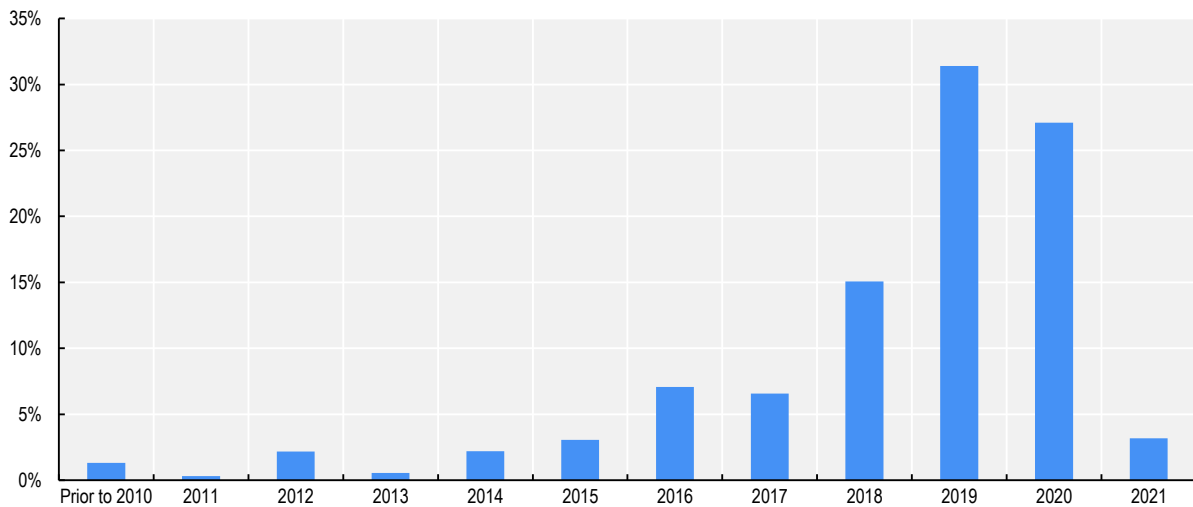
Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021[13]), *SDG Global Database,* https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg and (OECD, 2021[14]), *OECD.Stat,* https://stats.oecd.org/ (accessed on 29 October 2021).

StatLink 🖳 https://stat.link/qn7r6w

Conclusion: Start learning lessons for the post-2030 Agenda

As the 2030 deadline for the SDGs approaches, the United Nations and the international community at large will need to start working on a new framework for global policy action. With eight years to go to meet the SDGs, and despite progress in some areas, improvements are uneven across goals, countries and regions. In order to sustain the momentum generated by the SDGs, it will be key to develop a successor framework after 2030, one that will build on the strength of the 2030 Agenda while also addressing the shortcomings of the existing SDGs.

Beyond the measurement and monitoring challenges raised so far, a deeper reflection will be needed on how to capture the interlinkages between different goals, targets and indicators and their overall coherence. Most of the goals have economic, social and environmental aspects, yet the targets and indicators often offer a partial perspective on them. An example is the lack of a gender focus under the Planet SDGs and their related targets and indicators. Only 5% of the Planet indicators are identified in the framework as gender relevant (OECD, 2021[36]). While data availability is clearly a major limitation to broadening the scope of some indicators, the framework itself should capture the possible interlinkages between the many goals.

The 2030 Agenda is global in essence. In many cases, the focus on countries' performances may come with shortcomings. While action on adaptation and mitigation in response to climate change will necessarily have a national component, its monitoring and assessment is global in nature and goes well beyond the sole remit of any one country. Global measurement instruments and accounting systems such as the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) are crucial in developing common indicators. They are indeed the classic public good, like measuring and monitoring global poverty or global inequality (Kanbur, Patel and Stiglitz, 2018[37]).

Another methodological aspect that will require further consideration is how to better distinguish between measures of policy instruments and measures of ultimate outcomes. Separate reporting of

the two types of measures will be essential to assess the extent to which the short-term recovery plans deployed by countries in the aftermath of the COVID crisis are coherent with the long-term goals of the 2030 Agenda. The SDG framework recognises that progress should be considered in a holistic manner to take account of the inevitable trade-offs, spill overs and unintended consequences of policy and investment decisions. Yet, the 17 SDGs (both in their general formulation and in their specification into detailed targets) cover a mixture of aspects along the causal chain from inputs to processes, outputs and outcomes. The large number of goals and targets, spread out along the input-output-outcome chain, raises obvious challenges for evaluation and assessment.

Finally, the SDGs highlight the inevitable tension between the pull to broaden the set of measures used for monitoring progress and the imperative to focus on a small number of top-level indicators – a tension that can only be resolved through prioritisation of the UN goals and targets at the national level. The process leading to the SDGs reveals the tension between the desire for completeness and thoroughness, on one side, and the need for clarity on the other side. Obviously, the more detailed the information collected and the more that data are disaggregated, the more complete the picture one will have of what is going on. The 169 SDG targets and the 247 indicators provide a useful platform and have the virtue of being agreed internationally. But their implementation needs to be sensitive to national needs and priorities, as well as limited resources. Accountability and sovereignty imply that this streamlining and selection of targets and indicators should take place in the context of a national dialogue informed by international frameworks (Stiglitz, Fitoussi and Durand, 2018[38]).

References

Bureau fédéral du Plan (2019), *Quelle priorité pour un développement durable ? - Rapport sur le développement durable 2019*, Bureau fédéral du Plan, Bruxelles, https://www.plan.be/uploaded/documents/201906250851350.REP_TFDD2019_11924_F.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [11]

Cohen, D. (2021), "Le Covid-19, une crise qui ne ressemble à aucune autre", *Le Monde*, https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/10/29/daniel-cohen-le-covid-19-une-crise-qui-ne-ressemble-a-aucune-autre_6100352_3232.html (accessed on 14 March 2022). [28]

Cohen, G. and M. Shinwell (2020), "How far are OECD countries from achieving SDG targets for women and girls? : Applying a gender lens to measuring distance to SDG targets", *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, No. 2020/02, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/17a25070-en. [47]

Cohen, G. and M. Shinwell (2020), "How to measure distance to SDG targets anywhere: Adapting the methodology of the Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets study to go beyond OECD countries, with an application to selected Latin American countries", *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, No. 2020/3, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/a0ac1413-en. [24]

Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republic (2018), *Voluntary National Review of the Slovak Republic on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20131Agenda2030_VNR_Slovakia.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [46]

Government of Israel (2019), *Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals – National Review Israel 2019*, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23576Israel_SDG_VNR_final.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [41]

Government of Poland (2018), *Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Poland – The 2018 National Report*, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19409Poland_VNR_20180615.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [42]

Government of Sweden (2017), *Sweden and the 2030 Agenda*, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16033Sweden.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [44]

Government of the Republic of Slovenia (2018), *Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – 2018 update*, https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne-sluzbe/SVRK/Agenda-2030/Implementing_the_Agenda2030_update_2018.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [8]

Government of the Republic of Slovenia (2017), *Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda*, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16313Slovenia.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [43]

Ino, J., F. Murtin and M. Shinwell (2021), "Measuring transboundary impacts in the 2030 Agenda: Conceptual approach and operationalisation", *OECD Papers on Well-being and Inequalities*, No. 01, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/62f13e92-en. [49]

IPCC (2021), *Sixth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/ (accessed on 14 March 2022). [34]

Kanbur, R., E. Patel and J. Stiglitz (2018), "Sustainable Development Goals and the measurement of economic and social progress", in *For Good Measure: Advancing Research on Well-being Metrics Beyond GDP*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307278-4-en. [37]

Karousakis, K. (2018), "Evaluating the effectiveness of policy instruments for biodiversity: Impact evaluation, cost-effectiveness analysis and other approaches", *OECD Environment Working Papers*, No. 141, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/ff87fd8d-en. [6]

Kingdom of Belgium (2017), *Pathways to Sustainable Development – First Belgian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda*, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/15721Belgium_Rev.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [39]

Marguerit, D., G. Cohen and C. Exton (2018), "Child well-being and the Sustainable Development Goals: How far are OECD countries from reaching the targets for children and young people?", *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, No. 2018/05, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/5e53b12f-en. [48]

Murtin, F. et al. (2017), "Inequalities in longevity by education in OECD countries: Insights from new OECD estimates", *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, No. 2017/2, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/6b64d9cf-en. [18]

OECD (2021), *COVID-19 and Well-being: Life in the Pandemic*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1e1ecb53-en. [32]

OECD (2021), *COVID-19 Health Indicators (database)*, https://stats.oecd.org/. [27]

OECD (2021), *Gender and the Environment: Building Evidence and Policies to Achieve the SDGs*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/3d32ca39-en. [36]

OECD (2021), *Government at a Glance 2021*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c258f55-en. [21]

OECD (2021), *Health at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/ae3016b9-en. [17]

OECD (2021), *OECD Economic Outlook, Volume 2021 Issue 1*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/edfbca02-en. [29]

OECD (2021), *OECD Economic Outlook, Volume 2021 Issue 2*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/66c5ac2c-en. [20]

OECD (2021), *OECD Employment Outlook 2021: Navigating the COVID-19 Crisis and Recovery*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/5a700c4b-en. [31]

OECD (2021), *OECD Framework and Good Practice Principles for People-Centred Justice*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/cdc3bde7-en. [5]

OECD (2021), *OECD.Stat (database)*, https://stats.oecd.org/. [14]

OECD (2020), "Building resilience to the Covid-19 pandemic: the role of centres of government"*, OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/883d2961-en. [33]

OECD (2020), *Environment at a Glance 2020*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/4ea7d35f-en. [23]

OECD (2020), *OECD Employment Outlook 2020: Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1686c758-en. [30]

OECD (2020), *OECD Review of Fisheries 2020*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/7946bc8a-en. [25]

OECD (2019), *Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets 2019: An Assessment of Where OECD Countries Stand*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/a8caf3fa-en. [16]

OECD (2019), *SIGI 2019 Global Report: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities*, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/bc56d212-en. [4]

OECD (2018), *Mainstreaming Biodiversity for Sustainable Development*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264303201-en. [26]

OECD (2016), *Better policies for 2030: An OECD action plan to the Sustainable Development Goals*, https://www.oecd.org/dac/Better%20Policies%20for%202030.pdfv (accessed on 14 March 2022). [2]

Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (2017), *National Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Czech Republic*, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/15717Czech_Republic.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [45]

Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (2017), *The Strategic Framework - Czech Republic 2030*, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development, Prague, https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/udrzitelny-rozvoj/projekt-OPZ/Strategic_Framework_CZ2030.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [10]

Placzek, O. (2021), "Socio-economic and demographic aspects of food security and nutrition"*, OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers*, No. 150, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/49d7059f-en. [19]

Slovak Academy of Sciences (2017), *Východiská prípravy národných priorít implementácie Agendy 2030*. [12]

Statistics Denmark (2017), *Statistical follow-up on the 2030 Agenda - Denmark - Data on selected indicators showing the development from 2005-2015*. [7]

Statistics Netherlands (2018), *The Sustainable Development Goals: The Situation for the Netherlands*, Statistics Netherlands, The Hague, https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/publication/2018/10/the-sdgs-the-situation-for-the-netherlands (accessed on 14 March 2022). [9]

Stiglitz, J., J. Fitoussi and M. Durand (eds.) (2018), *For Good Measure: Advancing Research on Well-being Metrics Beyond GDP*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307278-en. [38]

The Danish Government (2017), *Report for the Voluntary National Review – Denmark's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Ministry of Finance, Copenhagen, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16013Denmark.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [40]

UN (2021), *The Sustainable Development Goals Report*, United Nations, New York, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2021.pdf (accessed on 14 March 2022). [1]

UN (2020), *Sustainable Development Goals: Decade of Action*, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/ (accessed on 14 March 2022). [15]

UN (2015), *70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda. [3]

UNDESA (2021), *SDG Global Database*, The United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal. [13]

UNDESA (2021), *Trust in public institutions: Trends and implications for economic security*, https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2021/07/trust-public-institutions/ (accessed on 14 March 2022). [22]

World Meteorological Organisation (2021), *WMO Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Weather, Climate and Water Extremes (1970-2019)*, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Geneva, https://library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=10989. [35]

Annex 1.A. How to read the figures summarising current performances and trends over time included in this report

This edition of *Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets* builds on earlier versions of the same report to assess OECD countries' current distances to the SDG targets of the 2030 Agenda. It also deepens the existing analysis by looking at whether countries have been moving towards or away from the targets and how likely they are to meet their commitments by 2030.

To support this assessment, each section of the five thematic chapters in this report focuses on a single Sustainable Development Goal and includes a figure summarising how OECD countries are distributed in terms of their current performance and of changes over time (see description below) for each target.

For the sake of clarity, all figures have the same structure:

Panel A of each figure shows how OECD countries perform, at a given point in time, in terms of their distance from the target level they are supposed to meet by 2030. As detailed in the Methodological Annex, countries' distance to target is measured as the "standardised difference" between a country's current position and the target end-value. For each indicator, the standardised measurement unit (or s.u.) is the standard deviation observed among OECD countries in the reference year (i.e. the year closest to 2015):

- lighter blue is used to indicate those countries that (based on the most recent available information) are very close to the final target (i.e. less than 0.5 OECD standard deviation away from the target, or standardised units, s.u.);
- medium blue for those that are at an intermediate position (i.e. from 0.5 to 1.5 s.u.); and
- darker blue for those that are still far away from the targets (i.e. more than 1.5 s.u.).

Panel B shows how OECD countries are performing, based on developments in the different indicators in the most recent period, in terms of the likelihood of meeting the different targets by 2030:

- green is used to indicate those countries that (based on the change in the different indicators over a recent period) should meet the target in 2030 just by maintaining their current pace of progress (i.e. more than 75% of (randomised) projections meet the target);
- yellow for those countries whose current pace of progress is insufficient to meet the target by 2030 (i.e. less than 75% of randomised projections meet the target, while the correlation coefficient between the indicator and the year is high and statistically significant, implying that a significant trend could be detected); and
- red for those countries whose recent changes have been stagnating or moving them further away from the target (i.e. less than 75% of randomised projections meet the target and the correlation coefficient between the indicator and the year is low or not statistically significant, implying that no statistical trend could be identified).

The methods and concepts are further detailed in the Methodological Annex.

Notes

[1] The 5Ps were first mentioned in the preamble of the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 (UN, 2015[3]). This report relies on the 5Ps to describe member countries' performance, even if the 5Ps are not, at the time of writing, an official UN classification of the 17 goals.

[2] The global indicator framework includes 231 unique indicators. However, twelve indicators repeat under two or three different targets. The total number of indicators listed in the global indicator framework of SDG indicators is therefore 247.

[3] While the Tier classification is relevant for global monitoring, it may not be used when restricting the analysis to a specific set of countries. For instance, this report covers Targets supported by indicators classified as Tier III while data for OECD countries may lack for indicators classified as Tier I.

[4] As complements to the main reports, the OECD has also developed, based on the same methodology, tailored assessments for specific countries, and it has also released a series of working papers on specific topics. For instance, the methodology in this report had been adapted to assess the distance that OECD countries need to travel in order to reach the SDG targets pertaining to children and young people (Marguerit, Cohen and Exton, 2018[48]) and to women and girls (Cohen and Shinwell, 2020[47]). Other studies have focused on the analysis of transboundary aspects within the 2030 Agenda – so as to better understand how countries' policies or development patterns will affect other countries as well as shared global resources (Ino, Murtin and Shinwell, 2021[49]).
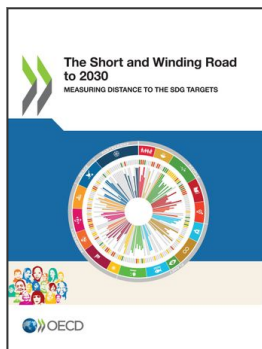
[5] The 2019 edition of the *Measuring Distance* report (2019[16]) showed OECD average and country-level distances from achieving the SDG targets for 105 of the 169 targets, based on 132 indicators from UN and OECD databases. It also presented a data gap analysis, identifying areas where available data do not allow exhaustive country-level assessments of distances from targets.

[6] In addition, evidence from previous editions of this report was quoted in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted to the UN-HLPF by eight OECD countries (Kingdom of Belgium, 2017[39]; Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017[45]; The Danish Government, 2017[40]; Government of Israel, 2019[41]; Government of Poland, 2018[42]; Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2017[43]; Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republic, 2018[46]; Government of Sweden, 2017[44]). The *Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets* methodology has also been used to inform OECD support for national strategies in line with the 2030 Agenda (e.g. Slovenia, Slovak Republic and Poland). More recently, work underpinning this report has informed bilateral co-operation projects related to the implementation of SDGs (e.g. in Korea, Poland and Italy).

[7] Target 4.5 on disparities in education is not included in Table 1.2 as it is the only target for which the OECD average distance is greater than 1.5 standardised units. Yet, this target is included in the discussion as, on average, OECD countries are 1.49 standard units away from the target.

[8] As already noted, for the climate-related targets (mainly among Goal 13), the level of ambition is particularly low. Indeed, the Paris Agreement on climate change entered into force over one year after the SDGs were agreed. The 2030 Agenda therefore did not reflect the ambition of the Paris Agreement.

[9] Wherever possible, data series are tracked in this report over the last two decades. In practice, to accommodate the fact that some of the available time series are much shorter, the minimum requirement for inclusion in the dynamic analysis performed in this report is that at least three observations are available over a five-year period.