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Items for information: statistics of human development

Report of the United Nations Development Programme on statistics of human development

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2024/312 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the United Nations Development Programme on statistics of human development, which is submitted to the Commission for information.

* [E/CN.3/2025/1](#).



Report of the United Nations Development Programme on statistics of human development

I. Introduction

1. The Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has provided updates on the *Human Development Report* and human development indicators at various sessions of the Statistical Commission, most recently the fifty-first session, held in 2020. The present report is submitted in follow-up to a request by the Commission at that session.

2. The *Human Development Report* is produced by the Office drawing on work and consultations with leading scholars, development practitioners and other stakeholders. The report, which is global in nature, has been published annually since 1990. It pertains to a different topic each year, with a theme relevant to the field of human development. For example, the theme of the 2023/24 edition is “Breaking the gridlock: reimagining cooperation in a polarized world”. In the 2025 edition, the question of how digitalization and artificial intelligence are reshaping key areas of human development, including health, education, social norms, relationships, employment and agency, will be explored.

3. Each edition contains a statistical annex, which is a thematic compendium of the most recent available statistics, some of which are summarized in six composite indices of which the human development index is the best known and used. Other indices include the multidimensional poverty index, the inequality-adjusted human development index, the gender inequality index, the gender development index and the planetary pressures-adjusted human development index. The report, including the extensive database of human development indicators, is also published on the website of the Office (<https://hdr.undp.org/>).

4. The General Assembly, in its resolutions [49/123](#) and [57/264](#), affirmed that the report was a separate and distinct exercise that was not an official document of the United Nations. That position was also reiterated by the Executive Board of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services in its decision 94/15. The Statistical Commission has also explicitly recognized that UNDP is not a data-collection entity and that the report is an editorially independent report commissioned and published by UNDP. The Executive Board, in its decision 2011/12, recognized that the report was an important tool for raising awareness about human development around the world.

5. For the production of the composite indices and the statistical annex, the Office is a user of statistics and indicators rather than a data producer. It relies on data from other United Nations entities and international organizations with mandates for data collection, verification, compilation and public dissemination based on international definitions and standards.

6. In addition to the annual report, more than 800 national or regional human development reports have been produced in over 140 countries since 1992. However, the Office is neither a producer nor a responsible party in that regard. Those reports are produced by regional and national teams of experts, often with the support of local or regional UNDP country offices.

II. Communications and other related processes

A. Direct communication with national statistical offices

7. The Office emphasizes communication with national statistical offices to effectively address areas of concern, in particular the discrepancy between national and international data. The Office regularly writes to all heads of national statistical offices and permanent missions to the United Nations, informing them about the key indicators and international data sources that will be used in the forthcoming edition of the report and its statistical annex. The letter also contains important dates and milestones relating to the report's production and a comprehensive list of data sources that will be used in the upcoming edition. In that way, national statistical offices have an opportunity to review the indicators and bring any existing discrepancy between national and international data to the attention of the relevant international organizations.

B. Consultations, workshops and meetings

8. The Office regularly seeks to attend regional and global gatherings of statisticians. Each such occasion has provided a valuable opportunity to consult official statisticians and solicit feedback.

9. In addition, the Office organizes an annual workshop on statistics of human development as a side event to the session of the Statistical Commission. All delegates are invited to the workshop. Furthermore, engagement with national statistical offices and international data providers has expanded, including through invitations to Office-coordinated thematic regional consultations and through bilateral meetings. Most recently a consultation was held with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics in Canada on 15 and 16 October 2024, with a focus on education indicators.

10. From 29 to 31 March 2023, the Office conducted a series of consultations with the International Labour Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Health Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

11. In February 2023, an expert consultation was conducted with the support of the International Science Council to bring the perspectives of the global scientific community into critical discussion on human development.

12. The Office has been representing UNDP in the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System.

13. The Office conducts an annual briefing for the Executive Board on the development of the report.

C. Expert group meetings on measuring human progress held between 2020 and 2024

14. In September 2020, UNDP convened a technical expert group meeting focused on the gender inequality index, bringing together leading experts in gender studies, statistics, and human development to evaluate and refine gender composite measures. The discussions centred on methodological approaches for the experimental composite measures and contributed to the final proposal for twin indices addressing women's empowerment and gender equality.

D. Statistical advisory panel

15. The statistical advisory panel met in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2024. Its membership consists of statisticians and analysts from international and national statistical offices and academic institutions, who are leading experts in the field. While the membership was partly refreshed for each report, the objectives of the panel generally remained to provide advice, guidance and feedback to the *Human Development Report* team with regard to the overall methodology of the composite indices, including the conceptual validity, appropriateness and statistical quality of the indicators presented in the report's statistical annex and used in the key analyses in the report. The panel also provided advice on the online content (data presentation and visualization) and on issues relating to consultations and effective interaction with the statistical community.

III. Global human development composite indices, methodology and data

A. Updates to the methodology

16. During the period under review, there were no updates to the methodology used for the composite indices.

B. New composite indices

17. During the period under review, the Office explored new composite indices to capture broader dimensions of human development. These include the gender social norms index,¹ the planetary pressures-adjusted human development index² and the twin indices on women's empowerment and gender equality.³

18. In July 2023, the Office, in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), published a report entitled *The Paths to Equal: Twin Indices on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality* addressing women's empowerment and gender equality. The report introduces a multidimensional framework to measure women's empowerment and gender equality globally, featuring two new experimental indices: the women's empowerment index and the global gender parity index.

19. In 2020, the Office published the first edition of the *Gender Social Norms Index*, which quantifies biases against women, capturing people's attitudes on women's roles along four key dimensions: political, educational, economic, and physical integrity. The second edition of the *Gender Social Norms Index* report was published in 2023, providing updated insights.

20. In 2020, the Office introduced the planetary pressures-adjusted human development index as an experimental index in the *Human Development Report 2020*, which adjusts the human development index for planetary pressures in the Anthropocene era and has been included in the *Human Development Report* statistical annex tables since 2021.

¹ See <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2023-gender-social-norms-index-gsni#/indicies/GSNI>.

² See <https://hdr.undp.org/planetary-pressures-adjusted-human-development-index#/indicies/PHDI>.

³ See <https://hdr.undp.org/content/paths-equal>.

C. Planned activities for 2025

21. Beyond composite indices, the Office also developed and published statistical dashboards to consolidate multiple indicators. These dashboards provide a comprehensive overview of human development, enabling the evaluation of progress by highlighting levels and trends across various dimensions. In 2025, the Office is exploring the development of digital dashboards. This initiative reflects the Office's commitment to leveraging innovative tools to assess and understand emerging trends in human development.

22. In 2025, a measurement conference is planned to review the existing human development measurement framework. This review will provide an opportunity to evaluate the current composite indices and consider potential revisions and updates to ensure that the framework remains comprehensive, relevant and aligned with evolving development priorities.

23. The Office would appreciate having the opportunity to continue to report to the Statistical Commission on updates to the methodology.

IV. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

24. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the present report.
