

Why there is not enough progress in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals - empirical evidence from the World Social Capital Monitor

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Summary

The Basel Institute of Commons, which has monitored social capital for many years, included two additional indicators into its global surveys in 2023. The objective was to contribute to understanding why the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals fails. Answers are to be given on a scale between 10 (high) and 1 (low):

How is the social inclusion of marginalized groups and minorities?
How is the support for environmental measures and sustainability?

The randomized and verified scores from the anonymous open access survey in 54 languages and 142 countries <https://trustyourplace.com/> allow for the first time to present the patterns and the distribution of ten local indicators with a crucial impact on achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Among 10 indicators, Social Inclusion and Sustainability are the lowest ones.

Table 1: Comparing Germany, France and the United States of America

		Germany	France	US
1	Please characterize the Social Climate of your place.	7.3	5.8	5.2
2	How strong is the trust among the people?	7.1	4.7	4.1
3	Will the people accept personal austerity measures in order to finance public goods?	5.3	3.7	4.5
4	Will the people accept taxes and contributions to finance public goods?	6.0	6.5	3.7
5	Are people willing to invest in local and regional assets?	6.4	6.0	3.5
6	How is the helpfulness across the people?	7.5	6.0	5.9
7	How is the friendliness of the people?	7.3	6.5	5.5
8	How is the hospitality of the people?	6.6	5.5	4.7
9	How is the social inclusion of marginalized groups and minorities?	5.8	4.2	2.6
10	How is the support for environmental measures and sustainability?	6.2	6.0	3.9

Table 2: Comparing Egypt with Yemen and Palestine

		Egypt	Yemen	Palestine
1	Please characterize the Social Climate of your place.	5.5	4.4	6.0
2	How strong is the trust among the people?	4.8	3.6	6.2
3	Will the people accept personal austerity measures in order to finance public goods?	4.8	3.4	5.6
4	Will the people accept taxes and contributions to finance public goods?	4.7	4.0	5.4
5	Are people willing to invest in local and regional assets?	5.3	4.0	5.6
6	How is the helpfulness across the people?	6.2	4.8	7.2
7	How is the friendliness of the people?	5.8	5.3	7.6
8	How is the hospitality of the people?	6.0	5.8	9.2
9	How is the social inclusion of marginalized groups and minorities?	5.0	3.3	6.8
10	How is the support for environmental measures and sustainability?	5.3	3.2	4.0

Table 3: Comparing the Ukraine, Romania and Bosnia Herzegovina

		Ukraine	Romania	Bosnia
1	Please characterize the Social Climate of your place.	6.8	5.6	5.7
2	How strong is the trust among the people?	5.9	4.6	5.0
3	Will the people accept personal austerity measures in order to finance public goods?	5.5	5.0	4.6
4	Will the people accept taxes and contributions to finance public goods?	5.5	6.2	5.1
5	Are people willing to invest in local and regional assets?	5.1	5.6	4.5
6	How is the helpfulness across the people?	7.3	6.4	6.6
7	How is the friendliness of the people?	7.0	7.0	7.5
8	How is the hospitality of the people?	7.4	6.8	7.8
9	How is the social inclusion of marginalized groups and minorities?	5.8	3.6	4.7
10	How is the support for environmental measures and sustainability?	5.5	5.2	4.3

Table 4: Time series for the Ukraine

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
October 2022	6,9	6,5	6,2	5,8	5,5	7,6	7,6	7,9	6,2	5,7
December 2023	6,8	5,9	5,5	5,5	5,1	7,3	7,0	7,4	5,8	5,5
Change	-0,1	-0,6	-0,7	-0,3	-0,4	-0,3	-0,6	-0,5	-0,4	-0,2

Methodology

All scores come from verified respondents, mostly with a valid mail address. Group votes as well as fake votes are not considered in the validation process. Once an average distribution of the ten indicators is identified, significantly different scores will only be accepted in case of a qualitative argument. Smaller panels will be considered if they come from valid respondents and compose a balanced and repeatable distribution.

Due to open access and anonymity, no representativeness of the results is reclaimed. Readers are invited to verify the results for themselves. It's very simple: all they have to do is recruit 10 participants and then request the results from us. Note: to recruit 10 participants, you'll need to approach about 100 people.

When looking at the following comparisons of the English, French, and Arabic language versions with country-level results, one quickly notices how similarly the ten indicators are distributed.

Unfortunately, the UN goals of social inclusion and sustainability rank at the bottom of the list of shared social goods worldwide. This can also be gleaned from a very recent sample organized by the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) - see Table 6.

More information on the methodology can be found on:

https://commons.ch/wp-content/uploads/Understanding_the_Methodology_of_the_World_Social_Capital_Monitor.pdf

Table 5: Comparing the World average with 21 countries (best five in green)

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
English average	6,1	5,5	5,3	5,6	5,7	6,7	7,2	7,3	5,0	5,2
French average	6,4	5,1	4,6	4,1	6,2	5,9	6,2	6,4	5,4	5,2
Arabic average	4,8	5,1	4,0	3,6	4,6	5,6	5,8	6,4	4,8	4,2
Australia	8,2	8,0	4,8	6,0	7,6	8,6	8,0	7,6	6,2	6,2
Bangladesh	6,3	5,0	6,3	4,7	6,0	6,3	7,3	7,7	5,7	4,3
Bosnia Herzegovina	5,7	5,0	4,6	5,1	4,5	6,6	7,5	7,8	4,7	4,3
Brazil	5,8	4,6	5,1	6,4	5,6	6,0	7,1	7,4	4,3	5,3
Cameroon	6,3	3,8	3,0	3,8	5,3	6,3	6,3	7,0	5,0	3,3
Canada	6,0	6,0	5,0	4,8	6,0	7,0	7,3	6,5	6,0	5,0
DR Congo	5,9	3,5	4,6	4,4	5,1	4,4	4,6	5,6	4,8	4,6
India	6,6	5,4	5,6	5,9	5,4	6,7	6,6	7,1	5,2	5,9
Indonesia	6,7	6,7	5,3	5,3	5,0	8,0	8,7	8,7	5,3	4,3
Iraq	5,1	5,5	4,5	3,6	5,0	5,5	6,1	6,7	5,5	4,7
Kenya	6,0	5,0	5,1	4,7	6,4	5,9	6,4	6,1	5,1	5,3
Lebanon	5,0	4,9	3,3	3,7	4,3	5,9	5,8	6,7	4,9	4,3
Liberia	4,3	5,0	8,3	7,7	6,7	6,7	7,7	7,7	5,3	4,3
Montenegro	4,9	3,5	4,5	3,9	3,8	5,9	6,6	6,9	3,6	3,3
Nigeria	5,9	5,2	6,4	6,0	6,3	5,8	7,1	7,1	5,0	4,0
Phillippines	6,7	4,0	4,3	5,3	5,7	6,7	7,7	8,3	4,0	4,3
South Africa	5,5	4,8	4,0	4,3	4,2	6,7	7,0	7,0	4,8	3,7
Türkiye	5,5	5,1	6,0	6,2	5,8	7,5	7,9	8,0	5,7	5,7
Uganda	3,8	4,5	5,5	4,8	6,3	6,8	8,3	8,5	7,0	6,3
Zambia	5,9	5,3	4,4	5,6	5,2	7,3	9,0	8,9	5,8	4,3
Zimbabwe	7,0	6,5	5,7	6,2	6,8	6,8	7,5	7,5	3,2	2,8

The Arabic version is biased by overweighting Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. The French version overweights African countries. China, Singapore and Japan are not considered yet but may show the highest scores worldwide in all respects.

Table 6: Sample from a seminar of Cambridge University CISL in March 2026

Countries ranked by social inclusion and sustainability	Social inclusion	Sustainability Support
China	10	10
Burkina Faso	9.0	8,0
Papua New Guinea	9,0	8.0
Australia	7.0	7.0
Indonesia	7.0	6.0
Trinidad and Tobago	6.0	7,0
Bangladesh	6.0	4.0
Liberia	5.0	4.0
Iran	5,0	4,0
Samoa	4,0	9.0
Niger	4,0	5.0
Ethiopia	4.0	5.0
United States	4.0	4.0
Zimbabwe	3,5	3,0
Nigeria	3,3	3,0
Philippines	3,0	4.0
Kenya	3,0	3,5
Germany	3,0	5,0

Conclusion: inclusive surveys to leaving no one behind

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) are succeeding the Millennium Goals (2000) and the UN Charter from 1945. They have been signed by 193 countries.

According to a comparative study published by the Basel Institute at the UN on indicators for measuring progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, ten wealthy countries have topped the rankings for the past 10 years:

<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/S4-15-Alexander%20Dill%20-%20Measuring%20Social%20Capital.pdf>

The new inclusive indicators that were introduced into the Basel Institute surveys in 2023 make it possible to assess the social conditions under which the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved.

Without a spirit of cooperation and solidarity, for example, social inequalities and environmental threats cannot be addressed, either nationally or internationally.

When reviews on the Sustainable Development Goals are solely performed through reports from governments, business firms and high-level institutions, and when these entities can freely select which goals they monitor, we only get a blurred view. This contradicts the original motto of “leaving no one behind.” In contrast, the World Social Capital Monitor, when implemented worldwide, not only shows a clearer picture of that inclusion but also contributes to the significant strengthening of the SDG 17-Partnerships for the UN Goals. All are invited to participate in the World Social Capital Monitor – apart from governments, companies and official institutions it is, above all, the civil society organizations whose vote will count.

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