

From Data to Impact: Measuring Progress through Disaggregated SDG Indicators



Executive Summary

This report is the 4th edition of UNEP’s Measuring Progress series. It provides an update on global progress towards achieving the environmental dimension of sustainable development. As a special edition, it presents proposed disaggregations for the 92 environment-related SDG indicators and their relevance to national and sub-national evidence-based policymaking coupled with its potential benefits on society, the economy and the environment.

Previous Measuring Progress reports stressed the need for improved data and highlighted the urgency of having disaggregated data for more targeted and localized actions and interventions. The current report outlines scientific, environment-related disaggregation that would lead to designing such interventions.

Positive and steady improvement in data availability

The latest available data and estimates for 92 environment-related SDG indicators indicates that the world is improving on having sufficient data to better understand actions and provide guidance towards improving the environment. A global review of the environmental dimension of the SDGs shows that 66 per cent of indicators have sufficient data for analysis of progress as of July 2025. This is a welcome increase from 34 per cent in 2018, 42 per cent in 2020 and 59 per cent in 2022. Increased data availability enables policymakers to make evidence-based and informed decisions. This increase in data availability paves the way for informed decision-making to better improve and protect the planet.

Analysis reveals data trends towards increased environmental conservation

Many indicators show a shift from no data to some data or from some data to positive or negative trends. In 2018, 18 per cent of indicators showed a positive trend, or environmental improvement, which has increased to 43 per cent in 2025. The percentage of indicators showing little change or a negative trend increased from 16 per cent in 2018 to 23 per cent in 2025. While a negative trend is not environmentally beneficial, increased data availability is nevertheless a positive development.

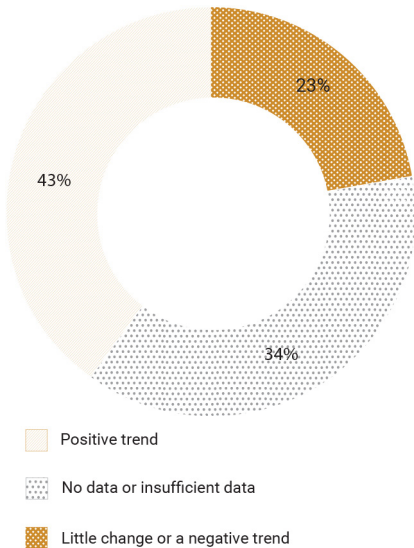


Figure ES.1 Environment-related SDG indicators data trend, global level

Data exists for 83 per cent of environment-related SDG indicators at various levels

For a set of 16 unique SDG indicators, data has never been available at the global level. For 69 per cent of them, national data exists but too few countries are reporting for the data to be aggregated to global level. While 6 per cent of the indicators have never been reported at any level, 25 per cent are indexes, where global aggregates were not computed by the custodian agencies; or are designed to have data at the city level and, therefore, cannot be aggregated. Global data for 11 unique SDG indicators is on the trend of improvement with forthcoming data updates.

Meaningful disaggregation of data leads to better evidence-based policies

At the core of SDG monitoring framework lies an overarching principle of data disaggregation. This states that SDG indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, and geographic location or other characteristics in accordance with the overarching principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – “leave no one behind”. Disaggregation of environmental indicators requires additional dimensions and categories to those used for socio-economic data, including ecosystems, pressures and responses or ecosystem services.

Although several environment-related SDG indicators have disaggregated data, others lack the detailed data and granularity to provide targeted guidance for policymakers. Availability of disaggregated data is crucial for analyzing environmental issues from different angles and for developing evidence-based environmental policies at national and sub-national levels adapted to different contexts and circumstances.

Countries are encouraged to focus on disaggregations that are relevant to their national and sub-national circumstances based on their policy needs as well as statistical systems. Investing in statistical resources to enhance the collection of disaggregated data would offer valuable insights for developing more effective interventions and actions for achieving sustainable development in the national context.