

‘Leave no one behind’ indices 2020

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Key messages

The ‘leave no one behind’ (LNOB) indices assess and monitor the extent to which national systems, institutions and practices across 159 countries are set up and are ready to meet commitments enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This analysis builds on three previous annual iterations in 2017, 2018 and 2019 to compare changes over the past year. The paper adopts the same methodology used in similar analyses in 2018 and 2019, and examines the same 159 countries included in the 2019 index that account for 89% of the global population.

The LNOB readiness index indicates that 75 countries are ‘ready’ to meet their LNOB commitment, while 65 are ‘partially ready’ and eight ‘not ready’. For 11 mostly small island countries, data are insufficient to make an assessment.

Using 2020 population estimates, this implies that nearly 3.6 billion people representing 46% of the global population live in countries that can be classified as ‘ready’. Another 3.3 billion people representing 42% of the global population live in countries that are either ‘partially ready’ or ‘not ready’. China’s move from ‘partially ready’ in 2019 to ‘ready’ in 2020 has had a notable impact.

Most high-income countries (HICs) and upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) have achieved ‘ready’ status. But very few low-income countries (LICs) have done the same; most are only ‘partially ready’.

Comparing 2019 and 2020, the status of 125 countries remains unchanged (79%), with 71 of these already in the ‘ready’ state, and hence with no scope to improve. The status of 12 countries has worsened (8%), while 10 have improved, and for 12 the data are not sufficient to assess change.

The complementary LNOB outcome index uses four indicators of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have inherent equity considerations. Based on that metric, 72 countries (45%) are already ‘on track’ and another 41 (26%) have made ‘partial progress’ towards achieving their LNOB commitment.

Analysis of both readiness and outcome indices together indicates a strong association between the two measures. This suggests that creating LNOB-supporting conditions enables countries to either get to or stay on track to deliver SDG targets that are inherently inclusive by design.

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Acronyms

HIC	high-income country
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IAEG-SDG	Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators
LIC	low-income country
LMIC	lower-middle-income country
LNOB	leave no one behind
MIC	middle-income country
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD Development Centre
UMIC	upper-middle-income country
VNR	Voluntary National Review

1 Introduction

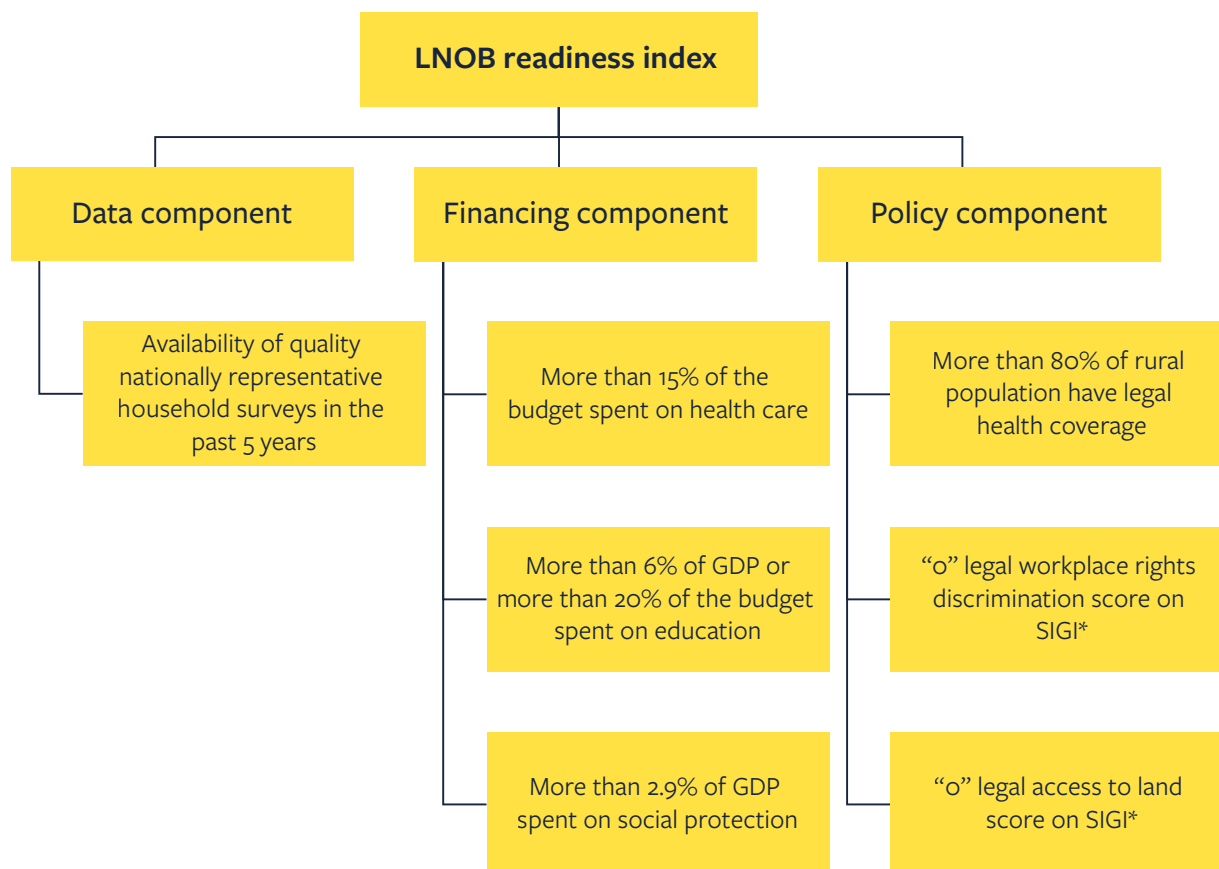
The commitment to ‘leave no one behind’ (LNOB) is a foundational cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNDESA, 2019). It seeks to emphasise the critical distributional aspects of the global development agenda through its goals, targets and outcomes. It was also the theme of the first High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) era in 2016. The HLPF meets each year and plays a central role in the follow-up and review of progress on delivering the 2030 Agenda.

Ahead of the 2017 HLPF, ODI developed an **LNOB readiness index** to measure, assess and monitor the extent of preparedness of countries and their government systems – in both policies and practice – to meet the LNOB commitment (Greenhill, 2017a; b). The 44 countries in the first iteration of the index in 2017 were those that participated in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of their progress towards achieving the SDGs at the HLPF that year. In subsequent years, coverage has expanded to match the increase in countries submitting VNRs. In 2018, we assessed 86 countries. The 2019 and 2020 iterations of the index covered 159 countries (we indicate the few countries that have insufficient data for indicator required to compute the index). These 159 countries constitute 89% of the world’s population, and include most low-income countries (LICs) and middle-income countries (MICs). These countries were relatively under-represented in 2017 and 2018.

Since 2019, we have also incorporated an additional, complementary **LNOB outcome index** that indicates the degree of success achieved by countries in fulfilling their commitment to LNOB by using SDG indicators that explicitly incorporate the distributional aspects of the goals.

The **readiness index** has three main thematic components as summarised in Figure 1:

1. **Data:** We assess whether countries are undertaking the surveys necessary to identify those at high risk of being left behind by tracking if they have had a high-quality nationally representative survey in the past five years, or have such surveys currently in progress or planned for the next year.
2. **Finance:** We assess whether governments are investing adequately in education, health and social protection – three basic services key to supporting those at high risk of being left behind. The thresholds for adequacy are internationally agreed budgetary allocation targets to these critical services.
3. **Policy:** We track whether countries have key policies in place that address the needs of those at risk of being left behind – specifically women’s access to land and employment and universal access to health. Previous ODI research has identified these as critical areas to support leaving no one behind.

Figure 1 Overview of indicators used in the ‘leave no one behind’ readiness index

Note: LNOB, ‘leave no one behind’; SIGI, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD Development Centre. Indicators display the threshold for a country to be deemed ‘ready’.

*Using OECD Development Centre’s SIGI, a cross-country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions – formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices (OECD, 2019).

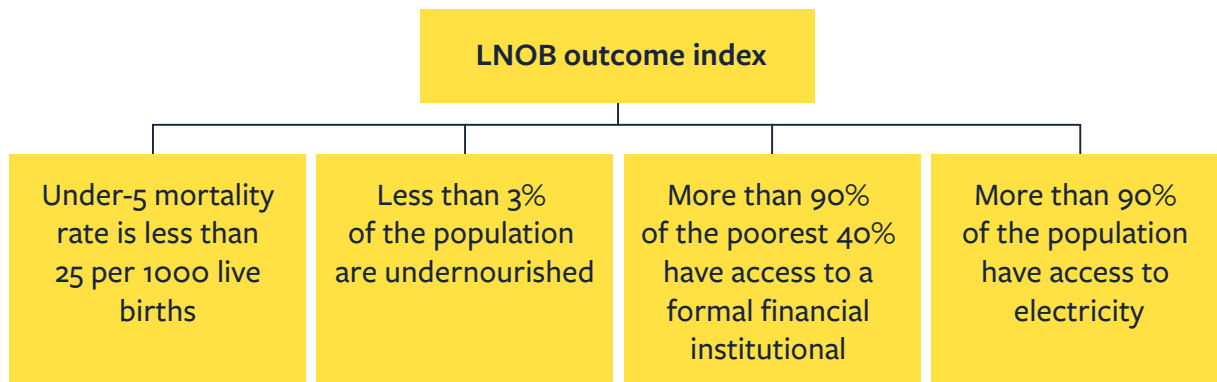
The rationale behind the choice of these three thematic components and their constituent indicators is as follows. The presence of up-to-date periodic survey data that is nationally representative, disaggregated at least to household level and standardised for comparability over time and spatially is critical to identify which segments of the population are being left behind, and how, and the progress (if any) being made over time in mitigating this marginalisation. It is also the building block to targeted interventions to accelerate progress towards the LNOB commitment. The financing component assesses whether adequate resources are being allocated specifically to expand the provision of and access to the most basic services (health, education and social protection) critical to chronically left behind groups. Finally, the policy component captures the presence of legal provisions that guarantee and assure marginalised populations equality in access and the prevention of discrimination – a common driver of exclusion – as well as access to legal mechanisms to redress discrimination when it occurs. These three clusters of policy were identified by previous ODI research as the most effective in leaving no one behind (Stuart et al., 2016; Greenhill, 2017a; b; Stuart and Samman, 2017).

The initiative and design of the index follows from ODI research that found that delivering on the commitment to leave no one behind will require a new focus on the scale of the challenge and new ways of policy design and implementation. Just as vital is early action: delays in the initial years of the SDGs will increase the effort required exponentially (Stuart et al., 2016). The components highlighted here are not the only areas that need to be fast-tracked to achieve the 2030 Agenda, but they are critical in setting the foundation for achieving the distributional objectives enshrined within the LNOB commitment. They will need to be supported by a wider set of policies, including economic, social, environmental and sustainability policies interlinked towards a common purpose (ibid.).

We assign thresholds for each of the three components and then aggregate them into a ‘readiness index’. Countries are classified as ‘ready’, ‘partially ready’ or ‘not ready’ in each component as well as the aggregate index. Details of thresholds associated with each component and how we combine these scores into the aggregate index are briefly described in the following section, and in greater detail in the 2019 Methodology Annex (Chattopadhyay and Manea, 2019).

LNOB outcome index: Our analysis in 2018 and 2019 also assessed the extent to which actual outcomes were showing progress on leaving no one behind (Manuel et al., 2018; Chattopadhyay and Manea, 2019) using a complementary measure derived from four indicators across three thematic components of health, financial inclusion and access to basic infrastructure covering the entire country population as summarised in Figure 2.

1. **Health:** We use two complementary indicators to measure the extent to which health systems and practices reach everyone and particularly the more marginalised and vulnerable segments of the population. They are:
 - Under-five mortality rate, to track whether health policy and financing readiness is leading to improved health outcomes.
 - Undernourishment, as this is a marker for multiple causes of vulnerability and exclusion.
2. **Financial inclusion:** We track whether financial access policies are lifting the marginalised out of exclusion and building a sustainable path out of poverty by measuring the extent to which the poorest 40% of the population have access to formal financial instruments (such as bank accounts).
3. **Access to basic infrastructure:** Here we track access to electricity, as lack of energy is a key factor affecting the lives and livelihoods of marginalised communities and their economic prospects. The indicator is whether more than 90% of the population have access to electricity.

Figure 2 Overview of indicators used in the ‘leave no one behind’ outcome index

Note: LNOB, ‘leave no one behind’. Indicators display the threshold for a country to be deemed ‘on track’.

Similar to the rationale of the readiness index, the outcome index has components that capture the end result of effective policies and practices of LNOB using four indicators. These four indicators are from among the 225 unique SDG indicators chosen by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to monitor progress towards the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and lay specific emphasis on the distributional aspect of the SDGs. These four indicators measure the extent of equitable access to basic services that form building blocks of opportunities for sustainable economic well-being. These are services that left behind groups are typically underserved in; they have clear benchmarks with fairly standardised quality of service parameters; they are all publicly available data sources.

Consistent with our methodology for the readiness index, countries in the outcome index are classified as being ‘on track’, having made ‘partial progress’, or being ‘off track’ using a composite threshold. The computational process is detailed in the 2019 Methodology Annex (Chattopadhyay and Manea, 2019). ‘On track’ denotes that the country is able to reach the SDG target – and since the target itself embodies distributional equity, we deem that the country is thereby on track to fulfil the LNOB commitment aligned with that theme (such as health, access to basic financial and infrastructure services).

As the SDG calendar advances and greater emphasis is placed on meeting SDG targets, future ODI reviews will increasingly focus on outcomes and results in achieving the commitments, drawing on emerging disaggregated data on outcomes for some typically marginalised and under-served groups.

This will be particularly pertinent for the next iteration of the index in 2021, which we anticipate will prominently reflect the impact of Covid-19. Interesting and pertinent questions to address would include the health impact of the pandemic, public health responses, the prioritisation/ allocation of fiscal resources and restrictions on the movement of goods and services. Covid-19 is likely to have imposed new barriers and priorities to data collection and analysis, altered financial

resource mobilisation and its allocation that will affect components of the readiness index. This shock has affected access to health and other basic services of the poor and more vulnerable that affect components of the outcome index. The directions of influences may be uncertain as some countries have increased spending on healthcare and social protection, just as others have struggled under the strain to generate adequate resources. Another critical hypothesis to test will be whether high scores in the readiness index helped such countries be more resilient than others in weathering the pandemic shock as measured through the outcome index – thereby testing the vital strength of a causal path-dependence between readiness and outcome measures through the prism of this shock.

2 The 2020 indices

This 2020 iteration of the indices uses the same methodology as 2018 and 2019. This allows us to create a systematic and consistent indicator to assess and monitor changes internationally and within countries over time.

In the early iterations of the index, VNR participation was used as a country selection criterion as participating countries were expected to have more complete data. In turn, our indices were more helpful in providing a consistent basis for evaluating and monitoring their performance.

The 2020 indices update data for 159 countries that have participated in VNRs once or multiple times between 2017 and 2021. Our indices are not derived directly from the data submitted in the VNRs. For each country, we incorporate their most recent data regardless of when they participated in the VNRs or how often they did so. Some countries that have participated in VNRs do not have data on specific indicators. We thus have readiness index values for 148 countries, and outcome index values for 146 countries.

In our analysis, we present the results in terms of overall levels of readiness, as well as changes over the past year (comparing 2019 to 2020). We do this for the overall amalgamated scores of the two indices, as well as for each of their respective thematic components.

2.1 Scoring the indices

The overall LNOB readiness index score of a country is based on the combined score of the three thematic components: data, finance and policy. Countries are first classified as ‘ready’, ‘partially ready’ or ‘not ready’ on each component separately. For the aggregate index, a country to be scored as ‘ready’ has to be either (1) ‘ready’ in at least two of the components; or (2) ‘ready’ in one and ‘partially ready’ in the other two. Countries deemed ‘not ready’ overall are either ‘not ready’ in all three components or only ‘partially ready’ in at most one. The remaining countries are classified as ‘partially ready’. Table 1 lists the possible combinations of scores for the aggregate index.

For the data component, ‘ready’ implies the country has completed at least one nationally representative household survey (from a list of four standardised international surveys) within the past three years (since 2017); ‘partially ready’ implies that one such survey has been conducted in the past five years, or is being undertaken currently (2020) or planned for the next year (2021); and ‘not ready’ implies that none of these four surveys has been undertaken in the past five years, nor is one being undertaken in 2020, nor has been planned for 2021.

Table 1 Combination of component scores and overall ‘leave no one behind’ readiness index

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	LNOB readiness index
Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready
Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready
Ready	Ready	Not ready	Ready
Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready
Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready
Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready
Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready
Partially ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready
Partially ready	Not ready	Not ready	Not ready
Not ready	Not ready	Not ready	Not ready

Note: LNOB, ‘leave no one behind’.

For the financing component, ‘ready’ implies the country meets internationally agreed threshold targets of budgetary allocation in health, education and social protection in at least two of the three dimensions. ‘Partially ready’ denotes that national budgetary allocation in the country meets the threshold in at most one dimension; ‘not ready’ denotes that the country does not meet the threshold in any dimension.

The policy component is a composite measure which includes an assessment of whether more than 80% of population have statutory healthcare coverage, whether employment laws explicitly prohibit gender-based discrimination, and a measure of women’s access to land ownership.

For the LNOB outcome index, we follow a similar methodology. We assess each country on each of the four chosen indicators, assigning scores based on the extent to which the countries have achieved threshold levels of under-5 mortality rate, undernourishment rate, proportion of the poorest 40% who have an account in a formal financial institution, and the proportion of population with access to electricity. We finally aggregate these component scores to derive the overall outcome score for each country and classify it as being ‘on track’, ‘partial progress’, or ‘off track’.

Details of the data and methodology on which the LNOB readiness and outcomes indices are based, as well as scores for all the elements that make up the data, policy and financing components, are set out in a separate 2019 Methodology Annex (Chattopadhyay and Manea, 2019).

2.2 Coverage of the indices

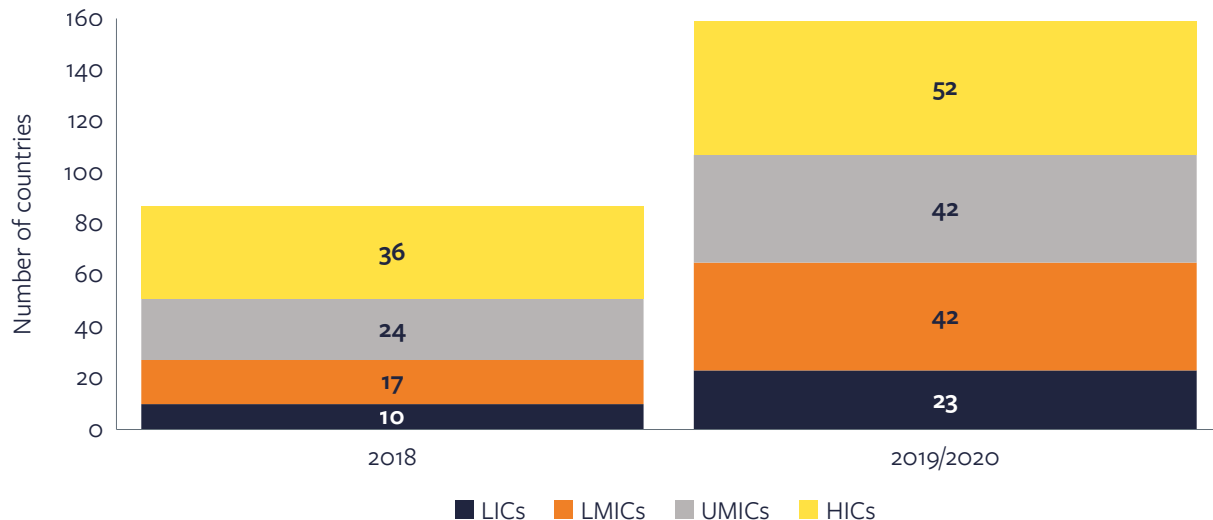
These 159 countries span a more comprehensive range than was possible in the 2017 and 2018 iterations of the index. There are 23 LICs, 42 lower-middle-income countries (LMICs), 42 upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) and 52 high-income countries (HICs) – using the World Bank’s classification in 2020 (Figure 3) (World Bank, 2020).

In 2017 and 2018, countries self-selected to present their VNRs. Since our sample of countries in the iterations of the index in 2017 and 2018 were linked to the countries participating in the early rounds of VNR, there was an inherent bias in the sample and in our results. For instance, in the 2018 index, which incorporated data for 87 countries, 68% were HICs and UMICs. They also tended to be countries that had achieved greater progress towards delivering on LNOB commitments, and hence had incentives to present their VNRs sooner than countries facing greater challenges meeting their targets.

For consistency across iterations of the indices, the list of 159 countries excludes eight countries (Estonia, France, Germany, Republic of Korea, Madagascar, Montenegro, Norway and Venezuela) that presented their VNRs in 2016 but have not done so thereafter (UNDESA, n.d.). Four additional countries (Barbados, Burundi, Comoros and Syria) presented their VNRs in 2020 for the first time but were not on the United Nations list when we computed the detailed analytics of the 2020 indices. We have included these eight and four countries in assessing their 2020 scores in Table 2. We are unsure of whether Iran (2017) and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (2020) presented their VNRs when they were initially expected to, but have included them in the list of 159 countries. In the next iteration of the indices, we will be able to include the same 171 countries as well as another eight countries (Angola, Antigua, Bolivia, Cuba, Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Nicaragua and San Marino) that are expected to submit their VNRs for the first time in 2021. This will bring the total country count to 179.

Since 2019, we now have a comprehensive and consistent set of 159 countries in our sample (out of a total 193 member states of the United Nations). They cover more than 89% of the global population. The sample composition is thus a much more accurate representation of the global community of countries and people – across all regions and country-income categories.

Figure 3 Comparing country coverage composition: 2018 and 2019/2020



Note: LIC, low-income country; LMIC, lower-middle-income country; UMIC, upper-middle-income country; HIC, high-income country. Using World Bank country-income classification.

Apart from updating data, this is the first time we compare the same group of 159 countries at two points in time: 2019 versus 2020. Further, we reflect on the results not only as counts of countries in each classification, but also include total country population as a rough estimate of the number of people within each component of the two indices. The latter is particularly relevant in mapping the impact of developments in more populous countries that might otherwise be overlooked. We highlight the caveat that population weighting of country-level readiness and outcome categories is a crude reflection of the magnitude of the number of people in a particular category. There are variations in the population within any country that may not conform to the overall classification of the country. The level of disaggregation for the indicators in our measurement metrics prevents us from assessing within-country differences in greater detail.

3 Analysis and results

Table 2 summarises the latest results for the LNOB readiness and outcomes indices by country, arranged in alphabetic order of their name.

Table 2 The ‘leave no one behind’ readiness and outcomes indices by country, arranged in alphabetic order

Country (year(s) of VNR)	Components of LNOB readiness index			Overall LNOB readiness index	Overall LNOB outcome index
	Data	Finance	Policy		
Afghanistan (2017)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Off track
Albania (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Algeria (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Andorra (2018)	Not ready	Not ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
Argentina (2017, 2020)	Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Armenia (2018, 2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Australia (2018)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Austria (2020)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Azerbaijan (2017, 2019)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	On track
Bahamas (2018)	Not ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data
Bahrain (2018)	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	On track
Bangladesh (2017, 2020)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Barbados (2020)	Not Ready	Not Ready	Ready	Partially Ready	On Track
Belarus (2017)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Belgium (2017)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Belize (2017, 2020)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	On track
Benin (2017, 2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Bhutan (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Insufficient data
Bolivia (2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019)	Partially ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Botswana (2017)	Partially ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Off track
Brazil (2017)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track

Table 2 continued

Country (year(s) of VNR)	Components of LNOB readiness index			Overall LNOB readiness index	Overall LNOB outcome index
	Data	Finance	Policy		
Brunei Darussalam (2020)	Partially ready	Not ready	Ready	Partially ready	On track
Bulgaria (2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Burkina Faso (2019)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Burundi (2020)	Ready	Not Ready	Partially Ready	Partially Ready	Insufficient data
Cabo Verde (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Cambodia (2019)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Cameroon (2019)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Canada (2018)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Central African Republic (2019)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Chad (2019)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Chile (2017, 2019)	Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
China (2020)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Colombia (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Comoros (2020)	Not Ready	Not Ready	Not Ready	Not Ready	Insufficient data
Congo (Dem. Rep. of) (2020)	Ready	Not Ready	Not Ready	Partially Ready	Off Track
Congo (Rep. of the) (2018, 2019)	Not Ready	Not Ready	Not Ready	Not Ready	Off Track
Costa Rica (2017, 2020)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Cote d'Ivoire (2019)	Partially ready	Not ready	Not ready	Not ready	Off track
Croatia (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Cyprus (2017)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Czech Republic (2017)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Korea (Dem. Rep. of) (2020)	Ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Partial progress
Korea (Rep. of) (2016)	Not Ready	Not Ready	Partially Ready	Not Ready	On Track
Denmark (2017)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Dominican Republic (2018)	Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress

Table 2 continued

Country (year(s) of VNR)	Components of LNOB readiness index			Overall LNOB readiness index	Overall LNOB outcome index
	Data	Finance	Policy		
Ecuador (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Egypt (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
El Salvador (2017)	Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Estonia (2016, 2020)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On Track
Eswatini (2019)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Ethiopia (2017)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Fiji (2019)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Finland (2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
France (2016)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On Track
Gambia (2020)	Ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Georgia (2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Germany (2016)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On Track
Ghana (2019)	Ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Off track
Greece (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Guatemala (2017, 2019)	Partially ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Guinea (2018)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Guyana (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Honduras (2017, 2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Hungary (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Iceland (2019)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
India (2017, 2020)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Indonesia (2017, 2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Iran (2017)	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Iraq (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Ireland (2018)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Israel (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Italy (2017)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Jamaica (2018)	Partially ready	Not ready	Not ready	Not ready	On track
Japan (2017)	Partially ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track

Table 2 continued

Country (year(s) of VNR)	Components of LNOB readiness index			Overall LNOB readiness index	Overall LNOB outcome index
	Data	Finance	Policy		
Jordan (2017, 2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Kazakhstan (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Kenya (2017)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Kiribati (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	On track
Kuwait (2019)	Not ready	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	On track
Kyrgyz Republic (2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Laos (2018)	Ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Latvia (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Lebanon (2018)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Lesotho (2019)	Ready	Ready	Not ready	Ready	Off track
Liberia (2020)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Off track
Libya (2020)	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	On track
Liechtenstein (2019)	Not ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
Lithuania (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Luxembourg (2017)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Madagascar (2016)	Ready	Ready	Not Ready	Ready	Off Track
Malawi (2020)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Malaysia (2017)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	On track
Maldives (2017)	Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Mali (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Malta (2018)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Mauritania (2019)	Partially ready	Not ready	Not ready	Not ready	Off track
Mauritius (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Mexico (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	Partial progress
Micronesia (2020)	Not ready	Ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
Moldova (2020)	Ready	Partially Ready	Partially Ready	Ready	On Track
Monaco (2017, 2020)	Not ready	Not ready	Ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data
Mongolia (2019)	Ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	On track
Montenegro (2016)	Ready	Not Ready	Partially Ready	Partially Ready	On Track

Table 2 continued

Country (year(s) of VNR)	Components of LNOB readiness index			Overall LNOB readiness index	Overall LNOB outcome index
	Data	Finance	Policy		
Morocco (2020)	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Mozambique (2020)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Off track
Namibia (2018)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Nauru (2019)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
Nepal (2017)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Netherlands (2017)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
New Zealand (2019)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Niger (2018, 2020)	Partially ready	Not ready	Not ready	Not ready	Off track
Nigeria (2017)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
North Macedonia (2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Norway (2016)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On Track
Oman (2019)	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Not ready	On track
Pakistan (2019)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Palau (2019)	Not ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
Palestine (2018)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	On track
Panama (2017, 2020)	Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Papua New Guinea (2020)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data
Paraguay (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Peru (2017, 2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	Partial progress
Philippines (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Poland (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Portugal (2017)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Qatar (2017, 2018, 2020)	Not ready	Not ready	Ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data
Romania (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Russia (2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Rwanda (2019)	Partially ready	Not ready	Ready	Partially ready	Off track
Saint Lucia (2019)	Partially ready	Not ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data

Table 2 continued

Country (year(s) of VNR)	Components of LNOB readiness index			Overall LNOB readiness index	Overall LNOB outcome index
	Data	Finance	Policy		
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2020)	Not ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	On track
Samoa (2020)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	On track
Saudi Arabia (2018)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	On track
Senegal (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Serbia (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Seychelles (2020)	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Insufficient data
Sierra Leone (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Singapore (2018)	Not ready	Not ready	Ready	Partially ready	On track
Slovakia (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Slovenia (2017, 2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Solomon Islands (2020)	Not ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Not ready	On track
South Africa (2019)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	Partial progress
Spain (2018)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Sri Lanka (2018)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	On track
Sudan (2018)	Partially ready	Not ready	Not ready	Not ready	Off track
Sweden (2017)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Switzerland (2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
Syria (2020)	Not Ready	Not Ready	Partially Ready	Not Ready	Insufficient data
Tajikistan (2017)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Thailand (2017)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Timor-Leste (2019)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Off track
Togo (2017, 2018)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Tonga (2019)	Ready	Not ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
Trinidad and Tobago (2020)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	On track
Tunisia (2019)	Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Turkey (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Turkmenistan (2019)	Ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress

Table 2 continued

Country (year(s) of VNR)	Components of LNOB readiness index			Overall LNOB readiness index	Overall LNOB outcome index
	Data	Finance	Policy		
Uganda (2020)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Ukraine (2020)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Ready	Ready	On track
United Arab Emirates (2018)	Not ready	Not ready	Ready	Partially ready	On track
United Kingdom (2019)	Ready	Ready	Ready	Ready	On track
United Republic of Tanzania (2019)	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Off track
Uruguay (2017, 2018)	Ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	On track
Uzbekistan (2020)	Partially ready	Ready	Partially ready	Ready	Partial progress
Vanuatu (2019)	Not ready	Not ready	Insufficient data	Insufficient data	Partial progress
Venezuela (2016)	Not Ready	Not Ready	Ready	Partially Ready	Partial Progress
Viet Nam (2018)	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Partially ready	Partial progress
Zambia (2020)	Ready	Not ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track
Zimbabwe (2017, 2020)	Ready	Partially ready	Not ready	Partially ready	Off track

Note: LNOB, 'leave no one behind'.

3.1 'Leave no one behind' readiness index

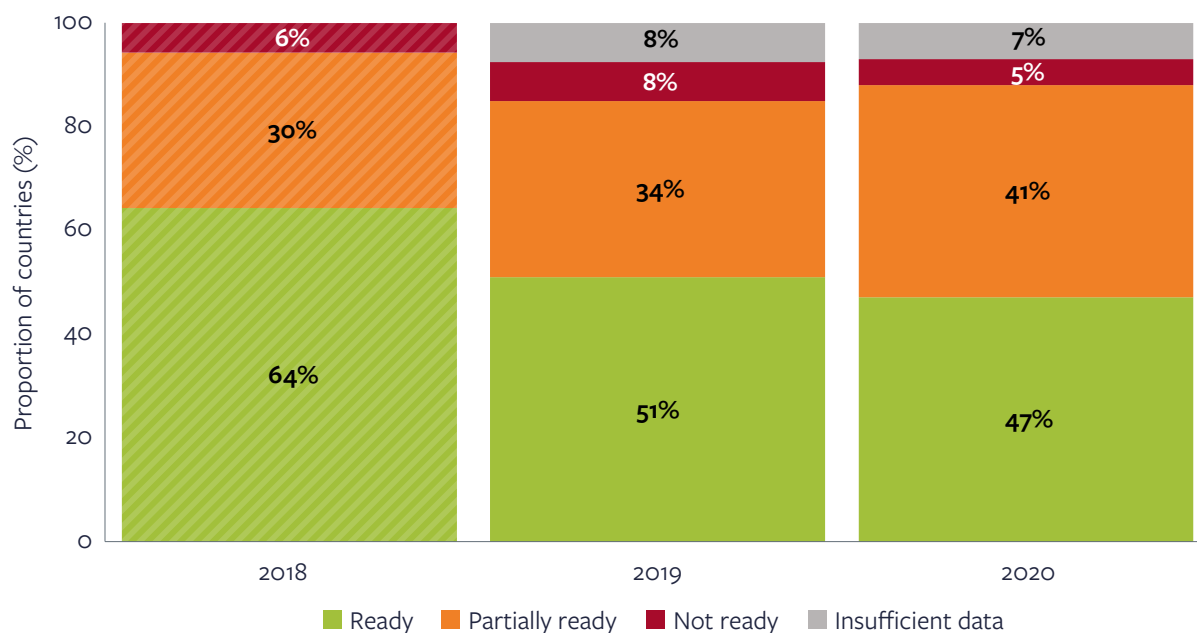
It is very encouraging that 75 countries (47%) are deemed 'ready', and this constitutes the largest group in the classification. Of the remaining 84 countries, 65 are 'partially ready' (41%), eight are 'not ready' (5%) and 11 have insufficient data.

However, when comparing 2020 to 2019 (and partly to 2018), we find that the number and proportion of countries that are deemed 'ready' in our sample have decreased (Figure 4). In addition, for 11 of the 12 countries that had insufficient data in 2019, this remained the case in 2020.

The results for 2018 are based on only 87 countries (of which one had insufficient data) due to our selection criterion for inclusion. We have already mentioned the presence of a probable bias towards better-performing countries in the 2018 index. The figures for 2018 are not exactly comparable, and hence we have shaded them .

We have used 2020 population estimates to reflect the relative population levels of the countries in each classification tier. The results imply that nearly 3.6 billion people, representing 46% of the global population, live in countries that can be classified as ‘ready’, with another 3.3 billion people, representing 42% of the global population, in countries that are either only ‘partially ready’ or ‘not ready’. We do not claim that all people in a country find themselves in the same position. Nonetheless, the weighting of country classification with population gives us a better understanding of the scale of progress made, and the remaining challenges in achieving the LNOB commitment. These population estimates might overstate the magnitude of those who are likely to be left behind. But to the extent that a larger proportion of people in LICs and MICs tend to be marginalised than in higher-income countries, and these lower-income countries also have larger populations, the overestimation is less pronounced for these most chronically underserved groups of people.

Figure 4 A trend of decreasing number of countries that are ‘ready’



Note: Comparing readiness overall index 2020 to 2019 and 2018.

It is notable that 64% of countries in the sample were deemed ‘ready’ in the 2018 index, which had lower country coverage. This should not be surprising, however, as countries that offered to present their VNRs to HLPF in 2017 and 2018 were better placed to achieve their 2030 Agenda commitments, leaving less-prepared countries to come into the fold at a later date. The same pattern is evident when we assess the different thematic components of the overall index separately, below.

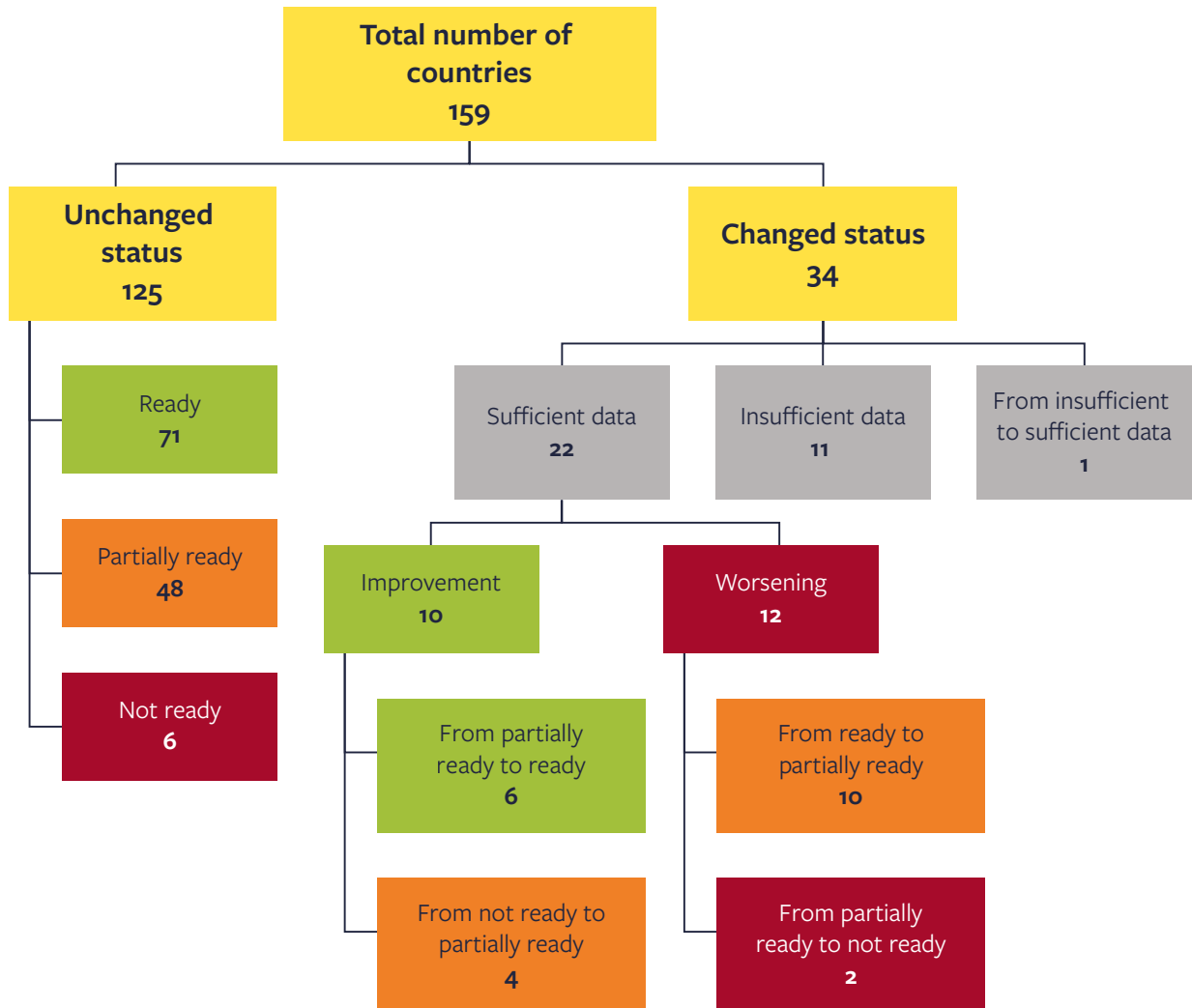
Comparing 2019 to 2020 and as summarised in Figure 5, the status of 125 countries remains unchanged¹ (79%) and 71 of them are already in the ‘ready’ state (45%) – hence with no scope to improve.² Of the remaining 54 countries that remained unchanged, 48 have retained ‘partially ready’ status and six remain ‘not ready’.

In addition to those countries whose overall status remained unchanged, worryingly the status of 12 has worsened (8%), while it has improved in another 10 (6%). Twelve countries did not have sufficient data in 2019 for us to compute their indices, and 11 of the same countries also did not have data in 2020.

1 Part of that lack of change is the result of an absence of updated annual data on the three indicators in the policy component of the index.

2 Proportions are based on the entire sample of 159 countries, not just on the 148 countries that we have data for in 2020.

Figure 5 Comparing changes in readiness index of 159 countries between 2019 and 2020



Note: Counts of countries in each category.

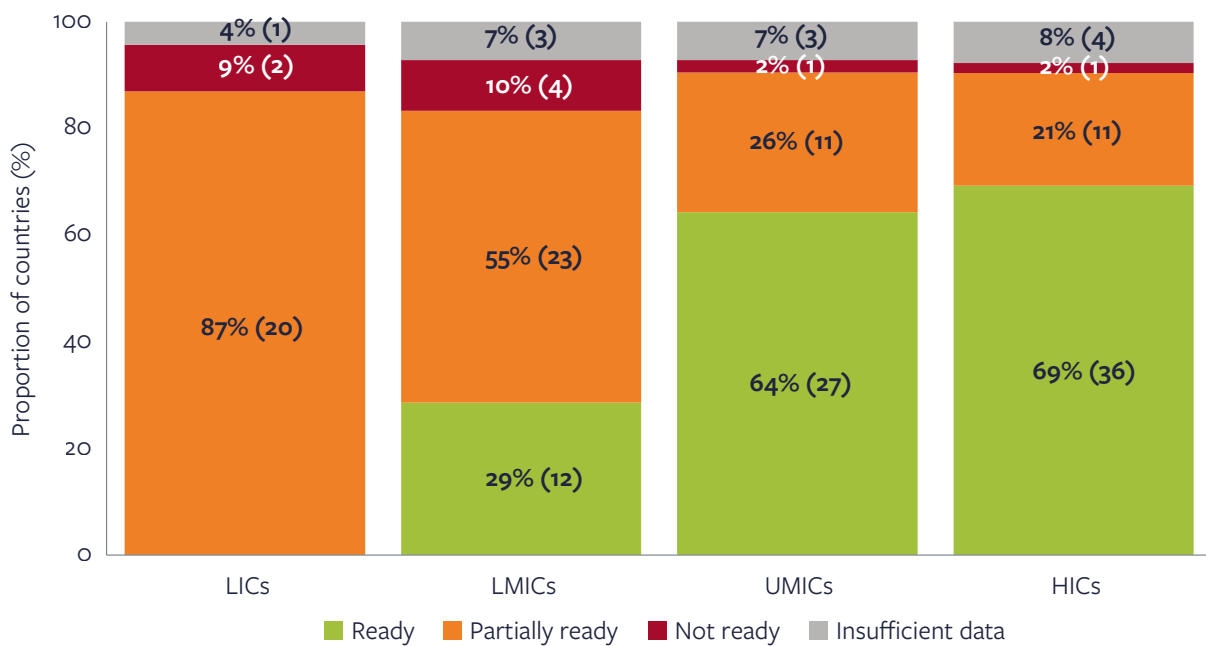
Among the 10 countries where the index level has improved over the past year, for six this improvement led those countries to go from being ‘partially ready’ to ‘ready’. China moved from being ‘partially ready’ in the 2019 index to being ‘ready’ in this 2020 iteration – and this has had an oversized impact on population-weighted results. As a consequence, 20% of the aggregate population of the 159 countries in our assessment lived in countries that improved their score. The remaining four countries moved from being ‘not ready’ to ‘partially ready’.

Significantly, the index status has worsened for 12 countries over the past year (8%). Ten have been downgraded from being ‘ready’ to ‘partially ready’, and the remaining two have dropped from being ‘partially ready’ to ‘not ready’. These declines were in countries that constitute only 2% of the global population.

We hasten to remind that, as noted, most of the data included in this analysis predates the Covid-19 pandemic. It therefore does not include direct health and economic consequences of the pandemic, or the impact of public health responses.

Readiness to fulfil the LNOB commitment is positively correlated with the economic status of the country concerned; a much higher proportion of affluent countries have achieved a ‘ready’ status than those in the lower-middle and low-income categories. It is highest (69%) among HICs. Worryingly, no country among LICs has yet achieved ‘ready’ status (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Readiness is positively correlated with country prosperity



Note: LIC, low-income country; LMIC, lower-middle-income country; UMIC, upper-middle-income country; HIC, high-income country. Comparing the readiness index across country-income classification. The values in parentheses are the respective counts of countries.

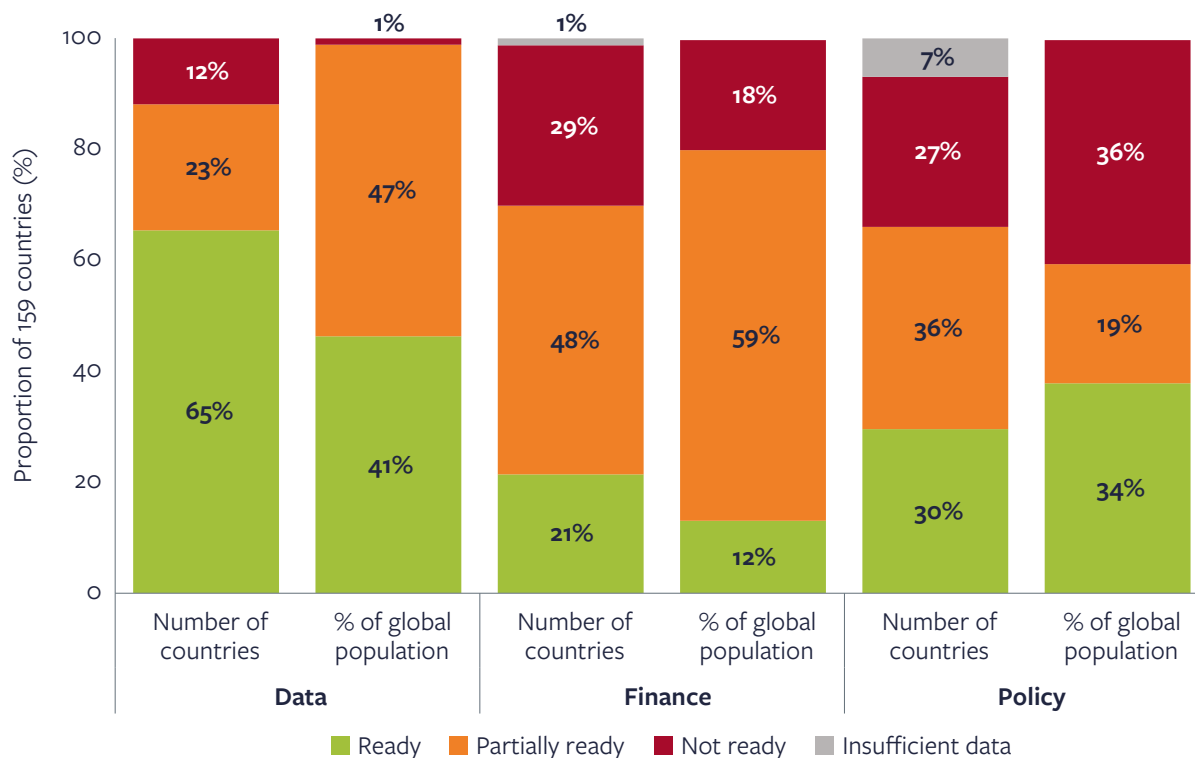
Conversely, a much higher proportion of LICs and LMICs are judged to be ‘not ready’. On a positive note, the bulk of countries in these two categories are ‘partially ready’ in their level of preparedness.

This disparity between affluent and poorer countries becomes even more stark when assessing the distribution by population. While 95% of the population in all HICs and UMICs live in countries that have achieved ‘ready’ status, 88% of the population in all LMICs and LICs live in countries that are only ‘partially ready’. This suggests that fiscal capacity constraints might pose a bigger challenge for poorer but more populous countries in crossing the ‘ready’ threshold.

3.2 Thematic components of the readiness index

In the **data component** of the index, more countries are ‘ready’ (65%) than in the two other components (Figure 7). The caveat here, as also mentioned in the 2019 Methodology Annex (Chattopadhyay and Manea, 2019), is that a majority of household survey-based data streams we consider in formulating our scores are funded and administered by external entities and multilateral agencies – and are not necessarily an outcome of direct policy actions of the respective country. Nonetheless, the presence of a large group of data-ready countries is encouraging as a potential building block for informed policy-making and practice, and the design of interventions to address the marginalisation of left-behind individuals and groups.

Figure 7 Data readiness dominates; finance readiness lags



Note: Comparing the three components of the readiness index.

We find that 104 countries are ‘data ready’ in 2020 (65%), compared to 102 in 2019. This seeming stability on the overall number masks a fair amount of flux beneath: while 106 countries remained unchanged in their status (67%), 24 improved their data readiness (15%), whereas it worsened in 27 (17%).

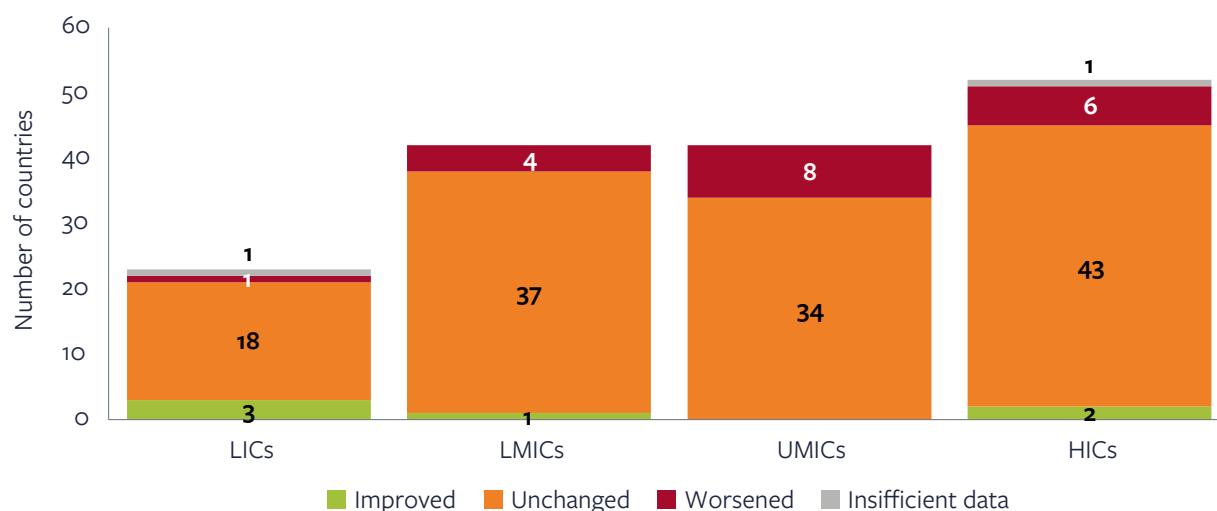
Nineteen of the 24 countries with improvements were MICs. However, worsening data readiness was fairly evenly distributed among all income groups – including six HICs, seven UMICs, nine LMICs and five LICs.

Since household surveys are the mainstay of our data readiness assessment, we anticipate that Covid-19 will hurt the scores of many countries over the next few years. While health service-related surveys have increased in some countries during the pandemic, these are not full face-to-face household surveys due to understandable public health restrictions and social distancing stipulations. Some national surveys are now being undertaken online or through mobile phones. While this offers opportunities to conduct surveys more frequently and at less cost – and hence opens up the possibility of improved data gathering and access even in poorer countries that have traditionally lacked adequate resources for frequent national surveys – this prospect is countered by inherent limitations that poorer and digitally less connected countries face. In addition, some of these surveys are limited in scope – focusing on health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic – and hence might not be truly comparable to the broader scope of the previous standardised, nationally representative surveys we consider in devising the data component of the index. We expect to be able to assess these impacts in the next iteration of the indices.

At the other end, in the **finance component** of the index, only 34 countries in 2020 are ‘ready’ in terms of government expenditure on education, health and social protection (21%). This is a decline from the 45 countries that met this threshold in 2019 (28%).

Since 77 countries (48%) are deemed ‘partially ready’, it gives us grounds for optimism. That favourable outlook is nonetheless tempered by the fact that 132 countries (83%) have not changed their classification over the past year even though this component has the greatest scope for improvement. Paradoxically, a larger number of HICs and UMICs worsened on this component compared to poorer countries (Figure 8). Our analysis did not assess the patterns in or causes of this shift in fiscal priorities in HICs and UMICs.

This inherent inertia to change fiscal allocation that benefits LNOB commitments has multiple plausible explanations. The first is that the overall fiscal capacity of countries does not fluctuate unless facing major shocks. The second factor is the structural mechanisms that are designed to maintain allocative stability/status quo. As a consequence, fiscal allocation for education, health and social protection requires long-term change in administrative and possibly legislative decision-making; drastic year-on-year changes are unlikely in most normal circumstances.

Figure 8 A high degree of inertia to change financial readiness

Note: LIC, low-income country; LMIC, lower-middle-income country; UMIC, upper-middle-income country; HIC, high-income country. Change in financial readiness over 2019–2020 by country income classification.

This is however one component where we anticipate country scores will increase through 2020 on account of the public health response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is overwhelming evidence of financial resources being diverted and allocated for health and social protection programmes that feature in the metric for this component in the index. But here too there is likely to be a disparity between countries based on their overall fiscal capacities – hence by country-income classification. It will be interesting to see whether such shifts are sustained, and what that might imply for funding competing components of readiness – such as education.

With regard to the **policy component** of the overall index, none of the data sources we include in our computation and assessment updated their indicators/metrics in the past year. There were no alternative data sources with comparable indicators that had more recent data we could use as a substitute. We thus cannot demonstrate any evidence for change on this component.

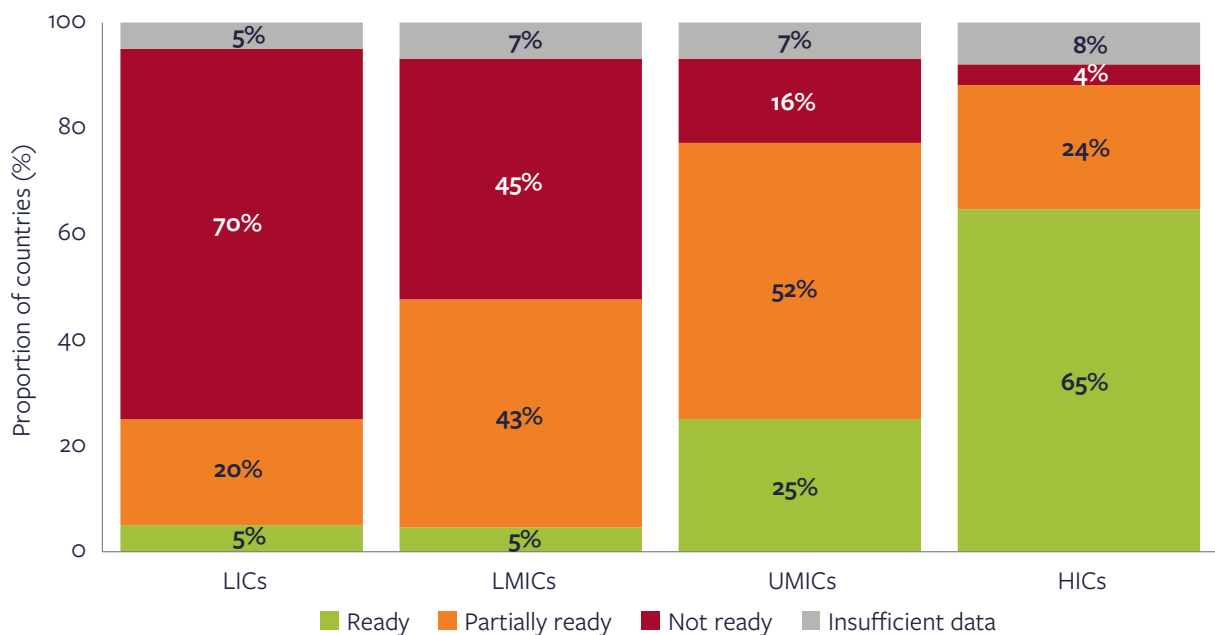
Among the 159 countries we track, 47 (30%) had achieved ‘ready’ status, with a comparable 43 countries (27%) in the ‘not ready’ status. The largest number of countries, 58 and constituting 36% of the 159 countries, were in the intermediate category of ‘partially ready’. In 11 countries (7%) there was insufficient data in this thematic component – the largest number in this category across all three components. This has had a cascading effect on our ability to compute the overall readiness index for these 11 countries.

The large proportion of LICs and LMICs that are ‘not ready’ (70% and 45% respectively) contrasts sharply with the large proportion of HICs that are ‘ready’ (65%) (Figure 9). Enacting policies that guarantee key services such as free healthcare at point of service, public awareness and institutional and legal reforms such as anti-discrimination labour laws or legal provision for women’s land ownership offer poorer countries an opportunity to significantly improve their

prospects for inclusive development. However, enacting such provisions into law and effectively implementing them require significant political will and capital that entrenched systems might be reluctant or unable to commit.

We are mindful of some dilemmas and limitations. There could be gaps between *de jure* provisions and *de facto* norms and practices, or in the implementation of legal statutes, that the data do not capture. Second, providing policy protection for these basic rights of access could indicate greater awareness of their importance (which is desirable). But might also indicate the greater need for such protection if societal norms do not grant them (which is undesirable). We are unable to assess which of these two directions of influence dominates from data on policy presence (or absence). The evidence from the large proportion of HICs that are ‘ready’ gives us confidence that these policies on balance are key stepping-stones towards creating a conducive and enabling environment for inclusive development – notably for basic rights and services for marginalised communities such as the poor and women.

Figure 9 A correlation between country economic prosperity and policy preparedness



Note: LIC, low-income country; LMIC, lower-middle-income country; UMIC, upper-middle-income country; HIC, high-income country. Count and proportion of countries and their policy readiness in 2020, by country-income classification. The values in parentheses are the respective counts of countries.

3.3 ‘Leave no one behind’ outcome index

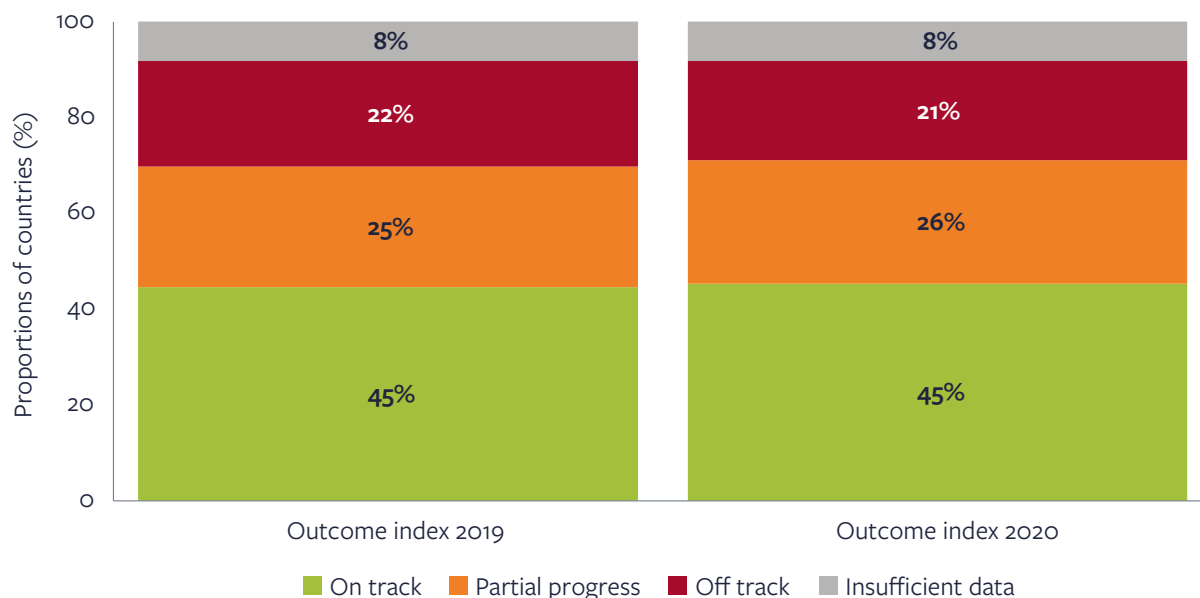
Finally, we assess the **outcome index**. As discussed above, this index complements the readiness index. Five years into the SDG era, it presents a measure of how far LNOB commitments have been met by using four indicators selected from the 225 unique indicators chosen to track

progress towards the SDG targets. All four indicators intrinsically and explicitly focus on the inclusion of typically marginalised communities within a country, and thereby reflect proof of delivery on the LNOB commitment.

The results of the outcome index present a more sanguine outlook. For all outcome components (under-five mortality rate, undernourishment, financial inclusion and access to electricity) for the entire country population, 72 countries (45%) are ‘on track’ to achieve the corresponding SDG target and thereby fulfil the LNOB commitment (Figure 10). Another 41 countries (26%) are making partial progress towards the commitment, while 33 are ‘off track’ (21%). For 13 countries data are insufficient to make a reliable assessment (8%). As a population measure, this implies that more than 2.8 billion people live in countries that are ‘on track’, but conversely more than 4 billion live in countries that are yet to reach that threshold.

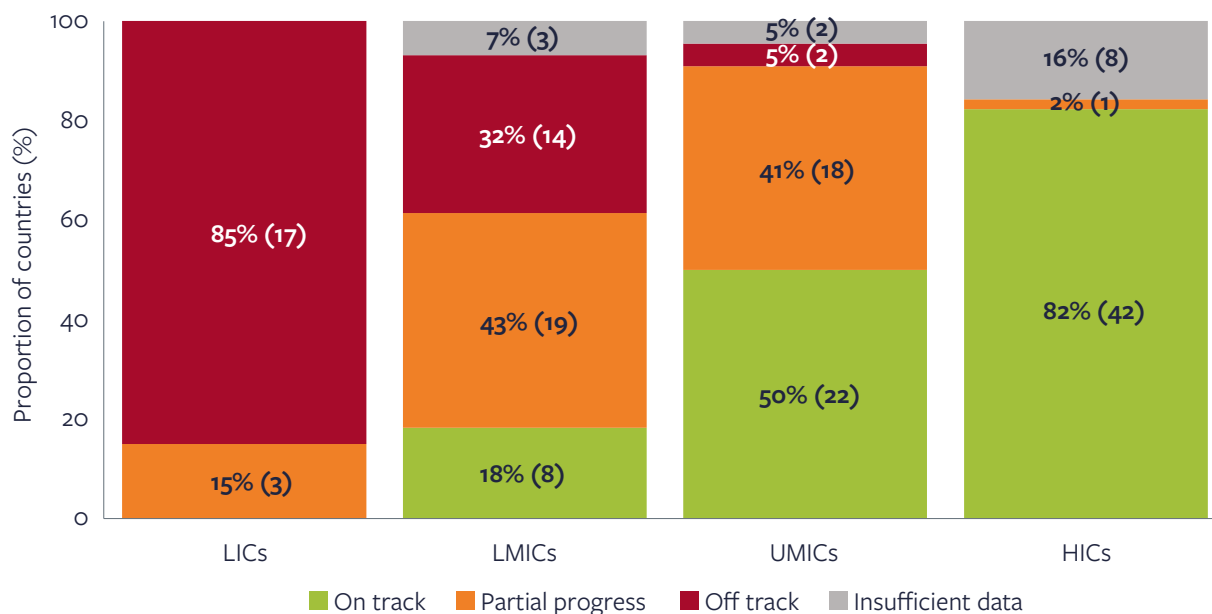
This pattern has been fairly consistent and unchanged over the last year: the number of ‘off track’ countries has fallen marginally from 35 to 33. Of all the metrics, the outcome measure demonstrates the most inertia; the status of 141 countries remained unchanged over the previous year (89%). This is not surprising as the indicators that capture this measure are slow-moving by construction, and some of the health data indicators have not been updated at source over the past year. We anticipate that the index in 2021 might indicate substantial changes, on account of the impact of Covid-19 and the public health responses to it.

Figure 10 Inertia in outcome results



Note: Comparing the outcome scores over 2019 and 2020.

Consistent with the results from the preparedness index, there is a strong correlation between country income classification and the outcome index. Nearly 82% of HICs are ‘on track’ whereas none of the LICs are. Conversely, 85% of LICs are ‘off track’ (Figure 11).

Figure 11 Outcome is positively correlated with country prosperity

Note: LIC, low-income country; LMIC, lower-middle-income country; UMIC, upper-middle-income country; HIC, high-income country. Comparing the outcome index across country-income classifications.

3.4 Mapping readiness to outcomes

Having constructed and analysed the two indices, the readiness index as the ex-ante condition and the outcome index as the ex-post result, we explored whether there is any prima facie evidence from data patterns to support the hypothesis that creating conditions conducive to achieving LNOB commitments ends up doing so through outcomes. Looking at the distribution of countries along the two indices, desirable and inclusive results in both measures appear to have a high degree of association (Table 3).

Table 3 Readiness and outcome are significantly correlated

		LNOB readiness index, 2020			
		Insufficient data	Not ready	Partially ready	Ready
LNOB outcome index, 2020	Insufficient data	64%	0%	8%	1%
	Off track	0%	63%	40%	3%
	Partial progress	18%	0%	29%	27%
	On track	18%	38%	23%	69%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Note: LNOB, 'leave no one behind'. Proportion of countries in a cross-tabulation.

As the shaded cells highlight, 69% of countries that were deemed ‘ready’ were also ‘on track’ to meet the SDG targets that had explicit inclusive parameters. A similar 69% of countries that were only ‘partially ready’ had either made ‘partial progress’ or were ‘off track’ to meet the SDG targets. Finally, of the countries ‘not ready’, 63% were ‘off track’. This consistent pattern and high correlation suggest strongly that investing efforts and resources in creating supportive conditions for inclusive development does help deliver the desired outcomes. This is consistent with existing literature and past ODI research we cited as one of our motivations for creating these two indices: one to measure initial conditions, and the other to indicate their outcomes.

This pattern of association is however only suggestive of an underlying causal link. We are unable to test for a direction of causality: whether better preparedness fosters better outcomes, or conversely better outcomes create an environment conducive to attracting more favourable readiness efforts in a virtuous cycle, or if they are both related to some other common driver. We are also unable to assess empirically if the components of the readiness index are necessary conditions or sufficient conditions or both for favourable outcomes results.

Looking ahead on the impact of Covid-19, there is ample evidence of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on poorer countries and also on chronically marginalised communities within countries. In the next iteration of the indices, we anticipate being able to detect whether investing resources to build readiness to deliver on LNOB is also associated with greater resilience to shocks such as the pandemic – on whether higher levels of readiness are correlated with shorter duration and/or shallower extent of adverse outcomes on inclusive development.

4 Conclusions

The analysis of the 2020 indices and comparison with previous results indicates some grounds for optimism, but also reasons for concern. With 159 countries included in our assessment, the 2020 indices are much more comprehensive than previous iterations. It is truly representative of the global population – across all country-income classifications – covering nearly 89% of the global population.

The LNOB readiness index indicates that, in 2020, 75 countries (47%) are ‘ready’ to meet their leave no one behind commitment, 65 are ‘partially ready’ (41%) and eight are ‘not ready’ (5%). We have insufficient data for 11 countries to make an assessment (7%). This is the positive news. However, it is tempered by evidence of some worsening and slippage – as countries that were ‘ready’ just a year ago have regressed. Overall, the status of 12 countries worsened, whereas only 10 improved. In the policy component, 19 countries worsened and only six improved. Countries that had insufficient data in 2019 continued to be plagued by the same problem in 2020.

Most HICs and UMICs have already achieved ‘ready’ status, but LMICs and LICs are consistently lagging behind. This is cause for genuine concern as LMICs and LICs have large proportions of marginalised communities. And they simultaneously face the challenges of mobilising adequate resources while having limited fiscal capacity to do so, creating matching physical, political and systems infrastructure to implement them, and to undertake these changes urgently. Yet there is scope for optimism; only a few LMICs and LICs are ‘not ready’, and most are ‘partially ready’.

Looking at the components underlying the overall index, we find that the data component is the most prominent thematic driver for the countries classified ‘ready’. Of three components, 104 countries are data ready (65%), in contrast to only 47 that are ready in the policy component (30%), and only 34 in the finance component (21%). As the last two components are more readily controlled by in-country policy-makers and administrators, this points to the need for relevant domestic institutions to focus their attention and resources towards fulfilling their commitments within the 2030 Agenda.

The outcome index is more encouraging, with 72 countries already ‘on track’ (45%) and another 41 making ‘partial progress’ towards delivering results (26%). But it will most likely need sustained progress on the readiness aspects to improve LNOB outcomes in the long run.

Our analysis of both indices together indicates a consistent pattern of correlation between readiness and outcome. This seems to suggest that creating LNOB-supporting conditions through initiatives that are reflected in the readiness index fosters conditions for countries to get to or stay ‘on track’ to deliver SDG targets that are inherently inclusive by design.

The year 2020 has been remarkable in recent history due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Data and information used to assess the components and compute the 2020 indices, however, predate the pandemic and hence do not reflect its impact. We anticipate that the public health and economic consequences of the pandemic, when captured in the next iteration, will impact both the readiness and outcome indices – some positively (such as some measures of financing) and some negatively (such as data and policy readiness, and outcomes).

In the next iteration, it will be important to assess the impact of the pandemic through three main sets of inquiry. First would be to estimate the magnitude and direction of impact of the pandemic, and the policy responses to it. Second would be to assess how persistent those disruptions might be – whether the shocks are transitory or have had a lasting impact on delivering inclusive development. This would in turn link to a third question exploring how effective country-level LNOB-conducive preparedness efforts have been in laying the foundations for shock-resilient LNOB outcomes.

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