

MAKING DATA COUNT

Press Briefing on Launch of Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 - Photo credit: UN Photo

... for evidence-based decision-making.

In 2022-2023, UN DESA continued to support Member States in collecting official data that are crucial for monitoring and assessing the pathway towards achieving the SDGs, as well as developing new measures that “value what counts” for people, planet and the future.

UN DESA ...

- Monitored progress and gaps in global efforts to achieve the SDGs, highlighting the ongoing impact of multiple global crises.
- Supported Member States’ efforts to compile, disseminate and analyze crucial, innovative, detailed, disaggregated, and geo-referenced data for decision-making, and responded to the increasing need for data.
- Convened opportunities for members of the international statistical community to connect, coordinate, collaborate, and strengthen capacities.
- Facilitated initial discussions about broader measures of well-being beyond traditional economic measures such as Gross Domestic Product.

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MAKING DATA COUNT

Countries and international partners cannot identify priorities and respond to interlinked crises and sustainable development needs without solid data. High-quality data are needed to “make the invisible visible” and ensure that efforts to accelerate action toward the SDGs benefit the people and places most in need.

Monitoring progress toward the SDGs

As the central coordinator of the global SDG indicator framework and monitoring process, UN DESA continued to deliver data, analysis and monitoring tools to inform the latest SDG progress, enabling policymakers and stakeholders to identify areas for targeted policy interventions.

In July 2023, UN DESA launched the *Special Edition of the Sustainable Development Goals Report*, marking the halfway point to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2023 report provided a powerful call to action and presented a candid assessment of the SDGs based on the latest data and estimates. While highlighting the existing gaps and urging the world to redouble its efforts, the report also emphasized the immense potential for success through strong political will and the utilization of available technologies, resources, and knowledge. The report was produced in



The Sustainable Development Goals Report Special edition



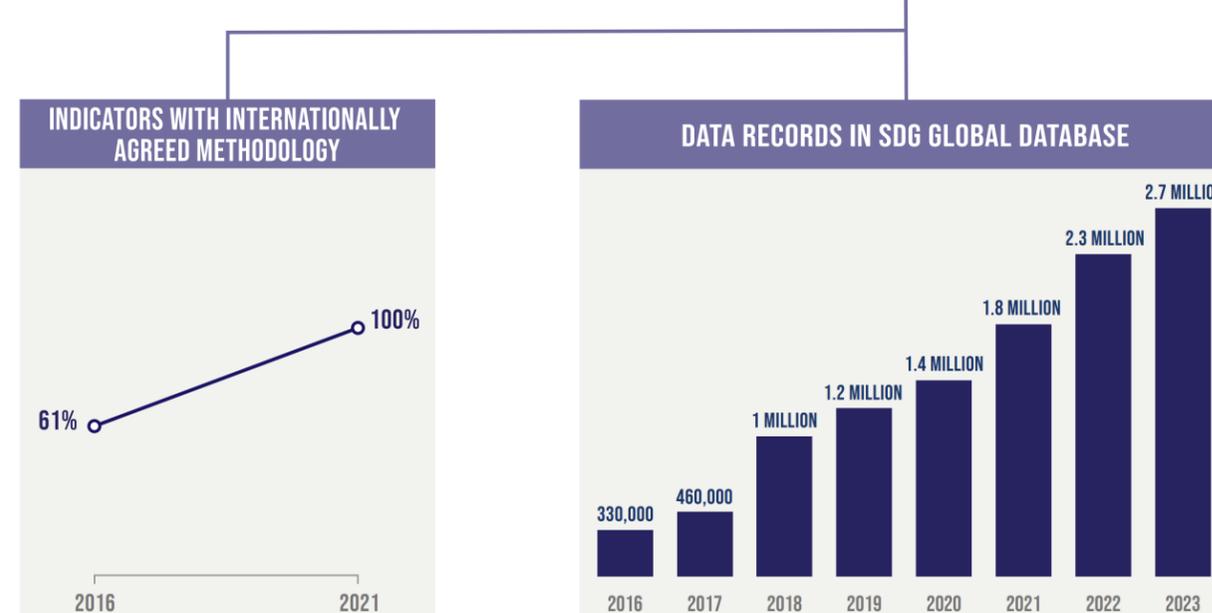
collaboration with the entire UN statistical system, consisting of more than 50 international and regional agencies, and based on data from over 200 countries and territories. It stands as one of UN DESA's most widely accessed publications, providing valuable insights for sustainable development.

Throughout the year, UN DESA also worked to expand the coverage and availability of data for SDG monitoring. In 2016, a concerning 39 per cent of the SDG indicators lacked internationally established methodology or standards. By 2021, all indicators had a well-established and internationally agreed methodology, ensuring the comparability, accuracy, reliability and usefulness of measurements. In addition, the number of indicators included in the global SDG database has increased from 115 in 2016 to 225 in 2023.

Improving the Global SDG Indicators Data Platform

UN DESA ensured universal access to up-to-date data critical for monitoring SDG progress. Through the improved Global SDG Indicators Data Platform, the Department developed a new interface that allows users to easily search, download and share data. The entirely new 'SDG Analytics' tool allows the interactive analysis of data availability, including for disaggregated data. The SDG Analytics tool also enables users to review global and regional trends for individual indicators and compare trends for countries and areas and for different indicators. The platform also provides access to the SDG Country Profiles which—with a single click—provide trends for individual countries across the SDGs. Most importantly, access to the metadata is

SIGNIFICANT STRIDES IN SDG DATA AND MONITORING



Source: Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition

dramatically improved. SDG indicators metadata are made available in machine-readable format using Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange.

Expanding the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians

The UN DESA-facilitated Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians has become a vital platform for the global statistical community to monitor the SDGs, growing rapidly during 2022 and 2023. The Network, with its innovative approach of open and inclusive membership, connects statisticians from all regions. Data experts and geospatial specialists use the platform to share knowledge on new data solutions and technologies, improve collaboration, and forge partnerships. In the two years since the Network began, it has connected over 2,500

statisticians and data experts from national statistical systems, international organizations, UN Resident Coordinator Offices, and data partners from academia, civil society, and the private sector. Network members from over 160 countries and territories shared over 4,600 exchanges (as of May 2023), reaching nearly 400,000 views. The Global Network Webinar Series is its most popular facilitated activity, where Members share innovative approaches using non-conventional and novel data sources and methods.

Promoting dialogue and exchanging experience on migration statistics

The number of international migrants has been growing consistently, but there is much to be learned on who migrants are, what their conditions are and

how international migration is affecting the global development landscape. Scarce or unused migration data allows for misconceptions to shape public debate. To address this, UN DESA, together with IOM and OECD, organized the 3rd International Forum on Migration Statistics (IFMS), from 24 to 26 January 2023, hosted by ECLAC in Santiago, Chile.

The event gathered experts from a range of backgrounds, with 230 in-person and over 400 online participants joining 30 sessions. Participants presented key challenges and innovative approaches to improve migration data and support evidence-based policymaking. Sessions covered new tools and methodologies; the impact of COVID-19 on migration and migration statistics; data gaps, including on vulnerabilities of migrants; the importance of collaboration; the use of data in the follow-up of global agreements, including the Global Compact for Migration; the importance of financing and political will for the production of data; and strategies to improve communication and fight misconceptions about migration. The connections and networks created during the IFMS will be fostered through different platforms and events until the next Forum.



Broad and inclusive measures of well-being

In support of SDG target 17.19 and the Secretary-General's call in his Our Common Agenda report, UN DESA supported the system-wide effort on finding measures that complement GDP, which culminated in the launch of the Secretary-General's policy brief *Valuing What Counts: Framework to Progress Beyond Gross Domestic Product* in May 2023, drafted by UN DESA, UNCTAD and UNDP.

In parallel to this effort, UN DESA also supported the High-level Forum on Official Statistics in February 2023 to explore broader measures of progress, and addressed both the need from data users for social and environmental measures to complement traditional measures of economic performance, as well as the approaches national statistical offices have taken in responding to these demands for broader measures.

Since June 2023, the Department has also supported the UN Network of Economic Statisticians to look at various initiatives to measure and monitor people's well-being and quality of life; measure progress made in the development of standards to measure enterprises' non-financial performance (Environment, Social, and Governance, or ESG); compile well-being dashboards by looking at examples in selected countries; and compile distributional measures of macroeconomic aggregates such as income, consumption, savings, and wealth.

Mobilizing international cooperation on data and statistics

UN DESA convened the fourth UN World Data Forum in April 2023 in Hangzhou, China. It concluded with the launch of the Hangzhou Declaration: Accelerating progress in the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data. The Hangzhou Declaration calls for an urgent and sustained increase in the level and scale of investments in data and statistics, closing data gaps for vulnerable groups, and enhancing country resilience in the current context of an economic crisis, protracted conflicts, climate emergency, and increased food insecurity.



A plenary session of the 3rd International Forum on Migration Statistics, Photo credit: IOM/DESA

More than 2,000 data experts participated in person and over 10,000 participants joined virtually, across four days. The Forum addressed the use and value of data for better policymaking; the value of innovation for timely and broader disaggregated data; public transparency and rights to privacy; establishing partnerships across different data ecosystems; and the national and international data and statistical capacities.

Shedding light on living arrangements of older persons

Living arrangements of older persons (persons aged 65 years or over) affect their economic well-being, physical and psychosocial health, life satisfaction and mortality. To support research on this important topic, UN DESA continued to monitor the living arrangements of older persons in households. In

2022, DESA also initiated monitoring of living arrangements in collective living quarters, and in October released new and unique dataset on this topic covering 135 countries from 1960 to 2018.

The data show that most older persons continue to live in private households. However, in many high-income countries, but increasingly also in developing countries, living in an institution has become more common, especially for those who need specialized medical services. At the global level, 3 per cent of older persons resided in collective living quarters. These new data revealed not only the need for improved healthcare infrastructure and specialized services to cater to the needs of ageing populations, but also the need to prioritize the development of age-friendly communities and housing options, along with the establishment of social support systems to maintain independent ageing.

Promoting integrated geospatial information for sustainable development

UN DESA convened the second World Geospatial Information Congress, held in Hyderabad, India in October 2022. It emphasized the importance of community, collaboration, and commitment to the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) in achieving the SDGs and societal well-being. The congress also highlighted the importance of integrated geospatial information to address environmental and climate challenges, embrace digital transformation and technology development, and catalyze a vibrant economy. It further addressed the development and strengthening of integrated geospatial information management and demonstrated the importance of international cooperation and coordination among geographic data experts.

The Congress featured nine keynote speakers from diverse backgrounds and received positive feedback for its inclusiveness and diversity, particularly for involving young people and individuals from under-represented groups in the official programme.

Providing new guidance on the organization of National Statistical Systems

UN DESA's *Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems*, endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission, offered guidance to the statistical community on how to develop and maintain national statistical capacity and explained critical issues and topics, including integration of innovative data sources and technologies in the production of statistics and indicators. To remain

relevant in a rapidly changing data ecosystem, the Handbook has been designed as a "living document" to be regularly updated and revised under the guidance of an Advisory Group composed of national and international statisticians. The Handbook, comprising 16 illustrated chapters, informative annexes, and a glossary, was made available on the Statistics Division's website in October 2022.

Delivering an SDG Monitoring Dashboard for local and regional governments

The United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), administered by UN DESA, supported Japanese local and regional governments to monitor SDG progress and identify gaps in SDG implementation. Through a public-private partnership, UNCRD developed an SDG Monitoring Dashboard to enable the local and regional governments to conduct data- and evidence-based Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), which would be used to monitor, evaluate and take further actions to accelerate SDGs progress. The Dashboard allows for local policymakers and other stakeholders to evaluate the SDG progress made by each city and region, while ensuring the data is internationally comparable for reference by other countries and municipalities.



The fourth World Data Forum, Hangzhou, China - Photo credit: UN DESA