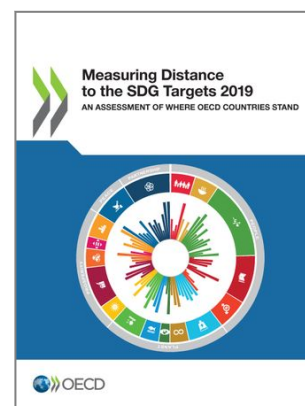


# OECD *Multilingual Summaries*

## Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets 2019

### An Assessment of Where OECD Countries Stand

*Summary in English*



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With eleven years left to achieve the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda, how close are OECD countries to reaching the SDGs? And how is our understanding constrained by targets and indicators that still cannot be measured? The OECD Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets Study aims to help member countries assess where they stand now and to identify the areas where additional effort is required in order to achieve the goals. It also sets out the statistical agenda – showing how much we do not yet know, and how this might impact both the achievement of the SDGs, and decisions about what to prioritise across this vast agenda. The methodology underlying the Study also provides a way for OECD countries to understand their SDG achievements and challenges in a comparative context.

This Study goes further than the previous (2017) edition in exploring how OECD countries have been doing over time by showing, indicator by indicator, whether they are moving in the right direction. It also highlights how much of the 2030 Agenda is transboundary in nature, thus requiring countries to consider their impacts beyond their own borders, as well as whether they are meeting the SDG targets domestically.

The indicators used in the Study are closely aligned with those in the UN Global Indicator List agreed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators. They are drawn from OECD sources and the UN SDGs Global Database. The available data only allowed assessing 105 of the 169 SDG targets, and for only 87 of these it has been possible to assess whether indicators have been moving towards the target levels, rather than away from them. The target levels themselves have been set with reference to the level of ambition embodied in the wording of 2030 Agenda wherever possible. Where no clear target level is indicated in the 2030 Agenda, the Study relies on international agreements and expert opinion, and (in the remaining cases) on benchmarking against the top performing 10% OECD countries.

The results of the Study indicate that OECD countries are, on average, closest to achieving targets such as access to basic amenities (e.g. energy, information and communication technologies, and modern education facilities); maternal, infant and neonatal mortality rates; statistical capacity; public access to information; and conservation of coastal areas. They are furthest away from several targets related to inequalities (e.g. relative income poverty, disparities in education, women's participation and leadership); healthy behaviours (tobacco use and malnutrition); certain educational and employment outcomes (secondary education; adult numeracy skills; share of youth not education, employment or training); and violence and safety (e.g. violence against women; feelings of safety).

When aggregated at the Goal level, the Study finds that OECD countries are on average closest to achieving goals on Energy, Cities and Climate (goals 7, 11 and 13) and goals relating to Planet (Water, 6; Sustainable Production, 12; Climate, 13; Oceans, 14; and Biodiversity, 15). They are furthest from reaching goals related to inclusiveness, such as Gender Equality and Reducing Inequality (goals 5 and 10), with Food and Institutions (goals 2 and 16) also areas of weaker performance. However, it is important to underscore that this assessment is based only on what can be measured at present. Data coverage is poorest on some of the planet-related goals, such as Oceans and Sustainable Production, and best in relation to goals on Health and Education. An analysis of the uncertainty created by these data gaps suggests that results could change substantially if a more complete data set were available.

There are considerable differences across OECD countries in achievement of individual goals and targets. These large disparities strongly suggest that national SDG implementation should consider performance at target level.

Time series data (available for 76 indicators) show that most OECD countries have been progressing towards targets relating to health, gender equality and all five Planet goals. The most notable areas of worsening performance pertain to Food (2.2.2 on obesity), Health (3.b.1 on vaccination coverage), Economy (8.1.1 on GDP growth, 8.2.1 on productivity growth, and 8.5.2 on unemployment) and Biodiversity (15.5.1 on the conservation status of major species groups and extinction risk over time). For most indicators, however, at least one third of OECD countries display no visible trend.

Nevertheless, this first analysis does not measure the pace of change, implying that, even when indicators are moving in the right direction, it does not assess when the targets are likely to be achieved by 2030.

Over half of the targets in the 2030 Agenda can be considered to contain a transboundary effect, meaning that, in achieving these targets, countries are likely to have impacts outside their own borders. These impacts could be on neighbouring countries, on other countries, or global public goods. Of 97 transboundary targets, indicators are available for only 31, leaving considerable data gaps for understanding the global and inter-connected aspects of the 2030 Agenda and its implementation.

Previous editions of this Study have been used by countries as input for communication on SDGs, for reference in their Voluntary National Reviews presented at the UN High-Level Policy Forum, for identifying data gaps in monitoring the SDGs, and for supporting deeper engagement across government and with civil society on the SDGs. The Study has proved to be a flexible tool that can provide a basis for analysis and be tailored to countries' needs in order to help them with the implementation and monitoring of progress towards the SDGs. As part of its Action Plan on SDGs, the OECD will continue to broaden and deepen its analysis so as to make the Study as useful to member countries as possible.

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