Part 2

The SDG Index and Dashboards

As in previous years, the *Sustainable Development Report 2020* (SDR2020) presents and aggregates data on country performance towards the SDGs. It is not an official SDG monitoring tool, but instead complements efforts of national statistical offices and international organizations to collect data on and standardize SDG indicators. To this end, the SDR2020 presents the most up-to-date data from official sources (the United Nations, the World Bank, and others) as well as from non-official sources (research institutions and non-governmental organizations).

Due to time lags in data generation and reporting, this year's SDG Index and Dashboards do not reflect the impact of Covid-19. The projection of country trajectories based on recent progress (business-as-usual, or BAU, scenarios) may not provide a realistic sense of the likely future, as Covid-19 risks changing trajectories relating to many SDGs (see section 1).

Nevertheless, the "pre-Covid-19" SDG Index and Dashboards remain useful for understanding goal-by-goal progress across countries and regions since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015. This serves three purposes in a world that is being transformed by the effects of Covid-19.

First, the SDG data presented in this report can help countries understand pre-crisis vulnerabilities and challenges, which partly explain why so many countries were ill-prepared to respond to Covid-19 (see Box 1). The SDG Index and Dashboards can support such diagnostics in every country.

Second, as highlighted in section 1, the SDGs provide the framework for the long-term recovery from Covid-19. The six SDG Transformations described in section 1 can help operationalize such a strategy. For example, our report highlights high levels of inequalities that must be addressed as part of the Covid-19 recovery (SDG Transformation 1). Over the longer term, the impacts of climate change might dwarf the dislocations caused by Covid-19, so countries need to understand where they stand in terms of decarbonizing energy systems (SDG Transformation 3); making their use of land and oceans sustainable (SDG Transformation 4); and developing low-carbon, resilient cities (SDG Transformation 5). The SDG dashboards provide a tool for such diagnoses (Box 2).

Third, the SDG dashboards underscore the urgent need for investments in more timely and comprehensive SDG data. As one example, SDSN's Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics (TReNDs), in collaboration with various partners, has launched the Data4Now initiative, which aims to provide real-time updates on certain key SDG metrics.

Using the same methodology as in previous years, the SDG Index and Dashboards summarize countries' current performance and trends in relation to the 17 SDGs. This year we include data for 166 countries. Owing to slight changes in the indicator selection (see section 4), the 2020 rankings and scores are not comparable with last year's results. For the first time, we are now able to estimate changes in performance on the SDG Index using the SDR2020 indicators, which are described in section 2.2. As every year, we encourage readers to look beyond the aggregate SDG Index score and to consider countries' performances at the goal and indicator level.

Detailed methodological information, sensitivity tests, and the independent statistical audit of the SDG Index conducted by the European Commission in 2019 are available on our website (www.sdgindex.org).

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Box 2. National and subnational SDG indices and dashboards

Good data and clear metrics are critical for each country to take stock of where it stands on the SDGs, devise pathways for achieving the goals, and track progress. Since 2016, the SDSN and Bertelsmann Stiftung have published the annual global SDG Index and Dashboards. The methodology has been peer-reviewed (Schmidt-Traub et al., 2017) and was audited in 2019 by the European Commission Joint Research Centre (Papadimitriou, Neves, and Becker, 2019).

To provide a better analysis of country and regional contexts, and to improve policy relevance, the SDSN in collaboration with numerous partners has also developed regional and sub-national SDG indices and dashboards. Regional assessments are available for Africa (2018, 2019 and 2020), the Arab Region (2019), the European Union (2019), the Mediterranean Countries (2019), and Latin America and the Caribbean (2020). These reports differ from the global edition in three ways: (i) they tailor the indicator selection to SDG challenges in each specific region; (ii) they use data and statistics from the region (e.g., the European Commission in Europe, UN/ECLAC in Latin America), which can greatly improve the analysis compared with the global Sustainable Development Report; and (iii) they include policy sections that discuss regional policy challenges and implementation efforts. For these reasons, regional SDG indices and dashboards have been generating a lot of interest from governments and other stakeholders.

Another priority is sub-national assessments of SDG progress, which can highlight disparities across cities, provinces, and regions within a country. The SDSN estimates that almost two-thirds (65%) of the 169 SDG targets underlying the 17 SDGs will not be reached without the engagement of and coordination with local, provincial, and regional governments. Similarly, UN-Habitat estimates that around one-third of all SDG indicators have a local or urban component. SDSN and local partner organizations have therefore supported the development of sub-national SDG indices and dashboards in Bolivia, Italy, Spain, and the United States, as well as the European Union. Many other sub-national reports are in preparation.

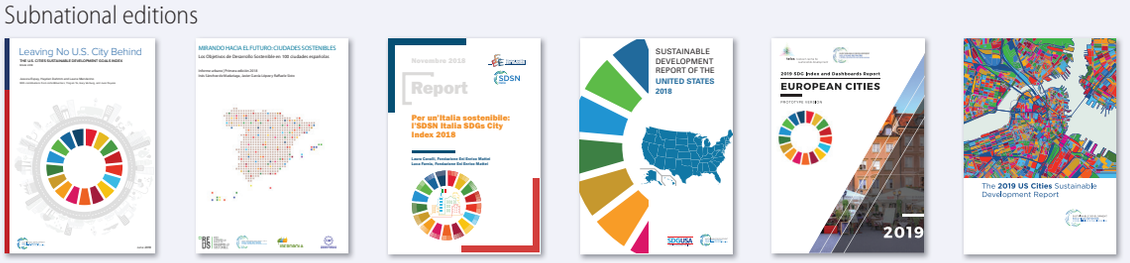
Figure 5

SDG index and Dashboards: global, regional and subnational editions (2016–2020)

Global editions

Regional editions

Subnational editions



Source: Authors' analysis. Download the reports and databases at: www.sdgindex.org.

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2.1 The 2020 SDG Index

The SDG Index tracks country performance on the 17 SDGs, as agreed by the international community in 2015 with equal weight to all 17 goals. The score signifies a country's position between the worst (0) and the best or target (100) outcomes. For example, Sweden's overall Index score (85) suggest that the country is on average 85% of the way to the best possible outcome across the 17 SDGs. To ensure transparency and encourage further analyses, all underlying data is made available publicly on www.sdgindex.org.

Following minor changes to the indicator selection for this report, and last year's audit by the European Commission Joint Research Centre, the methodology and data for the SDG Index and Dashboards are now mature and stable. This year's SDG Index and Dashboards include 85 global indicators plus an additional 30 indicators for the OECD countries. We separated imported biodiversity threats into terrestrial, freshwater (under SDG 15 – Life on Land), and marine (under SDG 14 – Life Below Water). We have also added an indicator to track profit-shifting (under SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals). This year, we are also able for the first time to compile trends on transboundary impacts embodied in trade and consumption. All changes to the indicator selection are described in section 4 of this report.

As in previous editions, three Nordic countries top the 2020 SDG Index: Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. Most countries in the top 20 are OECD countries. Yet even these countries face significant challenges in achieving several SDGs. Every country has a "red" score on at least one SDG in the dashboards (Figure 14). High-income countries perform poorly on spillover indicators (Table 13). Looking at trends, many high-income countries are not making significant progress on sustainable consumption and production or the protection of biodiversity, particularly in relation to Goal 14 (Life Below Water), for which most high-income countries are stagnating. Covid-19 will likely negatively impact progress towards most SDGs in the short and medium-term, including in high-income countries.

Low-income countries tend to have lower SDG Index scores. This is partly due to the nature of the SDGs, which focus to a large extent on ending extreme poverty and on access to basic services and infrastructure (SDGs 1–9). Moreover, poorer countries tend to lack adequate infrastructure and mechanisms to manage key environmental challenges covered under SDGs 12–15. Except for countries that face armed conflicts and civil wars, however, most low-income countries are making progress in ending extreme poverty and in providing access to basic services and infrastructure, particularly under SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), as illustrated by the SDG trends dashboards.

2.2 The SDG Index score over time

Overall, the world has been making progress towards the SDGs. Figure 6 presents the evolution of SDG Index scores since 2010 by region. The chart suggests some convergence overall, with regions that had lower 2010 SDG Index scores progressing faster. Countries in East and South Asia have progressed the most since 2010, and since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015. Africa made significant progress during the MDG period (2000–2015) and has also made some progress since the adoption of the SDGs. Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa region also made progress between 2010 and 2019 and have increased their SDG Index score by more than one point on average. Finally, OECD countries, which have on average the highest SDG Index score, progressed moderately since 2015. On average, progress since 2015 has been faster in low- and middle-income countries compared with high-income countries (Figure 7).

There are significant disparities in the progress that countries have made on the SDGs, including within regions. The three countries that have progressed the most in terms of the SDG Index score are Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Cambodia. By contrast, the three countries that have declined the most are Venezuela, Zimbabwe, and the Republic of the Congo. In general, conflicts and civil wars lead to reversal in SDG progress.

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Table 2

The 2020 SDG Index scores

Rank	Country	Score	Rank	Country	Score
1	Sweden	84.7	43	Greece	74.3
2	Denmark	84.6	44	Luxembourg	74.3
3	Finland	83.8	45	Uruguay	74.3
4	France	81.1	46	Ecuador	74.3
5	Germany	80.8	47	Ukraine	74.2
6	Norway	80.8	48	China	73.9
7	Austria	80.7	49	Vietnam	73.8
8	Czech Republic	80.6	50	Bosnia and Herzegovina	73.5
9	Netherlands	80.4	51	Argentina	73.2
10	Estonia	80.1	52	Kyrgyz Republic	73.0
11	Belgium	80.0	53	Brazil	72.7
12	Slovenia	79.8	54	Azerbaijan	72.6
13	United Kingdom	79.8	55	Cuba	72.6
14	Ireland	79.4	56	Algeria	72.3
15	Switzerland	79.4	57	Russian Federation	71.9
16	New Zealand	79.2	58	Georgia	71.9
17	Japan	79.2	59	Iran, Islamic Rep.	71.8
18	Belarus	78.8	60	Malaysia	71.8
19	Croatia	78.4	61	Peru	71.8
20	Korea, Rep.	78.3	62	North Macedonia	71.4
21	Canada	78.2	63	Tunisia	71.4
22	Spain	78.1	64	Morocco	71.3
23	Poland	78.1	65	Kazakhstan	71.1
24	Latvia	77.7	66	Uzbekistan	71.0
25	Portugal	77.6	67	Colombia	70.9
26	Iceland	77.5	68	Albania	70.8
27	Slovak Republic	77.5	69	Mexico	70.4
28	Chile	77.4	70	Turkey	70.3
29	Hungary	77.3	71	United Arab Emirates	70.3
30	Italy	77.0	72	Montenegro	70.2
31	United States	76.4	73	Dominican Republic	70.2
32	Malta	76.0	74	Fiji	69.9
33	Serbia	75.2	75	Armenia	69.9
34	Cyprus	75.2	76	Oman	69.7
35	Costa Rica	75.1	77	El Salvador	69.6
36	Lithuania	75.0	78	Tajikistan	69.4
37	Australia	74.9	79	Bolivia	69.3
38	Romania	74.8	80	Bhutan	69.3
39	Bulgaria	74.8	81	Panama	69.2
40	Israel	74.6	82	Bahrain	68.8
41	Thailand	74.5	83	Egypt, Arab Rep.	68.8
42	Moldova	74.4	84	Jamaica	68.7

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Rank	Country	Score
85	Nicaragua	68.7
86	Suriname	68.4
87	Barbados	68.3
88	Brunei Darussalam	68.2
89	Jordan	68.1
90	Paraguay	67.7
91	Maldives	67.6
92	Cabo Verde	67.2
93	Singapore	67.0
94	Sri Lanka	66.9
95	Lebanon	66.7
96	Nepal	65.9
97	Saudi Arabia	65.8
98	Trinidad and Tobago	65.8
99	Philippines	65.5
100	Ghana	65.4
101	Indonesia	65.3
102	Belize	65.1
103	Qatar	64.7
104	Myanmar	64.6
105	Honduras	64.4
106	Cambodia	64.4
107	Mongolia	64.0
108	Mauritius	63.8
109	Bangladesh	63.5
110	South Africa	63.4
111	Gabon	63.4
112	Kuwait	63.1
113	Iraq	63.1
114	Turkmenistan	63.0
115	São Tomé and Príncipe	62.6
116	Lao PDR	62.1
117	India	61.9
118	Venezuela, RB	61.7
119	Namibia	61.6
120	Guatemala	61.5
121	Botswana	61.5
122	Vanuatu	60.9
123	Kenya	60.2
124	Guyana	59.7
125	Zimbabwe	59.5

Rank	Country	Score
126	Syrian Arab Republic	59.3
127	Senegal	58.3
128	Côte d'Ivoire	57.9
129	The Gambia	57.9
130	Mauritania	57.7
131	Tanzania	56.6
132	Rwanda	56.6
133	Cameroon	56.5
134	Pakistan	56.2
135	Congo, Rep.	55.2
136	Ethiopia	55.2
137	Burkina Faso	55.2
138	Djibouti	54.6
139	Afghanistan	54.2
140	Mozambique	54.1
141	Lesotho	54.0
142	Uganda	53.5
143	Burundi	53.5
144	Eswatini	53.4
145	Benin	53.3
146	Comoros	53.1
147	Togo	52.7
148	Zambia	52.7
149	Angola	52.6
150	Guinea	52.5
151	Yemen, Rep.	52.3
152	Malawi	52.2
153	Sierra Leone	51.9
154	Haiti	51.7
155	Papua New Guinea	51.7
156	Mali	51.4
157	Niger	50.1
158	Dem. Rep. Congo	49.7
159	Sudan	49.6
160	Nigeria	49.3
161	Madagascar	49.1
162	Liberia	47.1
163	Somalia	46.2
164	Chad	43.8
165	South Sudan	43.7
166	Central African Republic	38.5

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Annual assessments of progress on the SDG Index score are affected by limited data availability and time lags for certain indicators. Due to gaps in data availability and time lags, these longitudinal trend lines include many imputations based on closest available years. As noted above, Covid-19 will likely have a strongly negative impact on SDG performance in many countries, but this has not been reflected in the data available to date. See the detailed trend database accessible on the SDG Index website: https://www.sdgindex.org/.

Figure 6

Progress on the SDG Index by regions (2010–2019)

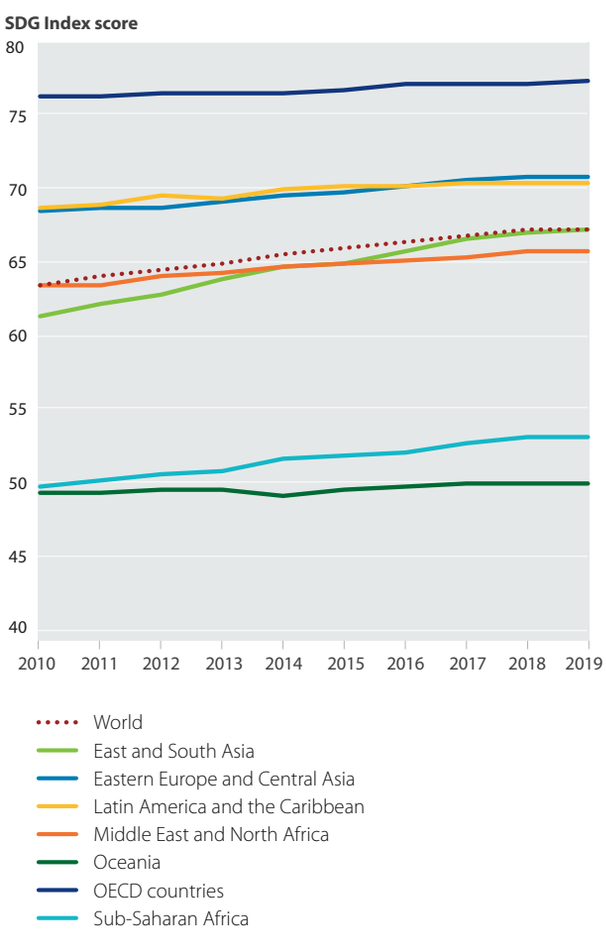

Figure 7

Progress on the SDG Index by income group (2010–2019)

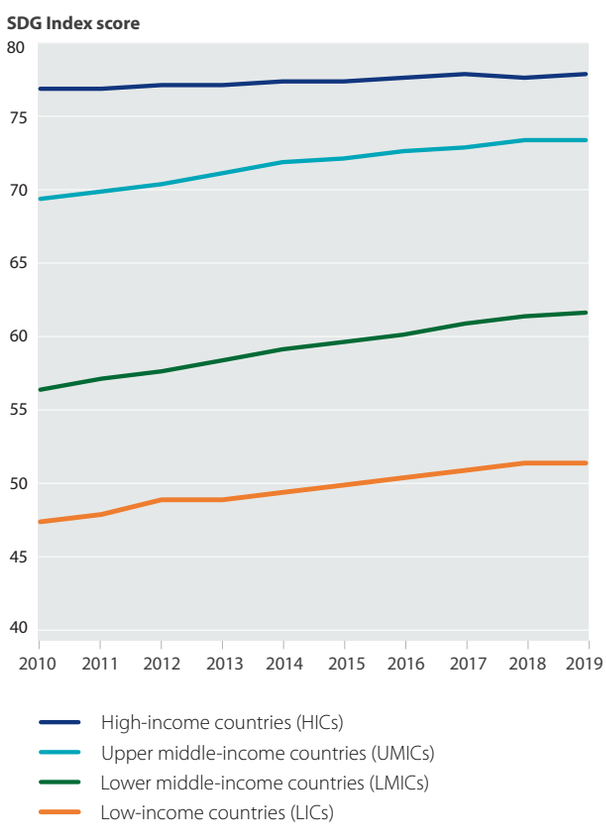

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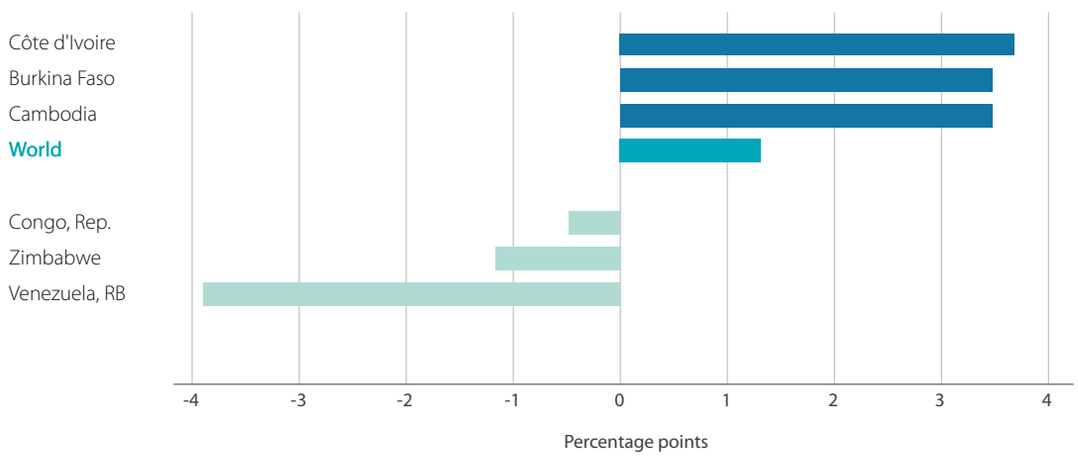
Figure 8

Countries whose SDG Index score has improved or decreased the most since 2015



Note: Population-weighted averages.
Source: Authors' analysis

Progress by SDGs

Since 2015, the world has seen the most rapid progress towards SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Overall, as underlined by the United Nations Statistics Division, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty globally in 2018 had decreased by 1.4 percentage points from the adoption of the SDGs: from 10% in 2015 to 8.6% in 2018 (United Nations, 2019). Following these historic trends, this figure was projected to reach 6% by 2030, however Covid-19 now threatens to increase extreme poverty in many countries. Access to basic transport infrastructure and broadband connection has also been growing rapidly. Ninety percent of the world's population live within range of a 3G or higher-quality mobile network (United Nations, 2019). Global investment in research and development has also been growing. At the same time, SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) is the goal that exhibits the largest spread between top and bottom performers. This emphasizes the need to accelerate the spread of technologies and innovation globally and to strengthen capacities and skills. As highlighted in the SDG dashboards, the historic pace of progress may not be sufficient to achieve these SDGs by 2030 – including ending extreme poverty.

By contrast, even before Covid-19, many parts of the world were progressing slowly or experiencing reversals in progress made towards SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). The lack of progress towards SDG 2 is driven by increases in the number of people who suffer from undernourishment as well as a growing share of people who are overweight or obese. It is likely that Covid-19 will increase food insecurity and malnutrition, especially for low-income people (FAO, 2020; IFPRI, 2020; World Food Programme, 2020). The accelerated loss of terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity is affecting performance on SDG 15 (Life on Land). Despite an increase in protected areas, reversals on this goal in many countries are driven by biodiversity threats and deforestation, caused at least in part by unsustainable supply chains. This is confirmed by many international reports (IPCC, 2019; IPBES, 2019).

There are indications that historic trends in progress towards SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) have also been declining slightly, however global trend data is sparse, so we do not present longitudinal charts for these goals.

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Figure 9

Progress by SDGs and regions

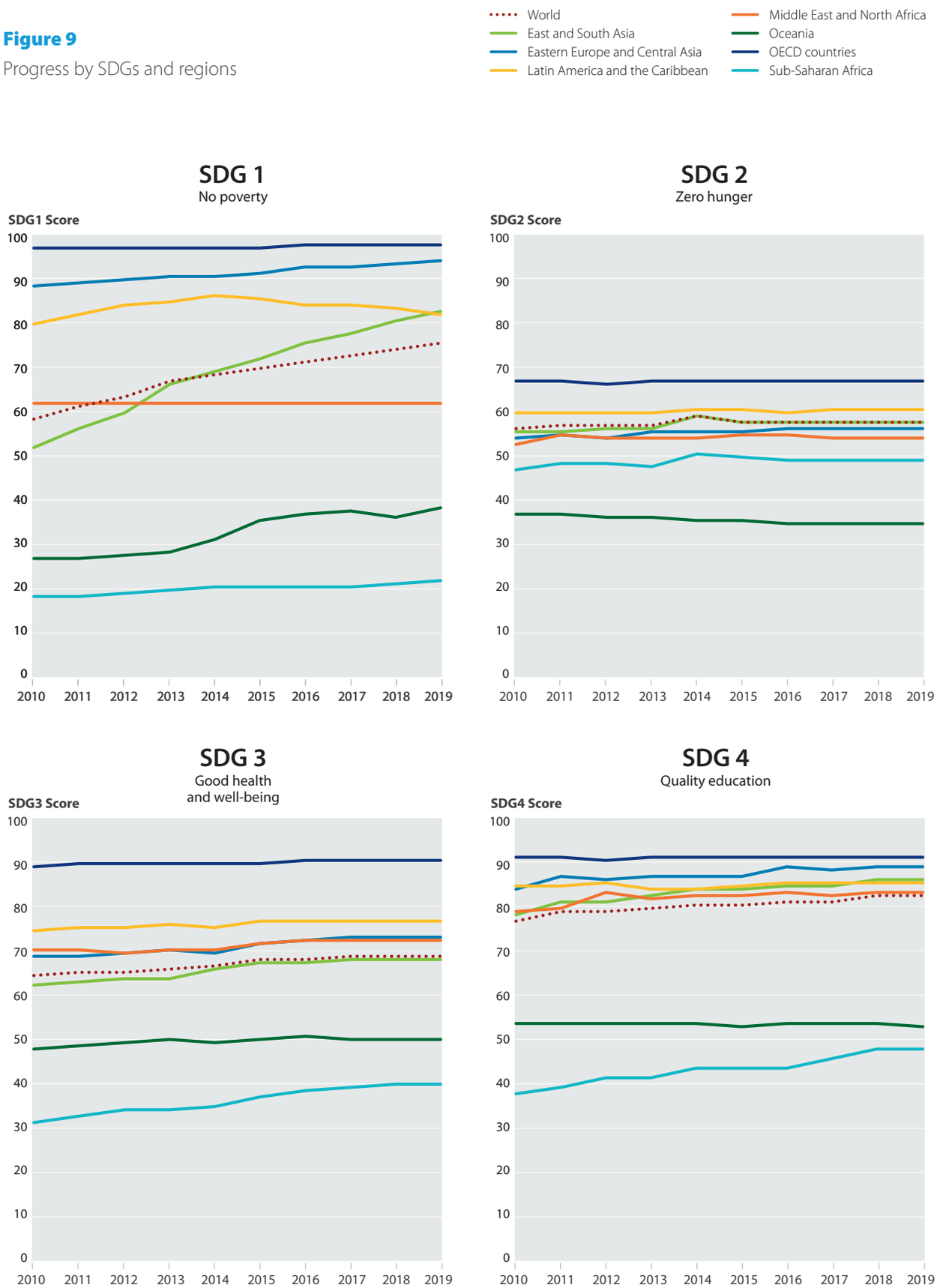

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Figure 9

Progress by SDGs and regions (continued)

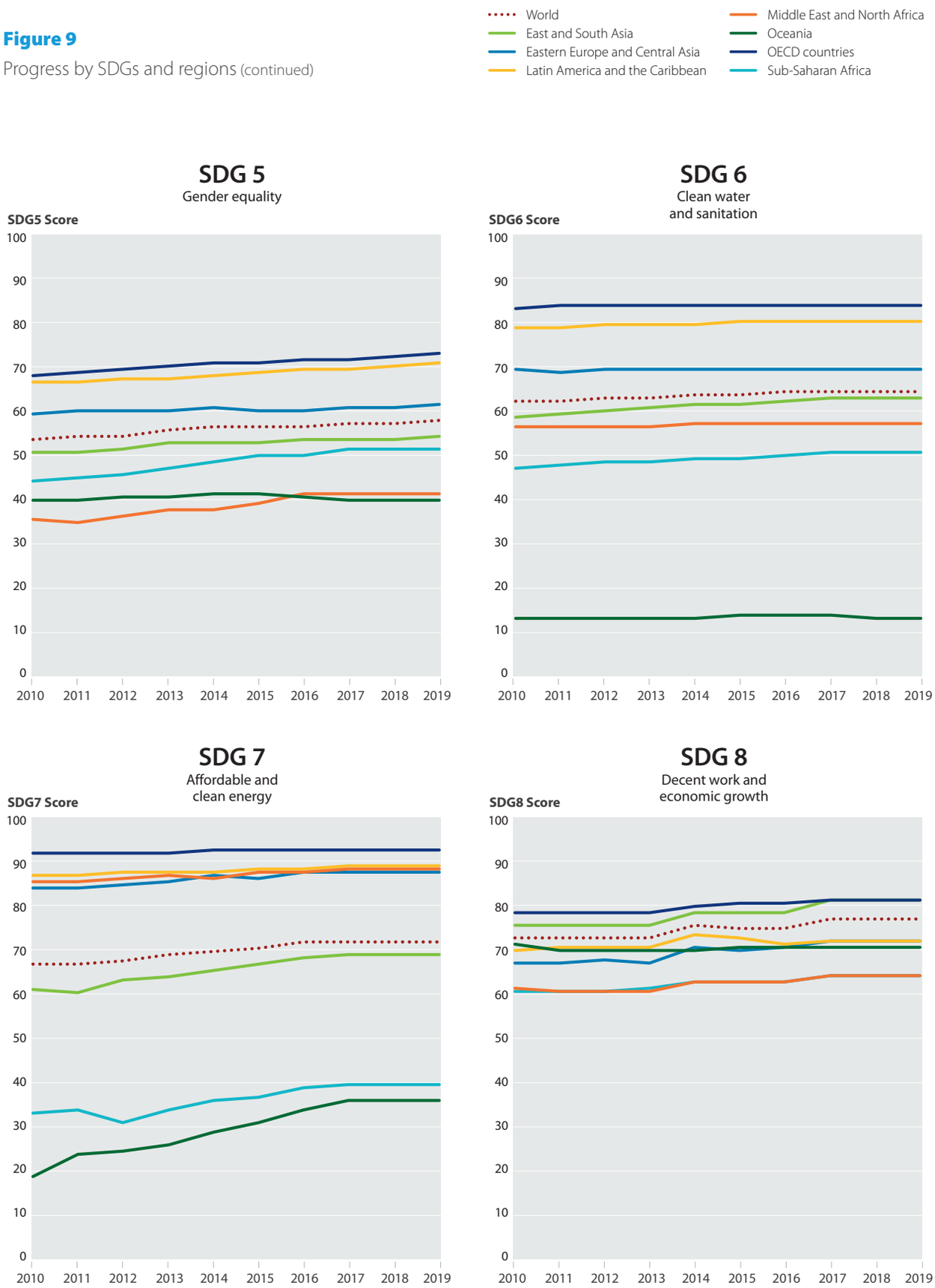

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Figure 9

Progress by SDGs and regions (continued)

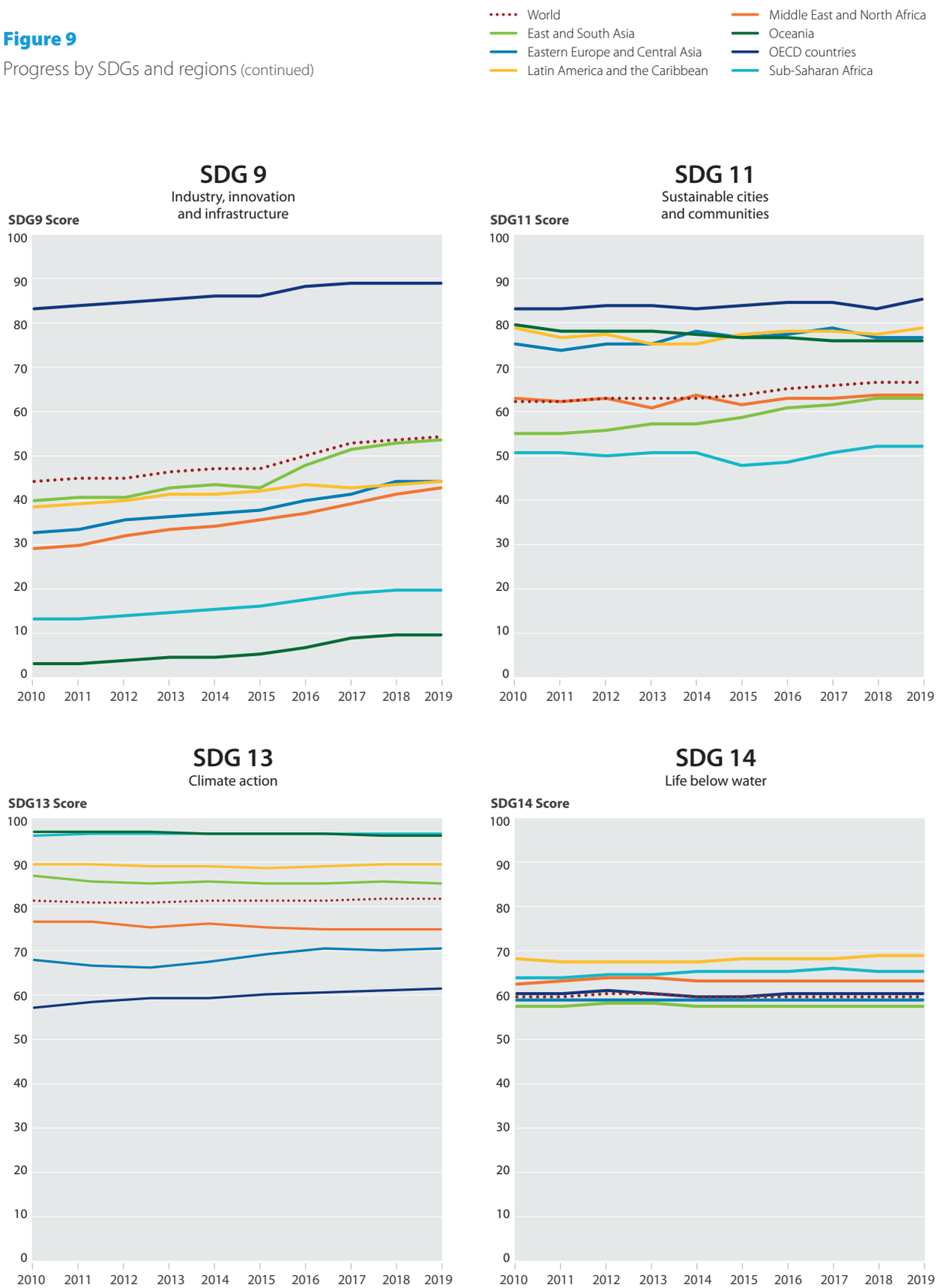

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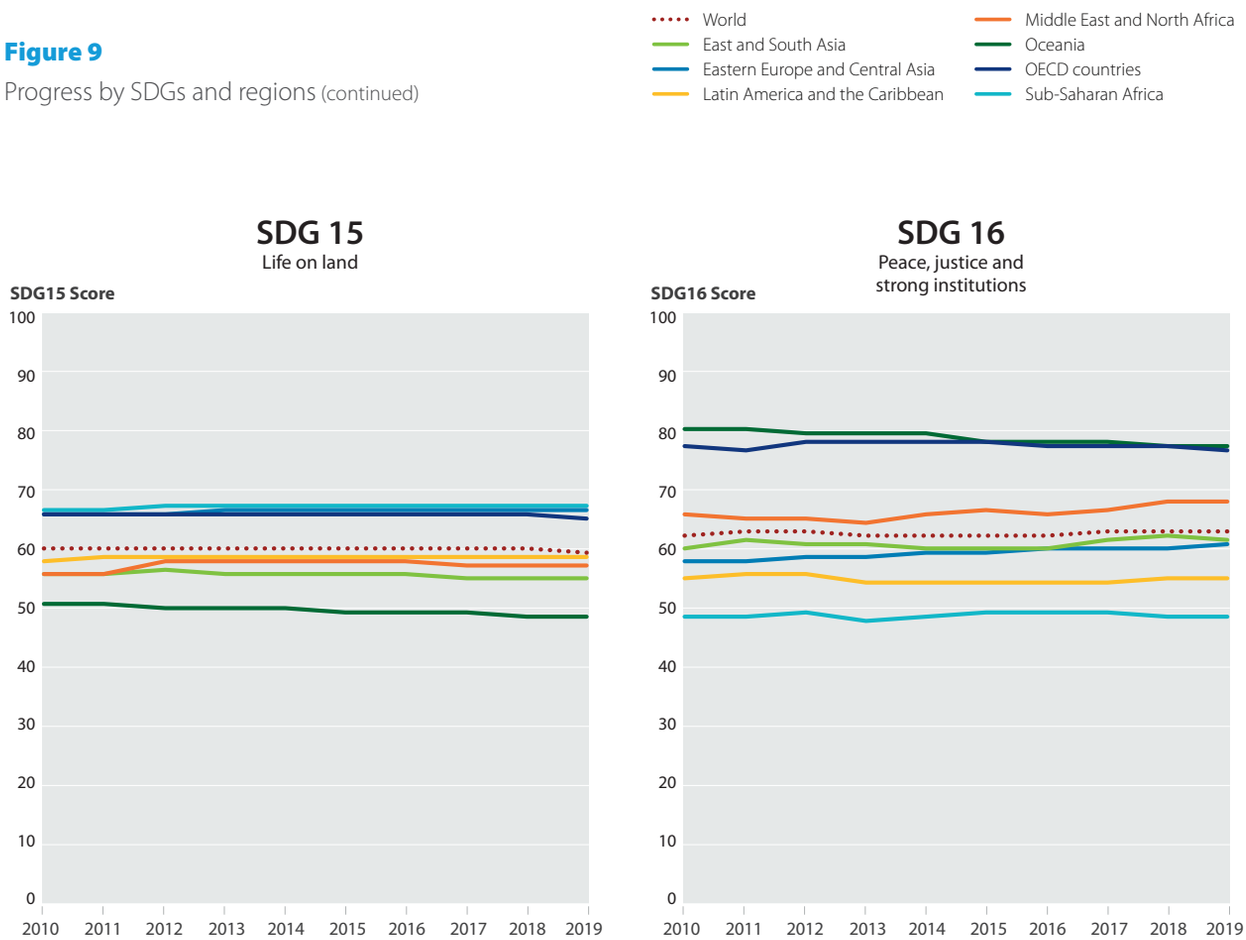
Figure 9

Progress by SDGs and regions (continued)



Note: Trend data for SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) are not presented due to data gaps. For SDG 13 (Climate Action), goal score is based on the headline indicator "CO_2 emissions per capita." Other indicators for SDG 13 are included in the country profiles and dashboards. Due to incomplete trend data, longitudinal results on SDG 14 (Life Below Water) are not presented for Oceania. See country profiles and dashboards for more information on indicator and goal trajectories.

Source: Authors' analysis

2.3 International spillovers

Strategies to achieve the SDGs need to be implemented domestically without generating negative impacts on other countries ("spillovers"). The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs recognize the importance of international spillovers. SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) requires developed countries to take the lead in tackling spillovers. Greta Thunberg and others have accused rich countries of "creative carbon accounting" by counting only "production-based" emissions, leaving aside consumption-based emissions embodied into trade.[1]

Spillovers must be understood, measured, and carefully managed. Since 2017, the *Sustainable Development Report* has presented the best available data on countries' positive and negative spillovers, and these have been consolidated into a Spillover Index. The index score and rank are available for all countries in the Annex and have been included in the country profiles. We group spillovers into three categories:

- Environmental spillovers cover international spillovers related to the use of natural resources and pollution. Environmental spillovers can be generated in two ways: i) through transboundary effects embodied in trade, and ii) through direct cross-border flows in air and water.

1. https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2019/10/17/greta-thunberg-accuses-rich-countries-of-creative-carbon-accounting

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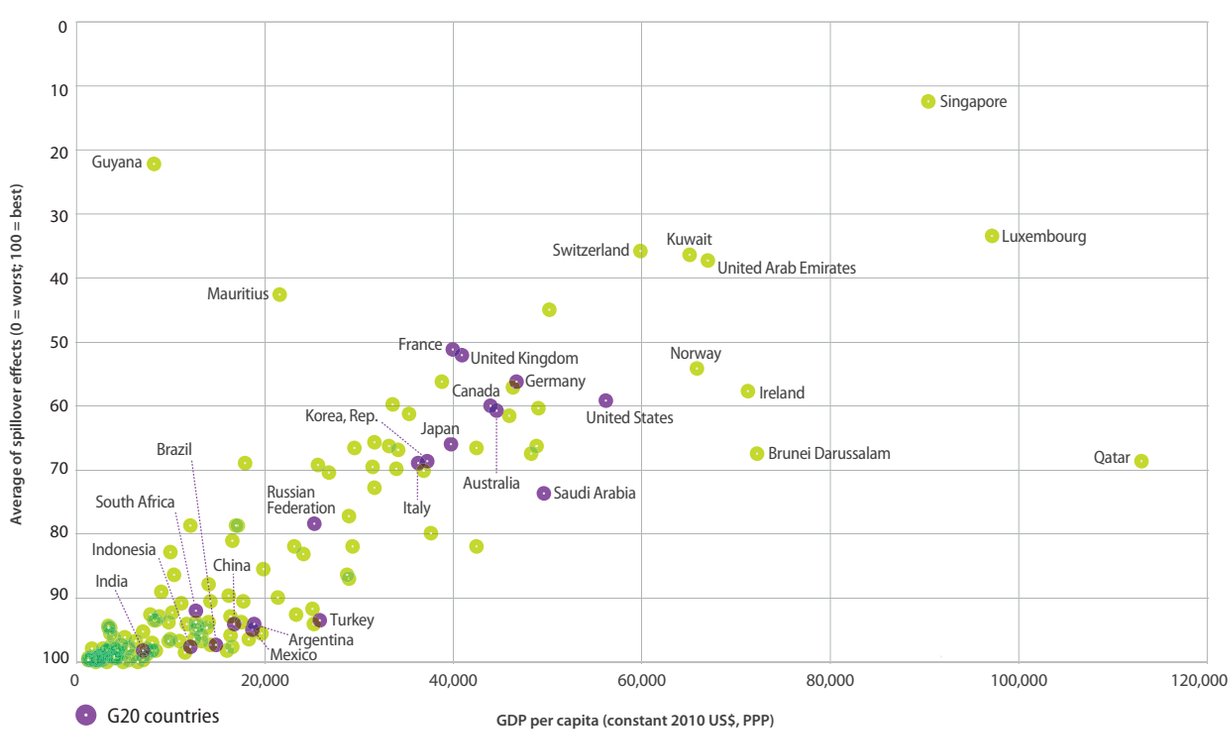
Trade-related spillover measures are obtained using the consumption-based accounting (CBA) framework and isolating the "import" component. Using tools such as multiregional input–output (MRIO) databases, combined with databases on environmental, biodiversity and social factors, we can estimate transboundary impacts embodied in consumption and trade. Generating better measures of cross-border flows (through air and water) for each country remains an important research agenda.

- Spillovers related to the economy, finance, and governance cover international development finance (e.g., ODA), unfair tax competition, banking secrecy, and international labor standards.
- Security spillovers include negative externalities – such as the trade in arms, particularly in small arms (Adeniyi, 2017), and organized international crime – which can have a destabilizing impact on poor countries. Among the positive spillovers are investments in conflict-prevention and peacekeeping, including through the United Nations.

Overall, high-income countries generate the largest negative spillovers, which undermine other countries' efforts to achieve the SDGs. Small countries – such as Luxembourg, Singapore and Switzerland – tend to trade more than larger economies, and therefore generate high per-capita spillovers. Yet, there is a large variation

Figure 10

Average spillover score against gross domestic product per capita (GDP per capita, constant 2010 US$, PPP)



Note: The Spillover Index measures transboundary impacts generated by one country on others, which undermine their ability to achieve the SDGs. The Spillover Index covers financial spillovers (e.g., financial secrecy, profit-shifting), environmental and social impacts embodied into trade and consumption (e.g., imported CO_2 emissions, imported biodiversity threats, accidents at work embodied into trade) and security/development cooperation (ODA, weapons exports). ODA is an example of a positive spillover. Scores should be interpreted in the same way as for the SDG Index, ranging from 0 (worst performance i.e., significant negative spillovers) to 100 (best possible performance, i.e., no significant negative spillovers). To allow for international comparisons, most spillover indicators are expressed on a per capita basis. The Spillover Index scores and ranks are available in Table 13.

Source: Authors' analysis.

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in spillovers among countries with similar per-capita incomes. This suggests that countries can reduce their negative spillovers without reducing their per-capita incomes. The spillover index is presented in each individual country profile.

Data on cross-border spillovers tends to be sparse and incomplete, and several spillovers lack clear conceptual frameworks for measurement. The lack of data and measurement concepts derive partly from the complexity of the issues. Another challenge is that national statistical offices are rarely mandated to measure international spillovers. Moreover, a lot of work on international spillovers focuses on individual supply chains (e.g., production of a pair of jeans) or specific products, such as palm oil from South-East Asia. Such case studies have made a tremendous contribution towards our understanding of international spillovers, but they cannot directly be incorporated into national-level assessments. Translating the findings from case studies into national metrics is a priority for future research into international spillover indicators.

Focusing on spillovers embodied into trade, there is a crucial need to better integrate consumption-based accounting within monitoring and policy frameworks, including in tracking and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Kander et al., 2015). Consumption-based accounting has the advantage of incorporating the impacts generated by international transport. It also incorporates carbon leakages and attributes them to the countries that externalize CO_2 emissions (or other types of impacts). As such, it brings complementary policy implications to production-based accounting. While production-based accounting rightfully emphasizes the principle of "product liability," which states that producers are responsible for the quality and safety of their products, consumption-based accounting emphasizes the responsibility of consumers and international trade policies and agreements.

For the first time, the report this year integrates trends over time for trade-related spillovers. Constructing MRIO databases and satellite datasets is very time consuming, which leads to time lags in data reporting of three to six years (Svenja Wiebe et al., 2018). This is an important limitation of consumption-based and trade-related spillover measures. Efforts to increase the timeliness of global MRIOs are under way (Miao and Fortanier, 2018; Stadler et al., 2018)

In contrast to domestic impacts, we see no clear signs of sustained reductions in spillovers generated by OECD countries. CO_2 emissions in OECD countries declined between 2010 and 2015 but imported CO_2 emissions have increased overall compared to 2000 and have risen further since 2009 (Figure 11). OECD countries are reducing their impact on domestic water scarcity. However, while scarce water use embodied in imports has declined overall since 2000, no progress was seen between 2009 and 2013.

More data-driven conversations are also needed to reform the governance of global supply chains. Many international supply chains, particularly relating to land-use and food systems are unsustainable. The ability of individual companies to correct these failings can be limited, so industry- and supply-chain-wide approaches are needed. Several such industry initiatives exist (for coffee, palm oil, cocoa, and many other products). As part of a larger consortium, SDSN released a study in 2019 on the governance of the soybean supply chain, and in particular on the impact of trade imports from Europe and China on major soybean producers, such as Argentina and Brazil (Czaplicki Cabezas et al., 2019). More work is needed to understand how the governance of international supply chains can be and need to be reformed to curb cross-country spillovers.

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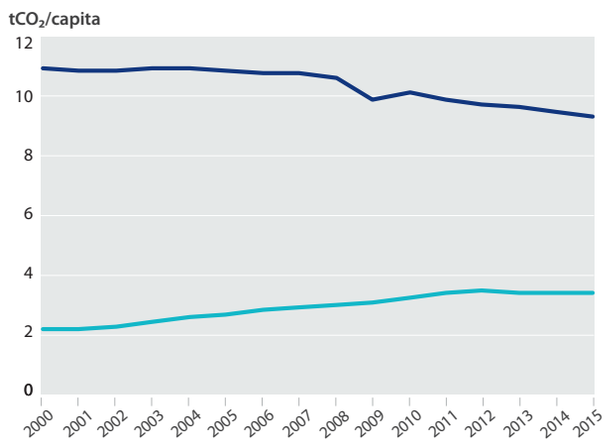
Figure 11

Domestic vs transboundary impacts (CO_2 emissions and scarce water use)

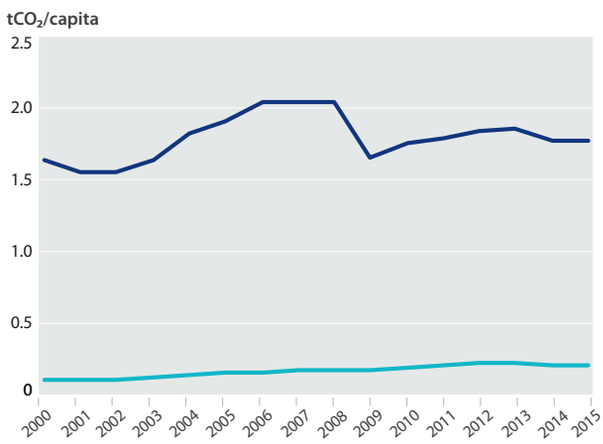
OECD countries
Rest of the World (ROW)

Domestic: Energy-related CO_2 emissions per capita (tCO_2/capita)



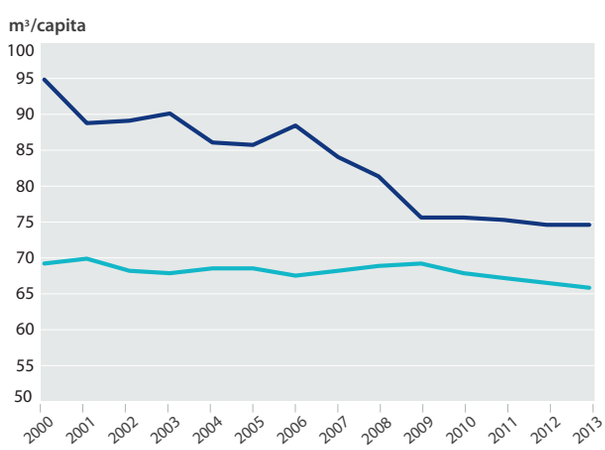
Source: Authors' analysis. Based on Gütschow et al (2016)

Spillover: CO_2 emissions embodied into imports (tCO_2/capita)



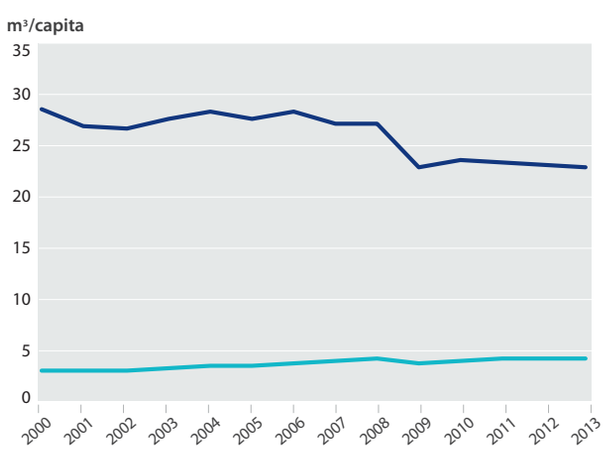
Source: Authors' analysis. Based on Lenzen, M. et al. (2020)

Domestic: Scarce water use for domestic consumption and exports (m^3/Capita)



Source: Authors' analysis. Based on Lenzen, M. et al. (2013)

Spillover: Scarce water use embodied into imports (m^3/capita)



Source: Authors' analysis. Based on Lenzen, M. et al. (2013)

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2.4 The SDG dashboards

The SDG dashboards highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each country in relation to each of the 17 SDGs. As described in the methodology section, dashboard ratings are based on data for the two indicators under each goal for which the country performs worst. This means that, for example, good performance on five out of seven indicators does not compensate for poor performance on two indicators. In other words, our methodology assumes low substitutability or compensation across indicators in the construction of our composite index.

This year, the dashboards include population-weighted averages for each region and by income groups (Figure 12). These regional comparisons are based on the same set of indicators as used for the SDG Index. The OECD dashboards (Figure 14) include more indicators than the other dashboards, however, owing to the greater availability of data for these countries. SDSN is also promoting regional editions of the *SDG Index and Dashboards*, including editions on Africa, the Arab Region, Europe, and Latin America (Box 2).

OECD countries

The OECD dashboard reveals that, before the Covid-19 outbreak, OECD countries were not on track to achieve the SDGs. Compared to the rest of the world, OECD countries perform better on goals related to socioeconomic outcomes and basic access to infrastructure, including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Yet the indicator set does not capture well a country's preparedness for health security challenges, due to the absence of a robust international measure (Box 1). Covid-19 has indeed highlighted the vulnerability of health systems, including those of OECD countries (section 1.2), and the need to strengthen resilience and prevention.

Major efforts are needed to accelerate progress towards climate mitigation and biodiversity protection – SDGs 12 to 15. In particular, some OECD countries perform especially poorly on associated spillover indicators. Based on available data, trends on SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and, where available, on transboundary impacts embodied in trade and consumption are alarming in most OECD countries. These countries need to undertake greater efforts to decouple economic growth from negative environmental impacts, particularly in the wake of Covid-19.

OECD countries face persistent challenges related to sustainable agriculture and diets – which are also major drivers of greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss. OECD countries perform relatively poorly on the indicators on trophic levels (capturing the energy intensity and long-term sustainability of average diets) and obesity. Meanwhile, the closure of yield-gap remains well below the 80% target in numerous OECD countries and below 50% in some. This underscores the need to increase the efficiency of agricultural and land-use systems and to improve diets and sustainable food consumption.

Inequalities in incomes as well as in access to services and opportunities are growing challenges in most OECD countries. Palma ratios, adjusted GINI coefficients, and elderly poverty rates are all high and are increasing in the majority of the OECD countries. Disparities in health and education outcomes by income and territorial area are also high. Finally, gender pay gaps and the gender gap in minutes spent doing unpaid work need to be substantially reduced to achieve SDG 5 (Gender Equality) in OECD countries.

East and South Asia

Overall, East and South Asia is the region that has progressed most on the SDG Index since the adoption of the goals in 2015. Most countries in the region also managed the Covid-19 outbreak more effectively than many other parts of the world (section 1).

Countries in East and South Asia differ greatly in size and in level of economic development. Correspondingly, SDG challenges also vary greatly across countries in this region. Overall, the best performances are obtained on SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), although for each of these goals, at least one country in the region has a red rating (major SDG

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challenge). Major challenges persist in most countries on SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDGs 12–15 on climate change mitigation and biodiversity protection, and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Trends on SDG 1 (No Poverty) are especially positive, with most countries in the region on track to eradicate extreme poverty. By contrast, negative trends on SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) need to be reversed and will require a significant acceleration of progress to achieve the 2030 targets in most countries. Vigilance is needed to ensure that Covid-19 does not change positive trajectories.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia obtain their best performance on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Compared to other regions, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) remains problematic, due to relatively high perceived corruption in some countries, low freedom of speech, or high insecurity. As for other parts of the world, poor performance on SDGs 12 to 15 on climate mitigation and biodiversity protection require urgent policy attention. Access to basic services and infrastructure, covered notably under SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), is improving rapidly. By contrast, trends on SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) are stagnating or reversing in most countries in this region.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin American and Caribbean countries perform best on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). They have also been experiencing progress on SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Yet, compared to other parts of the world, greater efforts are needed to reduce income and wealth inequalities, which is underlined by the poor performance of all countries in the region on SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Improving access to and quality of key services would help strengthen performance on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). In most countries in the region, a high homicide rate is associated with a low share of people who feel safe walking alone at night. Combined with high and often stagnating (or even increasing) perceptions of corruption, these factors explain poor performance and trends on SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Finally, as for other parts of the world, economic growth has not been decoupled from negative environmental impact, which is evident in large achievement gaps on SDGs 12 through to 15.

Middle East and North Africa

The SDG performance of Middle East and North African countries varies greatly. Conflicts in some countries lead to poor and declining performance on most SDGs, particularly on SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Countries less affected by conflicts perform best on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Still, all countries in the region face major challenges in reaching SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), due to undernourishment, stunting, obesity, or issues related to agriculture and sustainable land-use (such as poor nitrogen management). Access to infrastructure, primarily covered under SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), is generally high or improving at a fast pace. However, further efforts are needed to strengthen domestic labor rights and standards and to tackle negative spillovers under SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth); to enhance freedom of speech and address high levels of perceived corruption under SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions); and to make the transition towards more circular and green economies (SDGs 12 to 15). High CO_2 emissions embodied in fossil-fuel exports have a strongly negative impact on the performance of most countries in the region on SDG 13 (Climate Action).

There are persistent data gaps in the Gulf States for tracking poverty at 1.90$/day and 3.20$/day, income inequality (GINI coefficient), and working conditions (e.g., modern slavery). Greater investments are therefore needed in budget surveys, household surveys, and data availability.

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Sub-Saharan Africa

The average SDG Index score for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa has improved significantly since 2015. Yet, all sub-Saharan African countries continue to face major challenges in achieving the SDGs, and Covid-19 threatens to undo much of the progress made in recent years. Owing to the poverty in the region, performance on socioeconomic goals and access to basic services and infrastructure (SDGs 1 to 9) are poor compared to other world regions. In some countries, insecurity and conflict have lowered performance on various goals, including SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). To improve the low performance on this and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), countries need to strengthen their institutions and increase domestic resource mobilization. Relatively low levels of consumption lead to somewhat better performances on SDGs 12 to 15 on climate mitigation and biodiversity protection, although trends in pollution in urban areas, covered under SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and forest loss and biodiversity protection, covered under SDG 15 (Life on Land), are flat for the region as a whole and moving in the wrong direction in some countries.

The Covid-19 outbreak and the disruption in international supply chains, including the food supply chain, are likely to have very negative impacts on SDG performance in many sub-Saharan countries. International solidarity and support will be needed to prevent losing the development gains of recent decades.

Oceania

The SDG dashboards for Oceania reveal the relative lack of comparable data across the region. Due to this lack of data, it is impossible to benchmark many small island developing states in Oceania against other countries. On the basis of the data available, small island states in the region perform best on SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). By contrast, access to services, and their quality, covered under SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), need to improve. Similarly, access to infrastructure, covered under SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), is lower than in most other regions. Small island states perform well compared to the rest of the world on climate mitigation (SDG 13), but they are of course among the countries that are the most vulnerable to climate change.

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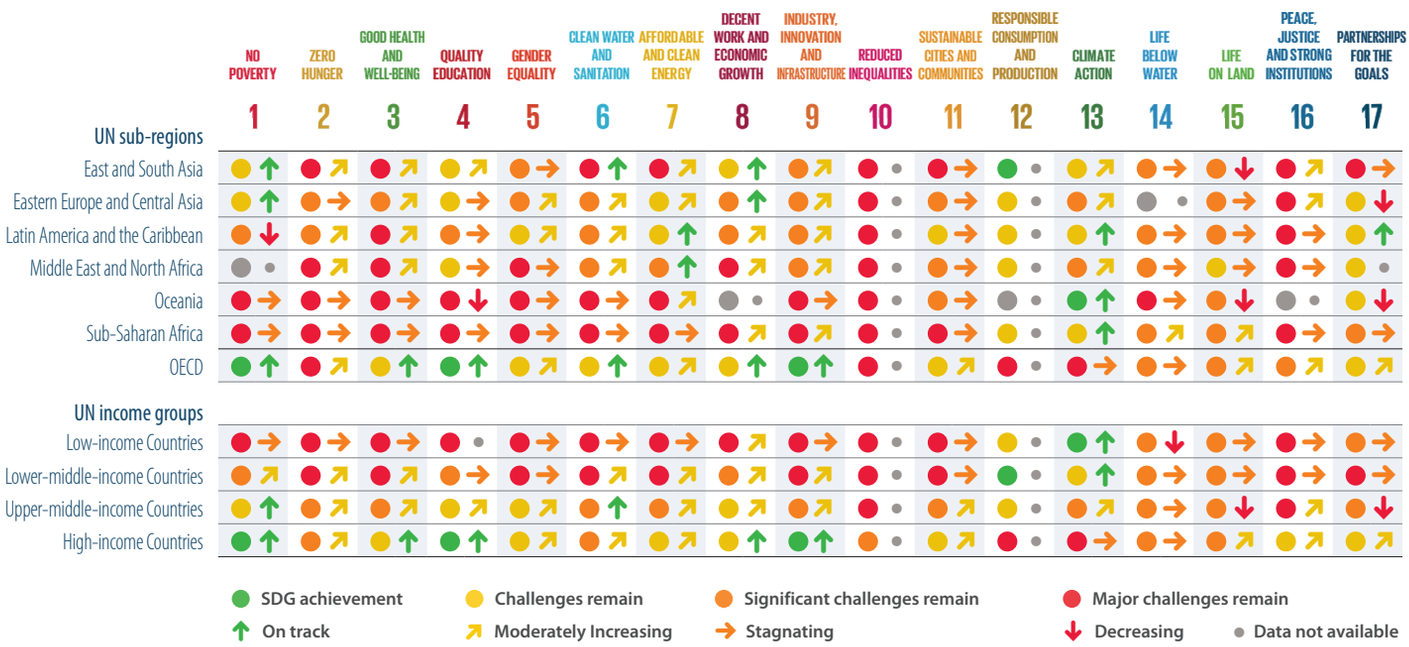
Figure 12

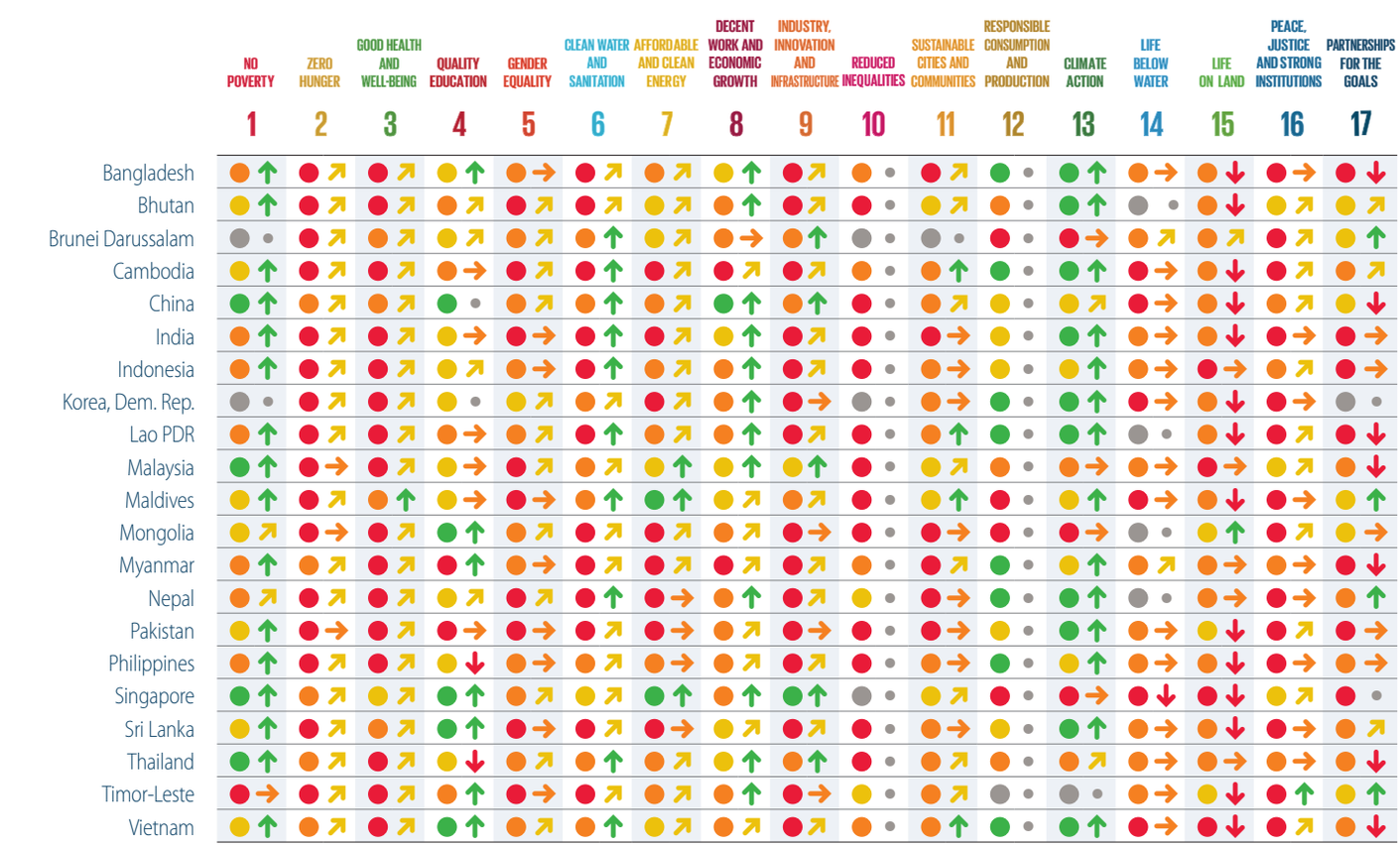
2020 SDG dashboards (levels and trends) by United Nations sub-regions and income groups



Note: Excluding OECD specific indicators. Population-weighted averages. *Source:* Authors' analysis

Figure 13

2020 SDG dashboards (levels and trends) for East and South Asia



Source: Authors' analysis

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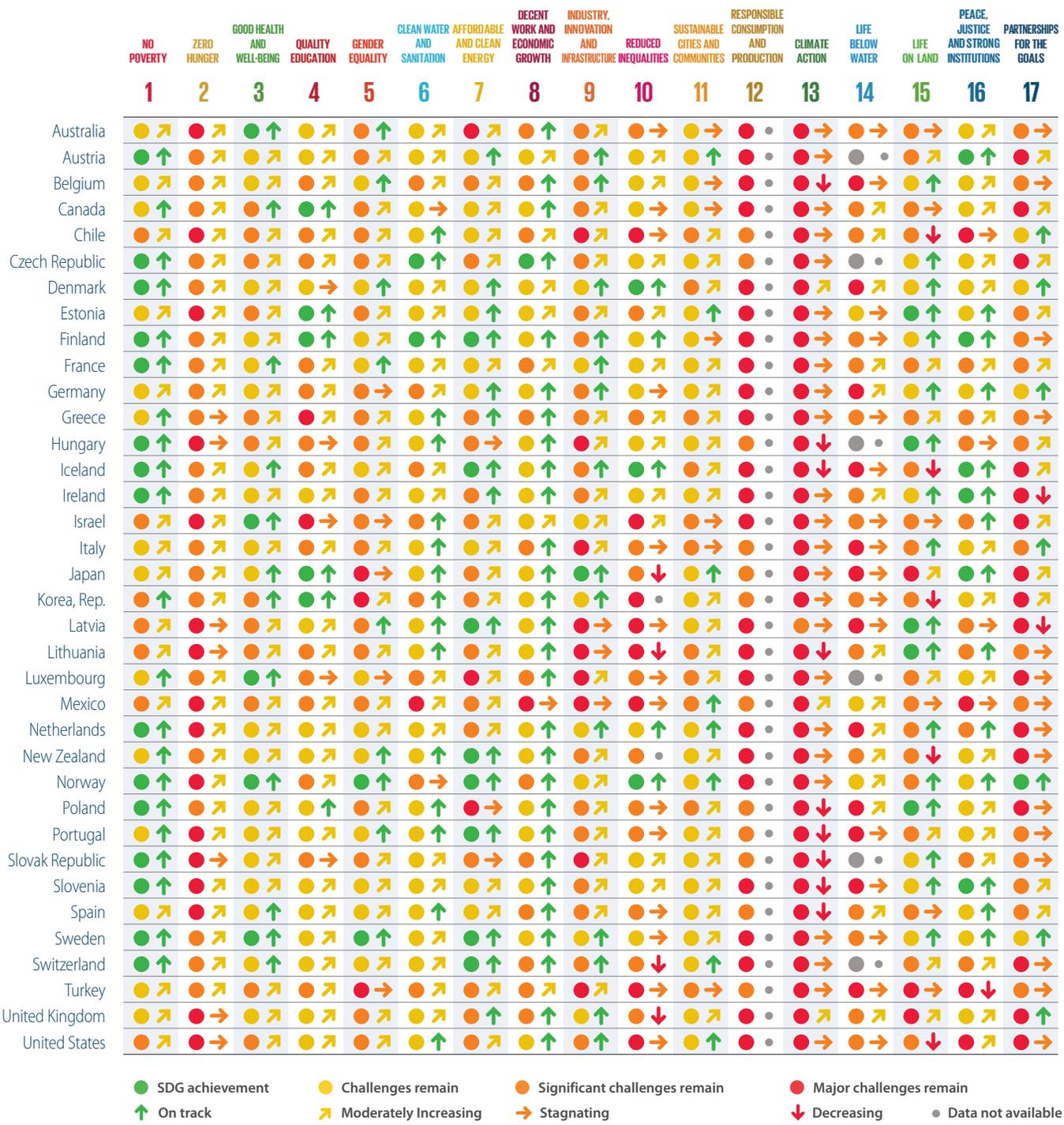
Figure 14

2020 SDG dashboards (levels and trends) for OECD countries



Note: Including OECD specific indicators. *Source:* Authors' analysis

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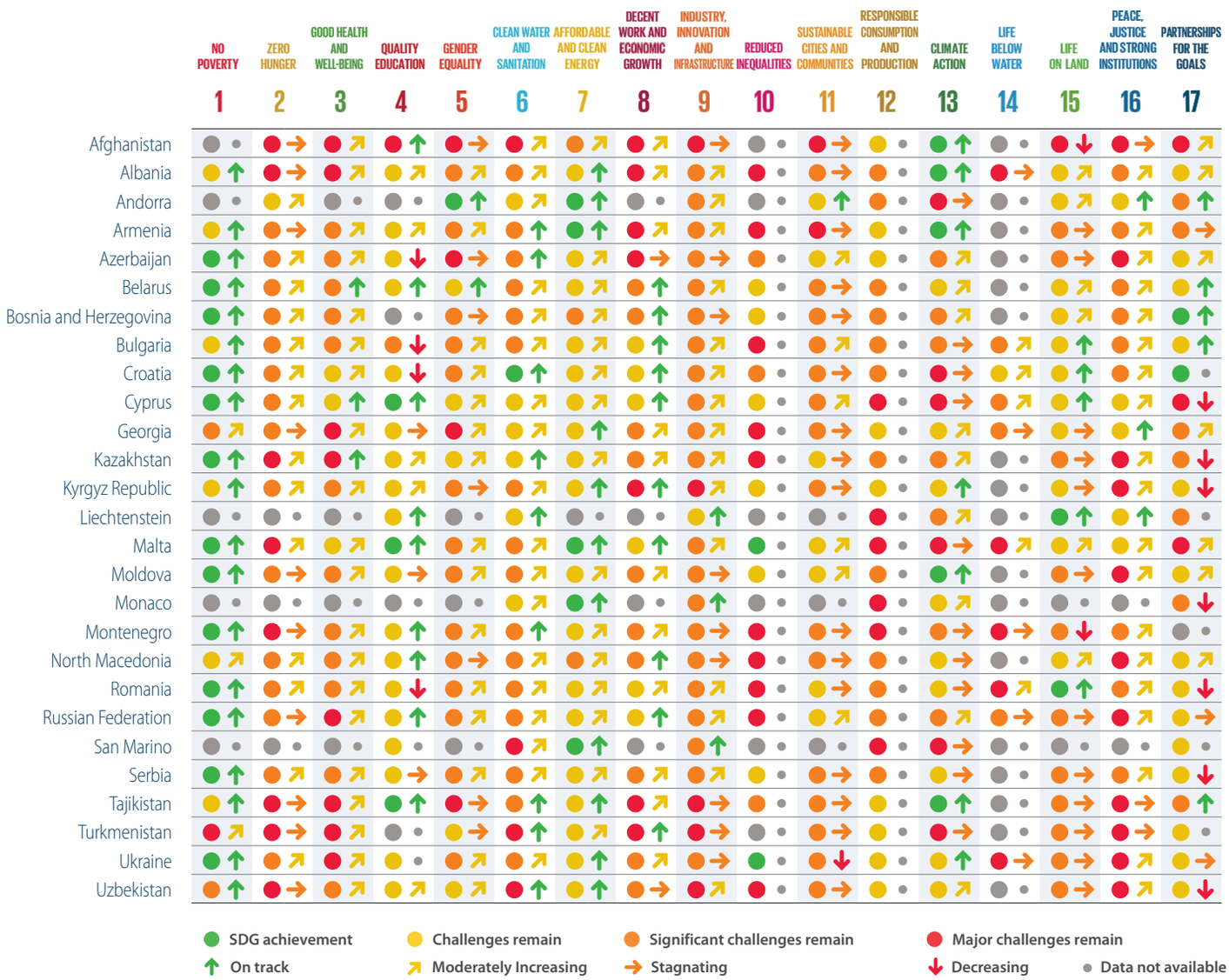
Figure 15

2020 SDG dashboards (levels and trends) for Eastern Europe and Central Asia



Source: Authors' analysis

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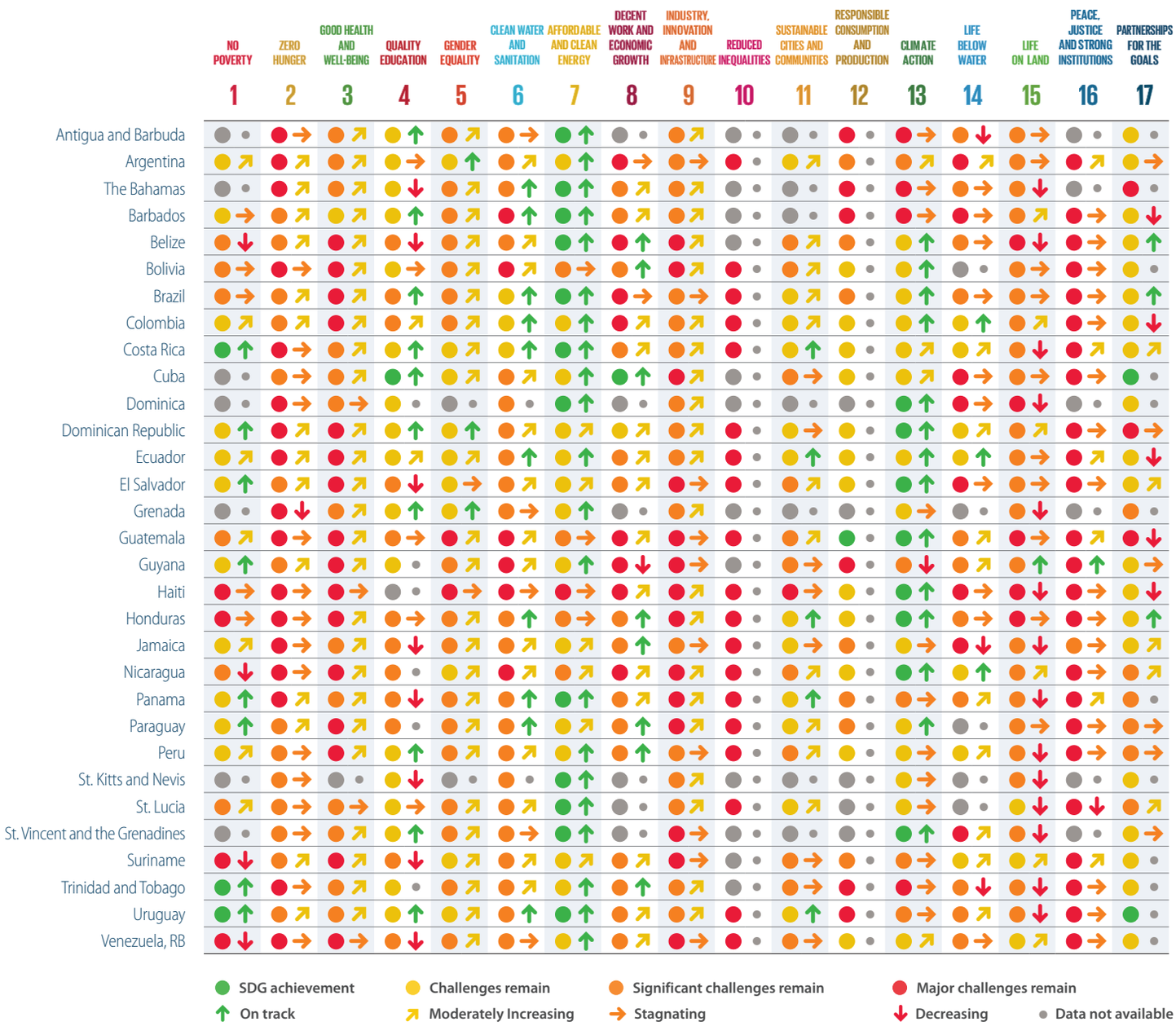
Figure 16

2020 SDG dashboards (levels and trends) for Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: Authors' analysis

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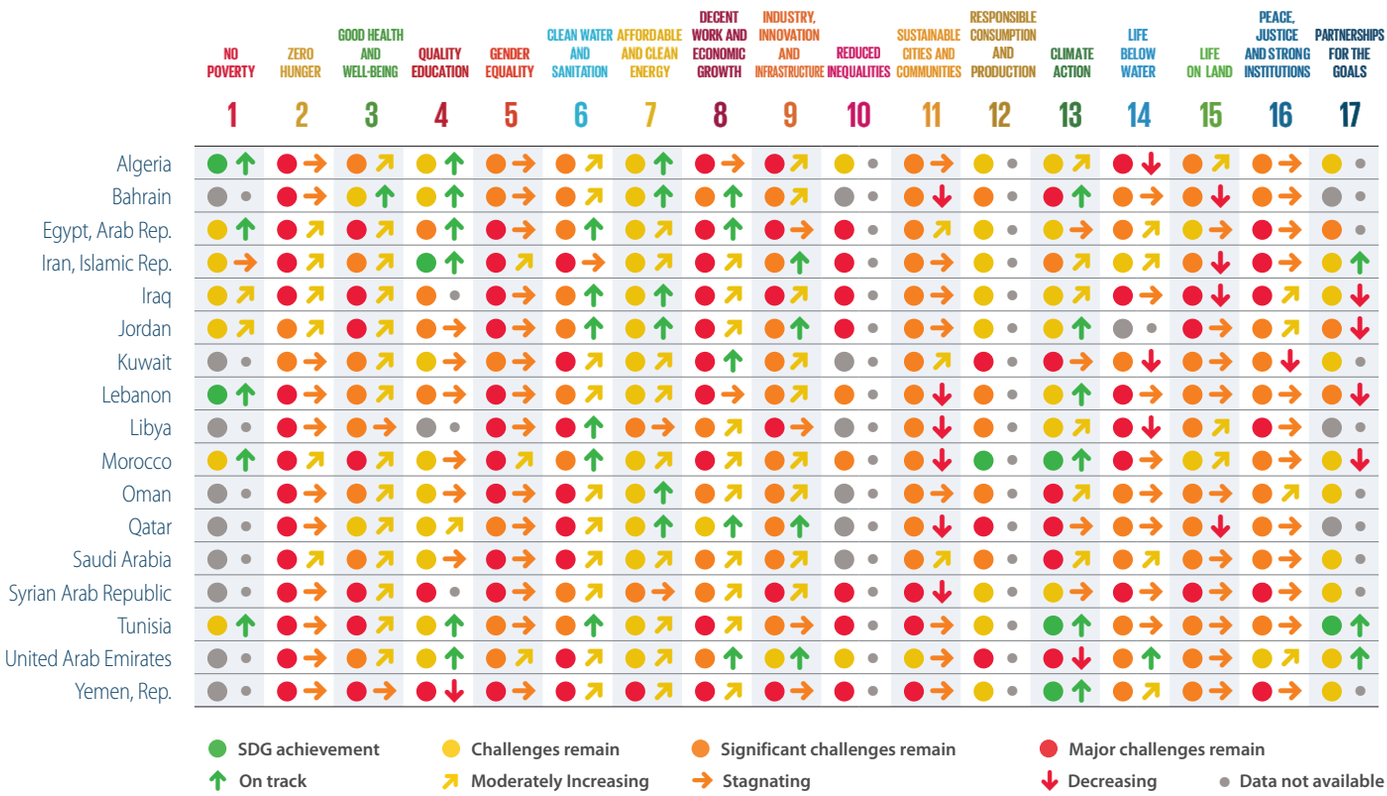
Figure 17

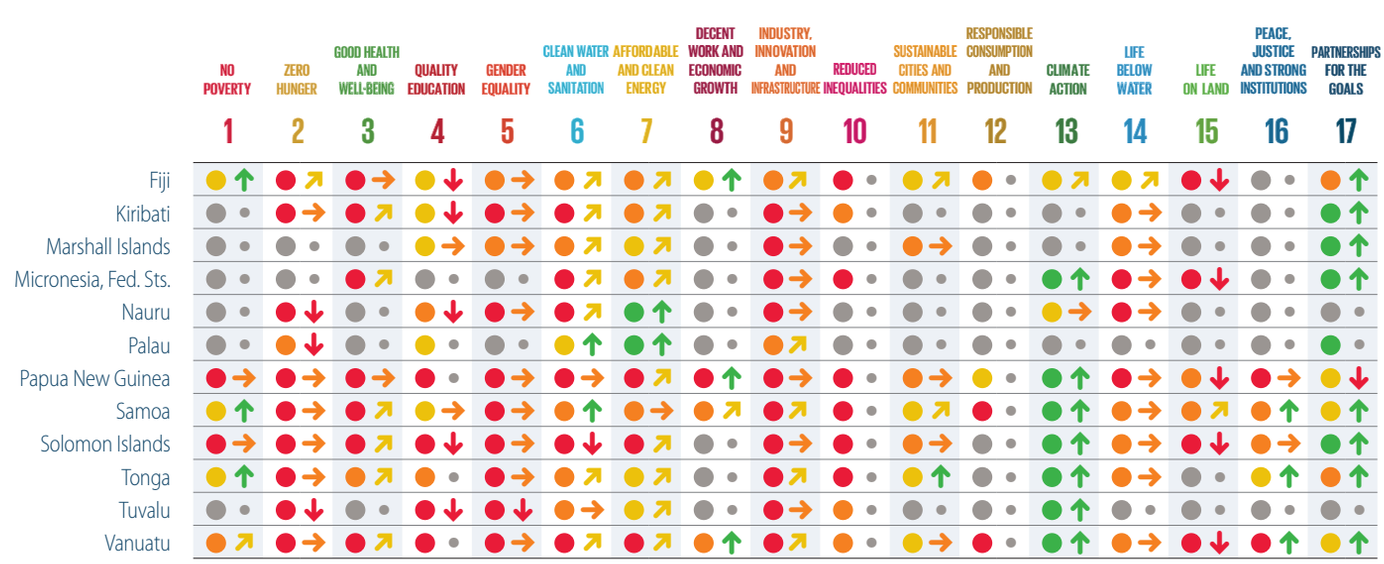
2020 SDG dashboards (levels and trends) for the Middle East and North Africa



Source: Authors' analysis

Figure 18

2020 SDG dashboards (levels and trends) for Oceania



Source: Authors' analysis

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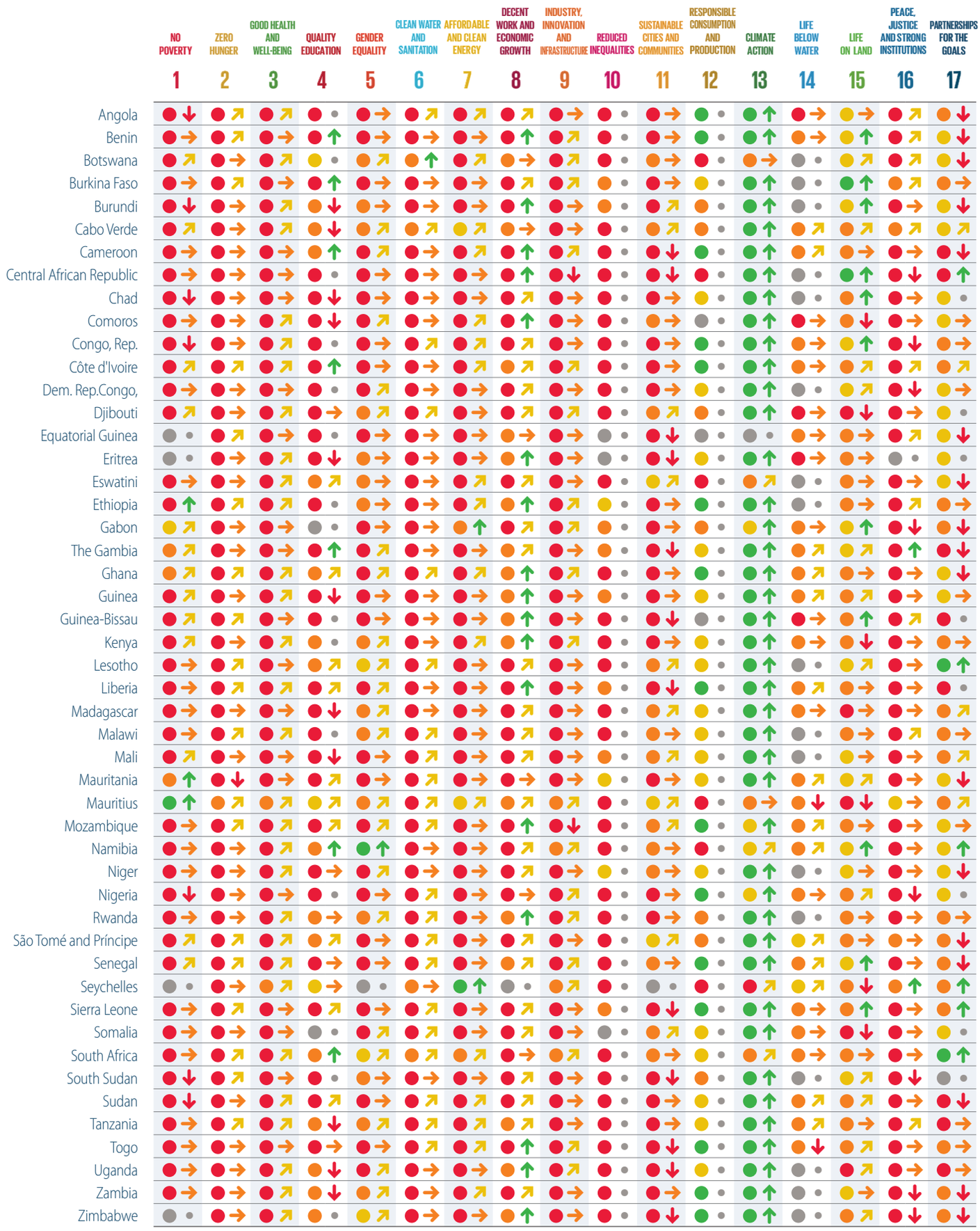
Figure 19

2020 SDG dashboards (levels and trends) for Sub-Saharan Africa



Source: Authors' analysis

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2.5 Absolute SDG performance gaps in G20 countries

G20 countries comprise two-thirds of the world's population and account for 85% of global gross domestic product and over 75% of global trade. They also generate 80% of global energy-related carbon-dioxide emissions. Table 3 illustrates the importance of G20 countries by showing estimated absolute SDG performance gaps (in %) for each Goal to complement the per-capita analyses in the SDG Index and Dashboards.

Absolute SDG performance gaps emphasize the importance of the G20 countries in the post-Covid-19 recovery. Apart from SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), for which sub-Saharan Africa accounts for most of the achievement gap, the G20 countries represent close to or more than 50% of the total performance gap for each Goal. A lack of action and commitments from the G20 countries would make it impossible to achieve the SDGs, depriving large shares of the world's population from achieving sustainable development and improved living conditions.

Due to their large populations, China and India account for the largest shares of global SDG performance gaps. For example: China, the United States, and the European Union together represent close to 50% of the global performance gap on Goal 13 (Climate Action).[2] Focusing on just one of the underlying metrics – energy-related CO_2 emissions – we see that if China was to reduce emissions to 2 tonnes of CO_2 per capita per year (equivalent to a total reduction of 69.2% from current levels), the world would be 31% closer to achieving the SDG target on CO_2 emissions. Similarly, India alone represents 23.8% of the total achievement gap on SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).[3] If India eradicated undernourishment (currently 14.5% of the Indian population) the world would be 27.4% closer to achieving the SDG target on undernourishment. The European Union also generates negative spillovers, in particular through trade and consumption, which undermine other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs.

As G20 countries design recovery plans, it will be important to maintain the commitments, efforts, and momentum for sustainable development if we are to avoid major setbacks on SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDGs 12 to 15 on climate and biodiversity. The G20 countries can also play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable supply chains by focusing on deforestation and other environmental damage. This will help to achieve the SDGs and reduce risks of zoonotic diseases and future pandemics.

2. SDG 13 (Climate Action) is measured using three indicators: energy-related CO_2 emissions per capita, imported CO_2 emissions, and CO_2 emissions embodied in fossil-fuel exports.

3. SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) is measured using seven indicators: prevalence of undernourishment, prevalence of stunting, prevalence of wasting, prevalence of obesity, human trophic level, cereal yield, and sustainable nitrogen management. The full title of SDG 2 is "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture."

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Table 3

Absolute SDG performance gaps in 2020 (%)

Country	SDG1	SDG2	SDG3	SDG4	SDG5	SDG6	SDG7	SDG8	SDG9	SDG10	SDG11	SDG12	SDG13	SDG14	SDG15	SDG16	SDG17	Spillovers
Argentina	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.4
Australia	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	1.2	2.5	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.3	1.4
Brazil	1.8	2.2	1.8	2.3	2.0	1.1	0.6	3.3	2.3	4.6	1.7	3.6	1.4	2.0	2.9	3.3	1.5	0.9
Canada	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.5	2.1	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.4	2.2
China	1.8	10.5	11.7	5.4	10.7	17.2	20.1	10.3	10.5	16.0	13.5	13.7	17.2	23.2	18.7	18.2	22.8	12.4
Germany	0.0	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.4	0.4	3.3	3.7	1.3	0.6	0.5	0.5	5.3
France	0.0	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.3	2.3	2.0	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	4.7
United Kingdom	0.0	0.7	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.2	0.5	0.2	2.6	3.2	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.9	4.8
Indonesia	4.1	3.7	4.1	1.8	3.2	3.5	3.3	3.8	4.3	5.1	3.6	2.7	2.2	3.6	4.9	2.6	4.2	1.0
India	21.8	23.8	24.5	17.3	29.2	23.1	19.7	14.0	21.5	17.6	27.2	8.8	5.2	16.6	22.0	18.7	20.8	2.5
Italy	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.7	1.9	1.5	1.0	0.4	0.5	0.7	2.8
Japan	0.1	1.0	0.3	0.0	1.6	0.7	0.4	0.9	0.3	0.8	1.2	3.3	4.7	2.0	1.4	0.4	1.2	6.3
Korea, Rep.	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.4	1.2	2.1	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.7	2.4
Mexico	1.0	1.7	1.0	0.0	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.9	1.8	2.9	0.9	2.0	1.6	1.1	2.2	2.1	1.5	1.0
Russian Federation	0.0	2.3	1.4	0.6	1.5	1.6	0.6	1.7	1.3	2.0	1.0	2.7	4.0	2.3	1.6	2.5	1.3	4.7
Saudi Arabia	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.8	1.0	1.7	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.3	1.3
Turkey	0.0	1.0	0.6	0.1	1.4	0.8	0.4	1.5	0.9	1.5	1.0	1.3	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.0	0.7	0.8
United States	0.2	3.5	1.5	0.1	2.6	2.1	1.0	2.8	0.5	5.0	1.4	12.5	16.3	3.9	4.3	2.9	3.0	20.0
South Africa	1.8	0.7	1.2	0.9	0.3	0.7	0.6	1.3	0.7	1.7	0.5	0.9	1.4	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.4	0.7
European Union	0.3	4.6	1.5	1.1	3.1	2.6	1.4	4.7	2.1	3.1	2.7	14.7	14.6	6.1	2.9	3.1	4.7	23.5
Total G20	33.30	57.80	50.80	30.20	58.70	56.30	49.70	49.20	47.60	62.40	56.80	74.70	81.90	66.30	66.30	57.90	65.10	86.30

>20% | 10-20% | 2-10% | 0-2%

Source: Authors' analysis

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