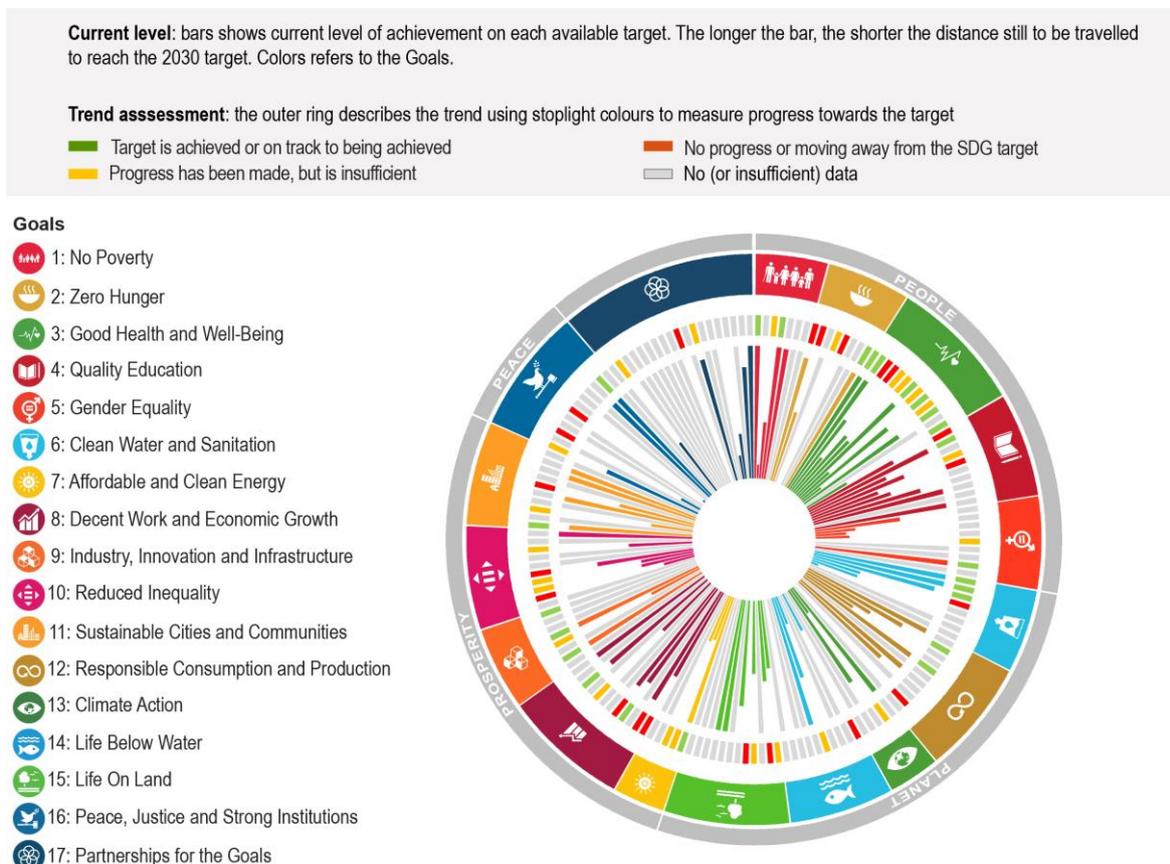


Measuring distance to the SDG targets – Korea

Korea has already achieved 28 of the 128 targets for which comparable data are available and, based on most recent trends, is expected to meet 7 additional targets by 2030 (Figure 1). As virtually all OECD countries, Korea has already met (or is close to meeting) most targets related to securing basic needs and implementing the policy tools and frameworks mentioned in the 2030 Agenda (see details in Table 1). Korea’s main strengths are within the Prosperity category, most notably on work and economic growth (Goal 8), industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9) and cities (Goal 11), as well as on delivering quality education (Goal 4). Yet, challenges remain, mostly related to promoting inclusion and reducing inequalities (within Goal 1, Goal 5 and Goal 10).

This country profile provides a high-level overview of some of Korea’s strengths and challenges in performance across the SDG targets. As such, it differs in nature from Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) or other reporting processes. To ensure international comparability, this assessment builds on the global indicator framework and relies on data sourced from the *SDG Global Database* and OECD databases. VNRs typically use national indicators that reflect national circumstances and are more up-to-date (See section How to read this country profile that provides some methodological details on country profiles).

Figure 1. Korea's distance from achieving SDG targets included in this report



Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021^[1]), *SDG Global Database*, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg> and (OECD, 2021^[2]), *OECD.Stat*, <https://stats.oecd.org/> (accessed on 29 October 2021).

Main strengths

Korea is among the fastest growing OECD economies. Before the pandemic hit, it experienced growth in GDP and labour productivity well above the OECD area (Targets 8.1 and 8.2), as well as a dynamic labour market. Average hourly earnings are high (USD PPP 23 per hour in 2018), and the unemployment rate is low; at 4% in 2020 (Target 8.5). Korea is also one of the best performing countries on industry and innovation. It has a strong researcher density and research and development expenditure account for a significant share of GDP (Target 9.5) and the relative size of manufacturing value added per capita is well above the OECD average (Target 9.2).

Korea has a strong track record in waste management. The amounts of waste recovered are growing and recycling rates are higher than in many other OECD countries; around two-thirds is recovered through recycling and composting (Targets 11.6 and 12.5). The materials intensity of the economy is declining (Target 12.2) and the proportion of domestic wastewater flows that is safely treated had been growing to achieve almost universal coverage (Target 6.3).

Education outcomes are also high. According to available data, Korea has already met three targets relating to quality education: Target 4.2 on pre-primary education, Target 4.a on education facilities and Target 4.c on the qualification of teachers. In addition, in 2018, 85% of students achieved minimum proficiency level in mathematics as well as in reading (Target 4.1); this is 10 percentage points higher than the OECD average for mathematics, and 8 percentage points higher in reading. Still, differences in socio-economic background, gender, immigration status and location contribute to significant disparities in education outcomes (Target 4.5). The share of low-skilled adults is also below the OECD average, although the difference is less pronounced (4 percentage points in reading and 7 percentage points in reading) than in the case of students.

Main challenges

Korea is furthest away from targets related to promoting inclusion and reducing inequalities (within Goal 1 on eradicating poverty, Goal 5 on promoting gender equality and Goal 10 on inequality among and within countries). Available data show that relative income poverty (Targets 1.2 and 10.2) is high (17% in 2018) and that redistribution through taxes and cash transfers is rather limited (Target 10.4). Data underpinning Target 1.3 also suggest that some population groups are not well covered by social protection. Furthermore, women are underrepresented in both political and economic spheres (Target 5.5), as well as bearing the larger share of unpaid domestic and care work (Target 5.4). In addition, around one in ten Korean women report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the previous 12 months (Target 5.2). The existing legal framework also falls short of preventing all forms of discriminations (Targets 5.1 and 5.3).

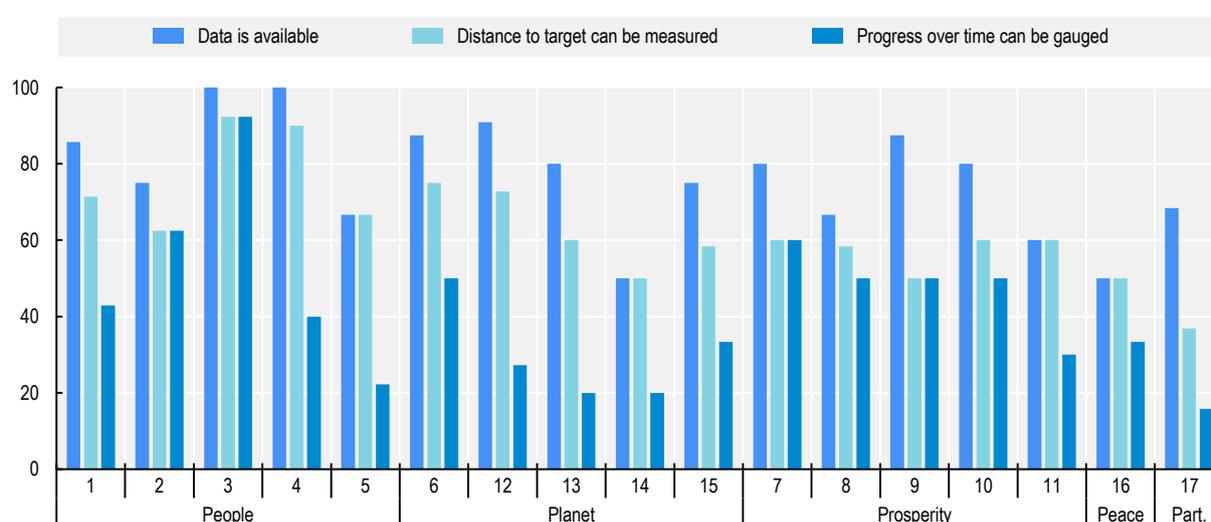
The scope for improving environmental performance is large. Rapid industrial growth over decades has taken its toll on the environment. Greenhouse gas emissions are high (Targets 13.2 and 9.4) and mean population exposure to fine particle matter in metropolitan areas are almost three times the WHO targets (Target 11.6). Environmental pressures from agriculture and fisheries (Targets 2.4, 14.4 and 14.b) are rising, leading to increased marine pollution (Target 14.1). In addition, the share of renewables in energy supply remains modest (Target 7.2), while resource efficiency for both water and energy (Targets 6.4 and 7.3) is low. All these factors have a strong impact on biodiversity (Targets 2.5 and 15.5).

Korea is also far from achieving targets on Peace, Justice and institutions (Goal 16), and Partnerships (Goal 17). Perception-based measures suggest that only 22% of Korean is satisfied by the judicial system (Target 16.6). In addition, the diversity of both central government workforce and members of parliaments (Target 16.7) is limited. On Goal 17, Official Development Assistance by Korea is only a fifth of the 0.7% (Target 17.2).

Statistical gaps

Like in many other OECD countries, data availability remains a challenge when measuring distances to targets (see the Overview chapter for details). Available data on the level of the different indicators allow covering 128 of the 169 targets. As shown in Figure 2 below, indicator coverage is uneven across the 17 goals. While eight goals (within the People, Planet and Prosperity categories) have most of their targets covered (the indicator coverage exceeds 80%), coverage is much lower for Goal 14 on life below water and Goal 16 on peace, with only half of targets covered. Data gaps become starker when focusing on performance indicators, excluding those providing contextual information. In this case, coverage exceeds 80% for three goals only, i.e. health, education and sustainable consumption (Goals 3, 4 and 12). For seven goals, mostly related to the Planet category (Goals 13, 14 and 15) but also to gender inequality, cities, institutions and partnerships (Goals 5, 11, 16 and 17), data are lacking to monitor progress over time for more than two in three targets.

Figure 2. Korea's share of the 2030 Agenda's targets covered by at least one indicator, by goal



Note: The figure represents Korea's share of targets covered by at least one indicator for each SDG. Numbers from 1 to 17 stand for the goals: 1 No poverty, 2 Zero hunger, 3 Good health and well-being, 4 Quality education, 5 Gender equality, 6 Clean water and sanitation, 7 Affordable and clean energy, 8 Decent work and economic growth, 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10 Reduced inequalities, 11 Sustainable cities and communities, 12 Responsible consumption and production, 13 Climate action, 14 Life below water, 15 Life on land, 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions and 17 Partnerships for the goals. These goals are grouped under five broad themes (the "5Ps"): People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. Beyond data availability, other statistical gaps such as timeliness or granularity also need to be considered. For instance, given the lag in available data, the effects of the pandemic on current distance and trajectories may not be reflected in the estimates.

Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021^[1]), *SDG Global Database*, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg> and (OECD, 2021^[2]), *OECD.Stat*, <https://stats.oecd.org/> (accessed on 29 October 2021).

Detailed information

While some SDG Targets are, on average, close to being met, performance is very uneven across the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Table 1 presents an overview of Korea's progress towards targets based on available data for each of the 17 Goals. It shows that distances to Targets and trends over time differ significantly even when considering a specific goal.

Table 1. Korea distances to targets and recent trends

Goal	Target	Short Label	Distance to Target (s.u.)	Trend Assessment	OECD Average distance (s.u.)	OECD Trend Assessment
1	1.1	Extreme poverty	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
1	1.2	Poverty in all its dimensions	2.69	n.a.	1.41	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
1	1.3	Social protection coverage	1.72	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.80	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
1	1.4	Access to basic services	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
1	1.5	Resilience to shocks	0.02	n.a.	1.00	n.a.
2	2.1	Hunger	0.12	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	0.28	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
2	2.2	Malnutrition	1.36	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	2.46	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
2	2.4	Sustainable production	4.42	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	1.34	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
2	2.5	Diversity of seeds and livestock*	4.05	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	3.59	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
2	2.c	Food prices anomalies	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
3	3.1	Maternal mortality	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
3	3.2	Death of newborns and children	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
3	3.3	Communicable diseases	0.99	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	0.56	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
3	3.4	Premature mortality	1.99	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.26	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
3	3.5	Prevention of Substance abuse	1.26	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.63	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
3	3.6	Road traffic accidents*	1.32	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.78	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
3	3.7	Access to sexual health-care	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.58	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
3	3.8	Health coverage	2.12	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	1.79	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
3	3.9	Deaths and illness from pollution	0.48	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.55	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
3	3.a	Tobacco consumption	2.48	Progress has been made,	2.65	Progress has been made,

Goal	Target	Short Label	Distance to Target (s.u.)	Trend Assessment	OECD Average distance (s.u.)	OECD Trend Assessment
				but is insufficient to meet the target		but is insufficient to meet the target
3	3.b	Vaccination	0.39	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.37	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
3	3.d	Health emergency preparedness	1.95	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	1.19	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
4	4.1	Primary and secondary education	0.80	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.17	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
4	4.2	Pre-primary education	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.24	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
4	4.3	Lifelong learning	1.11	n.a.	1.25	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
4	4.4	Skills for employment	0.73	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	1.23	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
4	4.5	Disparities in education	1.41	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.49	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
4	4.6	Adults' literacy and numeracy	1.15	n.a.	1.57	n.a.
4	4.7	Skills for sustainable development	0.49	n.a.	1.04	n.a.
4	4.a	Education facilities	0.00	n.a.	0.05	n.a.
4	4.c	Qualification of teachers	0.00	n.a.	0.60	n.a.
5	5.1	Discrimination against women	1.08	n.a.	1.32	n.a.
5	5.2	Violence against women	2.10	n.a.	0.89	n.a.
5	5.3	Harmful practices	2.31	n.a.	1.37	n.a.
5	5.4	Unpaid care and domestic work	2.24	n.a.	1.79	n.a.
5	5.5	Women's participation	3.54	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	1.89	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
5	5.b	Women's empowerment	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.53	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
6	6.1	Access to drinking water	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.15	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
6	6.2	Waste water treatment	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.35	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
6	6.3	Water quality	0.18	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.68	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
6	6.4	Water-use efficiency	1.88	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	0.54	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
6	6.5	Water resources management	1.92	n.a.	0.98	n.a.
6	6.6	Water-related ecosystems*	2.83	n.a.	2.18	n.a.
7	7.1	Access to energy	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
7	7.2	Clean energy	1.94	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.62	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
7	7.3	Energy efficiency	1.88	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.98	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
8	8.1	GDP growth	0.82	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.89	No progress or moving away from the SDG target

Goal	Target	Short Label	Distance to Target (s.u.)	Trend Assessment	OECD Average distance (s.u.)	OECD Trend Assessment
8	8.2	Productivity	0.13	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.77	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
8	8.4	Material footprint	0.38	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.82	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
8	8.5	Employment	0.18	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	0.97	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
8	8.8	Labour rights	1.49	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.80	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
8	8.10	Financial institutions	0.13	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.45	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
8	8.b	Strategy for youth employment	0.00	n.a.	0.45	n.a.
9	9.2	Sustainable industry	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.95	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
9	9.4	Environmental impact	1.78	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.87	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
9	9.5	Research and development	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	1.06	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
9	9.c	ICT	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.36	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
10	10.2	Social inclusion	2.29	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.54	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
10	10.3	Inequalities of outcome	1.79	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	1.27	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
10	10.4	Redistribution	1.81	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	1.12	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
10	10.5	Financial markets	0.83	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	0.90	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
10	10.a	Tariff-lines	1.57	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.93	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
10	10.c	Remittances	0.00	n.a.	2.21	n.a.
11	11.1	Housing	0.23	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.80	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
11	11.3	Urbanization	2.06	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	1.19	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
11	11.5	Impact of disasters	0.04	n.a.	1.19	n.a.
11	11.6	Environmental impact of cities	1.27	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	0.49	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
11	11.a	Urban policies	0.00	n.a.	0.23	n.a.
11	11.b	Disaster Risk Reduction	0.00	n.a.	0.81	n.a.
12	12.1	Sustainable cons. and prod.	0.00	n.a.	0.00	n.a.
12	12.2	Efficient use of natural resources	0.53	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.87	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
12	12.3	Food waste	1.29	n.a.	1.36	n.a.
12	12.4	Chemical and hazardous	1.69	n.a.	1.02	n.a.

Goal	Target	Short Label	Distance to Target (s.u.)	Trend Assessment	OECD Average distance (s.u.)	OECD Trend Assessment
		waste*				
12	12.5	Waste generation	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.66	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
12	12.7	Public procurement practices	0.00	n.a.	0.00	n.a.
12	12.8	Education for sustainability	0.49	n.a.	1.04	n.a.
12	12.b	Tourism sustainability	3.28	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.87	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
13	13.1	Resilience to climate events	0.02	n.a.	0.73	n.a.
13	13.2	Greenhouse gas emissions	2.33	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	1.15	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
13	13.3	Education for sustainability	0.49	n.a.	1.04	n.a.
14	14.1	Marine pollution**	2.06	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.84	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
14	14.4	Overfishing and IUU fishing*	2.33	n.a.	1.78	n.a.
14	14.5	Protected marine areas*	1.08	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.38	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
14	14.6	Harmful subsidies to fisheries*	0.00	n.a.	0.36	n.a.
14	14.b	Small-scale fisheries	5.40	n.a.	1.64	n.a.
15	15.1	Ecosystem protection*	1.45	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.74	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
15	15.2	Sustainable use of forest*	1.17	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	0.60	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
15	15.4	Mountain ecosystems	1.34	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.73	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
15	15.5	Threatened species*	3.14	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	1.20	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
15	15.6	Benefits from genetic resources	0.61	n.a.	0.78	n.a.
15	15.8	Invasive alien species*	0.00	n.a.	0.30	n.a.
15	15.9	National and local planning*	0.00	n.a.	0.54	n.a.
16	16.1	Violence and related deaths	0.74	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.66	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
16	16.3	Rule of law	2.51	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	2.33	No progress or moving away from the SDG target
16	16.6	Accountable institutions	4.11	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	2.26	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
16	16.7	Inclusive decision-making	2.94	n.a.	1.85	n.a.
16	16.10	Access to information	0.00	n.a.	0.00	n.a.
16	16.a	National institutions	0.00	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved	0.54	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
17	17.2	Official Development Assistance	1.64	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target	0.94	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet the target
17	17.10	Multilateral trading system	3.91	No progress or moving away from the SDG target	0.45	Target is achieved or on track to being achieved
17	17.12	Market access for least developed countries	0.16	Progress has been made, but is insufficient to meet	0.72	No progress or moving away from the SDG target

Goal	Target	Short Label	Distance to Target (s.u.)	Trend Assessment	OECD Average distance (s.u.)	OECD Trend Assessment
				the target		
17	17.15	National leadership to implement policies for poverty eradication	2.46	n.a.	2.32	n.a.
17	17.16	Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	1.98	n.a.	0.89	n.a.
17	17.18	Statistical capacity	0.48	n.a.	0.09	n.a.
17	17.19	Statistical capacity-building	0.00	n.a.	0.11	n.a.

Note: * refers to targets with a 2020 deadline. ** refers to targets with a 2025 deadline. The OECD average is measured as the simple average across OECD countries with available data

Source: All data is taken and adapted from (UNDESA, 2021^[1]), *SDG Global Database*, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg> and (OECD, 2021^[2]), *OECD.Stat*, <https://stats.oecd.org/> (accessed on 29 October 2021).

How to read this country profile

The OECD report *The Short and Winding Road to 2030: Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets* evaluates the distance that OECD countries need to travel to meet SDG targets for which data are currently available. It also looks at whether countries have been moving towards or away from these targets, and how likely they are to meet their commitments by 2030, based on an analysis of recent trends and the observed volatility in the different indicators.

As most authors and international organisations, this report adopts a rather simple geometric growth model for assessing the direction and pace of recent changes in the context of the SDGs. Yet, instead of making direct estimates of the value of the indicator by 2030, it models the likelihood of achieving a specific level using Monte Carlo simulations.

While the report provides an overview of where OECD countries, taken as a whole, currently stand, country profiles provide details of the performance and data availability of individual OECD countries.

How to read the OECD SDG Wheel?

Progress on SDGs requires a granular understanding of countries' strengths and weaknesses based on the consideration of the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. Figure 1 shows both **current achievements** (in the inner circle; the longer the bar, the smaller the distance remaining to be travelled) **as well as whether OECD countries are on track** (or are at least making progress) to meet their commitments by 2030 (in the outer circle).

The length of each bar shows current level of achievement on each target. As detailed in the Methodological Annex, countries' distance to target is measured as the "standardised difference" between a country's current position and the target end-value. For each indicator, the standardised measurement unit (s.u.) is the standard deviation observed among OECD countries in the reference year (i.e. the year closest to 2015). Therefore, the longer the bar, the shorter the distance still to be travelled to reach the target by 2030. The colours of the bars applied to the various targets refer to the goals they pertain to.

The outer ring shows how OECD countries are performing over time and how likely they are to meet the different targets by 2030 based on the observed trends of the various indicators. It uses stoplight colours to classify the progress towards the target:

- green is used to indicate those countries that (based on the change in the different indicators over a recent period) should meet the target in 2030 just by maintaining their current pace of progress (i.e. more than 75% of (randomised) projections meet the target);
- yellow for those countries whose current pace of progress is insufficient to meet the target by 2030 (i.e. less than 75% of randomised projections meet the target, while the correlation coefficient between the indicator and the year is high and statistically significant, implying that a significant trend could be detected); and
- red for those countries whose recent changes have been stagnating or moving them further away from the target (i.e. less than 75% of randomised projections meet the target and the correlation coefficient between the indicator and the year is low or statistically insignificant, implying that no statistical trend could be identified).

How to read the Strength and Challenges sections?

With the aim of helping its member countries in navigating the 2030 Agenda and in setting their own priorities for action, this report relies on a unique methodology for measuring the distance that OECD countries have to travel to achieve SDG targets. The identification of the main strengths and challenges proposed in this report relies on current performances only:

- A target is considered to be a strength when the distance to the target end-value is lower than 0.5 s.u. (i.e. the distance is deemed to be small) or when the country is closer to the target than the OECD average. For instance, while Korea's distance to Target 2.2 on malnutrition is 1.4 s.u. (i.e. classified as medium distance), the average OECD distance is 2.5 s.u. Therefore, Target 2.2 is categorised as being a strength for Korea.
- A target is considered to be a challenge when the distance to target is greater than 1.5 s.u. (i.e. distance is deemed to be long) or when the country is further away from the target than the OECD average. For instance, Estonia's distance to Target 4.2 on pre-primary education is 1.1 s.u. (i.e. medium distance), which is higher than the 0.24 s.u. distance for the OECD average. Target 4.2 is therefore classified as a weakness for Estonia.

While the lack of consistent time series often prevents an exhaustive assessment of trends, they are discussed when available and relevant in nuancing the assessment of current performance.

How to read the Statistical Gaps section?

In total, this report relies on 537 data series supporting 183 of the 247 indicators listed in the global indicator framework (or for close proxies of these indicators). These indicators cover 134 of the 169 SDG targets. Yet, target coverage is uneven across the 17 goals and among OECD member countries.

Figure 2 summarises data availability:

- darker blue bars indicate the share of *targets* for which at least one indicator (including indicators providing context information) is available
- lighter blue bars indicate the share of *targets* for which the available indicator(s) include those having a clear normative direction (i.e. allowing to distinguish between good and bad performance), which are the only ones used to measure distances to target levels.
- medium blue bars indicate the share of *targets* for which progress over time can be gauged (i.e. at least three observations are available over a five-year period).

All methods and concepts are further detailed in the Methodological Annex.