



MAKING DATA COUNT



UN DESA

... for evidence-based decision-making

UN DESA continued measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals during the critical final stretch to 2030. The Department released the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*, highlighting global progress and persistent inequalities, while strengthening statistical foundations through revised national accounts and census guidelines. UN DESA drove digital transformation by leading innovation initiatives and convening forums on emerging technologies for sustainable development. The Department also supported the development of new frameworks for measuring well-being beyond GDP and enhanced national statistical capacities, particularly in developing countries.

UN DESA...

- Highlighted global progress and persistent inequalities, calling for urgent action in six priority areas to accelerate implementation in the final stretch to 2030 in the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*.

- Supported the development of a Framework for Inclusive and Sustainable Well-Being, ensuring new indicators that account for quality of life and sustainability beyond GDP.
- Established revised statistical standards to better reflect today's complex economies through the 2025 System of National Accounts (SNA) and the revised Population and Housing Census Guidelines.
- Drove innovation by leading the UN Datathon, showcasing the potential of young data scientists in solving urban sustainability challenges through AI, geospatial tools, and non-traditional data.
- Accelerated digital and geospatial transformation by convening forums and symposia on the role of AI, data science, and geospatial technologies in achieving the SDGs and building climate resilience.
- Increased the global recognition of unpaid labor by publishing a manual for integrating unpaid household service and care work into national economic statistics.
- Strengthened global health and demographic data by convening a high-level panel to identify gaps in evidence for monitoring the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda, ensuring more data-driven policymaking.
- Released a report highlighting the role of international migration in advancing the SDGs, including poverty reduction, health, gender equality and education.
- Strengthened national statistical capacities by delivering enhanced technical support and updating manuals, empowering national statistical offices (NSOs), particularly in developing countries.

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Robust, inclusive, and forward-looking data systems are needed more than ever to support sustainable development. UN DESA is advancing key initiatives to provide access to global datasets of demographic indicators, strengthen the capacity of Member States to monitor population trends and address current and emerging population issues, strengthen national statistical capacities aligned with updated international standards, and mainstream gender and well-being metrics into global statistical frameworks. The Department reinforced these efforts through multi-stakeholder partnerships, technological innovation, and the integration of non-traditional data sources.

Tracking global progress on the SDGs

As the world enters the final five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN DESA spotlighted progress and urgent challenges in the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. Since 2015, the world has made notable strides in expanding access to education, improving maternal and child health, and bridging the digital divide. Effective prevention efforts have significantly reduced the burdens of infectious diseases. Access to electricity has continued to grow, and renewable energy is now the fastest-rising source of power worldwide.

Yet, progress remains fragile and deeply unequal. Millions still face extreme poverty, hunger, inadequate housing, and a lack of basic services. Women, people with disabilities, and marginalized communities continue to face systemic disadvantages. Escalating conflicts, climate chaos, rising inequalities, and soaring debt servicing costs are holding back further advancements. Despite these setbacks, the Report highlights national and local success stories that prove accelerated progress is possible and is already underway. It calls

for urgent action in six priority areas: food systems, energy access, digital transformation, education, jobs and social protection, and climate and biodiversity. Through this report, UN DESA calls for ambition, cooperation, and investment to deliver on the promise of the SDGs.

Advancing statistical standards for sustainable development

UN DESA supported milestones in global statistical collaboration with the launch of the 2030 World Population and Housing Census Programme and the endorsement of the new 2025 System of National Accounts (SNA). These innovations will shape how countries capture critical data on population, sustainability, and the evolving economy over the next decade and more.

The 2030 Housing Census Programme, a decennial work plan spanning the period 2025–2034, will update international standards and methodological guidelines, and enhance national capacity for census planning and execution through capacity building, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing platforms. The fourth revision of the Principles and Recommendations for

Key highlights from the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025

The world experienced notable progress:

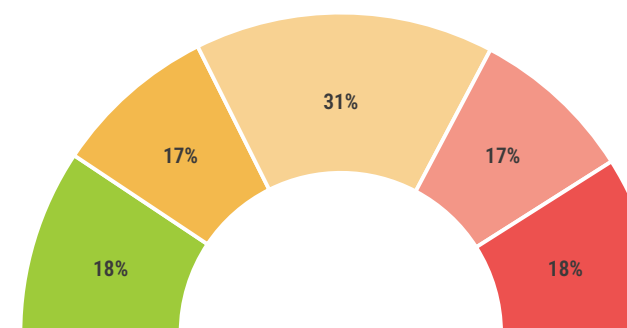
- New HIV infections have decreased by nearly 40 per cent since 2010.
- Malaria prevention efforts have saved more than 12 million lives since 2000.
- 54 countries have eliminated at least one neglected tropical disease.
- An additional 110 million children have enrolled in school since 2015.
- Access to electricity has reached 92 per cent of the global population, with 45 countries achieving universal electricity access in the past decade.
- Internet use has increased by 70 per cent—reaching 68 per cent today.

However, challenges remain:

- Over 800 million people remain trapped in extreme poverty.
- Billions of people lack access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene.
- Women continue to devote 2.5 times as many hours to unpaid domestic and care work as men.
- Climate change is accelerating, with 2024 marking the hottest year on record at 1.55°C above pre-industrial levels.
- Low- and middle-income countries faced record-high debt servicing costs of 1.4 trillion US dollars in 2023.

Overall progress across targets based on 2015–2025 global aggregate data

■ On track or target met ■ Moderate progress ■ Marginal progress
■ Regression ■ Stagnation



Source: UN DESA, 2025 SDG Progress Report, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025>.

Population and Housing Censuses was also endorsed by the Commission in 2025, providing countries with a robust and comprehensive toolkit to guide the successful implementation of the 2030 census round.



Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua addresses the 56th session of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2025, New York. | UN DESA

The System of National Accounts is the global standard for measuring economic performance, including gross domestic product (GDP), and is key to facilitating economic and policy analyses. The 2025 revision introduces treatments for new aspects of the economy that have gained prominence—such as digitalization and the informal economy—while expanding the framework to better reflect well-being and sustainability better.

The Statistical Commission tackled a wide range of pressing topics, from SDG indicators, environment, and demographic statistics to big data and modernization of statistical systems. It brought together 585 delegates from 116 countries and 48 observers, including international agencies and civil society organizations, reaffirming the Commission's role as a vibrant hub for the global statistical community.

Charting the future of data for sustainable development

The Fifth UN World Data Forum marked a pivotal moment for global data-driven development. The Forum, delivered by UN DESA in Colombia in November 2024, launched the Medellín Framework for Action on Data for Sustainable Development, outlining key priorities and actions to secure high-level commitments for transformative change. The Forum reinforced the global commitment to harnessing data for informed decision-making. It emphasized the importance of robust ethical and legal frameworks to ensure the responsible use of data in addressing global challenges.



Participants from more than 120 countries gathered in Medellín, Colombia, to spur data innovation, nurture partnerships, mobilize high-level political and financial support for data, and build a pathway to better data for sustainable development at the Fifth UN World Data Forum | UN DESA

Incorporating a gender perspective in official statistics

The statistical community, with the support of UN DESA, made significant strides toward embedding a gender lens across the global statistical landscape at the 18th meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS), in December 2024. Members reviewed progress in mainstreaming gender perspectives within the work of the UN Statistical Commission. They highlighted innovative initiatives that are transforming how we assess the lives of women and girls. Key discussions included advancements in methodologies for measuring violence against women and a deeper exploration of the gendered dimensions of care and well-being.

UN DESA also unveiled a compelling data story from the 2022 Global Survey of National Gender Statistics

Programmes, now featured on the Global Gender Data Hub. Regional Commissions and UN agencies shared ongoing efforts to strengthen gender data systems. At the same time, country representatives emphasized the power of integrating statistical and geospatial information to produce more granular gender statistics for policymaking. A strong call was made for a comprehensive statistical framework to measure care work, with time-use statistics highlighted as a powerful tool to capture well-being and track progress beyond GDP.

Producing innovative solutions for sustainable tourism

The UN Datathon 2024 demonstrated the power of bringing together young data scientists to address urban challenges through data innovation. Co-organized by UN DESA, the City of Medellín, and Colombia's



Teams of data scientists working at the UN Datathon: Innovating for Sustainable Tourism in November 2024, in Medellín, Colombia | UN DESA

national statistical office (DANE), it brought together over 300 data scientists across 108 teams. Forty teams successfully delivered creative proposals that tackled local challenges across three key dimensions of sustainable tourism—socioeconomic impact, environmental sustainability, and linkages to the SDGs. The grand prize went to the Data Science Lab of Mexico's National Statistical Office (INEGI), which showcased its integrated use of travel time analytics, crime pattern analysis, and environmental monitoring through innovative use of geospatial information—offering a robust decision-support tool for urban planners. Participants were mentored by experts from the private sector, research institutions, and DANE, fostering a collaborative environment.

Enhancing national capabilities in the use of innovative AI and data science applications

UN DESA advanced the capabilities of national statistical offices (NSOs) in harnessing AI and data science for economic statistics. Through two targeted

webinars, organized in collaboration with the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians and the Data Science Leaders Network (DSLN)—a body established by the UN Statistical Commission in 2022—participants explored how AI and data science can revolutionize statistical operations. These sessions highlighted practical applications such as automating business processes, enhancing efficiencies, and developing rapid indicators to respond to emerging issues.

Building on this momentum, an international symposium was convened by the Network and DSLN in Dubai from 20 to 22 January 2025, to examine the policy applications of AI and data science, with a particular focus on the impact of digital transformation on economic decision-making. With around 70 participants from 28 countries and 10 international organizations, the symposium featured interactive formats, including gallery walks, mapping exercises, storyboard development, lightning talks, and peer-learning talks, which fostered rich dialogue and collaboration. Insights from the symposium, hosted by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Center of the United Arab Emirates,



Panelists discuss the policy use of AI and data science and the impact of digital transformation on economic decision-making at the International Symposium on AI and Data Science for Economic Statistics, in January 2025 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates | UN BIG DATA

served as inputs to the DSLN playbook, equipping NSOs with cutting-edge tools and methodologies for modern statistical production.

Harnessing geospatial innovation for national resilience and sustainable development

The 7th High-level Forum on UN Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), organized in October 2024 by UN DESA and the Government of Mexico, represented by its National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), marked a major step forward in harnessing geospatial innovation to drive national progress on social, economic and environmental fronts. Over 200 high-level policymakers and senior government officials gathered with scientists, engineers, innovators, entrepreneurs, as well as representatives of science and technology communities, the UN system and international organizations to strengthen partnerships for sharing and disseminating knowledge, good practices, approaches and strategies towards advancing the 2030 Agenda. The Forum addressed the use of geospatial information to understand, communicate and manage climate-related challenges and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs

through the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF). The Forum also explored strategies on developing geospatial capacity, leveraging innovative tools and technologies, and fostering partnerships towards delivering positive national social, economic and environmental outcomes.

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages

UN DESA helped shed light on key advances in health and demographic data collection since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). On the sidelines of the 58th session of the Commission on Population and Development in April 2025, the Department convened a side event in which panellists presented compelling data on mortality, fertility, and family planning, identifying gaps in global health and demographic monitoring. They emphasized the indispensable role of robust, data-driven approaches in shaping policies aligned with the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda. The event brought together representatives from Member States, UN system entities—including UN DESA, UNICEF, and WHO—and civil society organizations, fostering a collaborative dialogue on leveraging data for impactful



Opening keynote session at the 7th High-level Forum on UN Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), October 2024, México City, Mexico | UN DESA

decision-making. This exchange showcased how global datasets drive informed policymaking and advocacy, reinforcing the importance of continued investment in data collection to support equitable and sustainable health outcomes worldwide.

Integrating unpaid household service work into national economic statistics

UN DESA has taken a significant step toward addressing gender disparities in economic measurement with the publication of the *National Time Transfer Accounts Manual: Measuring and Analysing the Gendered Economy* in January 2025. The Manual provides a methodology to integrate unpaid household and care work, predominantly performed by women, into national economic statistics, ensuring a more comprehensive

understanding of economic contributions beyond traditional measures like the GDP. By capturing gender and age-based economic contributions through time-use data, the Manual offers valuable perspectives on gender equity, intergenerational support, and population ageing. The refined metrics have the potential to reshape public policy by exposing the true costs of raising children, supporting older persons, and maintaining households, fostering more inclusive and equitable economic planning.

Providing data and research to inform global policy on migration

UN DESA has strengthened the global understanding of migration dynamics through two key publications: the *International Migration and Sustainable Development* report (released in December 2024) and the *International Migrant Stock 2024 dataset* (released in



Migration Resource Center in Kathmandu, Nepal | ILO/MARCEL CROZET

January 2025), providing crucial evidence to support informed policy decisions and sustainable development strategies. The *International Migration and Sustainable Development* report highlights the significant contribution of migration to multiple SDGs, including poverty reduction, health, education, and gender equality. It underscores the urgent need for comprehensive, reliable migration data, as outdated or incomplete information can lead to ineffective policies and erode public trust.

The *International Migrant Stock 2024 dataset*, offered detailed estimates of migration patterns across 233 countries and areas from 1990 to 2024. The findings reveal that the global migrant population has nearly doubled since 1990, reaching 304 million in 2024, including a record of 51.7 million refugees and asylum seekers displaced across borders. Although there is

much uncertainty around future trends, it is expected that the complexity and significance of international migration will increase in the coming decades due to demographic changes and global challenges like climate change.



Advancing inclusive policymaking through stronger global migration data

The Fourth International Forum on Migration Statistics, held from 16 to 18 June 2025 in Malmö, Sweden, marked a major step forward in strengthening global migration data for inclusive and evidence-based policymaking. Co-organized by UN DESA, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development



Speakers at the Fourth International Forum on Migration Statistics in June 2025 in Malmö, Sweden | UN DESA

(OECD), and hosted by the University of Malmö, the Forum convened more than 230 speakers from diverse regions and disciplines, showcasing innovative approaches to enhance migration data and strengthen evidence-based policymaking. UN DESA offered practical guidance on implementing the revised

UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration. The Forum also explored how data innovations can support regular migration pathways, strengthen national capacities for data use in decision-making, foster partnerships, and advancing migration forecasting tools.