

Heatmaps of historical performance and effort required for South Africa to meet its SDG targets by 2030

This country profile summarizes the status of progress towards the indicators (remaining effort required to meet the targets), and the recent progress of South Africa on 48 child-related SDG indicators, and indicates its data gaps. These indicators are grouped into five outcome areas concerning children: Survive and thrive, Learning, Protection from harm, Safe and Clean environment, and Fair Chance in Life.

For a comprehensive view, South Africa's performance is shown compared to three distinct benchmarks: (i) Global – where all countries are compared equally; (ii) By other Upper middle income countries; or, (iii) By others countries in Sub-Saharan Africa region.

Detailed results of our analysis for South Africa are presented below.

Figure 1 presents the heatmap to show the level of effort the country needs to perform to reach their child related SDG targets. Data on both the latest level of these indicators and historical performance are used as benchmarks. In this figure, blue means that the country has already met the target or is nearly achieving it; while light orange and dark orange indicate that the country is further away (off-track).

Figure 2 presents the heatmap of the country's performance on each of these indicators, using standardized metrics where a score of 0 denotes poor performance, and 100 signifies optimal performance. This heatmap indicates how strongly a country has been performing across these indicators, compared to an average of all countries, countries in their income group and countries in their region.

Figure 1. Effort required of child-related SDGs organized by sectors

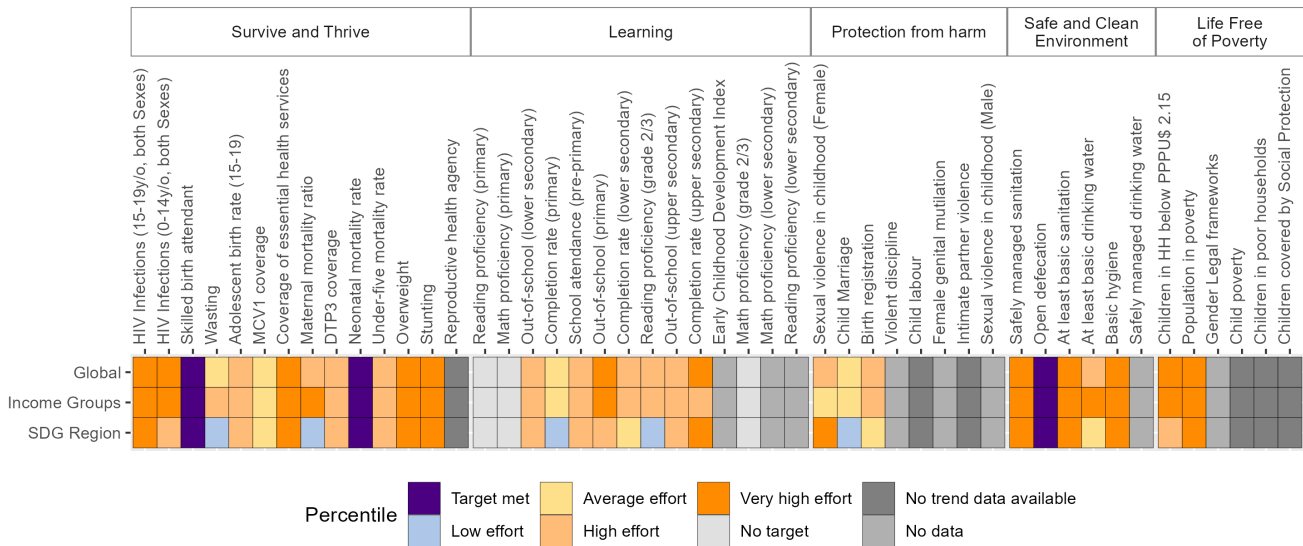
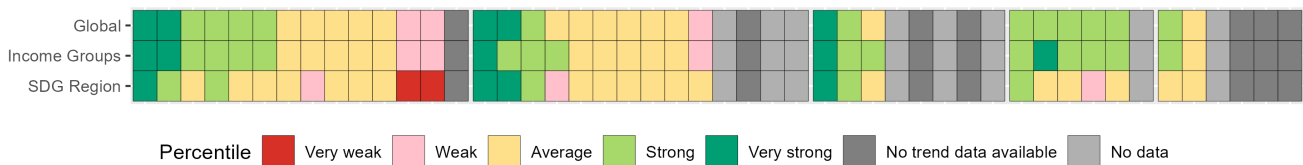


Figure 2. Historical performance of child-related SDGs organized by sectors



Source: UNICEF Chief Statistician Office using data from UNICEF Data Warehouse as of August 2023. For a global narrative using this methodology please see [UNICEF 2023 SDG Report](#). For more detailed information including indicator value and latest year available please visit our [Online South Africa SDG profile](#) at data.unicef.org/sdgs.

Detailed benchmarking of where the country is, and where it aims to be by 2030

This section has a deeper dive on the effort required by South Africa to meet its 2030 targets. We benchmark the South Africa targets against where they stand today to show the potential effort required to reach its SDG goals.

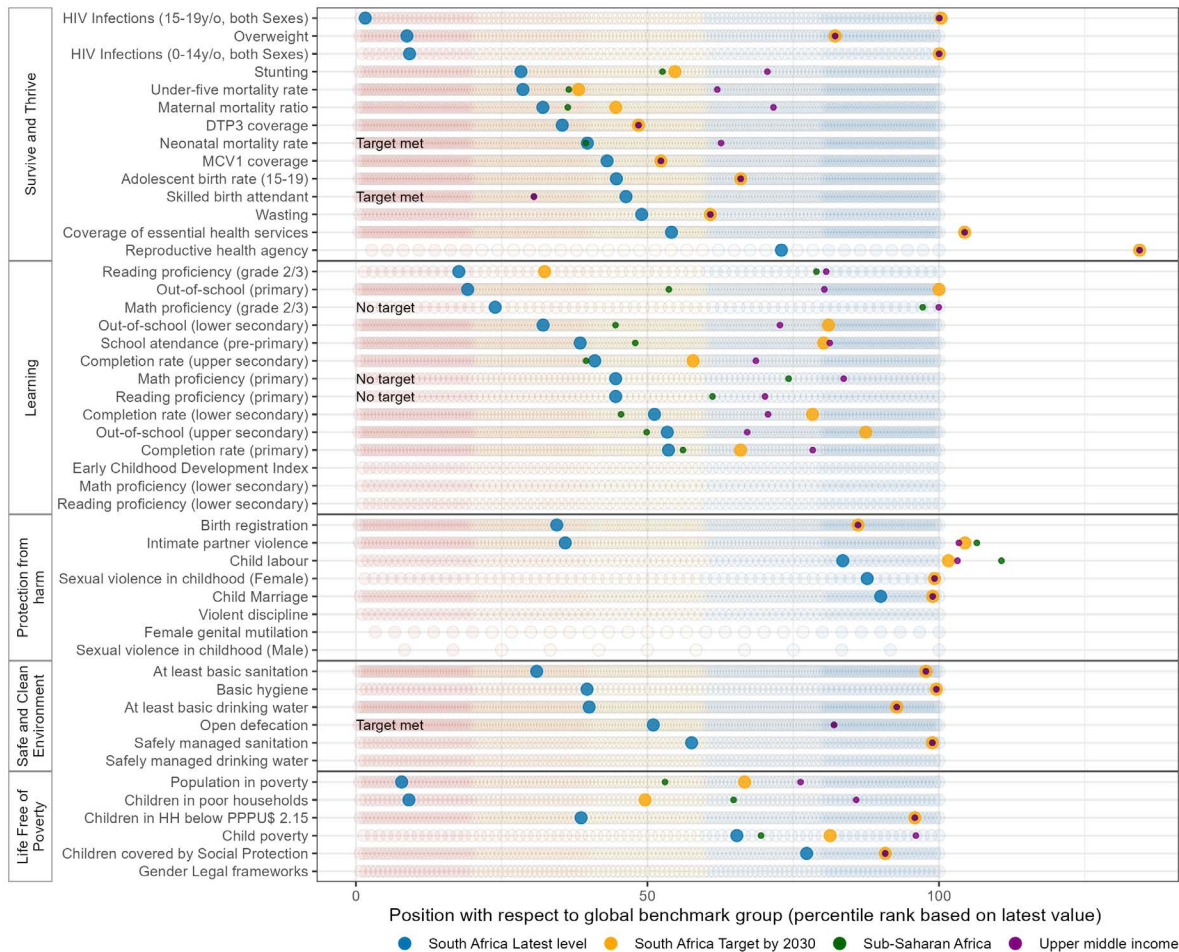
Figure 3 shows the average for countries for each of the 48 indicators to assess where South Africa aims to be by 2030 (orange dot) benchmarked against where it stands today (blue dot). The distance between these two dots can be interpreted as the average expected effort countries must make to reach their goal by 2030. We also show the average percentile for two reference groups, namely, Upper middle income and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Country target setting varies across different outcome areas and their indicators. For monetary poverty, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) didn't designate specific country targets, only setting a global aim to reduce monetary poverty to 3% of the global population. In areas like health and mortality, SDGs utilized past data for informed target setting. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics

(UIS) recently engaged countries in defining their contributions to a collective education goal, incorporating the benchmarking approach used in the climate change sector. This method ensures progress monitoring is tailored to each country's context, aligning national education strategies with regional and global goals. By 2021, two-thirds of countries had established targets for 2025 and 2030 based on selected benchmark indicators.

These findings have broad implications: first, they illustrate that the expected effort is not uniform across outcome areas (and respective indicators). This indicates that certain outcome areas (and specific results) may require more attention, resources, or effective strategies, highlighting the need for differentiated approaches. The point of this exercise is not to question or challenge the targets chosen but to offer a metric that can help inform expectations regarding the actions required to match these targets. This exercise also shows that for some indicators in some cases countries, the expected effort surpasses that in recorded history.

Figure 3. Benchmarking where the country is and where it aims to be by 2030



Source: UNICEF Chief Statistician Office using data from UNICEF Data Warehouse as of August 2023. For a global narrative using this methodology please see [UNICEF 2023 SDG Report](#). For more detailed information including indicator value and latest year available please visit our [Online South Africa SDG profile](#) at data.unicef.org/sdgs.

Detailed benchmarking the historical rate of progress and expected rate of progress to meet the 2030 target

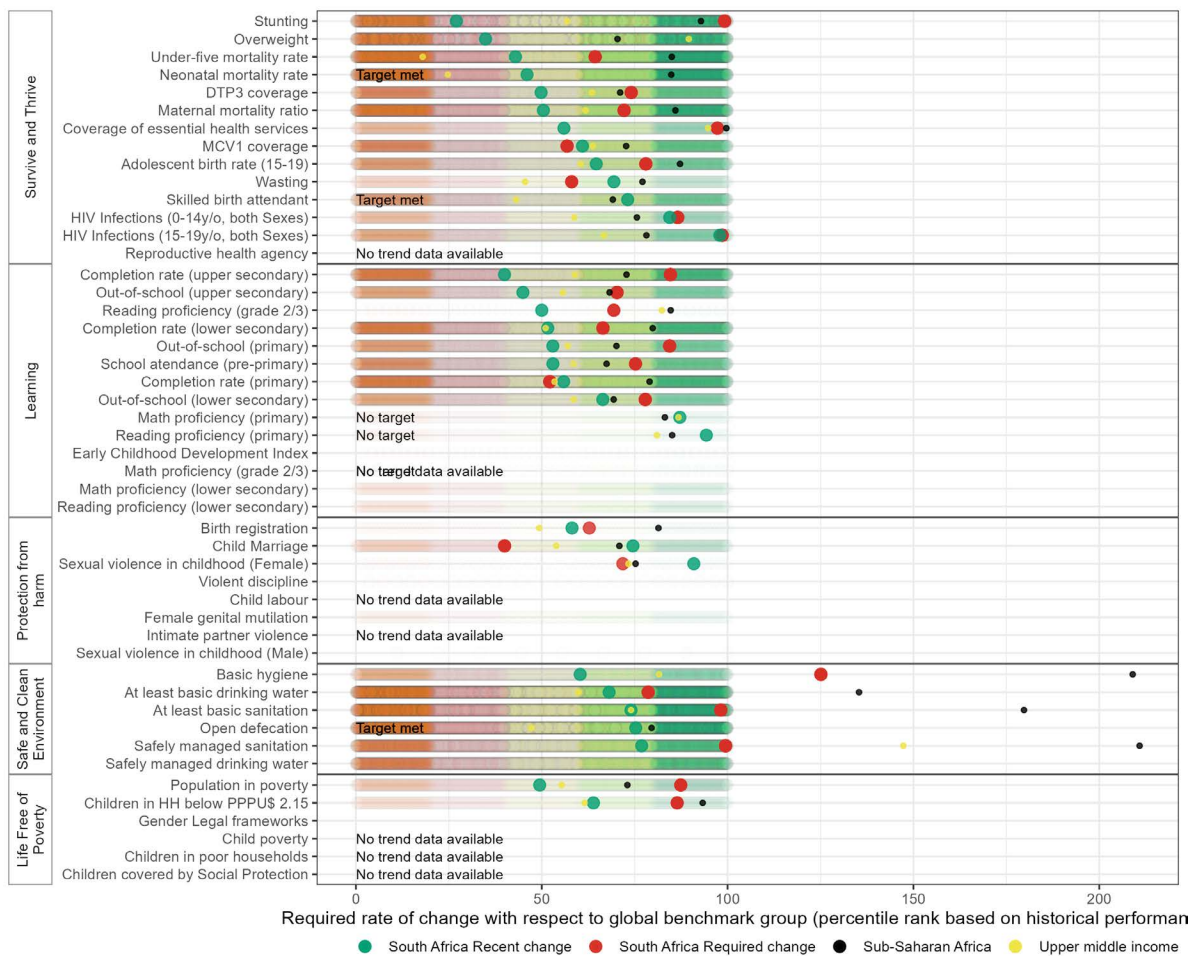
The analysis in this section helps identify the ambition of expected performance by benchmarking against the recent historical performance. These can be used to understand approaches to achieving targets. For example, if historical and expected performance are aligned, this indicates that “more of the same” will suffice for the country to reach the target although countries would need to evaluate their approaches to ensure they do not plateau progress. A second possibility is that the expected performance needs to accelerate by a modest amount which indicates that solutions are likely available although countries might still need to expand the scale of financing. A third scenario is that of themes and/or groups of countries where game changers are needed, indicated by the need to accelerate the rate of change substantially.

The observed recent rate of progress provides a benchmark against which we compare the acceleration required for countries to reach their 2030 targets. Figure 4 shows

the distribution of performance of all countries, with the red dot indicating the level of performance required for South Africa to reach the 2030 target and the green dot representing the benchmark value indicating the average recent rate of progress of South Africa. The global average shows that countries expect to accelerate from percentile 50 to 65 to reach their respective SDG target. This metric is useful as it indicates that thirty-five percent of the observed rates of progress have occurred at a higher percentile of performance (i.e. above 65) (see SDG report for a more detailed discussion), suggesting that acceleration is significant but not outside recorded history.

Figure 4 can be used to identify where game changers are needed to reach targets. These indicators are identified because the acceleration needed to achieve the target requires an above-average acceleration (more than 15 rank percentiles). Game changers are needed in total in 14 out of 48 child-related SDGs.

Figure 4. Benchmarking the historical rate of progress and expected rate of progress to meet the 2030 target



Source: UNICEF Chief Statistician Office using data from UNICEF Data Warehouse as of August 2023. For a global narrative using this methodology please see [UNICEF 2023 SDG Report](#). For more detailed information including indicator value and latest year available please visit our [Online South Africa SDG profile](#) at data.unicef.org/sdgs.

Availability of data on child wellbeing monitoring

South Africa has data on 40 of the 48 child related SDGs. The average latest available year for 24 modeled indicators is 2020, while the average latest available year for the 16 indicators directly observed is 2017.

South Africa has never implemented MICS.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) is the flagship household survey programme, developed and supported by UNICEF. Up to date, 341 surveys have been conducted

in 119 countries. MICS generates up to 38 child-related SDG indicators, the largest number for any household survey in the world. Conducting MICS greatly enhances availability of data on the monitoring of child wellbeing.

The Global MICS Programme is part of the UNICEF Chief Statistician Office and its global coordinator is Attila Hancioglu. In Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO), MICS is coordinated by Ranto Ramananjato (rramananjato@unicef.org). For more information on the MICS programme, visit mics.unicef.org, and/or write to mics@unicef.org.

Disclaimer: The data used in this brief is available in the [UNICEF Data Warehouse](https://data.unicef.org/warehouse). The numbers used reflect harmonization efforts from UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO and other agencies to increase cross-country comparability data. Therefore, numbers may be different from official statistics reported by governments. Such differences are due to their different purposes, which can be global comparison or meeting national definitions. For access to interactive dashboards with benchmarking results please visit data.unicef.org/sdgs.

Suggested citations:

United Nations Children's Fund, *South Africa: Benchmarking child-related SDGs*, UNICEF Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring – Data and Analytics Section, New York, September 2023.

United Nations Children's Fund, *Progress on Children's Well-Being: Centring child rights in the 2030 Agenda; For every child, a sustainable future*, UNICEF Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring – Data and Analytics Section, New York, September 2023.