

VOICE

— UN DESA —

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It's now or never: achieving the SDGs hinges on effective crises response

Still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, the world now finds itself confronted with numerous crises on several fronts—financial shocks, the war in Ukraine, food insecurity, climate emergency and energy access, rising poverty and inequality. Years of progress in achieving many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been all but wiped out. Thus, the need for global solidarity and international cooperation has become ever more urgent.

“We are facing continued inequity in the number of people able to get a shot of COVID-19 vaccines, rising inflation, major supply-chain disruptions, and crippling geopolitical uncertainties,” said United Nations Economic and Social Council President Collen Vixen Kelapile. “We are on a dangerous path to harming future generations, if we do not act now. It is within our power to turn the tide.”

On July 5–15, world leaders, entrepreneurs, researchers, advocates, practitioners and activists will come together in the UNHQ building in New York for the [High-level Political Forum \(HLPF\) on Sustainable Development](#) and [ECOSOC High-level Segment](#) to share their successes – as well as setbacks – in achieving the Global Goals. This year’s theme is “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

It will allow participants to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 across all SDGs and examine how the international community can effectively recover from the pandemic in a way that realizes the deep systemic reforms we need in the social, economic, environmental and other areas to realize the SDGs. They will also reflect on how to respond to future crises. The HLPF will review in depth Goal 4 on education, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 14 on life below water and Goal 15 on life on land, and how all SDGs hinge on improvements in Goal 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

A more comprehensive overview of the progress made in achieving all 17 Goals will be made available on July 7th at the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022. It is looking more likely that the world will fall far short of accomplishing the SDGs by 2030. Against this backdrop, the [44 Voluntary National Reviews \(VNRs\)](#), taking place on 13–15 July, will be of utmost importance. 44 countries – 21 of which are from Africa – will have an opportunity to share their best practices, challenges and lessons learned in incorporating the SDGs into their national plans and policies. This will allow peer learning on how to ensure an SDG-led response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic while building peace.

There will also be a series of [special events](#) and close to [400 side events](#), some of which in-person, involving governments, international organizations, the private sector and major stakeholders most engaged or impacted by the SDGs.

Time is of the essence. The world needs to get back on track in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Countering the triple C threat of “COVID, conflicts and climate change” will require bold, ambitious, collective action on all fronts. The HLPF aims to galvanize energy and actions to this end.

More information at: <https://hlpf.un.org/2022>

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 will be available on July 7 at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>





The state of our global goals

How are today's global crises affecting efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? On 7 July, the international community will find out as the annual report tracking SDG progress will be launched. To learn more about this year's edition and why the data it presents is critical, we spoke with UN DESA's Yongyi Min.

What do you want people to know about the Sustainable Development Goals Report; why is it important for the global community?

"The Sustainable Development Goals Report is the only UN official report that monitors global progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This annual progress report is prepared by UN DESA, in collaboration with the entire UN Statistical System, consisting of more than 50 international and regional agencies. Behind this report are 2.3 million data observations from Member States, which are also housed in the Global SDG Indicator Database. Hundreds of thousands of statisticians and experts from countries, international agencies, academia, and civil society around the world have contributed to data collection and analysis on monitoring progress towards the global goals. Therefore, this is truly a collective effort of the entire international statistical community.

Using the latest available data and estimates, the SDG Report 2022 gives the global community a reality check on the devastating impacts of multiple crises affecting people's lives and livelihoods. It details the reversal of years of progress in eradicating poverty and hunger, improving health and education, providing basic services, and much more. The report also highlights areas that need urgent actions in order to rescue the SDGs and deliver meaningful progress for people and the planet by 2030."

Your team has been tracking the goals since their adoption in 2015. Given recent global crises like the war in Ukraine, what are some of the major impacts you see?

"This year's report paints a particularly bleak picture of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how it is being seriously jeopardized. The multiple and intersecting crises, predominated by COVID-19, climate change and the conflicts in Ukraine and elsewhere, impact all of the SDGs. Just to give a few examples, as many as 161 million additional people slid into chronic hunger in 2020 alone. Soaring food prices and the food shortage caused by the Ukraine crisis will push millions more into hunger and poverty. Education disruptions brought by the pandemic, conflicts, and disasters have had devastating consequences on children, not only impacting their learning but also their psychosocial well-being. We also see a significant rise in anxiety and depression among young people. To top it off, the world is on the brink of a climate catastrophe and the window to avert it is closing rapidly."

Is there one goal that our global community has made the most progress on?

"Before the pandemic, progress was being made in many important SDGs, such as reducing poverty, improving maternal and child health, increasing access to electricity, and advancing gender equality. Among all goals, I think SDG 7, on sustainable and modern energy for all, is probably the goal that made the most progress. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of people without electricity shrank from 1.2 billion to 733 million, total renewable energy consumption increased by 25 per cent, the share of renewables in the

electricity sector increased from 19.7 per cent to 26.2 per cent, and energy efficiency continues to improve. Nevertheless, the current pace of progress is still insufficient to achieve SDG 7 by 2030.”

How do you believe data and statistics can help to advance the SDGs, and the world to build back better and stronger?

“To keep ahead of these crises, we must first understand where we are and where we are going and know how to shape policies and interventions. Without relevant data, even well-intentioned policymakers seeking to protect people and the planet are working in the dark. Data that are timely, high-quality, and disaggregated can help trigger more targeted responses, anticipate future needs, and fine-tune the design of critical actions. To emerge stronger from the crisis and prepare for unknown challenges ahead, we really want to ask national governments and the international community to prioritize statistical development because data are an indispensable tool that shed light on the path ahead.”

The Sustainable Development Goals Report will be launched on 7 July and can then be accessed <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>



THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW



5 reasons not to miss the World Population Prospects 2022

On 11 July, UN DESA’s Population Division will release World Population Prospects 2022. This is the 27th edition of the official estimates and projections of the global population, published by the United Nations since 1951. Here are five

reasons why we should be paying attention:

1. Demographic trends underpin national development planning

Understanding population trends and anticipating demographic change are crucial for national development planning and for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For instance, countries experiencing rapid population growth must provide schooling and health care to growing numbers of children and youth. Countries where population growth has slowed or stopped must prepare for an increasing proportion of older persons and, in some cases, decreasing population size.

2. World Population Prospects 2022 will be used for one-quarter of the SDG indicators

World Population Prospects 2022 will be used in the calculation of many development indicators used by the United Nations system, including about one-quarter of the indicators used to monitor global progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. The report reflects the demographic impact of COVID-19

Even though the full impact of the pandemic on demographic trends may not be known for several years, World Population Prospects 2022 considers the latest available information on the implications of the pandemic on mortality levels and trends, as well as on fertility and international migration.

4. For the first time, data is presented by single age and calendar year

For the first time in the history of United Nations population estimates and projections, World Population Prospects 2022 includes estimates and projections by single age and calendar year ("1x1"), instead of the five-year intervals ("5x5") used so far.

5. World Population Prospects 2022 is based on an unprecedented number of sources

World Population Prospects 2022 considers the results of 1,758 national population censuses, information from civil registration and vital statistics systems for 169 countries, and 2,890 nationally representative sample surveys.

How will these latest demographic trends affect the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? Join us at the press briefing on 11 July at 12 noon EDT to find out! The event will be livestreamed via webtv.un.org.





Population trends are both a key driver and a consequence of development

By Anastasia J. Gage, Professor at the Department of International Health and Sustainable Development, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Tulane University and member of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs

The number of people in the world has risen rapidly in recent times. According to the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), in mid-2019 there were 7.7 billion in the world, two billion more than in 1996. Almost 250,000 people are added to the planet every day. By 2030, we will have about 8.5 billion people in the world and the numbers will continue rising to around 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.9 billion by 2100. Over the next few decades, most of the growth in the world's population will occur in the world's poorest countries, many of which are in Africa. Most of these countries are expected to double in size by 2050.

Population growth is a result of success in improving public health, nutrition, sanitation, and personal hygiene, which enables people to live longer. In many of the world's poorest countries, population growth also results from failure to ensure that people everywhere have the knowledge, ability and means to determine when to start having children, how far apart to have them, and the total number of children to have. Although the number of births a woman has in her lifetime has been declining steadily in all the world's regions, the birth rate in the world's poorest countries is still higher than the global average. Even if fertility rates fall in the world's poorest countries, the human population will continue to grow for a few more decades, as the number of adolescents and young people in the world is at an all-time high and many of them will eventually start to bear children.

When a country's birth rate falls from a high level to a low level and there are relatively more adults of working age in the population, this can create an opportunity for the country to achieve more rapid economic and social development. However, if a country does not adequately plan for economic and welfare investments as it approaches this shift in the age distribution of its population, the window of opportunity for rapid economic growth will close.

The high population growth rate of about 3 percent per year in the world's poorest countries, many of which are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, poses huge challenges for these countries to invest more resources per capita on their populations. It makes it quite difficult for the world's poorest countries to keep up with improvements in education, human capital, health, youth employment, and economic development. When countries address low levels of education, gender inequality, and lack of access to family planning and reproductive health services, when countries invest in human capital and public health, when they provide full and meaningful employment for all, and when they integrate

women into the labor market, people tend to have fewer children, and social and economic development tends to progress at a faster pace.

Recently, food, fuel, and commodity prices have risen sharply all over the world and there has been a decline in how much money can buy. The inflation rate is much higher than it has been. The UN estimates that the global inflation rate will increase to 6.7 percent this year, twice as much as the rate of 2.9 percent that occurred during the period 2010-2022. The world's economy is expected to grow at a lower rate than previously thought – about 3.1 percent, down from 4.0 percent that was projected at the start of the year, according to the World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2022, prepared by UN DESA.

This situation is worsened by the war in Ukraine, new waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, supply shortages, and the fact that central banks in richer countries are raising interest rates as a way of controlling inflation. The hike in interest rates in richer countries will increase developing countries' borrowing costs and negatively affect their prospects for economic growth. This will make it increasingly difficult for the world's poorest countries to address widening economic and social inequalities, threats to the environment, and the burdens imposed by HIV, other infectious diseases, and non-communicable diseases. These new threats, as well as climate change and food insecurity, may make it difficult for South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa to bring people out of poverty, service public debts, address the needs of vulnerable groups, and create opportunities for all.

To achieve sustainable development, the world will have to lessen its impact on the environment. Environmental impact is driven not just by the number of people in the world but also by the way humans produce and consume goods and resources. While a large share of the population of developing countries is not consuming enough to meet even their basic needs, they are suffering the most from the drastic effects of climate change and environmental degradation. High-income countries are having more damaging effects on the environment than the world's poorest countries and urgently need to reduce waste, including per capita food waste, adopt sustainable natural resource management strategies, and assist developing countries to adapt to climate change and invest in greener technologies.

Against this backdrop, is the world on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, particularly those related to poverty, hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, decent work and economic growth, gender equality, and reduced inequalities? Can we sustain a global population increase of about 2 to 3 billion between now and the turn of the century? What policies must countries put in place to protect the environment, feed the growing population, and develop sustainably?

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<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-as-of-mid-2022/>



SDGs in NUMBERS

Stay tuned for the
SDG Report 2022
coming out 7 July

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



MORE FROM UN DESA

- 7 special events you need to know at the 2022 HLPF
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